

SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT

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December 3, 2018

Dear School Board of Directors,

Each year our administrative team works to develop a budget proposal that presents our best thinking on how to provide an excellent education to our students while balancing the fiscal strains on the Springfield community. This year has been particularly challenging in that regard.

For several years, I have worked with the business manager to project the potential tax rates that our proposals would result in. Those forecasts were built by making educated guesses to several key variables that affect residential educational tax rates. The big three variables that affect that calculation are: our level of per pupil expenditure, the common level of appraisal (CLA), and the spending "yield" of the educational tax. As we move through the budget season, each of these numbers becomes clearer, but the full equation is not complete until the state legislature finalizes the educational fund. This last piece comes after town meeting day.

In previous years, we had tried to use our educated guesses to develop a proposal that landed at a tax rate that the board felt confident they could advocate to voters. We felt that this was a responsible way to try to balance our wants for our students with fiscal constraints. Unfortunately, in the last two years, the school budget conversation at the state house has become far more difficult to predict. With that in mind, I have become far more wary of trying to build our proposal around a tax projection.

In discussing this issue with our new Chief Financial Officer Rick Pembroke, we decided that a more appropriate number to build a request around is per pupil educational spending. Rather than trying to project many variables, we have decided to construct our budget around a set of numbers that are more immediate. We have designed this proposal around our per pupil spending. Specifically, our proposal was built to maintain our purchasing power per student. As such, we are recommending that the board consider approving a proposal to maintain our current per pupil spending plus add an inflationary increase.

While we feel that this is a reasonable request, we also know that it comes with challenges. Similar to the state as a whole, our enrollments continue to decline. Those enrollment declines combined with cost increases will more than eat up the inflationary increase we are requesting. Based on our initial projections, this approach will lead to a potential tax increase of more than 4¢. With that number in mind, the administrative team set out to structure a proposal that will provide the best possible education within that number. To stay within those guidelines, I have tasked our team with cutting more than a million dollars of prospective spending in FY20.

As you know, most of our budget is made up of the salaries and benefits of the people who work for us. In order to reach such a high level of reduction, principals have worked with central office to identify cuts that will balance the educational needs of our students and the means of our community. Our list of cuts is far beyond what we are comfortable with, but we also embrace our responsibility to be fiscally prudent.

*All students will acquire skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes to enhance their lives
by engaging in learning experiences that are inspiring, relevant, and dynamic.*

In the coming two months, we look forward to engaging you and the community in a conversation about our schools. We are determined to come to a final budget that will put us in a position to serve our students and families in a way we can be proud of.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Z. McLaughlin', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Zachary J. McLaughlin
Superintendent of Schools