**Upper Darby School Budget Forum**

**Moderator Report**

**Group #2**

**Westbrook Park Elementary School – 3.11.13**

**Moderator Terrill Thompson and Gwynne Scheffer**

The composition of Group 2 was 22 white women, 1 woman of color, 1 man of color and 10 white men. There were property owners, district employees, community organization, concerned citizen, parents and students (current and former). There were members of the group who had attended prior forums. A few group members prepared in advance to share their perspectives on issues. The group was very large and energetic. At times they would talk over each other but the group pulled back together quickly to stay on task.

**Low Hanging Fruit**

#28a Eliminate late bussing of secondary students and increase efficiencies

* Pointless because you can’t stay after school unless a teach is one the premises
* Sports go over time so they aren’t able to use the bus; parents have to come to school to pick them up
* Other district have eliminated
* Increase efficiency of bus routes (buses carrying one student)
* Outsourcing bus contracts
* How far/distance to get bus
  + 2 miles or main road
  + Reconfiguration of eligibility (conflict with house numbers in who gets and who doesn’t)
* Make everyone walkers
* Reduce but don’t get rid of; Clifton Heights needs transportation to and from school
* Buses parked doing nothing
  + Seen them at Dunkin Donuts

10% but 5% gained sufficient votes

#29 Merge information services with media services

* Proposed and accepted as a LHF without discussion

#35b Increase property taxes up to index plus partial approved exceptions of 6% (up to 1.97 mil)

* Taxes going up anyway and this below what has been proposed
* We’ll share and do half of it
* Going in and telling them
  + More active in what you’re getting in the end
* More difficult to sell a house due to the need to fix school
  + Overcrowded
  + Test scores
* Homeowners and businesses are two sources of revenue
  + L&I not progressive thinkers
    - Scares businesses away and those who want to invest
  + Business owners pay taxes raising revenue
* Difficult to separate taxes from school
  + People pay taxes for good schools
* Bad press
  + First five stories on the news UD is mentioned negatively/not in a good light
    - Elements in the township aren’t good for schools
    - It’s a UD issue

The service areas rejected during our discussion:

#35 was initially raised with a comment of instead of increasing taxes; utilize resources to collect unpaid taxes. This should be a No Way No How

#36 fees was discussed

* Taxpayer who sent her children to catholic school and had to pay for all sports
* Does say how to raise funds but should pay
* Excelling athlete’s families can’t afford to pay, ex. Soccer team players
* Sports helps them to get their academic lives together/in check
* Comment: need better management of sports equipments
* Free/reduced lunch student should be helped
* Generate monies through fundraising as a team
* Some would pay and some wouldn’t
* Not enough cost to impact the budget

Did not yield enough votes for LHF; was voted to Shared Pain

#1b to reduce elementary school staff by 10%, he works for the school district, went to elementary school here with 28 to 29 in his class.

* Other districts have 33 to 35 in a class
* Not popular to get rid of jobs
* Daughter already has 30 in her class
* Cap on the number of students
  + Physical safety
* Do what’s best for whole district not for children
* Consideration to partnering with colleges and student teaching programs
* Get people who have the knowledge
* Times are different
  + Question posed: Did you parents work with you? Answer: No
* Behavior concerns
* Administrative cuts/concessions
  + They need to
  + Eliminate assistant superintendent secretaries
    - Everybody does their own work today, no one has secretaries
  + Five assistant principals at HS
    - Extra large school
    - Principal and 2 VPs (alternative)
* Variety of behavior issues impacts the numbers
* Teachers are on the battlefield
* Special education has 15 in class
  + Might impact class size average

**No Way, No Hows**

#1c Eliminate kindergarten

* Most kids walk to parents drop off
* Don’t go to kindergarten center
* Bussing
* School preparedness
* Bring back to home school, ex. Hillcrest
* Not mandatory so first grade is their first school experience
* All my children went to paid pre-kindergarten; parent will to pay for kindergarten
* Eliminating teachers would make room in homes schools for kindergarten
* Township fundraising through rec department
* Low socio/economic can’t pay
* 625 walkers
* Stonehurst doesn’t have kindergarten

#10 Eliminate noontime support for elementary school releasing students at lunch

* Non time not practical
* Parents not home
* Use to go home for lunch as a kid and we walked
* Teachers/assistants should moderate/supervise lunch
  + Need others to cover
* Teachers assigned to help with lunch don’t’ show up at high school
* Two hours and four minutes of time at $8/hr has minimal impact
* More involvement at elementary level has an impact on behavior and developing good habits

#3b Eliminate all related arts instructors

* We are piling on more to teachers
* Not certified to teach art
* New teachers aren’t trained/skilled in arts
* Charter school smell blood in the water and are offering more
  + Death sentence
* Fighting to save the arts for the past year
* Child with IEP did well with arts…they help

#34c Reduction of band, choral, theatre and extra pay/extra duty

* Personally on choral, was the Beast
  + Culture and social interaction
* I’m in bank and had to pay over $50 to be in it
* Joy of playing, reading music is learning another language
* Music increase learning ability
* Chorus as freshman
  + Nervous about high school and one place to get aware from all the crap
  + Sing hearts out no matter what
  + Happiest kids you’ll ever see
  + It will hurt immensely
* Recurrent theme - employers can’t teach people how to get along; learn through these activities – organization, work together, cooperating, teamwork
* Alternative participation for those who can’t play sports
* Pride and ownership

#6a Eliminate instrumental music staff and program at middle school

* Proposed along with #9a to reduce instrumental in middle and high school
* Phenomenal, need more than sports and school, need culture
* Singling out three teachers
  + Impossible to cut 40% of three
* Proposed #9b

#9b Reduction of high school specials teaching staff by 40%

***Discussion captured under above under #6a***

#32b Eliminate middle school sports

* Was raised along with 33b
* Sports is similar trend to charter and parochial
* Need to target a broader population/all kids

**Shared Pain**

#36a Charge fee of $100 for school sports

***Discussion captured under Low Hanging Fruit rejections.***

#1b Reduction of elementary school staff through attrition by 10%

***Discussion captured under Low Hanging Fruit rejections.***

#37c Use $2.0 million from fund balance

* Impacts credit rating
* Two million recommended in the budget proposition
* If you use fund balance, there’s nowhere else to go
* What if something major happens
  + There’s a capital fund of $6.0 million
* Use $1.0 million; don’t take as much since you don’t know what will happen
* Look for other sources of income
* Build a better tax base
* Find another way to generate incomes
* Use $1.0 now and develop plan for future

**Gut Wrenchers**

#6c Reduction in technology/computer instruction staff from 8 to 6 (two staff rather than four staff)

* Limiting to 8th grade will cause struggles in college
* Disagree with two but maybe four
* Need kids to speak multiple languages
* Charters offer foreign languages in elementary school
  + Philadelphia charters offers PreK and K Spanish; lost this when she moved to UD
  + Preschool they learn faster when exposed earlier

**GRAND TOTAL – 87.4 POINTS**