

Citizen's Budget and Finance Advisory Committee
November 17, 2008
7:00 PM – 8:30 PM
Administration building
360 Colborne Street

Present: Angel Thomas, Jo Ann Clark, Jennette Gudgel, Kevin Huepenbecker, Cricket James, Peter Hendricks, Mary Doran, Lois Rockney, Jabar Alsiddiqui, Steve Schellenberg

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 pm.

No minutes for the November 3, 2008 meeting.

Election of Committee members: Kevin Huepenbecker was elected chair. Jeanette Grudgel was elected vice-chair. Angel Thomas was elected secretary.

Enrollment History and Projections

Steve Schellenberg, Assistant Director of Research and Evaluation, presented three charts showing and comparing the enrollment trends in St. Paul and St. Paul Public Schools. The charts included public, non-public and charter combined enrollment trends. In 1998 SPPS experienced the largest decline of Kindergartens. It was noted that SPPS started experiencing a decline in enrollment before all of St. Paul started experiencing a decline. Kindergarten enrollment in SPPS started to decline 10 years ago but the birth rate in St. Paul has been steady for the past 25 years. Data for school enrollment trend is collected beginning at the pre-k level.

This year we lost over 600 students with three schools (Humboldt, Johnson and Arlington) being affected the most. SPPS is estimating a loss of over 2,000 students within the next five years. Charter schools are one of the factors contributing to decline in enrollment in SPPS. With much of the decline occurring at the high school level SPPS is losing more money because the high school students bring more revenue into the district.

There is currently discussions about large scale system changes with community discussions taking place around St. Paul. The Board will make the final decisions regarding large scale changes. The drop out rate has been constant and is not considered a factor for declining enrollment. There is not a lot of cross over from public to private school, however SPPS does lose students during the transition from elementary school to high school.

The relation between the projected vs the actual enrollment has not been good for the past 6 -7 years. The projected enrollment is usually within one and a half to two percent of the actual enrollment for the district and one half to five percent for individual schools. Projected enrollment is made using the previous 5-6 years of enrollment data. There are certain schools that are in high demand and have a waiting list. Schools with application processes are easier to project than neighborhood schools. The district loses 75-100 students a month. Record request are localized at the school. There is currently no system set up to track students who leave the district.

Kevin Huepenbecker mentioned that Chelsea Heights keeps a book documenting students entering and leaving the school. Jo Ann Clark suggested that asking a few questions such as why are you leaving and where are you going will help in tracking students. .

As part of our report to the board we will recommend setting up a system to track students who are leaving the district.

It was asked how the enrollment decline can be reversed. One way is if the many currently vacant houses in St. Paul get filled with kids. Also there may be a group of refugees moving into St. Paul soon. Full reversal is not likely anytime soon.

As part of our report to the board we will recommend ways to reverse the enrollment decline.

Revenue Implications

Jabar Alsiddiqui, Chief Budget Analyst, discussed revenue implications of the declining enrollment. He presented a handout showing the SPPS major revenue impacted by enrollment. SPPS receives funds at the end of the year depending on the total of the Average Daily Membership (ADM). The ADM is weighted depending on grade level which creates the Weighted Average Daily Membership (WADM), also known as pupil unit. Close to 80% of SPPS total revenue comes from the WADM.

There is a 5 year limit on ELL funding, after a student receives services for 5 years they are no longer funded for those services. In order to qualify for compensatory education for a student they must be in enrollment by October 1st. This years WADM generates next years funds. Special education is based on expenditures.

SPPS is currently promoting a Believe Campaign. The question is do we take away money from classrooms to invest in marketing for the future.

Jo Ann Clark suggested that we recommend more pairing of schools similar to the recently paired Farnsworth and Cleavland and Linwood and Monroe.

It was also suggested that we recommend eliminating transition times between elementary and middle school.

Other/ Future Meetings:

The committee briefly discussed the community conversations taking place regarding the large system changes. It was suggested that when the options are narrowed down they should be shared with the community to receive more feedback before making a final decision.

The December, January and February meetings will last longer due to a holiday falling on the 3rd Monday resulting in a canceled meeting.

Michelle Walker, Chief Accountability Officer, will be at our December 10th meeting to discuss large scale system changes. It will be a joint meeting with Capital Expenditure Advisory Committee (CEAC).

The meeting adjourned at 8:45.