



STATE COLLEGE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT MEDIA RELEASE

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SCASD Board of Directors To Vote on Tax Resolution

On Monday, Dec. 19, the State College Area School District Board of Directors will vote on an Accelerated Budget Opt Out Resolution certifying that the district's 2017-2018 fiscal year tax rate will stay at or below the Act 1 index of 2.5 percent.

[The resolution](#) was proposed as part of the ongoing 2017-2018 proposed preliminary budget discussion.

At present, the proposed preliminary budget calls for a 1.55 percent tax increase, significantly lower than recent district budgets that applied for Act 1 index exceptions to pay for high school referendum debt.

The Board also will vote on approving a [recommended data warehouse system for the district](#).

Discussions will include an [updated proposed 2017-2018 school calendar](#); updates on the Memorial Field renovation project, elementary school projects and State High Project; and an update on the SCASD Education Foundation's development efforts.

Accelerated Budget Opt Out Resolution

At its Dec. 5 meeting, the Board discussed the Accelerated Budget Opt Out Resolution, which allows the district to skip the "accelerated budget adoption timeline and procedure" required for the budget process if a district seeks Act 1 index exceptions.

The Act 1 index sets maximum tax increases for district.

For the district, the mandated proposed preliminary budget process in January and February would include adopting a resolution authorizing a proposed preliminary budget for display and advertising, proposing a preliminary budget for public viewing and publishing a notice of intent to apply for Act 1 index exceptions. The Board plans to vote on adopting a preliminary budget on Feb. 13, 2017.

School districts have until Jan. 27, 2017 to choose the alternate option, the opt out resolution.

The [district administration has recommended the opt out resolution](#) because of the district's ability to fund current operations and proposed programming additions with a tax increase below the Act 1 Index of 2.5 percent.

Based on analysis of available estimates at this time, the district believes a 1.55 percent tax increase would be necessary to present a balanced budget.

According to preliminary estimates, a 2.5 percent tax increase would add \$918,638 in revenue, but no tax increase would require \$1,499,181 in district resources to meet expenses in the budget.

Assistant Business Administrator Donna Watson also has noted the opt out resolution would reduce administrative paperwork tied to meeting deadlines, allowing the district financial office to concentrate more on the budget.

The 2017-2018 proposed preliminary budget calls for \$149,978.094 in revenue and \$150,145,245 in total expenses and fund balance transfers.

Revenue breaks down to:

- Local — \$121,488,565
- State — \$27,344,529
- Federal — \$1,145,000

The top three expenses are:

- Salaries (\$65,956,706)
- PSERS (Pennsylvania State Employee Retirement System) payments (\$21,064,552, includes an updated PSERS rate of 32.57 percent as of Dec. 7)
- Health insurance (\$14,111,448)

Under the current budget process timeline, the Board expects to receive a proposed final budget on April 24. A public hearing for the final budget is scheduled for June 5, and the Board anticipates voting whether to adopt the final budget on June 12.

Data warehouse system

The Board will vote on accepting [the district's recommendation to purchase a district data warehouse system from the DecisionEd firm](#).

The system would provide district administrators, teachers and counselors with more comprehensive and integrated data analysis than is currently available to them.

For the past two years, a team led by Director of Technology Nicole Steele has been exploring options for a new data warehouse system. During its research, the team looked for a system that:

- Integrates with the district's current and future systems
- Provides the ability to run reports that include data such as:
 - Assessments (state, local, third party vendors)
 - Demographics
 - Attendance
 - Activities
 - Grades, GPA
 - Financial data

- Human resource information
- Connection to curricular standards
- Offers easy accessibility to data and reports
- Enables predictive analysis
- Allows for program evaluation

“DecisionEd connects and analyzes data located in different native systems,” the district administration stated for the Dec. 19 meeting. “This provides flexibility to the District now as well as in the future based upon the volume of systems currently held. This ability proves to be a significant advantage as we currently predict changes in our data system holdings in the near future.”

At the Dec. 5 Board meeting, Supervisor of Elementary Education Vernon Bock said when he joined the district this year, he sought to analyze student achievement data to orient himself, but wound up frustrated by the limitations of the district’s existing data systems. Those shortcomings, he said, present a significant barrier for administrators and teachers.

After evaluating 12 data warehouse systems, including reference checks with other school districts, the team recommended the DecisionEd product. Bock said the chief advantage of the DecisionEd system is that it can connect and analyze data located in different systems, providing “real-time integrated analytics” or a potential “dashboard report” at the fingertips of users.

Bock said, for example, study halls could use reports to tailor that day’s tutoring for students in real time. Academic reports and program assessments can be customized to draw from various data sources, he said.

“It’s really cross-walking multiple data points to tell us the true story of our students and how to increase student achievement in multiple ways,” Bock said, noting later, “By two or three clicks, the power you could glean from an individual report is impressive.”

Bock said DesignEd was the team’s clear top choice.

“We could not find a product that would integrate all that information and work with our systems,” he said.

The first year cost would be \$175,000, including all technical support, data upload and professional training for district staff. In the second year and thereafter, the annual maintenance cost would be \$35,100.

The first-year roll out would be administrative only, Bock said. The district then would introduce it to teachers in the second year.

Discussion items

Proposed 2017-2018 school year calendar

For Board review, the district will present [a proposed 2017-2018 school year calendar](#) that includes a winter break of two weeks.

The extended break would be necessary because of the high school construction schedule. Over the winter break, the district expects to move classrooms from the North Building into the newly constructed 3-story units on the south campus. The extra time is needed to prepare for students returning on Jan. 8, 2018.

As a result of the long break, the proposed calendar does not have any built-in snow days. Any snow make-up days would follow the scheduled last day of the year on June 11.

Building projects

The Board will hear updates about:

- [The Memorial Field renovation project](#)
- [The elementary school projects](#)
- [The State High Project](#)

SCASD Education Foundation

The Board will hear [an update on the activities of the SCASD Education Foundation and district development efforts in general.](#)

Proposed School Climate/Inclusive Excellence Policy

The Board will review [a revised draft of the proposed School Climate/Inclusive Excellence Policy.](#)

Board members first discussed the draft policy at their Dec. 5 meeting.