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Dr. Maureen Long, Interim Superintendent of Schools

4/22/2024

Dear Berlin School Community,

I want to reach out and share some updates related to the development of the Berlin CSD 2024-2025 Budget.

I want to begin by thanking all of you who have actively engaged during the process by attending budget presentations and forums, sharing your perspectives via public comment or by completing surveys, and especially for advocating on behalf of the district by reaching out to elected officials.

As has been discussed throughout the process, moving into the 2024-25 school year, the district is operating from a deficit, in part due to the proposed reduction in Foundation Aid. Over the weekend the NYS Budget was finalized, with a commitment to restoring the Foundation Aid to current year levels.

While that is positive news, increases to that aid proposed by both the Senate and Assembly were not included in the final budget.

The circumstances leave the board and the district with some difficult decisions to make regarding how we mitigate the deficit, while balancing education and opportunities for our students with our responsibility to our taxpayers.

The only options to address our current reality are to increase revenues, decrease expenses, or some combination of both. Outside of state aid, our options to increase revenue are limited short of increasing property taxes or allocating additional reserves. Thus we have no choice other than to further reduce expenses.

The Draft 3 Budget inclusive of any changes will be shared at Tuesday evening's Board of Education Meeting. All information to date related to budget development can be found on our web page. <https://berlincentral.org/district/budget-information/>

Throughout the budget process, potential reductions have been proposed across all portions of our budget. A large number of those recommendations relate to staffing; The largest expense of any school district is staffing, as we are an institution that relies heavily on people.

These recommendations were not made easily and without thoughtful consideration. Reducing staff, and especially teaching staff is not an easy decision; it affects not only those directly impacted, but their colleagues and our students.

I had hoped the final NYS Budget would provide public schools, and the Berlin CSD in particular, more relief than it has. I had hoped at Tuesday evening's meeting, I would be able to discuss "adding back" some of the proposed reductions. Disappointingly, this will likely not be the case.

Pursuant to regulation, the board must finalize and adopt the budget they plan to bring to our voters by April 23rd. The Berlin CSD Board of Education will meet Tuesday, April 23rd, at 7:15 pm, in the auditorium at the Middle High School to continue their discussion and finalize their decision, in consideration of all of the information and feedback to date. The meeting will also be [streamed](#), and posted to Youtube.

While the information provided throughout the budget development process may not have been what you hoped to hear, I do hope it provided you a better understanding of the process and our circumstances, and it better positions you to make an informed decision.

Please consider joining us at Tuesday night's meeting, and at the Budget Hearing on May 7th; and please, mark your calendar for the May 21st vote being held at the Berlin Elementary School from noon to 9:00 PM.

Sincerely,

Dr. Maureen Long

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Interim Superintendent