

The Oldham Era

'Surprise' \$2M changes school board budget

By Glypie Grider

30 September 2010

Oldham school board members had only one night to review and approve a \$110 million revised working budget for fiscal year 2010-11.

Chuck Littrell, finance officer for the school district, spent six months preparing a \$107.5 million working budget and submitted it to board members by Sept. 17, but a last minute \$2 million "surprise" federal allocation from the state — and the subsequent order from the Kentucky Department of Education to include the new grant in the current year's working budget — caused Littrell to re-tabulate and present revisions at the regularly scheduled Sept. 27 board meeting.

"This is frustrating to me to get the information so late," Littrell said, noting that this was the first time in 16 years he has had to resubmit a working budget for formal approval.

"Why did we waste time working on the budget for six months only to have the state come in at the 13th hour and treat us like this?" board member Walt Schumm asked. "We deserve a little more time than an hour at a board meeting," he said.

KDE requires all districts to revise their working budgets by Sept. 30 in order to meet federal guidelines regarding the new funds; they announced the new allocation via a web presentation Sept. 20.

Schumm, along with board member Larry Dodson, voted against the working budget, stating that "surprise" federal allocations disguised as state funds appear to be a federal attempt to bribe local government.

Littrell emphasized to board members that the funds are not new, sustainable revenue for the district, but rather federal replacement funds to supplement a decrease in state financial support.

Board members Joyce Fletcher, Jennifer Jones and Kevin Woosley voted to approve the working budget.

Oldham's share of the federal allocation is \$2,058,740 and will expire at the end of fiscal year 2012. Littrell said the money is an extension of the federal stimulus funds previously received from the state under the American Recovery Act for FY2010 and FY2011.

"I'm grateful anytime someone gives us \$2 million for our schools, but we have to be careful because the state clearly has a revenue problem," said Oldham County Schools Superintendent Paul Upchurch.

Littrell's revised budget totals also reflected the new tax rate of 68.9 cents per \$100 assessed value (46.5 cents for general purposes and 22.4 cents for the district building fund), which the board approved in a special called meeting Aug. 26. He projected a 6.56 percent contingency in the amount of roughly \$7 million.

The budget includes \$77,784,817.08 in the general fund; \$10,860,924.57 in the grant fund; \$1,080,874 in capital outlay; \$25,384,018 in the building fund; and \$4,913,728 in the food service fund, totaling \$110,024,361.65.

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