



PATIENCE IS REWARDED AS BUDGET PROCESS NEARS ITS END

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Patience is defined as the state of endurance under difficult circumstances and the ability to exhibit forbearance when under strain, especially when faced with longer-term difficulties.

Nowhere was that steadfastness more evident than in the Salem City School division the last several months as administrators strived to avoid teacher layoffs, pay cuts and putting Salem's children at a disadvantage in the classroom.

"Throughout the process, whether meeting with teachers, briefing the School Board, answering questions from parents and citizens, or sending out regular updates to all employees, no one panicked or over-reacted," says Salem School Superintendent, Dr. Alan Seibert.

Dr. Seibert, Director of Business Services Mike Crew and other Central Office administrators visited each of Salem's six schools for face-to-face meetings with staff members concerning the ever-changing budget process. At each school it was made clear to them that teachers would rather take a pay cut than see a teaching peer become the victim of layoffs.

"I am still deeply touched by the overwhelming willingness of our employees to sacrifice a little in the form of modest salary reductions and other difficult budget reductions as opposed to layoffs," says Seibert. "In the end, the bottom line is that we were not recommending any layoffs, even before the Federal Stimulus money came to light. Salem's children will still have the benefit of the extraordinary people who serve in our Schools."

Six teachers will be retiring at the end of this school year, and student enrollment and course requests will be monitored closely before any of those positions are filled. That potential savings of \$400,000 in salaries and benefits, along with cuts in equipment and supplies coupled with the Federal Stimulus money and the all important level funding from Salem City Council will make it possible for the Salem School Division to continue its mission of putting "Children First."

“The Federal Economic Stimulus funds should help us restore a significant portion of the proposed reductions for at least one year,” says Seibert. “Specifically, the State Stabilization funds, dollars that the federal stimulus package allocated to states to mitigate state reductions, has been projected by the General Assembly to amount to \$1,366,008 for Salem Schools.”

The first use of these funds will be to avoid salary reductions within the School Division. The \$42.9 million budget will be considered for formal adoption by the Salem City School Board on March 24.

“The good news is that we have a budget proposal that closes a \$1,866,752 reduction from the current year without layoffs. This commendable accomplishment is due in large part to the terrific work throughout the division in preparing a budget with painful cuts and to an overwhelming willingness from our employees for us all to shoulder some of the burden so that a few will not have to shoulder it all,” says Seibert. “Our terrific people responded not only with patience, but flexibility.”

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