

April 24, 2024

As we all know, the passed referendum of April 2023 provided much needed budget support. However, inflation, declining enrollment, educational labor market, student needs, and state funding continues to be challenging while also addressing student learning, district operational needs, staff retention, facility deferred maintenance projects, and future budget deficit projections. As we continue work toward improving on our four strategic priorities, the Board of Education approved several items at recent board meetings:

Board of Education Approvals

- A change with WCA-GHT for direct billed retirees to no longer be on the district health insurance plan, but rather; to seek other health coverage or supplemental (for those Medicare eligible) through spousal coverage or the individual market/exchange (district will assist with this transition). The result for the district is a -1% overall renewal for the district and all active employees will maintain the same network providers, same plan design, maintain NICE clinic offerings, and a slight decrease in premium contributions for the 2024-2025 school year. Thus, any active employee receiving HRA contributions within policy 553 section III that will retire in future years will no longer be eligible to continue as a direct bill on the district health insurance plan upon retirement, but rather; need to seek other coverage through one the methods provided above. The individual market/exchange often offers lower cost plans with a similar or larger network so this option provides a win-win-win situation for the district, active personnel and retired personnel.
- 4.12% salary increase for all employee groups for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.
- Addition of 1 FTE Reading Interventionist to assist in requirements of Act 20.
- Addition of funds to support professional development associated to Act 20.
- Increase 18 special education paraprofessionals from part-time to 36.25 hours/week as necessitated by increased student needs and a competitive labor market.
- Addition of 1 FTE Middle School Agriculture.
- Addition of 1 FTE MS/HS World Language.
- Teaching and Learning Reconfiguration to support Pk-5 and 6-12.
- Addition of 1 FTE Special Education Teacher.
- Teachers will no longer be docked one half the substitute teacher's daily rate of pay for the use of a personal day (effective 7/1/2024).
- Any unused personal days as of June 30th shall be converted to sick days (effective 7/1/2024).
- Full-year, Full-time Support Staff upon hire and through 7 years of employment, will be allocated 10 days vacation days per year (prorated if employment terminates within that year) (prorated between 7/1/24 and the anniversary date and then the new allocation will occur on each anniversary date).
- The District premium contribution percentage will remain at 85.5% for full-time 1.0 FTE employees. Thus, the monthly employee premium contribution will be 14.5%.
- Teladoc and NICE will continue to be offered at no cost.

2024-2025 Budget Highlights

- 2024-2025 will be the 2nd year of the State biennial budget, thus the projections for the next biennial budget (2025-2026 and 2026-2027) are still very much unknown.
- Three year \$3,000,000/year non-recurring operational referendum passed in April 2023. This means the district can exceed the Revenue limit by \$3,000,000 in school years 2023-24, 2024-25, and 2025-26. Even with the 3 year, 3 million per year approved referendum question, there is still a projected deficit in 2025-2026.
- This past school year (2023-2024), the district did not have to short-term borrow because of our current Fund Balance, thus saving the district on interest. This was a result of long-term fiscal responsibility.
- Even though many deferred maintenance needs still need to be addressed (which is being processed through various committees and the board), the board approved of utilizing Fund Balance dollars toward addressing several deferred projects such as the resurfacing of the high school track and replacement of lighting on the football stadium and adding lightning to the soccer stadium for next school year. Again, a result of long-term fiscal responsibility.
- Per initial budgeting this past school year (2023-2024), the middle school will have the terrazzo floor restored and repaired, painting throughout the building, carpeting in some areas updated, and some vinyl graphics added.
- Revenue Limit factors are only projections until final numbers are received during the summer (state aid if State Budget is finalized) and/or fall (pupil count, Oct 15 Aid Certification, and property values).

Finally, as we know, school districts throughout the state continue to face difficult economic challenges toward providing quality services and meeting their large scale capital needs. That said, we remain committed toward making East Troy School be "a great place to learn and work."