

**DRAFT**

**Horseheads Central School District  
Budget Workshop of the Board of Education  
High School Auditorium  
April 14, 2011**

**Present:** Apgar, Brinthaup, Buck, Holleran, Jacobus, Lively, Lynch, Miller, Strollo

**Also Present:** Abrunzo, Bailey, Brock, Donahue, Hillman, Learn, Moyer, Pollard, Saptura, Suggs, K. Williams, S. Williams, Woodworth

**Absent:**

**Call to Order:** President Lynch called the Workshop to order at 6:01 PM

**Board President's Remarks:**

President Brian Lynch welcomed everyone to the final Budget Workshop of the year. He stated it has been a very challenging budget year and appreciates the Public for being so active in participating in the formation of the 2011-2012 Budget. He appreciates their comments and constructive criticism and hopes that it continues. Brian thanked Gregg Moyer for traveling to the various locations to ensure that the technical equipment was set up for the workshops. Brian explained the guidelines and format of the Workshop as per Board Policy 2370: Public Participation at Board Meetings) for Board of Education Community Budget Meetings. Brian did remind the Public that there should be no direct criticism of personnel or the Board Members during the Public Comments portion of the meeting. He further explained that the Superintendent will present an overview of the revised Proposed Budget for 2011-2012 as a result of Board and community input from the March 10, 2011 Budget Workshop that was held. There will be an opportunity for the Board to ask questions at the end of the presentations and then the floor will be open to the public for comments/questions at the conclusion of Dr. Marino's presentation.

**Budget History**

Dr. Marino thanked everyone for attending the final Budget Workshop of the year. He stated this is the final budget presentation this year with a Public Hearing being held on April 20, 2011, for the Board to accept the Budget so that it can be presented to the tax payers on May 17, 2011. Ralph stated we are in the third year of the economic downturn in our country and state. The Horseheads District has been working for the last two years to combat the downturn while continuing to provide our children with a quality education. Ralph stated the first difficult budget was the 2009-2010 school year with a \$2.3 million in reductions. He stated that administrators and staff have been sacrificing for the past few years. Ralph reviewed the previous reductions of May 2009 which totaled \$2,299,659.00. Some of those reductions included a 15% reduction in all building/department budget allocations, eliminated 13 positions through attrition (retirements and resignations), restructured the Educational Support Center Office (replaced three positions with two), took back two Special Education Classes from

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BOCES, eliminated BOCES Labor Relations Service and more. Ralph also reviewed previous reductions of May 2010 which totaled \$2,806,905.00. Ralph reviewed reductions since May 18, 2010, which gave a potential savings of \$1,214,894.00. The reductions include not filling 13 positions(\$743,348), Additional Salary Savings of \$95,046, Spending Freeze approved by the Board on December 16, 2010 effective January 1, 2011 – June 30, 2011—estimated savings of \$350,000 and Curtailment of Overtime Costs - \$26,500(July 1, 2010 to January 31, 2011). The Total Reductions since May 2009 total \$6,321,458.00. Since May 2009 a total of 43 positions have been eliminated which equals 5.8% of staffing with a total number of staffing at 736. Ralph stated that state categorical aids such as textbook, hardware and software aid, as well as federal and state grants, must be spent or districts lose that money the following year.

Ralph reviewed the 2011-2012 Budget Decisions to date which include a 20% reduction in all building/department budget allocations and 13 positions not filled which total \$1,382,099 that has already been deducted from the 2011-2012 preliminary budget. To date the Budget Deficit(as of February 17, 2011 ) is \$8,985,331.00. This does not include a property tax increase or use of reserves. Ralph explained what an \$8.9 million deficit means to Horseheads: the reduction of programs and services and/or reduction of positions(approximately 138) and/or property tax levy increase(approximately 30%) and/or continued use of reserves and/or a combination of all of them. Significant increases for 2011-2012 and what they mean to the 2011-2012 Budget were reviewed. Ralph reviewed the Preliminary 2011-2012 School Budget as of March 10, 2011 with the Preliminary Expenses totaling \$72,022,595(+4.87%), Preliminary Revenues - \$61,055,921(-11.09%) and Preliminary Deficit - \$10,966,674. This includes the reduction of 5 Administrative Positions(-\$412,500), 24 Local Retirement Incentive (-\$809,725), Federal Jobs Bill(-\$1,745,980), 7.5% Property Tax Levy Increase (-\$2,250,000), Use of Reserves(-\$3,000,000), Program/Service Reductions(-\$2,779,425) and Preliminary Overage(+\$30,956). As of April 14, 2011, the Additional Revenue includes the Restoration of State Aid(March 30, 2011) estimated at \$659,819 and the Withdrawal from the District's Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve Fund(EBALR) for Compensated Absences from 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011 estimated at \$1,012,632 for a total Additional Revenue of \$1,672,451. The recommendation for New Revenue is to reduce the 7.5% Proposed Property Tax Levy to Approximately 4.95% - \$659,819 and restore some Proposed Program/Service Reductions - \$1,012,632 for a total Additional Revenue of \$1,672,451. It should be noted that the total use of reserves for the 2011-2012 school year is approximately \$40 million plus the \$1,745,980 Federal Jobs Bill Grant are slated for restoration. Program/Service to be restored includes \$48,891 to defund 50 Extra-Curricular Stipends, \$76,316 eliminate 2 freshmen and 4 modified teams; sports with two teams combined into one defund Modified/Freshmen or Junior Varsity Sports, restore 1 Position(\$65,000) to Eliminate 4 Elementary Teacher Positions(due to low enrollment), Restore \$25,000 to the Elimination Grades 7-12 Summer School, restore 4 positions to the Elimination of 8 Computer Lab Teaching Assistant Positions, restore 6 Positions(\$361,161) with Friday dismissal at regular time to the Reduction of the 11 K-8 Special Area Teachers(Restructure program delivery for K-8 Art, Music, Physical Education, Library, restoring \$113,286 to the elimination of 1.5

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Pre-Kindergarten Teacher Positions and 1.5 Teaching Assistant Positions(In-district Pre-K Program would be reduced to half-day), restore \$17,400 to the Elimination of the Videoconference Program, restore \$40,000 to the Elimination of the High School Resource Officer Position and restore \$52,153 to Technology Reductions for a total of \$1,012,632 in Restorations. Ralph reviewed the Staffing Levels for 2011-2012 which includes 17 positions being restored with 30(In Addition to the five administrative positions and 24 retiree positions not being replaced) positions being eliminated.

Ralph presented a Comparison of the 2010-2011 to 2011-2012 Budget as of April 14, 2011. Based upon this proposal the approximate spending is +0.52%, Approximate Property Tax Levy: +4.95% and the Use of Reserve Funds: \$4,000,000(This is in addition to the one-time Federal Jobs Bill Grant of \$1,745,980.). Ralph stated final figures will be presented for approval at the April 20, 2011, Special Board of Education Meeting.

Ralph reviewed the New York State School Report Card for Fiscal Accountability 2008-2009(most current data published by New York State). He stated that Instructional Expenditures Per Pupil for General Education is \$8,597 and Special Education is \$16,682 and the total Expenditures Per Pupil is \$15,141 in comparison to similar school districts at \$17,709 and New York State \$19,381. Ralph stated that per New York State, Total Expenditures Per Pupil include District expenditures for classroom instruction, transportation, debt service and district-wide administration.

Board President Brian Lynch thanked Dr. Marino for a very thorough presentation and stated he appreciates the effort that was given in putting this budget together due to the changes requested from the Board at the last Board Meeting. He stated he is very happy that we were able to restore over \$1 million in Programs and Services along with the reduction of the Tax Levy. We are looking for a balanced budget and Dr. Marino and the Administrative Team has done an amazing job getting one for us to present to the taxpayers on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Board of Education Discussion**

Board Member Pam Stollo stated that the Board received a lot of input at the last Budget Workshop from Dr. Marino and the community. Pam stated that she appreciates that Dr. Marino and his Team took the information that was given at the last Board Workshop and looked at what we had and did what we asked. It is extremely good to continue to go to the State and external auditors and apply those funds to programs and services and the tax levy.

Board Member Mark Brinthaup stated he is extremely pleased to see the recommendations that the Superintendent came forward with tonight. He is extremely pleased to see that the suggestions the Board gave to Ralph at the last Budget Workshop Ralph took back to his Administrative Team and were able to present the Board with a new proposal that gives us a more accurate idea of what is going to happen next year. It is reassuring to know that we have a fund like the Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve Fund that we are able to use a portion of and still have more in it for future needs. It makes sense to leave some of the funds intact as we do not know what will happen next year with the State Budget.

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Board Member Mary Anne Holleran stated she agrees with what Pam said. She is very pleased that all the comments and suggestions that were presented at the last Budget Workshop and Board Meeting were listened to and taken into consideration. She is also pleased that the Restoration of Programs/Services was across the Board as this is what the Public wanted. It is very disheartened to look at the 2011-2012 Budget with the realization that there are still staff reductions knowing that we are not able to do anything to change this. Mary Anne commended Dr. Marino and his staff for keeping the budget as equitable as possible.

Board Member Ruth Miller echoes Pam and Mary Anne's sentiments. She thanked Dr. Marino and his Administrative Team for making this budget meet the needs the Board requested. She is very happy to see an equitable distribution of the funds in the restoration of Programs/Services. She appreciates all of the hard work that Dr. Marino and his Team did to present a Revised Budget to the Board tonight.

Board Member Jim Jacobus inquired as to the intentions of using only the \$4 million from the Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve Fund even though the Comptroller has allowed us to use more. He also wanted to know if it would be a one-time opportunity. Dr. Marino stated that the District has been given the authorization to take out up to \$5.8 million as a one-time opportunity. The recommendation is that we would switch the \$4 million withdrawal one time and keep the other for the following year. We want to take as much as possible to make the budget balance which would be \$4 million.

Board Member John Lively likes the improvements that have been made in the budget and generally supports Dr. Marino's proposal. He stated it is appropriate to use the additional reserves at this time. He likes the fact that the money was used to restore programs/services/academics and also helps with the tax levy. He appreciates the proposed reduction in lowering the tax levy as this is what the Public wants. He would like to see if we could even go a little lower (below 4%) with it if more money becomes available. It would be nice to make our tax levy look like less of a tax increase as other surrounding schools around us are doing. It will also help us next year.

Board Member Rose Apgar thanked Dr. Marino and his Administrative Team for what they were able to do to restore the Program/Service Reductions and the tax levy. We heard out loud and clear at the last meeting what the Public wants and Ralph took this information back to his Team and they were able to restore Programs/Services and reduce the tax levy to the best of their ability. Furthermore, she stated even though it saddens her that thirty people will be laid off, it is better than laying off fifty. She appreciates all of the efforts and the hard work that Dr. Marino and his Administrative Team have put into making this budget possible.

Board Vice-President Michael Buck stated that the savings in the Budget can be contributed directly to Dr. Marino and his Team. He stated the reductions for offsetting the reduction of State Aid allows us to balance the budget. There will be a minimal increase in taxes for two years but the difference this year is the reduction in State Aid

and very few retirements even with the incentives that were presented by the District. The use of using a significant amount of money from the Reserves is a risk; however, Michael stated he is in full support of the budget proposal. However, restoring \$1.2 million in Programs/Services he cannot support. Through the withdrawal of the District's Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve Fund, we must reduce \$1.2 million in cuts from areas so that this does not occur next year. It is not feasible to pay for a Program/Service that will only last one year. The \$5.57 million is underfunded for 2012-2013 with no funding in sight. How will we achieve our Exit Outcome, our brand, as we have no data for them or have them measured? There is no concrete evidence to support this recommendation. He stated new times require new approaches and ways to do things. Michael stated he supports the tax levy but not the restoration of Programs/Services, therefore, he will vote no against any budget that recommends any more than \$3 million without a clear plan of how this will be measured in the future. He is in favor of the one-time expenses though. He inquired as to the possibility of developing an internal grant program for all the District staff as now is the time for change and not time for more of the same.

President Brian Lynch stated that he appreciates Vice-President Buck's comments and how well thought out and prepared they were. He stated Dr. Marino and his staff has answered the Public's concern for the past few years with cuts in the reduction of staff, programs and services. He stated he is in support to continue the proposal where we would use the \$4 million this year from the Reserves which makes a \$5.7 million gap for next year. Knowing it is necessary to keep as many of the programs intact is extremely important as people move to our District because of what we have to offer the kids. Brian believes that we can sustain it for now and work with changes that may be coming down the road.

Board Member John Lively thanked Board Vice-President Michael Buck for sharing his views and stated that he is exactly correct in his analysis. However, there is a lot of uncertainty about the future funding support from the State and using our Reserves as we are now will allow us to buy one year, maybe two years and maybe something will change in the future.

Board Member Mary Anne Holleran thanked Board Vice-President Michael Buck for all the time and effort he put into his presentation. She stated she is in agreement with him and in full support of the adoption of the ELA Program for Pre-K-6. She stated she still believes that reading is very valuable to the child at a very young age and hopes that perhaps this can be worked in to the budget before it is passed.

### **Public Comments**

Ken Leiwis, Erin, stated he is very happy to see the 5% increase in the Tax Levy and that he is also pleased to see the District WebSite so very open, thorough and easy to navigate. He stated he reviewed the data for the past ten years and stated that a 4.9% increase is very comparable with what is being proposed. Inflation is at 2.5% which means the school rate is double the inflation rate. He inquired as to what portion of the

budget is made up of personnel costs and how does it compare to last year and the year before? Superintendent Marino stated that 75% of our budget is made up of salary and benefits. The percentage changes because we have fewer employees this year. We are also responsible for retiree health insurance. The appropriation is about \$2.5 million a year. Ralph stated Health Insurance has tripled in 9 years. In the private sector the reverse is happening. Ralph stated the cost is now being contained because we have fewer employees and that this is the first time in many years we are looking at 30 layoffs.

Dori Fulk, Barnes Hill Road, inquired to how the reduction of 102 staff members over the last two to three years has affected class size. She stated we must be close to going above the legal limit for class size. Dr. Marino stated we are maximizing the classes out. Dori inquired as to how this is affecting the teacher's attention to student's individual needs. She stated she is really, really happy that the Pre-K Program has been restored and that it would have been extremely short-sighted if this program would have been reduced. There is research that shows that Pre-K is extremely effective and that Foreign Language should also be started at an early age. She inquired if 7<sup>th</sup> grade language, music, art and library will be put back in the budget. Superintendent Marino stated the economic reality is that we can no longer maintain smaller class sizes. We are being forced to max out our classes. Dr. Marino stated Foreign Language will be put back in the budget. The School District will be a two language curriculum at the 7<sup>th</sup> grade level consisting of French and Spanish. Ralph stated six K-8 Special Area Teachers will be restored to the budget.

Barb Wood, Marshall Street, stated she is very concerned that in comparison to other school districts we are about \$1000 less per student expenditure. Is it possible for the District to go back again and ask corporations for help or check with other organizations to see if there are any grants we can apply for? She also stated the District needs a better science program. She stated she does not believe there should be a decrease in the tax levy. The State is giving that money to the District and the Board should look at ways to use that money to restore programs/services. She stated it is time for the taxpayers to give back some money to their community and help maintain the strong programs that we are known for. She stated there is a very big possibility with these proposed budget cuts that we may lose students to the Corning School District. We are at a time right now where we are going to be asked to do a lot better instruction. We need to be mentors to work with students who are failing the tests to get them through. We need to look at ways to improve the academics and keep the teachers we have even if we have to use them a different way. Board President Brian Lynch thanked Barb for her comments. He stated that he as well as the Board is concerned with maintaining the programs we currently have. He stated that Dr. Marino did apply for a grant through the Corning Foundation and that Dr. Marino and the Board has spoken to legislatures to try and change the funding rate level. Furthermore, he stated the Board is doing the best they can to obtain more funding for programs/services.

Kelly Murray, 230 Fairfield Street, stated she teaches First Grade at Ridge Road Elementary School and is referred to as Number 6 on the Seniority List and therefore

received a Job In Jeopardy Letter. However, she stated she is not a Number to her students or their parents. She is a very important asset to them as she is to the District. Over time she has taken time and money and invested herself into a partnership with Mansfield University which is another way Horseheads was able to establish a partnership in the community. Kelly believes that raising class sizes to the maximum number will be a disservice to the students. When you start to cut teachers, you are cutting this community's most valuable resources.

Jeffrey Van Zile, 640 Middle Road, stated the Board has the opportunity to stop the cuts this year. The Comptroller is giving you the power to go in and remove the money that is needed to prevent teachers from losing their jobs. The Board needs to step up and protect the public education. This is the Board's opportunity to save the District and keep the District competitive to other districts, save teacher's positions, save the students and save the administrators. Help the students achieve 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning by preventing the cuts that are being proposed in the 2011-2012 Preliminary Budget.

Kristie Murphy, 220 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Elmira Heights, stated she is a Spanish Teacher at the Middle School who also received a Job In Jeopardy Letter. She thanked Dr. Marino for the revisions in the Preliminary 2011-2012 Budget. She stated she is a graduate of the Horseheads Central School District and chose to return to her roots to establish her career in the Horseheads School District. Kristie stated that research shows that Foreign Language is very, very important to the growth of the child for many different reasons. She stated it is wonderful to see that Dr. Marino and his Team were able to put Foreign Language back into the budget. She stated Foreign Language is very important in the student meeting the District's Exit Outcomes. She doesn't want to see Horseheads change due to cuts. Board President Brian Lynch stated that many of the Board members are also Horseheads graduates and it is great to see the Horseheads graduate return home and give back to his/her community. Brian stated it is not easy for us to sit here and make the decisions that we have to make. Times have changed and we have to be proactive in our decision-making process. For five years we have been very, very conservative and now we are forced to make decisions that we never thought we would ever have to make. We all feel terrible that even one person on the list may get cut, but there isn't anything we can do to prevent this.

Jamy Brice-Hyde, 708 Tiff Avenue, stated that calculating a 7% tax increase for her home would be approximately \$7.00 a month. The quality of the education received from this school district goes far beyond what she could receive with a 7% tax increase. She stated her family chose to move from out of state to the Horseheads School District because of the quality of education, programs and services it has to offer to the children of the District. She stated the Board has a really tremendous opportunity to make sure this high quality education continues in the District. Areas that you have chosen to cut in are the areas that make a huge impact in a child's life. She stated that if AP classes are cut then colleges will look at our students in a different light. She encouraged the Board to reconsider its position and increase the tax levy rate to 7% and take the funds to reinstate programs/services. Dr. Ralph Marino thanked Mrs. Brice-Hyde for her comments. Ralph stated with this proposal not all of the AP classes at the High School will be cut.

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Tyler Coolidge, Horseheads High School Student, Elmira Heights, stated that he is very upset with the proposed budget cuts. He stated that students are not products that you can throw away. The Board needs to continue to look and keep looking until they find the money they need to reinstate Programs/Services. The kids are here to learn and become educated and should be the most important thing to the Board of Education.

Art Carichner, 232 Stuart Street, stated before tonight he was really upset and did want to vote for this budget or even re-elect the current Board members back onto the Board. However, since Dr. Marino and his Team went back and decided to restore programs/services in the schools he has changed his mind. He inquired as to why Dr. Marino didn't go to the faculty members and ask them their opinion as to what should be cut or saved. Why weren't they asked their input, how could we save programs/services, how could we do things differently, what can we do to make things better, etc.

Rochelle Giczowski, Math Teacher at the High School, 119 Burkeshire Drive, inquired about maximizing the classes out at the High School level. She stated that half of the students that come to her now are not able to do the math or pass the Assessments/Regents. So how can they be successful in a large class of 25 if they are not able to succeed in a classroom of 16 to 18 with no aide available? Students have to continue to take the test and pass, yet the numbers of students per class size are going to increase which will result in student's confidence and self-esteem becoming lower and we will see more students struggling and fall apart. She stated cutting thirty teachers will do more harm than good.

Alise Pedicone, Erin, stated she is angry. We as a community fought to get the money back to save our schools, not the taxes. She stated the money should go back to the programs/services. The reality is each family should take a minimal amount and pay the increase in the tax levy. The number of teachers we can bring back is what is important as our children deserve to have the best education possible.

Heather Gillette, 245 Orioleo Drive, stated she is a Math Teacher at the Middle School. Heather stated that we do have a way to measure that students achieve the District's Exit Outcomes every time where he a story about how successful one of our graduates have become in life. You can see it when you enter a school and see a student interacting with his/her peers, teachers, attending school events whether music, art or athletics or see their participation in school clubs, etc. Heather urged the Board to increase the tax levy and spread the word and see how the community would react to this increase so that we can save our children's future.

Carolyn Welliver, 107 Presidential Drive, stated she agrees with the additional 7.5% is not a big deal to the taxpayers. What the children are losing is a great deal more than what the increase is in the tax levy. We need to keep the educational level here in Horseheads where it has been even if it means that people have to give more. She pleaded for the Board not to bring our School District's educational level down with the cuts that have been proposed. People are willing to pay the 7.5% increase if it means



we will be able to keep our education where it is. Please take what is being said tonight by the community into consideration when deciding whether or not to accept the proposed 2011-2012 Budget and please consider keeping the 7.5% tax levy increase. She thanked Dr. Marino for the job that him and his Team have done in the preparation of the 2011-2012 Budget.

Moved by Brinthead, seconded by Strollo.

RESOLVED, that the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education Meeting extend the Public Section of Questions and Comments for another 30 minutes.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstained</u>	<u>Absent</u>
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Apgar			
Brinthead			
Buck			
Holleran			
Jacobus			
Lively			
Lynch			
Miller			
Strollo			

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Kelli Festch, 830 Maple Avenue, Elmira, Spanish Teacher at the High School, stated that education needs to be looked at in a different point of view. It is a way of life; it is a right we have when we are born. It cannot be treated the same way we treat any other kind of job. The Horseheads School District staff or students do not deserve to be punished because of a lack in the amount of State Aid the District is to receive. She pleaded for the Board to please look at education as an investment, not a commodity. It is the investment of our children's future.

Theresa Pedicone, 63 Pine Lane, Erin, asked for clarification regarding the closing of the school during evening hours if the District ends up with a Contingency Budget. Superintendent Marino stated that a Contingency Budget occurs when the budget is defeated by the public. If this occurs, then the schools would only be available to host school sponsored functions. Outside agencies such as the Boy and Girls Scouts, the Youth Bureau, etc., would no longer be able to use our buildings.

William Hyde, 708 Tiff Avenue, stated this is what a democracy looks like and there shouldn't be anything used as an excuse of why our kids need an education. This kind of discussion is why we listen, we plan and we make decisions. He urged the Board to consider all that has been said tonight when making a final decision on the 2011-2012 Budget.

Nancy Simons, 2215 Grand Central Avenue, Math Teacher at the Middle School, stated her children graduated from the Horseheads Central School District and are very successful. When they return home for a visit and we have conversations about the School District, they become very upset. They don't understand how Horseheads it is

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allowing itself to lose the prestige and brand that is so widely known for. They realize that Horseheads no longer has the same brand it once had. They don't understand what is going on here in the District and they don't know how to explain it to their friends. It saddens her to realize that other children will not have the same opportunities that her children had when they were students in Horseheads. There must be some way the District can find some money to keep the Horseheads brand intact. If it is important, you will find it. If the extra-curricular programs are gone at the Middle School, what will the students have left who are not financially able to participate in community events/programs outside of school? Not all students in the District have the same advantages and some only have school events/programs to look forwards to that make them a well-rounded student. Through the Raider World all the students have the same opportunities to enhance their individuality. So, if the extra-curricular programs are gone this means the students will have two years of no opportunity to participate in events/programs outside of school. The Middle School students deserve to participate in activities, other than just academics. Also, it is very vital that the \$40,000 be restored for the High School Resource Officer.

Andrew Sol, Horseheads, informed the Board that many of his friends who have become successful due to the challenges(such as the AP/ACE courses), the Arts, Music and Athletic Program that were available to them while they were students in Horseheads. One of his friends has become a Cruise Line Director, another performed at Carnage Hall, another production agent, etc. He stated these proposed cuts in staff, programs/services cannot take place. All of these things and people made him who he is today. Andrew urged the Board to reconsider the cuts and to step forwards and keep the Horseheads Brand intact.

Chris Sakamoto, Chambers Road, stated as a taxpayer he is recommending that the Board go back to the Corning Foundation and ask them again for a grant to help save staff, programs/services in the Horseheads District. He does not want the Board to give up on our children. We need to fight for what we believe in. Some of the employees of the Corning Foundation are taxpayers and they also have children in our schools.

Sarah Stack, Belaire Drive, stated she chose to move to Horseheads because she was told that Horseheads is a good school district and the community is a community that still follows an easy and peaceful life style and that her children will be well educated. She stated she is a little nervous now about whether or not she will stay in this area. If the education fails, the housing market fails and people will start to relocate and she may be one of them. There is a lot more affected than just staff, students and programs/services when the education does not succeed. It also affects the livelihood of the community itself. She feels her children will not be properly stimulated or become well-rounded individuals if they do not have the extra-curricular activities that other school districts offer.

Linda Watson, Quail Run Road, stated that our District is very fortunate to have such a large sum of money that can be withdrawn from its Reserve Account. When other Districts are going under because they do not have these reserves, our District is being very frugal in the use of them. Linda stated that the District should not use the reserves,

but that the State is going to have to do something to change the way they are funding education. She believes the Board needs to approach the Corning Foundation again and apply for a grant. President Brian Lynch stated that we applied for a grant over a year ago from Corning and they gave us their decision that there were no funds available for our District.

Abby Brown, Spring Creek Drive, stated our children are our future. They are our investment and it is up to us to see that they succeed on a daily basis. They deserve to have the opportunity to participate in the extra-curricular programs. She believes that the teachers should be asked for their input regarding how the proposed cuts will affect their programs. The Board needs to respect our teachers enough to seek their input.

Meghan Strong, 1381 Hibbard Road, Health Teacher at the Middle School, stated she is heartbroken over what is occurring in our District. She cannot handle seeing the kids losing their teachers, programs and services. They need the teachers, programs/services that are offered to them to succeed in life. If they are cut, there is a great potential these students will not become the best they are able to. What will happen to the health of the child? The Board needs to find the money to save our children.

Corey Sweet, Spring Creek Drive, inquired as to whether the Music Teachers were asked for their input regarding the proposed cuts. Were they asked to sit at the table with Dr. Marino and his Administrative Team when these proposals were being made? Dr. Marino stated the proposals were put together with his Administrative Team strictly as proposals and if the taxpayers vote yes for the Budget then he will get together with the necessary teachers to fine tune the proposals. So, once he receives endorsement for the Board he will ask the teachers for their input once the dollar amount is known that he will have to work with. The Preliminary Budget was developed under the guidelines/parameters that he was given by the Board.

John Thomas, 1305 Caton Road, Corning, Social Studies Teacher at the High School, commented regarding Vice-President Michael Buck speaking about the fiscal responsibility and the District being a business as well. In this day and age, the money that is being used in the Strategic Plan could have been spent elsewhere. We are not a business, but we are all here as educators to teach the children of this District to become successful later in life, to become a life-long learner.

Bruce Watson, Quail Run Road, stated that it seems as though what he is hearing when he attends these Board meetings has become a broken record. The Board, Dr. Marino and his Administrative Team are doing the best they can. Their hands are tied when it comes to certain aspects of the Budget such as salaries and contracts. The Board does not want what is occurring in our District to happen. Bruce encouraged everyone to talk to their State legislatures to get rid of the State mandates, to untie the District's hands.

Tina Matejka, 1570 Chambers Road, inquired for clarification to the restoration of the Music Program and staff. She did not see Band, Chorus or Orchestra on the list of items being restored to the budget. The Music Staff lost 8 teachers. Will their positions be restored? Shouldn't the money that is being restored to the budget be used for the restoration of staff, programs/services and not lowering the taxes? Why should the students suffer while the taxes are being saved?

Moved by Apgar, seconded by Miller.

RESOLVED, that the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education Meeting extend the Public Section of Questions and Comments for another 30 minutes.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstained</u>	<u>Absent</u>
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Jessica Benkelman, Millport, feels the money should be used to save the programs/services and that the District would be better to borrow the money that is necessary to do this. She realizes it is a short-term solution and if the reserves are there to use, then we need to. She also encouraged the Board to look into other revenue sources as they will be needed in the future. The tax payers are willing to take part of the responsibility and step up to ensure the next generation of children have an excellent education as they are our future. They deserve to have a quality education.

Dave Robbins, 9 Garden Lane, stated the Board needs to think about the priorities we have and increase the tax levy. The expense of a quality education continues to rise and will continue to do so. He stated he works in the Recruiting Office at Corning and he realizes that education is more than just academics. He chose to move to Horseheads because of its educational system. What he has heard tonight scares him and fears that his sixth grader may not have the same opportunities that his other two children have had. If it costs a little more in taxes to give our children a quality education, than he is willing to pay it.

Yvonne Allen, 11 Maple Lane, Campbell, stated she has been a Music Teacher in the District for 26 years, and stated she does not find it admirable that our District spends less on education than other districts surrounding us. If we chose to support quality education, we must pay for it. With the possible leadership in this community our staff's input should be used. Where is the leadership to develop higher level thinking skills if staff, programs/services are cut? We need to decide what is the most important. We all need to tighten our belts so we can support this increase. The School Board needs to speak up and tell the people of the community what our children are worth.

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Colleen Hess, 13 Acorn Avenue, Pine City, Special Education Teacher in the District, is very touched by the overwhelming support of the people in the Horseheads community. It means so much to hear community members come forward in support of our children. She is very proud to have been a graduate of Horseheads and to return here to teach. If it wasn't for the programs and the services that she had here as a student, she wouldn't be here standing today. The experience she had as a student in Horseheads made a huge impact on her life. All the kids need to have the same opportunities that she had. The extra-curricular activities are just as valuable as the academics. She urged the Board to go back and reinstate the staff, the programs/activities and the tax levy to 7%. She also urged the people to continue to contact their legislatures, to speak out and fight for our kids.

Connor Lewis, 1346 Breesport Road, Erin, stated it saddens him to see the Horseheads District in the state that it is in. It is sad to see so much stripped away from the students. He urged the Board to raise the tax levy and to use the funds the government is allowing the District to use to keep the staff, programs/services intact.

Zach Cowl, 21 Country Estates, Horseheads, stated when he moved here the most important thing to him was the school district and its educational system. Horseheads came up over and over again as the top District in the area when compared to other school districts. The programs that Horseheads has offered him have allowed him to become the man he is today. The only reason he was able to attend the colleges that he did was because of the quality of education he received while a student in Horseheads. It wasn't just the academics but the extra-curricular programs such as music that helped to balance him and make him a well-rounded person.

Rebecca Hulette, Sullivanville Road, is a 2007 graduate of Horseheads. She stated the District needs to listen to the teachers. The teachers know what is going on in the lives of the students. The Board doesn't. They don't interact with the students on a daily basis. The teachers play a major role in the lives of the students. Rebecca stated the extra-curricular programs made a huge impact in her life. These programs need to be kept. She stated the 2% tax cap is a possibility for the future, however, is the Board willing to take a risk of losing the name it has established for itself by not increasing the tax levy?

Terry Malloy, 3308 Markle Hollow Road, Big Flats, a Technology Teacher at the High school, stated that the proposed tax levy increase is five times less than the cost of inflation. We are not in this situation because of what the Board, Dr. Marino or his Team has done. It is because of what the State is doing to us. The people at the State level see Horseheads as being a rich District. Horseheads is a great place to be. Terry is afraid that we are going to lose this brand that we have had for the last 50 years. He encourages the Board to raise the taxes; make the taxpayers help save our children.

Betsy Sechrist, 224 Aberdeen Road, a Language Teacher at the Middle School, stated that within the first marking period she was floored by the behavior of the children, the support she received from the staff and the parents and realized that this is the place where she wanted her children to go to school. She is very happy with the education

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that they have received. However, she is starting to become concerned as to what will happen to her children as they get older. She is in support of restoring the staff, programs/services back in the budget. If the Board has to cut corners to see that the children have the quality education they deserve, then they must do so. We all have to work together for the success of our children's future.

Amy Klossner, 307 Steege Hill Road, Corning, Art Teacher at Center Street Elementary School, stated she left Elmira to come to Horseheads and has been very happy here and so are her children. She stated that as an Art Teachers she doesn't just teach Art, but that she also integrates the core curriculum subjects into her teaching. The students receive so much more than just an Art Class. She thanked the Board, Dr. Marino and his Administrative Team for all of their hard work in restoring, programs/services back into the budget.

Dori Fulk, Barnes Hill Road, stated her daughter survived and graduated from High School because of the art program and the teachers. They rescued her and offered her a support system that built her confidence and self-esteem which has resulted in her making it through college. She stated it seems to her that the Board feels that if they do not offer the Public a low tax rate then this budget will not pass. Have you heard what the people have said tonight? They are here in support of the restoration of the teachers, programs/services and are willing to have a higher tax levy to keep them. Board President Brian Lynch stated that the Board has heard the people who have spoken tonight. However, there were 1,400 people who completed the survey who are not in favor of even a 4% tax increase. Ninety percent of those who returned the survey want a tax levy increase below 4%. Brian stated the budget will not pass solely the number of people who have spoken tonight. The Board has tried to be respectful and meet the needs of what we have heard.

Jay Stoltzfus, 763 Ridge Road, stated he greatly appreciates all that the Board, Dr. Marino and his Administrative Team has done in the restoration of the budget. However he stated that it will come to a point where one cut could be the difference in maintaining programs and meeting standards. If the input comes from the staff equals the input that comes from the taxpayers and the funds are there, then we need to maintain as many programs/services as possible. Jay urged the Board to be very, very careful when making cuts to the District staff, programs/services.

### **Board of Education Discussion**

Board President Brian Lynch thanked everyone for coming forward tonight with the comments and suggestions. It is great to hear the success stories of our graduates and concerns from the residents as this shows the Board that they truly care about our students and their future. Brian also thanked Dr. Marino, the Finance Committee and the Board for all of their hard work and dedication to the proposed 2011-2012 Budget.

Board Member Mary Anne Holleran thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. Everyone's presence shows that they are here for the same reason we are to support our children and their education. On the other hand though there are a lot of members of our community who do not attend the meetings and tell us what they want or what

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they will support. These will be the ones who will vote no. This has been a very challenging budget process and if the budget is voted down then there is the possibility of the District having a Contingency Budget. Each person sitting here is someone who has dedicated their life to being a parent or who has had a child in this school district. We are here for the children. We are here because we now they are not just a product. They are precious to us and we do care about them. As a Board we think about the struggles and it is very difficult for us to make these tough decisions. Mary Anne stated from personal experience she knows what the Horseheads District is all about and wants to keep its brand. Mary Anne is asking for the people to go out and speak to your neighbors, to the people who have not attended the Board Meetings/Workshops and let them know what is at stake.

Board Member Ruth Miller echoes Mary Anne's sentiments. She stated that the decisions that have been made by the Board are taking with great magnitude. They are not easy decisions for us to make. She stated we were voted on the Board to take care of the District and the student's needs and that is why we are here and why we need the Public to attend our meetings to let us know what they want, how they feel. They are the taxpayers and they need to work with us as much as we need to work for them. Ruth urged the Public to get out there and communicate with their neighbors, their friends and their family and educate them on the budget. Ruth stated she is in full support of the proposed 2011-2012 Budget and is also fine with the 7.5% tax levy increase as long as the money is distributed equably across the District. Ruth also commended Dr. Marino and his Administrative Team for all of the hard work, effort and time they put into this Budget. She also appreciates everyone who has come to the meetings/workshops to express their concerns and comments.

Board Member Rose Apgar stated she does not have an issue with raising the taxes, however; she does not see any Senior Citizens in attendance. I am one who can only implore the Public to get out there and talk to your parents, grandparents, family members, friends, neighbors, etc. These are the people that need to be educated on the budget, the ones who stay home and end up voting "No". If they don't have a child in school any longer, they won't hesitate to vote, "No." We need to remember that the Senior Citizens are on a limited income and that a 7.5% raise will not be looked at in a favorable light by them.

Board President Brian Lynch stated that this has been an extremely challenging budget year and that he is very thankful that Dr. Marino was able to restore some of the staff, programs/services to the preliminary budget. However, he is very concerned as Vice-President Buck mentioned carrying the deficit forward into the next budget year. Brian's fear is that if we take the full \$5.8 million we are creating an unbelievably huge deficit and to start with \$7.5 million and with \$6.9 million is a very scary thought. This year has been bad enough with \$2 million. However, he is in support of taking the money from the \$4 million so that we are able to restore everything. This is not an easy decision for any of us and feels that Dr. Marino has proposed an equitable, satisfying 2011-2012 Budget.

Board Member Mark Brinthaup stated that 7.5% is a little hard for him to swallow. He prefers the 4.95% which is not as difficult. However, tonight he has heard the Public say they do not want to go lower than 6%, so therefore, he agrees with Dr. Marino's new proposal. Even though this budget is voted down, we have the opportunity to put it up for another vote. With some slight changes, it could be possible for us to miss a Contingency Budget.

Board Vice-President Michael Buck stated he is a graduate of Horseheads, has a senior in High School and a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at the Middle School and that these cuts also affect his family. They do not come easy for any of us. As a Board we have the ability to make careful problem solving decisions which is why it is so important to hear from the Public, to look at all the options and make the best decision possible. Mike thanked the Public for attending and sharing their thoughts and concerns. The Board has listened to what has been said and have not taken this budget process lightly. The Board has a job to do as well. He realizes that we are an educational institution; we are an institution that deals with knowledge and education. He also stated that in at least two meetings Dr. Marino has literally come to meetings with tears in his eyes as he brought the budget to the Board and the Public. This budget also affects Dr. Marino as he has children in our schools. Mike wanted the Public to realize that if this budget gets voted down it also means there will be no capitol improvements in our buildings, there will be no public use of the buildings, there will be no purchasing of supplies, etc. He stated the problem with taking from the Reserves is what will happen the following year to the Programs/Services that are being restored this year? We will still be short that money next year and the years to come. We have been elected as a Board to be in charge of making financial decisions for the people of the Horseheads community and now is the time that we need to be creative and use our problem solving skills. It is not a one time solution. It would be a one-time fix and we still would have to come up with money the following year. These are decisions that need to be made slowly and with a concrete plan. People have received Job In Jeopardy Letters and when the budget passes there are \$1.75 million in Federal Funds will be sent to inform employees they may not have a job the following year, 2012-2013. We have to figure out a long-term solution, not a short-term fix. The tax cap will only cover the increase in spending that is outside of our control. What will we do for revenue? We are trying to rationalize the budget so that we are able to continue to provide quality education to our students and assure them the best education possible, yet we don't have the money that is needed. Mike is in fear that it is the other group of people as Board Member Apgar and Brinthaup stated who do not attend the meetings/workshops who will vote the budget down. It is really important that we follow the laws when we discuss the budget. We can educate in the decision-making process and yet the budget can still be voted down. Dr. Marino, Brian and myself have met with the Corning Foundation seeking grants for our District and were told funding wasn't available. It was a significant proposal and it was flatly refused. Mike stated it was very encouraging to see so many teachers and parents speak up. He suggested the Board do some careful problem solving, raise the tax levy back up to 7.5%, ask the teachers in our buildings for their opinions and input in the creative problem solving for solutions. We have to plan for the future which is what he did not hear with this new proposed 2011-2012 budget. Mike would also like to see the ELA Program for Pre-K-6 reinstated and the purchase process started for the fall if the budget passes.

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Board Member Pam Strollo thanked everyone for attending. There has been a lot of great input from the Board and the Public. She stated this has been a very challenging year and a very tough one for all of us. She is very worried about the financial stability of our District as well as the future of our children. Right now people are drawn to move to our area because of our education system. If we have to continue to rely on increases in the taxes the cost of living, we will not look so reasonable and we will lose growth in our community and in our schools. Pam stated she is in favor of the proposed 2011-2012 budget with the slightly higher tax increase and is in full support of the ELA Program being purchased.

Board Member Jim Jacobus stated two years ago when he ran for re-election he wanted to have the opportunity to help the school district get through the financial difficulties that he seen coming in the near future. Then along came the recession and then cuts from the legislatures and now the possibility of a tax cap freeze. Jim considers this school district to be the best District in the state. He thanked everyone who spoke tonight and as he looks around the room he has seen how hard it is for the educators, the parents and the students. He has to agree with almost everything that has been said tonight. He doesn't like what is happening to our District. He spent 32 years as a teacher in this District and it breaks his heart to see what is occurring knowing that the Board has no control over it. Jim stated he has spent many, many sleepless nights trying to figure out where to go and what to do to stop this from happening. He has gone to the legislatures over and over and yet there hasn't been any change in their decision-making process. He stated it would be easy for the Board to look at the \$5.8 million from the Reserves and apply all of it to this year's budget. However, it will be necessary to realize that we will still have next year and the following year to look at and we don't want to deplete the Reserves. We need something for the future. Jim stated he would not be opposed to raising the tax levy to 7.5% and not take money out of the reserves.

Board Member John Lively stated he shared the same feelings of many who have spoken tonight. John stated he also has a child in the District and has had to explain to her about the changes that may be occurring in her school and it isn't easy. He thanked everyone who came out and shared their thoughts and who listened to what was said tonight as it affects all of us whether we are a Board member, a community resident, a student or a parent. Every member of this Board would like to keep everything the District currently has. However, the reality is that we realize that it is not possible. We all need to work together to make this District the best it is given the circumstances we are in. John is in full support of using the reserves as proposed by Dr. Marino and reducing the tax levy to 4.95%.

Board President Brian Lynch polled the Board for their recommendation regarding the new proposed 2011-2012 Budget as discussed tonight.

Board Member Mary Anne Holleran stated personally she does not have an issue with the 7.5% tax levy, but she believes the budget would not pass if we go with it. She is in favor of the proposed 4.95% with the use of our Reserves with the ELA Program being purchased for Pre-K-6. She also wants to see the Foreign Language Program reinstated in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade along with Elementary Positions and Special Area Teachers if there is any extra money.

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Board Member Ruth Miller stated she is not in favor of using any more of the Reserves than the allotted \$4 million and is in favor of a 6-7.5% tax levy increase.

Board Member Rose Apgar stated she is in favor of taking more money out of the Reserves(\$4 million) and going with a 6% tax levy increase.

Vice-President Michael Buck stated he is very concern with the 7.5% tax levy increase and believes that we may face a Contingency Budget. He feels the \$650,000 should be used on the tax levy and pick up the restoration of programs/services out of the Reserve Fund. He is not comfortable with going any higher than \$3 million from our Reserves. He is in favor of the 6% tax levy increase and using \$3.5 million from Reserves and earmarking \$500,000 for the ELA Program, Pre-K-Gr. 6.

Board Member Pam Strollo stated she is in favor of the new Proposed 2011-2012 Budget using the \$4 million.

Board Member Mark Brinthaupt stated he is in favor of the new Proposed 2011-2012 Budget using the \$4 million.

Board Member John Lively stated he is in favor of the 6% from use of the additional money emarked for ELA.

Vice-President Michael Buck stated it is important that we use the Reserves to purchase one time purchases not on-going costs. We don't want to sacrifice textbook aid for the purchase of the ELA Program. He wants to stay as close to the \$4 million reserves which will make him stay comfortable in the moving forwards and maintaining programs.

Board Member Pam Strollo agrees that if we choose to move the ELA purchase it should come out of the Reserves and any additional money should go to the restoration of programs and services.

Board Member Jim Jacobus stated that he agrees that the ELA Textbook Adoption should come out of the Reserves. Jim also stated that he wants to see Elementary Positions reinstated along with Special Area Teachers if there is any extra money.

Board President Brian Lynch stated that three Board Members are in favor of using the \$4.3 million from the Reserves and two Board Members are in favor of using \$7.5 million.

Board Member Ruth Miller stated she is in agreement with the purchase of the ELA Textbook Adoption as a one-time purchase and to be included in the 7.5% tax levy and to use any leftover money for the restoration of programs/services.

Board President Brian Lynch stated he is in favor of the increase in Reserves and taking the extra money to purchase the ELA Program.

Board Member Pam Stollo stated that she agrees with Dr. Marino and the use of the additional money in the Reserves for the purchase of the ELA Program. She also supports the \$4.3 million and the 6% tax levy increase and the restoration of Programs/Services.

Board President Brian Lynch and Vice-President Michael Buck stated they are in favor of the 6% tax levy increase and the use of \$4.3 million from the Reserves.

Board President Brian Lynch stated that the Board is in agreement that the Board wants Dr. Marino to go with the following Preliminary 2011-2012 Budget a 6% tax levy increase, the use of \$4.3 million from the Reserves and earmark \$300,000 for the ELA Program.

**Adjournment**

Moved by Jacobus, seconded by Holleran.

RESOLVED, that the Horseheads Central School District Board of Education Meeting adjourned from its Regular Meeting of the Board of Education at 9:40 PM.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Noes</u>	<u>Abstained</u>	<u>Absent</u>
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Apgar

Brinthaup

Buck

Holleran

Jacobus

Lively

Lynch

Miller

Stollo

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted By:

***Candy L. Maine***

Candy L. Maine

District Clerk