

## THE MAPLE RUN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #57

### February 28, 2018 Informational Meeting Summary

**Present:** See attached List

#### Summary:

James Farr reviewed the slide show presentation, reviewing Board members, who MRUSD is, and asked building principals to give an overview of their schools. Kevin Dirth, Superintendent then reviewed the year-to-date progress on the 5-year plan. Mr. Farr then gave an overview of the budget. He stated that if he remains Chair of the Board, finding efficiencies will be a top priority.

Mr. Farr explained that, of the total increase in taxes, the Board can only control about ¼ of that. For example, based on a \$200,000 home, the estimated tax increase for City, Town and Fairfield is \$353, \$229, and \$346 respectively. **The school board can only affect \$89 of that.**

The state sets the yield rate; the reduction of pupil count has an affect; and the common level of appraisal (CLA) is based on whether properties within a town sell for more, less or at the appraised value. Income sensitivity adjustments are not considered in these calculations. Because we are now merged, there is an 8-cent reduction this year.

Mr. Farr reiterated to keep in mind that decisions of the State affect us. For example, we negotiated a single teacher's contract as required by the state. AFTER our contract was completed, the state put a cap on the amount a district could pay towards health insurance. Our negotiated contract exceeded that amount so now we have to pay a penalty of about \$160,000 over two years.

He then asked for questions from those present.

- Q. You stated that the bulk of the increase was from salaries, benefits and cost of services going up. What are the services you are referring to?
- A. Services include things like NCSS contract, out-of-district placements, contracted specialists, and the like.
- Q. What savings have there been since the merger?
- A. Purchasing the building has allowed us to bring Early Ed into our space, saving their monthly rent amount. There is no interest on the loan, so our entire payment – which is equivalent to our rent payments as a tenant – go directly to build equity. There has been attrition through positions not being filled, tuition savings and we have begun eliminating redundancy.
- Q. How much money is currently in the capital reserve fund? How big does it get before it gets put back into the budget?
- A. Currently the capital fund is about \$2 million. This will be significantly reduced because there is a list of building improvements that are needed. This money was placed into this account with voter approval from all of the districts upon the merge. There is a list of building improvements that has been prioritized. One such project that comes out of this fund are the kitchen and bathroom upgrades at Fairfield Center School. These funds do

not go back into the budget but are used in an effort to not need a bond for building improvements.

Q. Why are some line items up considerably if we are being more efficient through the merger? For example, technology appears to be up \$300,000, I assume for buying computers for students?

A. For technology we have to continually reinvest to keep equipment up to date and safe. Also, keep in mind that most of these line items include salaries and benefits for that area. Salaries and benefits are nearly 90% of the increase.

Q. How about savings in Special Ed?

A. There are some savings from attrition by not filling openings from reductions and retirement. Moving forward, the quality of staff is increasing, having staff that can train paras in house will be future savings.

Some things that were suggested to better publicize:

- Fairfield now only pays tuition for grandfathered students, saving the district money. More money will be saved as the grandfathered students graduate.
- The benefits of a merged contract, saving a great deal of time – and time is money.
- Where there are efficiencies, since they don't clearly show in the budget.

