

The Budget Process and the School Boards' Role

The City of Linwood is charged with the responsibility of raising monies to provide for the protection of its citizens and their property and to provide for the education of the children within its boundaries. The City Council and the School Board have competing demands for city resources and must each balance those demands in order to manage their affairs responsibly.

To facilitate fairness in this endeavor the Board is not comprised solely of parents in the school system but of representatives of the entire community. Special care has always been taken by our mayors to appoint members who bring a certain expertise, whether it is professional or personal, to aid in the functioning of the Board. For your information, please read the profiles of our current Board members found on the Board section of the Linwood Schools website.

In the formation of the budget the Superintendent instructs the administrative team to reach out to all staff members so that a clear picture of upcoming needs can be compiled. When that information is gathered the team meets to discuss the merits of the requests and begins the process of prioritizing that information. When complete the Superintendent and Business Administrator present these budget requests to the Operations Committee of the Board for discussion.

The next step in the process is to arrange a series of meetings with the Board of School Estimates. This Board is comprised of the Mayor, two Linwood City Councilmen and two Board of Education members. The School Board's representatives typically are the Board President and either the Operations Committee Chairperson or the financial expert on the committee. Over the course of three separate meetings budget realities are discussed. At the final meeting the School Board members of this committee will find out the amount the City finds acceptable for the funding of the schools. If that number is lower than the amount requested by the Board, the School Board will need to find areas to reduce or eliminate while ensuring support of student achievement,

programing, and staff. To accomplish this goal the Administration including the Superintendent, and Supervisor of Curriculum and Special Education, and building Principals debate the merits of various cuts and come up with recommendations to the Board. Together the merits of these are discussed until the proposed document has been agreed upon.

Following this process there will be three public hearings as well as regular public meetings on the budget by both the City and the School Board. Each meeting has ample opportunity for public input. This provides the public, including staff, with an opportunity to be heard in their concerns over the proposed budget and for the Board of School Estimates to determine whether these concerns are sufficient to override the decisions already proposed.

The Board will act as a whole after discussion and consensus by the majority if there are to be changes made. It is not appropriate for individual Board members to answer directly to the public without first discussing alternative choices with the entire Board, including the Superintendent and the Business Administrator.

The Board of Education may respond to the various suggestions offered to them from the public by considering different cuts but must still remain within the budget parameters given by the city. It is important to be mindful of the impact particular requests may have on other programs or personnel.

There is a tremendous amount of time that goes into creating a budget from start to finish. We are grateful for the time and dedication the members of the Linwood Board of Education put into creating a sound, responsible budget.