

Press Release January 27, 2017

Cost Savings Task Force

Sweetwater School District #1 formed a Cost Savings Task Force recently to identify possible solutions for dealing with the bleak fiscal outlook for the State of Wyoming and the District. The budget shortfall for the 2017-2018 school year is estimated to be a minimum of \$3.7 million. The gap may increase pending the results of the current legislative session. The committee consisted of community members, parents, students, board members, media, District leaders, certified and classified staff. With the facilitation of Dr. Bernadine Craft, the Task Force was charged with providing input and suggestions regarding cost saving measures. The Task Force was not a decision-making group, but rather an advisory committee.

In a series of three meetings, the Task Force first examined the District fiscal outlook and received a crash-course in school finance. All members agreed that students need to remain the first and foremost priority through these difficult times. In the second meeting, District information was disseminated including staffing levels, current insurance premiums, and steps taken by the District in recent years to preserve teaching positions and student programs. The Task Force generated ideas and suggestions in the final portion of the second meeting. During the final meeting, the group evaluated suggestions made by staff and community members via three public forums held January 19 and email feedback submitted through the District website. They identified the following suggestions for the District to consider:

- Change the insurance plan
- Repurpose Lincoln Elementary
- Move to a 4-day school week
- Reduce substitute wages
- Start kindergarten with first through fourth grade
- Provide incentives for unused leave and Professional Development days
- Reduce amount of paper, copying, and printing costs
- "Pay to play" for activities
- Reduce staff

Next steps will include evaluating the input provided and formulating a plan to assist with cost savings for the upcoming school year. Visit the district webpage at www.sweetwater1.org and click on the Cost Savings Task Force link for additional information including legislative responses, documents shared with the Task Force, and meeting minutes and agendas.

See photos below.



Stacey Jackson & Roy Ruffini



Chad Shelley & Stephanie Thompson



Heather Young, Eastside Elementary Teacher