

## **KFCS District Newsletter**

### **Volume 1; Issue 4**

#### **Which Needs Are the Most Pressing?**

In the harsh economic climate in which we currently operate, it is difficult to determine which of the myriad of needs is the greatest. Is it fixing up our aging buildings? Is it reducing class sizes? Is it providing up-to-date curriculum materials and technology for our students? Districts throughout the state are struggling with this prioritization. KFCS is no exception.

The last newsletter included information on the condition of our facilities as determined by a community facility taskforce. The plan they proposed was also included in Issue 3. Last year, another taskforce plan was board approved. It was a budget plan developed by district administration and the Budget Committee.

In total, the district reduced its budget by \$3,750,849. This 8.3% decrease happened at a time in which inflationary expenses continue to mount in many areas including PERS, utilities, and insurance.

That plan resulted in a reduction of 18 district-certified positions. It also caused a jump in average class sizes from about 25 to 30 district wide. Elective class options at Ponderosa and KU were reduced. In addition, a number of junior high sports were eliminated and picked up by private organizations. Many valuable resources were also lost to the district due to budget contraction. These included district librarians, counselors, instructional-support coaches, a curriculum director, and a number of classified support positions.

As the board weighs the greatest immediate funding needs, they must choose between facility improvements and instructional needs. While the former is unquestionably important, the school board has determined the most urgent concern is to improve the financial support for our classrooms. This must always be our top priority.

They believe if we expect students to reach new and more challenging state standards, class sizes need to be reduced. Likewise, they are convinced if we hope to address the myriad needs students bring with them to each of our schools, they need more individual help and attention. This is made possible by smaller numbers of students in each classroom. Parent surveys conducted the last two years confirmed this conviction.

The board also believes adding back elective opportunities is critical to our students. This will help more of them make a connection to their schools and motivate them to persevere to graduation. It will also help them become well-rounded individuals who develop their strengths and talents.

Finally, the board has identified the need to update high school textbooks. Over the last few budget reduction processes, textbook additions have been postponed. The result is a shortage of books in a number of classes and in many others, the texts are so obsolete they do not address increased state and federal learning requirements. A good example is our high school social studies' books that have a 1990's copyright. According to our curriculum materials, 9/11 has not taken place!

To make a long story short, at their February 13<sup>th</sup> meeting the school board will decide whether or not to ask the community to vote for a local option levy that will allow the district to hire back teachers, lower class sizes, add elective courses in the junior and senior highs, and update high school text books.

Below are some questions and answers related to this consideration:

1. Q: How much would taxes increase? A: \$.50 on a \$1,000 of property or \$50 annually on a \$100,000 home.
2. Q: How much would this generate for our district? A: \$850,000. The state would also provide an extra 17% in equity aid which amounts to about \$144,000. The total this tax would bring to our schools is about a million dollars.
3. Q: How would these funds be used? A. About half the funds would go to the elementary schools to lower class sizes in grades K-2 by providing about 6 to 7 more teachers. The other half would go to the 7-12 system to lower failure rates at Ponderosa and provide more grade 7-12 elective opportunities for students. The funds would also be used at the high school level to update some textbooks.
4. Q: For how many years would the funds be available if taxpayers approve the option levy? A: Three years.
5. Q: When would the election be held? A: May 15, 2012.

If you would like more information, please respond to this email or call me at 541-591-3625.

#### Interesting facts:

- **Did you know that the KFCS District at \$3.11 per \$1,000 has the lowest property tax rate of any district in the state that has 2,000 or more students?** Here are some comparisons:
  - KFCS \$3.11;
  - Klamath County Schools, \$4.05;
  - Ashland, \$7.45;
  - North Bend, \$5.10;
  - Eagle Point, \$6.34;
  - Central Point, \$5.59;
  - Grants Pass, \$5.91;
  - Jefferson County, \$7.54
  - Phoenix Talent, \$5.10
- KFCS was recently awarded a \$1.4 million seismic-improvement grant from the state of Oregon. These dollars are earmarked to improve the Mills Auditorium. The bulk of these funds will help make the auditorium structurally sound in case of an earthquake. As much as possible, the district will also make the auditorium more attractive.

As part of this project, KFCS would like to re-build the 800 seats at a cost of \$55 per seat. They plan to give people a chance to donate a seat for \$25. Donors will be recognized for their generosity. On **Thursday, February 9, 2012, from 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.** there will be a pre-construction open house in the Mills auditorium. Following completion of the project, there will be a second open house to give a pre- and post-look at the facility. All are welcomed to both occasions.

Please call Shaw Nee Stearns at 541-883-4700 Ext 1 if you would like more information on the open houses or about donating a seat.