

G'town unveils preliminary school budget

By DIANE VALDEN

GERMANTOWN—The public got its first glimpse of some very early budget figures for the 2008-09 school year courtesy of school district Consulting Business Manager Bill Knaust during his presentation at the January 9 Board of Education meeting.

In an overview of the general support, transportation, benefits and debt service sections of the new spending plan, Mr. Knaust said the cost increases at this point add up to a 4.9% hike or \$325,000.

He made it clear that he and District Superintendent Patrick Gabriel want to keep the overall spending increase to 4% and may well "have to cut into other areas" to achieve that goal.

Among the more substantial spending increases he mentioned were a 15% or \$25,000 jump in fuel oil and LP gas and a \$3,000 increase in electric costs, a \$30,778 increase in pupil transportation costs and a \$245,200 increase or 8.27% hike in employee benefits.

Other increases included: \$12,946 for custodial salaries,

\$8,700 for instructional and non-instructional salaries, \$5,700 for a water softener, \$5,000 for auditing, \$4,400 for equipment including bleachers for the soccer and baseball fields, a sander, a refrig-

erator, security cameras and air conditioners.

Serial bonds—principal and interest—will decrease by \$36,624.

Mr. Knaust called the 4.9% increase "pretty hefty" and "more than I thought it was going to be." He told the board there are a lot of things they can look at cutting, such as equipment. He will make a budget presentation on the instructional portion of the budget next month. He reminded the board that revenues are still up in the air, though he noted, "I'm not guessing the state is going to give us a lot of money."

In other numerical considerations, the board approved a policy change that redefines the grade point average (GPA) difference necessary when determining whether the valedictorian and salutatorian designations should be shared.

The existing policy stated that co-valedictorians or co-salutatorians would be named if their GPA difference is .4 or less.

With the end of the first semester approaching, the time when class rankings are calculated, Superintendent Gabriel said the policy wording needs to be clarified.

He said the policy committee, which is working on revising all district policies, had a problem with .4 as "too wide a difference" par-

ticularly when there were two different "integers" involved. He used the example of 95.6 and 96.

The committee decided that the difference necessary should be moved to the next decimal place, that is hundredths or .01 or less, before the valedictorian or salutatorian distinctions should be shared.

District parent Al MacDonald suggested that if the GPAs of the first two students are so close as to make them co-valedictorians, that the salutatorian designation should be dropped for that year.

High School Principal Karol Harlow said that the salutatorian designation should never be dropped, since a "tradition" of having co-valedictorians and co-salutatorians has been established.

"In my view, why not give the honors? It will help students get into college, these kids earned it, why be so parsimonious?"

Mr. Gabriel suggested that the valedictorian/salutatorian discussion be revisited at a later date and that for now the board move forward with the .01 revision. The board agreed and all voted in favor. Board president Suzanne Pelletier and board member Teresa Repko were absent.

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