

Feb 19, 2021

Dear OSSD Community,

As we begin February break, I wanted to let the community know that the district is moving forward on the next phase of our return to in-person instruction. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, our seventh-grade students will return to full in-person instruction, four days per week (Monday-Thursday), beginning March 8<sup>th</sup>. While the district's school busses will be running as always, parents should transport their students whenever possible as this will provide room for more social distancing on the busses. As March 8<sup>th</sup> approaches, more specific information will come to seventh-grade parents directly from the high school.

### **Upcoming Annual Meetings**

The annual school budget informational meeting will be held at 6:30 PM on February 24<sup>th</sup>. This information is the same as what was presented in multiple open forums held earlier this month but will go into deeper detail.

[Join with Google Meet](#)

[meet.google.com/fph-urve-oe](https://meet.google.com/fph-urve-oe)

[Join by phone](#)

(US) +1 585-532-5448 PIN: 694 642 948#

The annual school district meeting will be held on March 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 PM. This meeting is focused on electing school officers (i.e. moderator, clerk, treasurer) and allowing the district to borrow money to conduct its operations until taxes are received by the member towns (i.e. the bills come due before the taxes are received to pay them – this is true every year).

[Join with Google Meet](#)

[meet.google.com/gnt-tsmx-csm](https://meet.google.com/gnt-tsmx-csm)

[Join by phone](#)

(US) +1 713-714-1844 PIN: 740 642 827#

Participants can access both meetings either in person or remotely. The links for remote access are above. For those attending in person, the meetings will be held in the RUHS auditorium. Strict protocols will be in place: masks must be worn, attendees must use hand sanitizer before entering the auditorium, and social distancing of six feet or more must be maintained. Even before COVID, these meetings generated a small turn-out (a dozen people or less) so we anticipate there will be no issues in terms of capacity. If turn-out exceeds the capacity guidance, folks will be restricted from entering the auditorium, it is therefore highly recommended that community members participate remotely.

## **School Budget and Expected Impact on Local Taxes.**

For those who have not been able to attend a school budget informational meeting, the district has responded to the needs of our communities by minimizing the impact of school taxes during this time of financial difficulties wrought by COVID. Working together, the district maximized last year's surplus (money that remains unspent at the end of a budget year) so that it could be used to subsidize future budgets – in essence, the surplus funds (\$1.6 million) will be used to decrease your school taxes for the next three-years while the State's financial health recovers from the pandemic.

If our communities vote yes on school ballot Article Ten, it will do three things: 1) it will approve the 2021-22 school budget which includes half of the surplus money to reduce the local tax burden, 2) it will create an operational reserve fund, and 3) it will place the remaining half of the surplus into the reserve fund so that it can be used to offset school taxes in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Next year's budget only includes the increases required to maintain our current level of programs and services - ninety-seven percent of which is needed to meet our contractually mandated obligations which support our staff. This is as bare bones as it gets without cutting programs. In terms of the bottom line for taxpayers given the state's current thinking on the education fund: the average homeowner in our district will see an increase in school taxes due to the 2021-22 budget of \$41 per year (\$3.42 per month). More details can be found in the district's annual report: <http://orangesouthwest.org/annual-report>

[OSSD 2020-21 Annual Report.pdf](#)

Sincerely,

Layne Millington

OSSD Superintendent