

August 20, 2009

An Open Letter to the District 205 Board of Education and Administration

The League of Women Voters of Elmhurst strongly urges School District 205 to produce an annotated version of its 2009-2010 tentative budget for immediate public review. It is imperative that the public has **complete** budget information with sufficient time to thoroughly analyze and understand the details before the Board of Education final budget vote on September 22, 2009.

District 205 relies on well-informed, active citizens and community organizations such as the League to pass referenda, participate in district task forces, and otherwise support its mission to educate the children of our community. This support is based on our **sustained and comprehensive knowledge** of the workings of the District and full community participation in the budget process is at the very core of that support. This year the District eliminated summer public budget workshops, provided only the most meager budget numbers, and minimized public input. In our view, these actions undermine the community trust and support at a crucial time.

The tentative budget (approved at the August 11th workshop meeting and posted on the District 205 website), and the corresponding *Budget Information* document fail to provide sufficient detail as to how or why individual figures were calculated. Specifically, we urge the District to supply:

- ❖ An introductory narrative detailing how the budget was created including all the priorities that were set, assumptions that were made. The District needs to explain where revenue shortfalls and spending increases are anticipated, and what, if any, other factors were considered.
- ❖ Item by item comparisons with projected and actual revenue and spending figures from the previous year and the percentage of change wherever it occurs.
- ❖ Succinct explanations for every change from the previous year.
- ❖ Full explanations for the substantial administration staffing increases budgeted for the coming year, including the exact nature of each position to be added, salaries, and the specific reasons for doing so.

The District may have met the State of Illinois' requirements for budget reporting, but not local community standards for government thoroughness and clarity. District 205 needs to provide the public with **complete** budget information and it needs to welcome the community back into the discussion.

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