

Press Release



Battle Ground Public Schools

Director of Communications: Gregg Herrington, (360) 885-5337

PO Box 200 • Battle Ground, WA 98604-0200 • Office Location: 11104 NE 149th Street • Brush Prairie, WA
District Switchboard: (360) 885-5300

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Unanimous Battle Ground Board OKs three-year levy

The Battle Ground School Board, with three of its five members freshly sworn in, agreed unanimously Saturday to put a three-year maintenance and operations levy before voters on Feb. 9. The levy is for \$20.5 million in 2011, after the levy approved by voters in 2007 expires.

If approved, the levy will help fill the widening gap between state support for basic education and the basic education needs of students. Levy money goes for: teachers, and thus smaller class sizes; teaching assistants who help provide individual attention to students in the classroom; supplies; transportation; extracurricular activities and other maintenance and operations expenses.

Even so, the Board, with help from the public and employees Saturday, made substantial cuts in a best-case scenario outlined in a three-year strategic plan.

“I am incredibly pleased with this Board,” President Sam Kim said after the meeting, which began at 9 a.m. Saturday and ended at 6 p.m. “They worked well together, wrestling with the need to fund our schools in the face of drastic state cuts in support.”

The \$20.5 million, followed by \$21.53 million in 2012 and \$22.6 million in 2013, “is necessary for the district to operate,” said Monty Anderson of Yacolt, one of the three directors elected last month.

Anderson took the oath of office Saturday from Frederick Striker, the 12-year Board member Anderson defeated in the November election. “It is my hope that the patrons of this district stand behind the children of the district, its employees and this Board and support the levy,” Anderson said.

The two other new directors are Steve Pagel, who was sworn in by Clark County Auditor Greg Kimsey, and John Idsinga, former mayor of Battle Ground, who was

administered the oath of office by current Mayor Mike Ciraulo. The two returning directors are Sam Kim and Karen Lehman.

Idsinga's 5-year-old grandson Jonathan, a student at Tukes Valley Primary School in the Battle Ground district, led the flag salute to open Saturday's meeting.

At the end of the day-long session, a happy Superintendent Shonny Bria said, "I was impressed at how well this Board worked together. It is obvious to me that they are here for the children." Bria and others present Saturday grimly recalled horrific cuts in programs for students and in school personnel after levy failures prior to 2007.

Under the levy approved by the School Board, the rate of taxation per \$1,000 of assessed property value is estimated at \$2.99 the first year, \$2.88 in 2012 and \$2.78 in 2013. By comparison, the Vancouver School District's proposed levy seeks \$3.08 the first year and Evergreen Public Schools seek \$3.49.

The amount was reached Saturday after considerable Board discussion and input from the public and employees. An initial round of cuts in a best-case proposal amounted to approximately \$4 million. More discussion and trims and an across-the-board reduction removed another \$4 million, for a total of approximately \$8 million below the best-case scenario outlined in a three-year strategic plan.

That plan is the result of several public meetings last winter and spring involving school district employees and the general public. Thomas O'Connor of Wind Mountain Consulting Group in Vancouver (www.windmountaingroup.com) donated dozens of hours to flesh out and focus the results of those public meetings and prepare the written plan. His no-charge task was acknowledged Saturday with a standing ovation from the School Board and those in attendance.

Ellen Joslin, president of the Battle Ground Education Association, called Saturday's action "the best Christmas present the School Board could have given our students, the community and employees. It is a vote of confidence by the Board in our district – its employees and students."

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