

Dear Community Members:

For the past month and a half, the school board has been carefully reviewing the proposed budget for the 2010/2011 school year. It has been a difficult process at best. Our region's unemployment rate has more than doubled and additional staffing cuts at some of the area's largest employers are imminent. At the same time, the Plainfield School District is experiencing significant increases in health benefit elections, special education expenses, and the cost of high school tuition - all of which are out of our control. In fact, these non-discretionary increases alone total nearly \$458K and would represent an 8.25 % increase over last year's spending budget. Meanwhile, we continue to face the reality of decreasing enrollment and significant reductions in non-tax revenues (such as state aid and existing year surplus).

Over the past several weeks, we have gone through the budget carefully, considering a variety of cost-saving measures. As a result, we currently have a budget that increases spending over last year by approximately 3.8%, representing an estimated 13.9% increase in tax revenues needed. This is drastically reduced from the first draft of the budget. It is important to note that this increase does NOT include negotiated salary increases for any of our personnel and instead calculates staffing expenses based on current salaries. Both the professional and support staff contracts are up for re-negotiation this year and that process is ongoing. The impact of any negotiated salary increases, including step and track, will be added to the final budget.

This coming Tuesday, January 12th, beginning at 7 pm in the PES Music Room, the board will hold its Annual District Budget Hearing. We will present the proposed 2010/2011 budget that includes the following changes in staffing:

- Reduces staff by two full-time teaching positions (one in grades K through 4 and one in grades 5 through 8)
- Reduces staff by one half-time special education and one half-time regular education aid position
- Adds a half-time reading teacher
- Adds .125 FTE to the 7/8 science position
- Reallocates existing staffing resources in ways that help to offset the impact of the proposed staffing reductions. (We are projecting only 15 kindergartners next year and therefore have one half-time teaching position available for reallocation as a result of having only one section of kindergarten.)

In addition, we are proposing that co-curricular expenditures be reduced by \$5,000 or offset by \$5,000 in revenues (generated through participation fees for clubs and sports).

Finally, we are proposing some strategic increases in the areas of facilities and

technology that we feel represent critical and timely investments in both our infrastructure and in meeting the needs of 21st century learners for years to come.

The Plainfield School Board is proud of the excellent reputation our school enjoys throughout the Upper Valley. We continue to be committed to supporting high quality educational opportunities for Plainfield children. At the same time, we are acutely aware of our responsibility to do so in a way that is affordable for our town. In fact, the reality is that you cannot do one without the other. We simply must propose a budget that supports quality education for our children AND that can be supported by the majority of voters in Plainfield. We are making critical decisions for the education of children in our community and we need your input as we finalize the budget articles for the district warrant.

We will continue to discuss and finalize the budget throughout January. Please join us as follows to learn about the proposed budget and express your views:

- **Tuesday, January 12 at 7 pm:** District Budget Hearing followed at 8:30 pm by a regular board meeting
- **Wednesday, January 20 at 6 pm:** Bond Hearing to discuss possibility of \$275K facilities bond followed at 6:30 pm by a regular board meeting where we plan to make final budget decisions
- **Tuesday, January 26 at 6:30 pm:** snow date for January 20th board meeting and final date for signing the proposed warrant articles including the budget

All January meetings will be held at PES so that we have plenty of parking. We meet in the music room. The board meeting schedule along with agendas for upcoming meetings can also be found on the school website - www.plainfieldschool.org

As always, please feel free to contact one of your board members for additional information.

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