



## BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

May 12, 2025 | Hilliard Crossing Elementary School

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# MEETING NOTES

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*Meeting Notes are not official until voted on by the Board of Education at its following Regular Meeting.*

- A1 President called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- A2 Members present: Ms. Arnold, Mrs. Crowley, Mrs. Murdoch, Mr. Perry, and Mr. Vorst.
- A3 Pledge of Allegiance

**NOTE:** *Portions of the meeting's audio recording were difficult to decipher; therefore, this document may contain several incomplete sentences or inaccuracies. Additionally, some of the participants' names may be misspelled.*

*Mrs. Crowley:* Mr. Perry, I think you wanted to say something.

*Mr. Perry:* Yes, I did. Before we begin, you may have heard of the unfortunate passing of longtime Hilliard resident and public servant Chuck Buck, who was the board president at the time this building was built. I wanted to say thank you to Chuck and his many years of service to his family, to his community, to his country, and to the God he deeply believed in. He will be sincerely missed. Let's have a moment of silence in his memory.

## B. PROGRAMS / PRESENTATIONS

- B1 Consistent with District Treasurer Swearingen's March 24, 2025, notice under Section 3307.353 of the Ohio Revised Code, the Board of Education will now hear the issue of whether or not to reemploy STRS retirees Melinda J. Mordarski, Principal of Memorial Middle School, and Richard L. Boettner, Chief Technology Officer. These individuals have given notice of intent to service retire under the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio, effective at the end of the day June 30, 2025, and have each applied for reemployment in their previous positions effective July 2, 2025. Any member of the audience who wishes to comment on this issue will be recognized

*Mr. Stewart:* Seeing none, we'll begin with our five-year forecast presentation.

- B2 Five-Year Forecast Presentation

*Mrs. Swearingen:* I have the presentation on the screen here. The Ohio Revised Code requires a five-year forecast to be completed each year by November 30th, with a revised forecast to be completed by May 31st. Tonight, I'll go through some key components of the May forecast update and highlight some of our key indicators. We'll also review the changes from our November forecast. The agenda includes the forecast for your approval later in tonight's meeting.

As a reminder, we discussed this at our last meeting, but a district's financial forecast projects its financial position at a specific point in time using the best available data. Forecasts are inherently subject to change due to dynamic factors like legislative changes, economic shifts, and unexpected expenses. They are a

snapshot of the data available at the time of preparation, which in this case is May 8th, for approval this evening.

Our beginning cash balance on July 1st was \$91 million, and we expect to end fiscal year 25 in June with a cash balance of \$92 million. In fiscal year 25, we anticipate operating at a surplus where our revenues exceed our expenditures. We had been operating in a deficit spending situation for the past two fiscal years, being fiscal years 23 and 24. With the passage of the 6.9 mill operating levy in November, we received a half year's collection, or approximately \$15 million in new tax revenue this spring.

In November, we had projected ending fiscal year 25 with a \$89.6 million cash balance, so this is slightly better than what we projected. As you can see here, our projected general fund revenue for the year is just under \$249.8 million. Our projected general fund expenditures are \$248.7 million, resulting in an operating surplus of just over \$1 million, which adds to the \$91 million and brings us to \$92 million.

We have discussed board policy DBDA, our cash balance reserve policy, at great length over the past couple of years. As this slide demonstrates, we're able to meet the 20% cash reserve policy requirement through the forecast period of fiscal year 2029. By proactively identifying this, we're able to have discussions and take action to avoid reaching an eventual negative cash balance and fiscal emergency. On a later slide, we will see...*(unintelligible)*... in terms of days. When compared to November, the cash balance as a percent of expenditures increased for the current fiscal year from 36.1% to 37%, and for fiscal year 29 from 23.6% to 25.1%.

Now we'll take a closer look at revenue and expenditure projections for the current fiscal year. As you can see, our local tax revenue represents roughly 67% of our general fund revenue, with 27% coming from the state. These percentages remain relatively stable throughout the forecast, and other miscellaneous revenues account for the remaining 6%. Our total general fund revenues, like I mentioned, are projected to be \$249.8 million, which is \$2.5 million, or a 1% increase from what our November projections were.

Our key assumptions and revenue include property values being expected to increase between 1% and 1.4% annually due to new construction. This forecast also takes into account the passage of the latest operating levy, which is anticipated to generate approximately \$31.6 million in new real estate tax revenue annually. Our public utility values have increased slightly, which has increased our revenue projections in this category from what we had anticipated in November.

With the uncertainty in the state budget and our state funding for the next two budget cycles, we're estimating that the state will not increase the base cost in the next two budget cycles and that they will not continue to phase in the current formula. This forecast results in a reduction of our unrestricted state funding and a decrease in our restricted state funding. If the base cost and the phase-in percentages remain as is and our district property values and personal income continue to increase, we will receive less restricted funding. Other operating revenues will increase as we begin to receive payments from Amazon in the current fiscal year and TruePointe next fiscal year. These payments will continue throughout the current forecast.

Now we'll shift over to expenditures. As you can see, salaries and wages account for a combined 84% of general fund expenditures. This is not surprising given that we are a labor-intensive organization. The next largest expenditure category is purchase services at 10%, and other expenditures, which include supplies and materials represent 6%.

These percentages remain unchanged from November. Total general fund expenditures are projected to be \$248.7 million, representing a \$62,000 or 0.02% increase from our November projections. Our key assumptions regarding expenditures include salaries increasing by 2% annually for cost-of-living adjustments, with an average step increase of 1.5%.

Our current negotiated agreements with both associations are set to expire on June 30, 2025. We project a need to hire three additional certified and three classified staff members each year to keep pace with our growing special education and English Language Learner (EL) populations.

In terms of benefits, our medical insurance costs increased by 18% for the current calendar year. Moving forward, we project increases of 10% for 2026 and 6% annually thereafter. It will likely take some plan design changes to lower these premium increases.

In the purchase service category, utilities represent a significant cost. We expect an 8% increase in natural gas and a 35% increase in our electric capacity costs for fiscal year 2026. Due to the expiration of our prior consortium agreement, those are the costs that we'll face moving into next year.

The graphs here help to demonstrate that our revenues are now more in line with our expenditures. The graph on the left shows our projected revenues in blue and expenditures in orange. Deficit spending, where expenditures exceed revenue, resumes in fiscal year 27. However, due to our cash balance, we can absorb this overage and still comply with our cash balance policy through fiscal year 2029, and likely beyond.

Over the past five years, revenue has increased by just over 2.5% and is projected to increase by 3.25% through fiscal year 2029. Expenditures increased by 3.6% during the past five-year period and are projected to increase by 4.1% through 2029. Employee benefits, such as medical insurance, are the primary driver of that increase.

Our cash balance is depicted in the graph on the right. Although we started fiscal year 2024 with a cash balance of \$93.7 million, this reserve will decline over time as our expenses increase more rapidly than our revenue. Our cash balance at the end of fiscal year 2029 is currently projected to be \$72.4 million. Our November forecast had projected a fiscal year 2029 cash balance of \$68 million.

The graph on the screen provides an additional visual representation of our revenues compared to our expenditures. Our total revenues are shown in blue, and our total expenditures in yellow; the percentages I just mentioned are also indicated.

Our historical annual revenue growth has been 2.9%, increasing from \$215 million in fiscal year 2021 to \$233 million in fiscal year 2024. Our projected growth from fiscal year 2025 of just under \$250 million to \$273 million in fiscal year 2029 represents an annual change of 3.27%. The historical annual change in expenditures has been a 4.24% increase from fiscal years 2021 through 2024, and we project those annual increases to be just over 4.1% from fiscal year 2025 through 2029. These increases have been very slight, rising by just one or two tenths of a percent since November.

As of the May 2025 forecast, our projected cash balance on hand is presented here in terms of days. The anticipated days of cash on hand has improved just slightly from November, increasing by three days for the current fiscal year.

This slide here compares our current May forecast to the November forecast just for the current fiscal year. As I mentioned, revenue projections are shown in the chart on the left, indicating a \$2.5 million increase, or 1% more. Our state revenue has increased slightly due to state reimbursements for the science of reading stipends for our staff, as well as receiving some increased funding for targeted assistance and transportation. Our other revenues have increased due to higher interest earnings based on increased cash balances and interest rates than initially projected. Additionally, our TIF revenues collected by the county have increased slightly. And some other miscellaneous receipts are more than anticipated.

Our expenditure projection changes are represented in the chart on the right. As this illustrates, the net change was less than \$63,000. The salary and benefit projections decreased, while the purchase service projections increased, resulting in an overall cash balance increase of \$2.4 million at the end of fiscal year 2025.

And with that, that'll take any questions you might have.

*Mrs. Murdoch:* Melissa, can you go back two slides and expand a bit on the revenue increases at a rate higher than historical, and the expenditures decreasing as a percentage?

*Mrs. Swearingen:* The most significant driver of the change in revenue is the operating levy that was just passed, which averages out over the next several years and represents what percentage that would be over time. In terms of expenditures, we're comparing the total from fiscal years 2021 to 2024 with the total from fiscal years 2025 to 2029. There are some changes in the way state funding has worked. Before 2023, they had funded us a gross amount, and then we had purchase service expenses that reduced the amount for charter schools and scholarships. So, our purchase service expenses were significantly higher than what they are now. Now, students are funded where they're educated. So, our purchase service expenses have gone down. And even though some of the salary expenses are going up, it's all set in that amount.

*Mrs. Crowley:* I don't have a question, but I want to thank our community for passing this levy and everyone who helped make the levy a success. This forecast looks a lot different from what we were worried it might, but I also want to pay special attention to the state budget, which is a giant question mark at the moment. Thank you for passing the levy, and hopefully, the state budget will be supportive.

*Ms. Arnold:* Speaking of that, as I was speaking with some board members from around the state, they're receiving advice that varies, and again, this is district-dependent, because I was talking to somebody who had 700 kids in their district, versus where we are. There seems to be a wide range of what is expected in terms of that cash balance and operating reserve. Are you hearing that we should be looking at adjusting in any way, or is it just more dependent upon how each district is looking at it, based on where we think the budget might be going, or, in general, how they operate in their cash flow situation?

*Mrs. Swearingen:* It's individualized based on the district. Some districts receive so little in property taxes that they have a very high cash balance, and it's challenging to reduce property taxes enough to bring them down to that level because they cannot pass a levy. They're in very rural, low-income communities, and they're highly dependent on state funding. So, in that situation, they save money for capital improvements because they wouldn't be able to pass a bond levy to make those happen. Therefore, it's a very different story across the state, and there are numerous proposals, even outside of the state budget, that affect districts differently.

*Mr. Vorst:* As fate would have it, we celebrated our retirees about an hour ago, and there are a couple of retiree/rehire folks on the docket for today. Can you explain the impact of these two positions, as you mentioned in your email? How many positions like that do we have, roughly?

*Mr. Stewart:* It's not a lot, about a handful.

*Mr. Vorst:* Okay. So the overall impact is pretty minimal?

*Mrs. Swearingen:* It is.

*Mr. Vorst:* But we do save a significant amount of money and retain their expertise.

*Mr. Stewart:* Correct.

### **C. ROUTINES**

- C1 The agenda is correct as presented.
- C2 The Board of Education adopted the agenda as presented.
- C3 The Board of Education approved the April 2025 Treasurer's Report.
- C4 The Board of Education approved the minutes from the following meetings:
  - a. April 14, 2025, Regular Meeting
  - b. April 14, 2025, Regular Notes
  - c. April 28, 2025, Work Session Meeting
  - d. April 28, 2025, Work Session Notes

### **D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Board of Education appreciates citizen interest in meetings of the board. This place on the agenda is set aside to hear comments from visitors. When called, please go to the microphone so that remarks may be clearly heard and recorded. You must give your name and limit comments to three minutes. Comments must be respectful and professional in nature. Board members may or may not ask questions or make comments. No board member has the power or authority to act for the board; therefore, no response from an individual board member should be interpreted as an official action of the board. Portions of this meeting are being recorded.

#### Carly Colombi

Hello and welcome to Hilliard Crossing Elementary. Not only do my two incredibly smart and wickedly cute kids attend, but I also have the honor of working here as a noon aide to our 521 students. My name is Carly Colombi, and not only am I a parent to three children who attend Hilliard City Schools, but I am also a 2010 Hilliard Darby graduate.

I would like to make it extremely clear. I am not a part of a union, nor do I serve on our PTO Board, but what I really am is an extremely pissed off parent. I'd like to understand why our teachers are expected to work over their contracted hours when members of our very own school board are choosing to ignore emails until the last minute, so that then the time came for our community board meeting, we could not

even be on the same team for the better of our children and community. How embarrassing for you and honestly, shame on you.

Take a good look around. Do you see the sea of red? You see this because these teachers are showing up for their students. Things at least two of our board members are choosing to ignore and not uphold. With just a quick Google search, you'll find that Hilliard City School District is the top 10 largest school district in Ohio, but we are not a part of the 300 Ohio school districts that have chosen to put their egos aside and sign on for an equal education.

So my question, along with many others, is why. Why have you not taken action for all children? Why have you decided that a select handful of children that could maybe possibly take advantage of a private education are better than the 16,000-plus students that attend Hilliard City Schools from kindergarten through 12th grade?

Along with the majority of the community, I voted yes for our levy to increase our taxes, to be used to better the schools for all children. And not to be used as a mud patch in the cracking dam that we call our budget. That includes the children who not only use but depend on our Title I benefits, and with one's living in million-dollar homes.

Before I end, if I may ask one question directly to those two, why have you chosen to represent our school board if you have not chosen to take action needed to represent all 16,000-plus students?

I'd also like to take the rest of my time to thank our amazing PTO Board as they're truly the prime example of community. This year alone, they are able to host two free stores here at our very own school where children who attend could come and get anything they may need for free. In addition, I would like to thank all of our amazing teachers and staff here at Crossing. Thank you.

Maxine Irvin

Hello everyone. My name is Maxine Irvin, and I'm a parent of two Hilliard Davidson High School graduates.

All of you are aware that there is a whole string of harmful legislation deliberately introduced to sabotage and destroy public education, both in Ohio and at the federal level. They include Senate Bill 1, the destruction of higher education, Senate Bill 113, which prohibits diversity, equity, and inclusion in public schools, House Bill 190 the given name act, and House Bill 26 which forces local officials to allow ICE to enter schools and arrest anyone while ignoring our constitutional right to due process.

School vouchers take money from public schools and give it to primarily private religious schools. Currently, the Ohio legislature is in the process of trashing public school funding by ignoring the Fair School Funding Act to unconstitutionally fund private school education.

Your job as school board members is to protect and approve the education of public school students in the Hilliard City School District. It is a daunting task when facing all these attacks on public education. The easiest thing to do and most harmful to our community is to comply in advance with these bills. With the current makeup of our legislature, these bills are bound to pass. However, that is a huge mistake. Do not comply in advance. Don't make it easy for the government to take control of our schools. They are not interested in providing our children with quality education. They want the opposite to make our children obedient puppets of a tyrannical regime.

Those against Senate Bill 1 did not comply in advance. And one week ago, we received approval from the Attorney General. Now we are gathering signatures to put SB 1 to a referendum on the ballot so that voters will have the right to vote for or against SB 1 in the fall. By not joining the Vouchers Hurt Ohio Lawsuit, you are compliant in advance giving in to tyranny and sacrificing a quality education for our students. Hilliard needs to stand up against tyranny by joining the 300 school districts across the state by signing onto the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit. They're expected to be in court this year. Thank you.

Linna Jordan

Hello, Linna Jordan. I am once again here, luckily representing 1,233 HEA members, and I'm here specifically to thank them all as we just ended Teacher Appreciation Week, which should actually be called Educator Appreciation Week because we represent OTs, PTs, speech therapists, nurses, media center specialists, tutors, and innovation and discovery center specialists – everybody that educates our students.

I want to give them a huge shout out for years of sacrificing their time, of sacrificing their money, of buying supplies for classrooms, of supplying food and snacks and materials for kids that might otherwise do without, for writing grants, including grants through HEF, the OEA foundation, and through the central NEA/OEA and many other places in order to have innovative and interesting and dynamic activities and projects happening in their classrooms. I want to thank them for volunteering with PTOs to fund activities and materials in their buildings, including playgrounds.

I want to thank them for sacrifice for, no, I'm not gonna say sacrificing for volunteering their time for trunk or treat, for open houses, and for a variety of activities that they willingly give of their time outside of contractual hours. I want to thank them for loving our kids, every single one of them, without exception, who walks in through the doors regardless of where they come from, what language they speak, what they look like, or what their innate abilities may be.

I want to thank them for being here today representing pre-K through 12 and our College Credit Plus. I want to thank them for everything they're doing to remind the community of the importance of a great public education, not just for them, not just as their job, but for the prospects of their children as they grow up, for the community itself and the value of their houses, of their properties, of the esteem of being in Hilliard City Schools.

Educators fight to come to work here. This is a destination district, and we need to continue to be a destination district, or we're not going to be able to recruit those that we need. With STRS's changes to retirement, we're going to start losing more and more people that are now eligible for retirement. How do we replace them if we're not the place to be? If we can't say to people, this is what's available here. This is what it means to be a Hilliard teacher. So, I hope you join me in thanking every single educator who does everything they can to make sure every kid is welcome their buildings.

Tim Anderson

Good evening, members of the board. My name is Tim Anderson. I'm the father of four children in grades 8, 7, 5, and three in the Hilliard City School District. I'm also an IT professional with a lifelong career in technology. I'm here today to comment on the second reading of the policy on the use of electronic communications equipment by students, and because I care deeply about how technology and especially smartphones are impacting our kids.

At the last policy committee meeting, I shared why I believe the proposed policy JFCK doesn't go far enough. I appreciated the discussion that followed in that policy meeting. I want to say I sympathize with

how difficult enforcement will be. This is not an easy problem, but that's exactly why we need strong, clear guidance at the highest level. enforcement is going to be hard. Let's at least make the policy easy to understand, consistent, and backed by leadership. Flexibility in the current policy and the proposed one is the root of the problem.

Our student handbooks already say phones should be off and away, but in reality, they're not. I know from my middle school kids' own observation that they're out all the time during class, at lunch, and on recess, and in the hallway, not for learning, but for scrolling, gaming, and social media. When one teacher allows it, others follow, and that inconsistency becomes the culture. I strongly support the ODEW model policy, which clearly prohibits phone use during school hours with exceptions only for medical or IEP needs. That is the kind of clarity we need.

Let's talk about why this matters so much. Social media is now widely recognized as a severe mental health risk for youth. We've heard this from the Surgeon General, the American Psychological Association, and study after study. It drives anxiety, depression, bullying, and addictive behaviors. Any school-age parent can attest to how difficult a battle this is. It's also acknowledged the link between smartphones and increased school conflict and violence. Across the country, school administrators and resource officers have noted that many fights and bullying incidents are instigated or escalated through phones and social media.

The 2022 Study and Educational Psychology Review confirmed that phones contribute to impulse behavior and conflict among students. The 2020 study in the Journal of Catalyst and Health found a direct link between in-school social media use and peer conflict and disciplinary referrals.

If we knew there were new drugs circulating through our schools, fueling aggression and addiction, we would not be debating whether to limit them as much as possible. We wouldn't say it's already in schools, we can't stop it now. We would prohibit it and enforce that prohibition for the safety and well-being of every child.

Our district already generously provides one-to-one iPads, giving every student the tools they need for learning and digital literacy. Phones are not required. They're a distraction and worse, they're a threat to healthy development. A strong district-level policy gives families the backing they need, gives teachers consistency, and most importantly, it sends a message to our kids that school is for learning, for movement, and for human connection, not for scrolling and escape.

I trust Superintendent Stewart to implement thoughtful and fair policy, but this board needs to give clear direction. Don't pass this decision down another level. Don't leave it open to interpretation. Adopt the ODEW model policy. Set a hard line, give our schools the backing they need to protect students and reclaim the learning environment. Thank you.

## **E. CONSENT AGENDA**

The Board of Education approved the consent agenda, items E1 through E3. Action by the Board of Education in "Adoption of the Consent Agenda" means that all E items are adopted by one single motion unless a member of the board or the Superintendent requests that any such item be removed from the consent agenda and voted upon separately. Employments, where applicable, are contingent upon 1) Verification of education, 2) Proof of proper certification, and 3) Positive results from a criminal records check.



- E1 Approved the following Certified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E2 Approved the following Classified Personnel actions – See attachment to the Minutes.
- E5 Approved the following trip requests:
- Bradley Marching Band, Orlando, FL – February 13, 2026
  - Bradley Boys Basketball, Sandusky, OH – June 27, 2025
  - Darby Marching Band, Orlando, FL – March 28, 2026
  - Davidson Choir, New York City, NY – March 26, 2026

Mr. Perry congratulated and thanked the following retirees for their service:

Certified Personnel Retirements:

- Stephanie Dietrich has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/29/1994.
- Deborah Frazier has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/24/1992.
- Douglas Griebel has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/25/2000.
- Kelly Hummell has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/31/2001.
- Shelli Miller has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/01/2009.
- Diane Stroh has been with Hilliard City Schools since 08/25/2003.

Classified Personnel Retirements:

- Brenda Afflitto has been with Hilliard City Schools since 09/01/2001.
- Janet Humphrey has been with Hilliard City Schools since 09/02/1996.
- Roy Walker has been with Hilliard City Schools since 07/01/2002.
- Beverly Fawcett has been with Hilliard City Schools since 10/14/1996.
- Teresa Long has been with Hilliard City Schools since 12/05/1994.
- Laura Orr has been with Hilliard City Schools since 01/03/1983.

*Mr. Stewart:* In that the consent agenda, one of the positions you just approved that I'm very excited about is Cort Hamilton as the next principal at Bradley High School. I believe Cort's here and available to say just a couple of words to you.

*Mr. Hamilton:* Seems odd to have my back to the group. I'm super excited to continue my journey here at Hillard. I've been here in a couple of different roles. I believe this is a special place, most importantly because of all the people – Mr. Stewart, Ms. Abraham, Mr. McDonough, Board of Education, and Mrs. Swearingen. I can't thank you enough. I'm excited and looking forward to hitting the ground running. I'm eager to connect with students and families in this new role, with the same intentionality and purpose, so thank you.

**F. ACTION AGENDA**

- F1 The Board of Education approved the 2025 Graduates. A complete list of graduates can be found in the approved meeting *Minutes*.

*Mr. Perry:* Congratulations to all our graduates.

*Mrs. Crowley:* I had so much fun scrolling through those lists last night, just looking at all the graduates. It's such an exciting time.

F2 The Board of Education approved the May Five-Year Forecast.

F3 The Board of Education approved the following handbooks:

- a. Preschool/Elementary Student Handbook
- b. Sixth Grade & Middle School Student Handbook
- c. High School Student Handbook
- d. Athletic Manual for Parents-Athletes-Coaches
- e. Performing Arts Handbook

*Mr. Vorst:* Dave and Mike, whenever this comes up, there's always a lot of word fixing. You sent us the file, but what do you think are the high points of these updates and what are the most difficult things to do? What are your overall thoughts on what we got?

*Mr. McDonough:* Quite honestly it's all the policy changes that we've had over the last year, making sure that we're making all of those changes in our handbooks. That's the primary driver of most of those things. Certainly, we engage our administration in terms of any changes they recommend. Some of the diversion program stuff was updated, but primarily the policy changes with the amount of legislation that's been impacting education over the last 12 months.

F4 The Board of Education approved the following trip request:

- a. Darby Marching Band, Mt. Gilead, OH – August 3, 2025

*Ms. Arnold:* I asked that this one be broken out separately from the other trip requests because I had some concerns that I wanted to address. I've long been concerned about our economically disadvantaged students, and this has been a topic for me for many years.

When I examined the building data from 2024, specifically, we know that as a district, approximately 35.6% of our students are economically disadvantaged, as indicated by the data from our high schools. In 2024, we were at about 32.8% across our three high schools, and this distribution is fairly consistent with our district's overall percentage. When I re-examined the data in 2025, we were at 34.5%, representing an increase of just under two percentage points.

When I pulled the data for our marching band programs at the three high schools, I don't expect our marching band programs or any of our instrumental programs to look identical to our percentages across the district. Instrumental music comes with a cost, but that's understood. However, I would expect our programs to look somewhat more in line with each other.

Looking at Bradley and Davidson last year, the percentage of students within the marching band who were economically disadvantaged was roughly around 15.7% to 15.9%, whereas at Darby it was 9.8%. Examining the data again this year, and again pulling it from the same point in time at Bradley, the figure has decreased to 9.8%. Davidson's figure is 16.7%, indicating an increase. Meanwhile, Darby's figure is 5%.

However, the band camp costs are significantly different because Darby is the only one who attends band camp away from home. Bradley and Davidson stay at home for band camp as the summer begins. Bradley has, and again, this is a long-standing issue that I've been examining. The cost back in 2016 was \$35 for Bradley, which included charges for some food and extra instruction. At Davidson, it was \$50; at Darby, it was \$270 for the away camp, which started on Sunday and ran through Friday, with transportation in both directions. This camp is now \$350 for one less night, starting on Sunday through Thursday, with transportation only returning on Thursday. Bradley's costs have increased to \$150 for home camp, which I'm unsure how that happened. In contrast, Davidson has managed to maintain its costs at \$50 since 2016, a significant achievement that demonstrates its ability to keep the program steady and stable for our economically disadvantaged kids.

When we passed a levy, it was at \$242 per 100,000. So, if you are in a \$300,000 home, this equates to approximately a half mill increase. We tell parents and our community that it doesn't matter where you live in our district, everybody's taxed at the same rate, but it doesn't feel that way when you've got these extra expenses.

Going back through my old notes from the years, I came across Mike at a State House hearing in November 2015, when Senator Hite, who was reportedly indicted on something, and Secretary of State Husted held hearings on pay-to-participate fees. I've helped try to reduce the uniform fees and instrumental fees over the years, along with many others. I also had several conversations with Paul Lambert over the years. It's not just about these economically disadvantaged kids; it's also what he used to term the 'donut-hole kids,' which we used to hear when discussing Medicaid or Medicare expansions and similar topics, referring to the children who don't hit the threshold but don't have the resources to participate in these programs.

I was a band kid. My kids were band kids. My daughter was in the orchestra and color guard. I want these opportunities for all of our kids, and I feel like we are pushing it too far out when we don't control and constrain some of these costs. Our policy, IGD, allows students to pay reasonable fees to participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. However, I think that reasonable fees need to be discussed. Our strategic plan is to audit existing programming to identify opportunities for growth and expansion of access, examine opportunities for potential growth, increased representation, and improve responsiveness in high school electives and after-school enrichment experiences.

I wanted to bring this to everybody's attention in consideration of the camp fee. I hope that all our coaches and directors will review our fees in any capacity. I know we have support through our booster groups, but when we're so far out of line between schools, I have concerns and questions.

So those are my thoughts. Thank you.

## **G. REPORTS / INFORMATION / EXHIBIT ITEM**

### **G1 Committee Reports**

*Ms. Arnold:* Not exactly a committee report, but I wanted to update you on a leadership institute I attended on Friday, May 2nd, and Saturday, May 3rd. The OSBA Leadership Institute is similar in structure to the capital conference in November, but focused specifically for board members. The opening general session began with a mock board meeting, which was not only highly entertaining but very informative, allowing some deep dives into the issues we as board members face while at this table.

It's also an opportunity to connect with board members across the state, many of whose districts look vastly different from ours. I'm still struggling to understand the concept of a district with only 500 students; it just blows my mind. And I would say that every single one of those board members I spoke with or who commented on our sessions was concerned about the impacts of state budget proposals and public school legislation.

However, even with all the valuable information on responding to key issues and advocating for our schools, one session in particular stands out to me. It was a student panel from Akron City Schools. I wish everyone in this room could have heard these impassioned young people and their stories. Similar to the workshop I attended last year, these students discussed the confidence and communication skills they gained as part of a targeted program designed to elevate student voice.

One of these amazing students, Zaya, absolutely commanded that room with her wit, her humor, and most importantly, her truth. When asked how we, as board members, can improve, she laid bare the struggles and challenges faced by her and her peers, reminding us all to focus on the why. Speaking from her experience at a time when no one knew she was struggling, she asked, "Where are the safe spaces for her and her classmates?" We need to remember that it's not all about test scores, policies, or, in their case, metal detectors, but whether all our students are seen and heard.

*Mrs. Crowley:* Thank you, Kelly. I had a curriculum committee meeting, and I don't have a lot to share from that. I just got a sneak preview from Jill Abraham of the presentation from the April work session. It was like a behind-the-scenes look, and I got to ask so many questions, which I loved. I know Jill's retiring, and we're going to miss you so much. I'm also going to miss being on that committee with you. It's been a true joy, honestly.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to go on the ISPTO bus tour, and I promised not to get too excited. So, I'm going to take a deep breath, but I love the bus tour; it's my favorite event of the whole year. This year, we focused on the changes from the master facility plan. We took a tour around the district on a bus with all the ISPTO members, and Mike and Dave stood up front. They refused to wear a Britney Spears headset, even though I requested it. However, they did discuss the secured entrances, the preschool, and the playgrounds. We also saw the new location of Brown Elementary.

I've heard about all of this at the board meetings, so it was wonderful to see it come to life and be in those spaces, visualizing everything. It just really brought it to life for me. So, thank you for that opportunity.

G2 Policies submitted for a second reading:

- a. BCE – Board Committees
- b. BD – School Board Meetings
- c. DECA – Administration of Federal Grant Funds
- d. DID – Capital Assets
- e. DJF – Purchasing/Payment Procedures
- f. DJF-R – Purchasing/Payment Procedures
- g. EDE – Computer/Online Services
- h. GBH (Also JM) – Staff-Student Relations
- i. IGAH/IGAI – Family Life Education/Sex Education
- j. IGBA – Programs for Students with Disabilities

- k. IGBLA – Promoting Parental Involvement (New Policy)
- l. IGCH-R (Also LEC-R) – College Credit Plus
- m. IJ – Guidance Program
- n. JECBB – Interdistrict Open Enrollment
- o. JEFB – Released Time for Religious Instruction
- p. JFCK – Use of Electronic Communications Equipment by Students
- q. JGE – Student Expulsion
- r. JHC – Student Health Services and Requirements
- s. JHCA – Physical Examinations of Students
- t. JHCD – Administering Medicines to Students
- u. JHCD-R – Administering Medicines to Students
- v. JHF – Student Safety
- w. JHG – Reporting Child Abuse and Mandatory Safety Training
- x. KBA – Public’s Right to Know

*Mr. Stewart:* Again, there will be no board action tonight, but if you have any discussion or questions, this is the time to raise them.

*Mrs. Crowley:* Does anybody have any discussion or questions?

*Mrs. Murdoch:* I'd like to hear a little bit about the reasoning behind the changes in JFCK, the cell phone policy.

*Mr. Stewart:* The reasons behind the changes are that the state passed a law that says....

*Mrs. Murdoch:* Right, but beyond the change of the red lines, the changes in wording.

*Mr. McDonough:* As Dave said, by July 1st, we have to have a policy in place for cell phones. We've always had one in place. We reviewed the ODEW's model policy and met with our administrative team to discuss what it would look like in practice. We also met with a select group of teachers working with HEA. We discussed what we would incorporate from those policies to bring forward to our policy review committee (PRC) and ultimately to the board. If you look in the handbooks around cell phone use, we more clearly delineate by level what is accepted and what is not accepted. Our policy is more general in nature. It's a little easier for us to navigate changes in the handbook as opposed to the policy review cycle, which takes almost two months for us to complete. We adhere to what is out there as one of the model policies, but put some of that stricter language in handbooks that we feel is more enforceable moving forward. And that's based on feedback from our administrators as well as our teachers.

*Mr. Vorst:* There was a reference to this in the handbooks. Specifically, there are separate cell phone policies for K through 6 and 7 through 12. Can you give a synopsis?

*Mr. McDonough:* We expanded it beyond cell phones because watches have become a communication device. At the elementary level, students are not permitted to have their electronic devices out during the day. We did add some permissive language stating that they may check their cell phone at the end of the day in case their parents have messaged them. At the sixth-grade level, electronic devices are to be kept in lockers or backpacks all day. At the middle and high school levels, they are permitted to use their electronic devices in between classes and at lunch, but not in the classroom.

*Mr. Vorst:* So, K through six from the beginning of the day until the end, it shouldn't be visible.

*Mr. McDonough:* Correct. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as a medical necessity.

*Mr. Vorst:* And 7 to 12, it should only be visible between classes and at lunch.

*Mr. McDonough:* Yes.

*Mr. Vorst:* We have a lot of educators here. Please know that you are the ones who will enforce this rule. You have backup if we receive emails from parents who claim you took my son's cell phone. This is the rule, and you have the authority to enforce it, and we support you in doing so when the time comes.

*Mr. Perry:* Beth, to answer your question as well. That's one of the things I liked about this particular policy: we're all saying functionally the same thing, which is, 'don't use your phone in class, don't be distracted.' It's time to learn when it's time to learn. But what this does that's different from the original policy is you're allowed to use it as long as it's in compliance. This also prescribes an objective, specifically stating that the policy's objective is to strengthen the district's focus on learning. And specifically, the language says that it must be as limited as possible during school hours. So if it's possible and we're not doing it, then that would be a violation of policy. Still, it also gives the teachers and educators the authority to say, here's what I believe is possible to do in my classroom. Trusting them to do that, but as much as they can limit it, then it's required to be limited. So that's one of the differences in this policy as well.

*Mr. Stewart:* Any other questions?

*Mr. Perry:* I want to point out a separate policy, JECBB. Under subsection one, I had mentioned to Mike that they specifically said the board permits a non-resident student to apply to rural district schools free of any tuition obligation if both of the following apply. Number one says, a student's parent is a member of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Marine Corps, National Guard, or Coast Guard who's on full-time, active duty, et cetera, et cetera.

Actually, I don't think this applies. Still, the point is that I would like to add the Ohio Organized Militia under Section 5923.03, because they're given the same protections under state law as federal entities. So that would also apply. However, I'll discuss this with Mike.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION / ADJOURNMENT**

- H1 At 7:24 p.m., the Board of Education entered an executive session to prepare for, conduct, or review negotiations or bargaining sessions with public employees concerning their compensation or other terms and conditions of employment.

*Mr. Stewart:* I do not anticipate any action after the executive session.