

GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Superintendent's Corner

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The November 14 school committee meeting (a joint budget meeting with the towns) will feature a very preliminary idea of expenditures for next year. These include two items that have been discussed with the towns over the past several months: including the costs of full-day preschool into the expenditure budget, and including a teacher for early childhood education, essentially a new Chapter 74 vocational program for the high school. There has been significant agreement between the school and the towns around the need to improve and expand programming. We'll also be sharing projected increases for items such as utilities, employee contractual costs and changes in insurance costs. It's important to note that these are likely to change over time as we finish contract negotiations, lock in the price of fuel and look at changes to insurance programming.

At the last meeting, we were able to show the progress made across the schools in terms of maintenance. These included a diverse range of items from the mundane (mold/stain removal) to the improvement aspects of the buildings/grounds (expanding the epoxy floor covering, renovating elementary playgrounds, and renovating both the Booster Shack and announcing booth) to the enhancement of services (building a preschool playground, enhancing security features and improving the audio/visual capability of the performing arts center). This was in addition to the normal custodial and maintenance schedules that make us so proud of our facilities and consistently receive recognition of the excellent state of facilities and grounds from visitors. Kudos to our maintenance and custodial staff as they've been able to do all of this while at the same time reducing expenditures and moving towards 'green' cleaning products.

Related to ongoing budgets, we also shared with the committee the significant progress in cutting energy use (and therefore costs) in the district. Through joint efforts with our utility company we have been consistently updating appliances and lighting fixtures throughout our schools. These steps, in conjunction with efforts by our staff to conserve energy, have led to a nearly 700,000 kWh reduction in the past ten years.

We also shared some needs and long-term planning issues with the committee including some capital projects (new equipment storage, roof replacement, buses and district equipment). While there has been much work done, we do anticipate continuing to improve our facilities, working to increase efficiency and ensuring that our maintenance plans are being utilized. For the larger projects, we need to continue to discuss funding a capital stabilization account (to reduce the cost of bonding these types of projects) and continue to work with the towns to see if we can use grant funding for green communities for some projects (like boiler replacement on the main campus). Thankfully the ongoing discussions and meetings between town and school officials are yielding some interesting ideas and opportunities that we'll hopefully be able to use as we move forward.

For those interested in further detail, the presentation given to the school committee is on the district's website (www.GRSD.org) and we also have budget information over a number of years posted there. As we move forward with developing a budget in conjunction with town officials, we'll be posting additional presentations and information so that everyone in our communities can follow the budget progress, ask questions and provide input.

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