

March 18, 2024

Dear BKW Community,

On February 8, 2024, I sent/posted a message to you regarding the BKW budget status at that time in the process. I informed you of two important situations having an impact on the development of the 2024-25 school district budget. Those issues included a potentially significant reduction in Foundation Aid proposed by the Governor and the district designation by the Comptroller as Moderate Fiscal Stress. I asked you to stay tuned, as the NYS budget process would proceed into the legislative process, and we could see changes to the Governor's proposal made by the legislators.

For the past several weeks, we have participated in nearly a dozen meetings with legislators, press engagements, and had visitors from strong advocates and partners in this process to retain save harmless status in the Foundation Aid allocations, as a means to protect the outstanding programs and opportunities we have been able to offer students in the past several years. The work seems to have paid off. Last week, the NYS Assembly and the NYS Senate each released and adopted their "one house" budget bills, and the scenario looks much better than it did before last week.

Both houses rejected the Governor's proposed changes to the Foundation Aid formula, and restored "save harmless status" for the 337 impacted districts in NYS, including BKW, also restoring the proposed funding cuts for all 337 districts. Both legislative proposals also call for a 3% minimum increase in Foundation Aid to account for inflation. This is very good news for our budget building process. However, these are still just proposals. Although the Foundation Aid allocations are not yet law, we at least have a general idea of the amount of dollars we can project as revenue to support our programs and operations for 2024-25.

The next public meeting of the Board of Education will be held on March 25, at 7 pm, when we will be able to provide more concrete information about revenue, expenses, and tax levy. Our primary goals include protecting our current program offerings, continuing to carry out our long-term financial plan, and preparing for the electric bus mandate and a potential capital project in the near future.

I want to express my appreciation to those who have reached out to me by email, phone, or in person to offer support and assistance in the legislative advocacy process over the past six weeks. I apologize if I have not gotten back to you. It has been a whirlwind. The Board of Education has reassured me that we should maintain programs and we will do our level best to do just that, while also managing the local tax burden responsibly. We are all eagerly awaiting the final NYS budget, which is due April 1, so we can nail down all of the details appropriately and communicate our local budget proposal to you in a timely manner. Again, thank you!!

Dr. Timothy Mundell

