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**REPORT**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
*May 19, 2026 – 6:00pm*

**TRUSTEES:** Christine Lervold, Committee Chair  
Cendra Beaton (online via MS Teams)  
Amanda Dowhy, Trustee  
Russ Chipps (online via MS Teams)

**STAFF:** Paul Block, Superintendent  
Brian Jonker, Secretary Treasurer  
Monica Braniff, Deputy Superintendent  
D’Arcy Deacon, Associate Superintendent  
Lisa Leclerc, Associate Superintendent  
Fred Hibbs, Executive Director, Human Resources  
Steve Tonnesen, Manager, Information Technology - Operations

**REGRETS:** Trudy Spiller, Trustee

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**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FIRST NATIONS TERRITORIES**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the Committee Chair who acknowledged the territories of the First Nations. Approximately thirty members of the public were in attendance. The Committee Chair introduced members of the Board and partner groups and provided an overview of the meeting format.

**2. PRESENTATIONS**

**2.1 Superintendent Remarks – Paul Block**

During the budget consultation process, over 1300 public survey responses were received as well as 430 student survey responses across grades 6-12. This strong response rate reflects an engaged school community and feedback indicated priorities are students first with a focus on mental health. Although the budget is increased from last year, enrolment growth has declined from 4.5% to 1.7%. Careful planning is required, guided by the District’s values and Strategic Plan.

**2.2 Budget 2026/27 Presentation – Brian Jonker**

The Secretary Treasurer detailed the three streams of funding; Operational, Capital, and Special purpose funds that make up the budget bylaw of \$245,936,000. Explanation and rationale were provided for each category of the financial plan

included in the meeting materials. Next year would see an additional thirteen teachers, two more full time counsellors, 10-15 new Education Assistants, funds for Elders in classrooms, and an accessible bus and driver. Plans are underway (awaiting Ministry approval) for prefabricated classrooms to address space in schools.

Slowed enrolment growth has resulted in a budget deficit of \$2.2 million. Mitigation of this deficit is required to avoid an untenable situation. Recommendations follow a measured approach in line with feedback received with the deficit mitigation strategy using a three pronged approach including \$1.374M in administrative savings, \$.562M in savings through ending of the ECE in kindergarten classrooms pilot and \$.267M in a draw from reserves. Examples of items to be reduced through administrative savings were provided.

### **3. DELEGATIONS**

#### **3.1 Standing Delegations (STA, CUPE, SPEAC, PVP, Students)**

##### Rita Zeni – President of the STA

The President of the STA urged the Board to advocate for more provincial funding. Thirty-five percent of funding allocated to public schools (\$575 million) was spent on private schools last year. Ending funding of ECEs in classrooms takes away an adult in the room is the wrong direction for early learners.

##### SPVPA – Jen Nixon and Ruchi MacArthur

The SPVPA co-presidents were happy to see there is continued support for literacy, numeracy, and students across the district in the proposed budget. This is foundational to all the partner groups.

##### Amber Leonard – CUPE President

The CUPE President stressed the important role of ECEs and other CUPE staff in the classroom highlighting that services provided by CUPE members are essential.

##### Tom Davis – SPEAC President

There were many positives shared tonight and SPEAC applauds the maintenance of counselling staff. The survey input received was not to cut services in classrooms; however, cutting the ECEs is a cut to classrooms. The SPEAC President suggested the use of reserve funds and advocating to the province for funding.

#### **3.2 Delegations (Members of the Public)**

Sixteen members of the public, including some staff, advocated to the Board to maintain ECEs in classrooms.

The Committee Chair thanked everyone for their participation and feedback.

**4. BUSINESS**

4.1 2026/27 Annual Budget By-law – Brian Jonker

MOVED: Amanda Dowhy/Russ Chipps

That the Board of Education of School District 62 (Sooke) give first and second readings to its 2026/27 Annual Budget Bylaw, specifying a total of \$245,935,907.

CARRIED

Discussion of the motion ensued with Trustees speaking both for and against the reduction of the ECE program with all trustees in attendance ultimately supporting the motion.

**5. RISE AND REPORT**

The Committee Chair reported the Committee has recommended the following motion for board consideration at its next meeting:

That the Board of Education of School District 62 (Sooke) give first and second readings to its 2026/27 Annual Budget Bylaw, specifying a total of \$245,935,907.

**6. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.