

SUMMARY OF BUDGET QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM JANUARY 19 FORUM

Please note that the questions and answers that appear below are not an exact transcript of the meeting. We have attempted to capture the intent of the questions, and in some cases, answers have been expanded.

1. Does Pleasanton Unified sunshine specific areas of the contract?

The contract articles to be discussed at the bargaining table are sunshined. In general, specific proposals are discussed by the negotiating teams at the bargaining table in order to preserve the integrity of negotiations and ensure that good faith bargaining will occur. The Board is continually updated on the progress of negotiations. Any tentative agreements that are reached by the bargaining teams become public documents requiring approval by the Board at a public meeting. Information about which articles are sunshined for the 2010/11 year are available on the PUSD website in the packet for the January 12 Board meeting (navigate to Board of Trustees, Meetings and Agendas).

2. The Governor has proposed fully funding the COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) this year. This is a negative number. Will employees get a "negative" raise?

No. This COLA is a state COLA and is applied to the revenue that comes to the District. The -0.38% will mean a loss in revenue of about \$400,000 for PUSD.

3. I read in the paper that the Governor proposed cutting state funding for CSR (Class Size Reduction). Is this true?

No. CSR will still be funded the same. The article referred to the fact that, as districts increase class sizes over 20, they pay a penalty and receive fewer dollars from the state. The state is then able to use those dollars elsewhere.

4. Assuming a parcel tax was to pass, could it fund CSR?

Yes, if funding CSR was included in the ballot language. It is possible that a parcel tax would provide only a portion of the total cost of CSR (to cover the District's responsibility). The rest of the cost currently comes from the state program.

5. Part of the Governor's budget proposal included cuts to administrative costs. What cuts would be made?

The Governor has proposed a \$1.2 billion reduction in administrative costs. Various education groups have asked the California Department of Finance to clarify this. The DoF

responded that administrative costs cover anything other than a classroom teacher or a principal. There will still be a lot of discussions and negotiations before the state budget is finalized. In prior years, when this type of proposal has been made targeting specific areas for reductions, the final budget includes the same dollar amount of cuts, but the requirement about specific target areas goes away.

6. Why are most cuts recommended by the BAC (Budget Advisory Committee) affecting K-3 classes?

The BAC has not made any recommendation for spending reductions. The list of possible reductions out at this time has come from Cabinet. CSR in grades K through 3 costs the District \$1.3 million. Last year, the state support for CSR became part of the new flexibility allowed. Since we are facing such a significant shortfall, we have to consider CSR as it is one of the "big ticket" items.

We now believe that we will have to make an additional \$3.3 million in reductions, bringing the total for next year to \$6.9 million. The cuts will be even deeper at all levels. The District welcomes suggestions of items at all levels to consider for reduction. There may be more cuts at the elementary level because there is more room there to make reductions. Cabinet is currently working on a recommendation for additional cuts which should be released about January 26. The Board has to approve a balanced budget, and this will mean deep cuts everywhere.

7. Has there been thought about a revenue-generating effort similar to the one in San Ramon?

Yes. This suggestion came up at last forum. The Revenue Enhancement subcommittee of the BAC will consider this at their next meeting. The public is invited to attend.

8. If APT (the Association of Pleasanton Teachers) agreed to eliminate all teacher work days, how much savings would that generate? If CSEA did the same, what would that add?

Certificated staff currently has 185 work days. 180 days are instructional days. There are five non-students days, three of which are for staff development. Two are for either work days for grades 6-12 or a work day and a conference day for grades K-5. If all three units (certificated, classified, and management) gave up one day of work, the District would save \$450,000. Giving up five non-instructional days would generate about \$2.25 million in savings.

9. If there is a change to the elementary schedule with an early release on one or more days, when will parents know?

Currently, grades 1-3 have more instructional minutes than required by the state. Grades 4-5 are closer to the requirement but still are over the minimum. One idea proposed to save money would be to shorten the school day by 45 minutes and provide a teacher prep period at the end of the day. To still meet the minutes requirement, we could do this for one day a week in grades 4-5 and up to 3 days a week in grades 1-3. This is one of the

items that will be considered by the Board over the next few weeks. The Board will have to take action by their February 23 meeting in order to meet the timeline for issuing notices of possible layoff (by March 15). If this is one of the reductions approved, staff will work with sites establishing schedules and notifying families.

10. What specialists provide prep periods at elementary schools?

Currently elementary students receive instruction two times a week from P.E. specialists and once a week from a vocal music specialist. Grades 1-3 meet once a week with a science specialist, and grades 4-5 have science twice per week.

11. If elementary specialists are laid off, yet parent groups still provide supplies, why can't parents volunteer to teach a class? If programs are being eliminated, what can the money parent groups raise be used for?

Per California regulations, instruction must be delivered by a credentialed teacher. Parents are welcome to come in and volunteer in conjunction with a teacher but cannot solely take on the teacher's role. Materials purchased by parent groups would still be made available to the classroom teacher.

A community-wide fundraiser is something that the District would consider again. As the state budget moves through its adoption process, we will have a clearer picture of the impact of reductions and welcome the opportunity to work with parent groups on raising funds and selecting areas to support.

12. P.E. (Physical Education) is a required course of study in grades K-12, and elementary students must receive 200 minutes of P.E. instruction over 10 days. Considering the overall increased workload for elementary teachers, what is the District's plan to ensure that students are receiving the necessary instruction?

Elementary classroom teachers are credentialed to teach all curricular areas. They will have to schedule the required time into their days. It is likely that the District will need to provide some professional development support related to standards, assessment, and differentiation. This can be provided on staff development days if available or at other times.

The District does not believe that these cuts are a good thing. We understand the benefit of having instruction provided by specialists. However, we need to provide options to the Board to fill a very large budget deficit.

13. Is the District position on parents volunteering to teach based on law?

Yes. Teachers in California are credentialed to deliver the curriculum. Volunteers are not credentialed. They can assist a teacher but are not authorized by the state to deliver curriculum. The state established this system to ensure a consistent and quality education for our students.

14. If a certificated teacher is present in a classroom, could a parent volunteer, for example, help with the science lesson?

Yes. Parents can work alongside the teacher. The teacher of record is required to have a valid credential.

15. Can APT provide an update on any concessions teachers are discussing, and when will there be decisions?

Per Trevor Knaggs, APT President, the association will be meeting in good faith with the District at the bargaining table. While Mr. Knaggs can't speak for the entire unit, he believes that, given the severity of the budget crisis, everything will be looked at. The association will go into negotiations knowing that there are some serious problems that need to be worked on. The first negotiation session is scheduled for January 27. He promises that there will be a full and honest dialog. There is a tradition of good employer/employee relations in our District, and APT will do their best to be part of the solution.

16. Why didn't Mr. Knaggs, as President of APT, sign the RTTT (Race to the Top) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)? Does this mean that PUSD cannot apply, or will this affect our overall score?

For the state's RTTT application to the federal government, the more signatures you have, the more points will be awarded to the application. Having signatures from the Boards, superintendents, and certificated associations from all districts across the state would help the state's application. Many associations across the state had issues with the MOU and did not sign. APT issued a joint statement with the District indicating that they were generally in support of the effort; however, they did have some concerns and chose to exercise caution and not sign the MOU at this time

We will know about April 1 if California will be accepted into the program.

17. How much money could RTTT generate for PUSD? Would it solve our budget issues?

If accepted, the state would potentially receive somewhere between \$355 and \$700 million. Part of that will be awarded to an unknown number of districts, but we do not have any idea of how much would be received by PUSD.

RTTT cannot solve PUSD's budget issues. The amount that California as a whole might receive is less than 3% of the state's budget problem. Another caution is that typically, when the federal government provides funding, it is intended to be an incentive. There is enough to entice you to apply with an expectation that you cover the rest of the costs yourself. Any funds received from the program would likely be restricted and would not necessarily match up with the areas where we have made reductions.

18. How carefully would the District track the minutes mandated for elementary P.E.?

The California Ed Code requires 200 minutes of P.E. instruction every 10 days for elementary students. If the curriculum were to be delivered by classroom teachers, site principals and teachers would come up with a schedule that would accommodate the requirement.

19. Has the District given consideration to cutting P.E. at all levels K-12?

Ed Code requires P.E. instruction at all grade levels. This is not a subject area that can be eliminated.

20. A lot of the reductions being considered impact elementary schools. What opportunities are there to make cuts at the secondary level?

The list of possible reductions that Cabinet has issued are items that are non-negotiable (the Board can make those changes unilaterally without agreement with our associations). There are other reductions that can be considered through the negotiation process, and many of the secondary possibilities fall into that category. CSR in grade 9 and reductions in administration would not need to be negotiated. Staffing ratios (number of students per teacher) are a negotiable item. Currently, our class sizes in middle school are staffed at 26:1, resulting in class sizes of about 30-31 students. High schools are staffed at 27:1, resulting in class sizes of about 31-32. The number of instructional minutes at the middle schools is near the minimum required. The high schools do have more than required due to the 7-period day that is offered. This schedule, along with the collaboration period (late start Wednesday) at the high school, is also an item that would need to be considered through negotiations.

21. Besides a fundraising effort, what are the other two revenue enhancements under consideration? What is the Board's position on a parcel tax?

The Revenue Enhancement subcommittee of the BAC is also looking at a starting a grant writing endeavor and at forming an exploratory group for a parcel tax. The subcommittee will be discussing all three ideas and working on prioritizing them and allocating resources.

District staff cannot speak for the Board. Typically, a governance team would be looking at the kind of support that was in the community for a parcel tax. Parcel tax measures are expensive and time consuming. We see support in the community, but there is still opposition as well. A parcel tax initiative could still be on the table, but we are running into timeline issues. A June election would have to be called in early March. The Board is going to have to consider whether to move quickly to benefit 2010/11 or to plan for a possible benefit for 2011/12.

Chris Grant, PUSD Board President, offered some comments. While not speaking on behalf of all Board members, he believes that the biggest concern is the state budget and its impact on education. Because so much of our budget is in personnel costs, large

reductions impact people. PUSD needs to make prudent reforms along with working to receive more revenue. There also needs to be reform at the state level. Mr. Grant believes that the community needs to be educated and that the Board needs to take time and plan and address concerns raised by community members.

22. PUSD recently adopted VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts) standards, but vocal music does not have minimum instructional time required by Ed Code. If elementary vocal music specialists/preps are eliminated, what happens? Will there still be a section on the report card?

California Ed Code does not have a comprehensive set of requirements for instructional minutes. The state has adopted content standards for elementary vocal music, and our District has reviewed and adopted content standards. There is an expectation that the content standards will be covered and, without music specialists, the burden will fall on classroom teachers. Teachers without special training in music would likely struggle. PUSD has been fortunate to have music specialists, and the reduction of specialists would be a loss to the program.

It was our District's decision to accommodate a music grade on the elementary report card. This is something that could be looked at again. Not all districts in California assess music.

23. Would it cost the District more to have an election before November?

If there were a special election where our initiative was the only item on the ballot, the District would bear the total cost. Last June, the costs totaled about \$250,000. If we participated in a general election, the District would share the cost with the other entities that have something on the ballot, and we expect that the cost would be less.

24. During the Measure G campaign, it was seemed that step and column increases could not be changed. Are contracts with the associations renewed on a yearly basis, and is that why it seems that step and column are under consideration now?

Step and column increases are a part of PUSD's contract with our associations, as they are with nearly every other district in California. Contracts are usually for a three-year term. Each year, there are articles in the contract which can be reopened for negotiation. This happens every year with salaries, so the District will have the opportunity to discuss step and column at the bargaining table.

25. How does the \$1.6 billion that President Obama today said he would like to give to education affect Pleasanton?

On January 19, it was reported that President Obama proposed giving an additional \$1.35 billion to education. Most of this would appear to be an addition to the Race to the Top funds, and we will hear if California will qualify in April. A portion might be available directly to districts on a competitive grant basis, but we do not have details of this yet. Also, see response to RTTT question above for general information about federal funding.

26. If you shorten the elementary school day and still have the requirement for P.E. minutes, what happens to other subject areas?

California Ed Code does not specify a minimum number of minutes for all content areas. If we shorten the school day but still have the 200 minute P.E. requirement, there will be less time left for other subjects.

27. What steps need to be taken to get a plan of action in place for a parcel tax or fundraising effort?

Essentially, someone needs to come forward to lead the effort. The District wants to continue the dialog about revenue enhancement and is interested in having a parcel tax as part of the solution. District staff alone cannot carry such an effort, but we can work with the community. At this point, our discussion is starting with the Revenue Enhancement subcommittee.

28. Is the proposal to eliminate music specialists a "done deal?"

All of the possible reductions and items discussed at the forums are ideas and possibilities. No decision has been made, but the Board will have to make reductions to arrive at a balanced budget. They will continue to seek input from students, teachers, parents, and the community before making a final decision about reductions.

29. How can we get community leaders more involved in the District's budget crisis?

PUSD works very closely with the City and is unique in that we have such a mutually strong relationship. We will continue to work with the City on creative ways for them to help us, but we believe the options are limited. City funds are restricted, and they cannot take money from their reserves or other funds and transfer them to the District. The City has offered a \$1.2 million revolving line of credit to help us bridge the gap in the collection of developer fees; however, they are not able to be the solution to our budget issues. We need to look to the state or to our local community for a solution.

30. What is the District's total budget? What percentage does \$6.9 million represent? What percentage of the budget might a parcel tax restore?

Our total budget is about \$110 million. The \$6.9 million reduction we need to make represents about 6%. If we try to get an idea of what that reduction might look like, it would be a loss of about 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. In reality, it would be more individuals because some employees work part-time. Revenue from a parcel tax would depend on the size of the levy. Measure G, at \$233 per parcel, would have raised \$4.3 million annually.

31. Does the District lose revenue because of absences?

In 2008/09, the District lost about \$2.6 million in revenue due to student absences. One recommendation from the BAC was to start an elective absence fund. There is now a flyer circulating with an explanation of the impact of absences. PUSD receives revenue based

on students being in school. We lose money when they are not there for any reason—whether they are ill or on vacation. The number quoted above was the loss due to all types of absences (about \$51.54 per student per day). In any case, the District absolutely does not advocate sending children who are ill to school. Students who do not feel well should stay home until they have recovered.

32. Why doesn't the District close a school?

Most districts close schools that have lower enrollments (about 300 to 400 students). All PUSD elementary schools are between 650 and 750. If we were to close a school, it would impact things like traffic, lunch service, and recess. Students could not all be housed at one site and would need to be split up. There would probably need to be additional personnel at the larger sites which would offset savings from the closure. A potential savings of about \$600,000 would be offset by the additional needs at the remaining sites. We also believe that the budget will improve in a few years and need to position ourselves to restore things we have reduced or eliminated.

33. Is it legally possible or feasible for parents to come in after school to work with students who might be struggling?

Yes. We have had after school intervention programs in the past (such as homework clubs). They need to be under the direct supervision of a credentialed teacher who would oversee the program.

34. If the community can raise money, would the Board commit to maintaining elementary CSR? Could K-3 teachers negotiate a class size lower than 30?

Technically, yes, class sizes can be negotiated. Currently, the contract has 30-1 in grades K-3. It could go lower or higher. The District believed that 30-1 was a prudent number to retain in the contract because of the possibility that the state might reduce its contribution to CSR someday.

The Board has tended to support CSR. District staff understands its value as well. When the I Love Pleasanton Schools (ILPS) effort came about, some of the funds, while insufficient to support a reduction in elementary class sizes, were used to mitigate the effect of more students through hiring reading specialists and having them work in the classroom.

35. Can individual schools raise money for CSR at their site only?

No. The District has a strong commitment to keeping our schools equal. Any effort to raise money for CSR would have to be district-wide.

36. How does shortening the school day save money?

As part of the elementary teacher contract, teachers are provided a number of prep periods per week. These are currently provided when the students receive instruction with a specialist (45 minutes, 4 or 5 times per week). If the day were shortened, a prep period could be offered at the end of the day after students have left. There would not

need to be a specialist provided for that time. One prep period per week represents about 5.5 FTE. The savings would be \$400,000 - \$500,000.

37. How do site principals feel about the proposed cuts and their ability to maintain school sites?

Principals, along with the rest of staff, do not want to make any reductions, but all are aware of the budget crisis and the need to make cuts. Principals have had the opportunity to give input. They will be part of the process if we need to make decisions about what programs we might be able to retain. Parents should communicate with their site principals and let them know their opinions

38. Other than CSR, what are other "big ticket" items in the budget?

\$1.3 million--the positions and programs funded by one-time funds. These include some time for reading specialists, middle school vice principals, counselors, and library technicians. They were brought back for one year only by the ILPS effort.

\$700,000--reduction to categorical programs (e.g. SLIP and GATE) due to the flexibility option

\$400,000--\$856,000—savings from shortening the elementary school day and eliminating specialist sections

\$360,000--elimination of reading specialists.

39. How are sports funded?

The cost of coaching stipends used to be paid by the District. That support has been eliminated in the current year, and participants pay a fee for coaching, along with transportation costs. District support for sports includes things like lighting, field maintenance, and shoulder pad and helmet refurbishing (a safety issue). Equipment and uniforms typically have been covered by booster clubs.

40. If the District eliminates CSR for 2010/11, do we lose the chance to reinstate it later?

Under the rules as of today, the District will remain eligible for the program (however, keep in mind that the rules may change). The flexibility option we are exercising is in effect for two more years.

41. Can the District implement a payroll tax?

Probably not. School districts are limited in the ways they can raise revenue, but we will continue to do research about the possibility. Please visit our website regularly for updates.

42. What reductions have already been made at sites?

There is a document on our District's webpage that details some of the impacts of reductions made in the current year. For example, while enrollment is about the same, we have lost 73 FTE of certificated staff (48 at elementary), 70 FTE of classified staff, and 13 FTE of managers.

43. What does the District need to continue operating?

This is a difficult question to answer. Any reductions made make us less of an organization than what we were. Sadly, we have to continue to make cuts until we balance the budget and maintain our reserve. Ed Code does not have minimum requirements for all positions and programs needed to run a District.

The next list that will come out will address a total of \$6.9 million in reductions, and we really do not want to make any. We do welcome comments and suggestions (email budgetinfo@pleasanton.k12.ca.us).

44. Why doesn't the District eliminate 5 non-instructional and 5 instructional days to save money?

The amount saved by eliminating one day is \$450,000. A reduction of five days would equal \$2.25 million and could possibly be covered by non-instructional days (this option requires contract negotiations).

45. How can the District reduce the number of days if there is a minimum minutes requirement?

In this time of budget difficulties, the Governor is allowing districts to reduce five instructional days, and provides for a commensurate reduction in the number of instructional minutes without penalty. This provision is allowed from FY09/10 through FY12/13.

46. Who is on the Revenue Enhancement committee?

The subcommittee is part of the BAC. The BAC has 31 members who represent a variety of interests. Student members were selected by their principals. Parent representatives were recommended by the Board. The Chamber of Commerce provided names for business representatives, and our associations selected their representatives. Individuals from the BAC volunteered to participate on the subcommittee.

47. Would the District consider cutting back on specialists at the elementary level rather than completely losing programs?

Yes. All variations will be considered when looking at reductions; however, we do need to recommend a sufficient level of cuts to the Board.

48. Why not spend the reserve? If it just means that the county will come in to supervise, that doesn't sound so bad.

If a district does not maintain its reserve, there are several steps that might happen. It is more than just supervision—the county will demand to see a plan to restore the reserve. This just delays, not eliminates, the need for reductions. The District would start to lose local control to supervisors who are not familiar with our students and community. This is not an option that we would recommend.

49. Why are there additional instruction minutes for grades 1-3?

When CSR came into effect, the staggered reading program was eliminated (where some students came and left earlier to have smaller groups for reading instruction). Since all students attended the full day, there were additional minutes gained.

50. Do you read all of the email you receive?

Yes.

51. What is the timeline for negotiations in relation to the Board's timeline for making reductions?

The first negotiation session for 2010/11 is scheduled for January 27. We believe there will be an accelerated timetable because of a sense of urgency to get to heart of matters and see what agreements might be reached to help with the budget crisis. The Board will need to approve reductions at their meeting on February 23 in order for notices of possible layoff to be issued by March 15.

52. Why were the three assistant superintendents' contracts extended for three years? Will they take a cut if school year is cut?

In order to run a district, you have to have a team that includes certificated, classified, and management staff. At some point, the Board will have to decide what team is needed to run the schools. Although you would need to talk with each Board member to find out why the contracts were extended, the recommendation from Dr. Casey was to do so for three years. With his retirement, the District needs their knowledge and history to ensure a smooth transition. This will allow time for a new superintendent to come in and get to know them and the District.

The contracts are between the Board and the assistant superintendents. If work calendars are reduced, they will work with the Board about their contribution. This year, they agreed to give up three work days and reduce mileage stipends.

53. Why can't the District ask the associations for concessions totaling a certain amount?

That suggestion is noted. The negotiations process will be a discussion of a number of options and the dollars of relief they might provide.

54. Why are counselors, band/strings, specialists saved by ILPS seemingly cut already?

Technically, those positions were eliminated by the Board in February 2009. The Board was able to take action to bring them back because of the one-time funding from ILPS and other one-time sources. There was always the understanding that those positions were brought back for one year only.

55. Can sites raise money for instructional aides on an individual basis?

Yes. We have had some sites where parent groups contribute to intervention aides or other classified staff who work in classrooms. If the scope of this were to increase, the District would need to work with the sites to ensure that the issue of equity between schools was still being addressed.

56. Which revenue enhancements will be worked on, and how fast can something happen?

The BAC was presented with a lengthy list of alternatives suggested by the community through the January 5 forum, email, calls, and public comment at the Board meeting. They prioritized three possibilities. The subcommittee will discuss the next steps and whether the efforts should happen in parallel or sequentially.

57. How can the community gain cohesiveness around these issues, particularly a parcel tax?

The expert (Larry Tramutola) who spoke at the January 5 forum advised that a community and District should take their time to plan for a parcel tax measure. We are reading the environment, and while we do see support for a possible parcel tax measure, there is still opposition. We need to consider the need for a survey, listen to both sides, let negotiations proceed, and see what budget we wind up with.

We are seeing interest in an ILPS-type effort that would start very soon. The District will listen to what the Revenue Enhancement subcommittee recommends and will likely invite a group of stakeholders with similar interests to meet together.

58. Is PUSD negotiating a freeze in step and column and/or an across-the-board reduction? Who receives step and column increases? Is it a guaranteed raise? Most government employees have some sort of step and column in their compensation package. In PUSD, a first year teacher starts at about \$60,000 annually, and, after 20 years, can reach about \$98,000 annually (please note that certificated staff pay for health and welfare benefits out of this amount). They do this by moving a step (for years of service) or a column (by accumulating credits which they pay for). Not all teachers move every year. Classified and management have steps only (for 5 or 6 years of service). There is a scattergram posted on our website that shows how many employees are in each box on the pay scale.

59. Has the District considered selling the maintenance or graphics building to an outside buyer?

We are researching and considering options related to this. Reducing those services is a negotiable item.

60. How much does PUSD contribute to after hours care programs at elementary sites?

The District has its own program, Kids Club, which collects fees and is self-supporting. We contract with other vendors (such as YMCA and EDCC) at some sites and collect fees from them to cover items such as utilities and rent.

61. Is the District required to offer AP (Advanced Placement) classes?

The District is not required to offer AP classes. AP classes come out of current staffing levels. They do not cost any more to offer than other courses. The availability of these classes is valued in our District, and our students compete well in them. The cost for the test which leads to college credit is borne by the students, not the District.

Any new course may involve some startup costs for training and materials.

62. Would closing Village High School save money?

Closing VHS would save the funding of the principal and office staff, some number of teaching positions (though when the students returned to the comprehensive high schools, additional teachers might be needed there to allow for enrollment growth), and facility maintenance staff and resources.

63. What would be the impact of closing Village?

There would be few placement options for students who are expelled from the comprehensive school sites, potentially disruptive middle school students who are in the Opportunity Program housed at VHS, as well as discipline challenged high school students would return to comprehensive high school and middle school campuses. In addition, many students who have not been successful at their home school because of not completing enough credits to earn a high school diploma and those failing courses would lose the option of attending smaller classes at VHS, receiving additional help from their teachers and the opportunity to catch up for graduation. This could potentially result in more drop outs, increased discipline issues, poor academic performance and a reduced graduation rate.

64. If you know that the "District has a good year when the state has a good year, and the District has a bad year when the state has a bad year," could you have planned better for this crisis?

Given our reliance on the state for funding, the PUSD does indeed plan for "surprises." We have an informal policy to maintain our Reserve for Economic Uncertainties at about 4.5% to 5.0%, as opposed to the state recommended level of 3.0% (i.e., \$1.8-\$2.4M in excess of the 3.0% reserve level). With this cushion, we demonstrate a higher level of fiscal solvency and responsibility, as we are able to absorb "surprises" during the current year (e.g., unexpected expenditures, mid-year state adjustments). Unfortunately, the severity and the length of this economic downturn have exceeded our cushion. As a reminder, no economist forecasted this downturn in the economy; in fact, this recession was not identified as such until 12 months after it started.

65. *With the budget being as it is, should I as a parent consider private education?*

The quality of private schools varies a great deal just as it does with public schools. To make the determination to enroll at a private school, parents would need to compare the program offered by the specific private school they are considering with the program available in Pleasanton public schools. Currently, PUSD is the 11th highest performing K-12 district in the State of California.

66. *My neighbor did not vote for the parcel tax because of the Neal lawsuit and its cost. How would you respond to this?*

It is important to note that any past or future costs associated with the Neal lawsuit come from the capital fund. These costs have had no effect on the District's ability to hire teachers or provide programs, and the budget issues which are causing us to consider such drastic cuts are not a result of the lawsuit.

The agreement that the District had with the two developers (Signature and Standard Pacific) to build and fund Neal School has been declared illegal by the courts. Currently, we have hired a law firm on a contingency basis (at no cost to the District) to pursue a malpractice suit against the firm who created the agreement. Any money recovered will pay those attorneys and be divided between the District and the developers to cover each party's expense for pursuing the original Neal case in court. The District will not owe any legal costs to the developers.

67. *Has the Board discussed how they can better communicate with the public about the budget?*

Yes. The Board is committed to letting the public know about our current budget situation. The recent community forums are part of this effort. In addition, information is being posted online and sent via email. Budget Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public, and the Board will be holding budget workshops in February. Please check our homepage at www.pleasanton.k12.ca.us for updated information.

68. *With all of the layoffs in the classified ranks, why can't parents help keep libraries open or keep classrooms clean?*

Parent volunteers currently assist in our school libraries and are a tremendous resource for the schools. School volunteers are required to work under the supervision of a staff member. Parent volunteers can assist the teacher in the classroom and are involved in many campus beautification and improvement efforts. Classroom cleaning and custodial tasks represent work that is by contract carried out by the classified employees bargaining unit.

69. If the District cuts instructional days, do we lose ADA? What would be the net impact?

No, the PUSD would not lose ADA, thus we would not lose revenue. In simplest terms, a student with perfect attendance will generate 1.0 ADA of funding regardless of the length of the school year.

70. If staffing is reduced, has someone considered how many teachers will have to change grade levels?

This will depend on the extent of cuts that need to be implemented. In any given year, school principals need to have some teachers change grade levels due to the number of students that are enrolled at different grade levels each year. In a year where layoffs occur, the number of teachers changing grade levels will increase.

71. Most of the people at this forum are elementary parents. What can be done to get middle and high school parents more aware and involved?

We welcome any ideas in this area. We are sending information out to all families via email from both the District and sites, and we encourage everyone to talk with friends and neighbors about school funding and PUSD's current status.