Moving Jeffco Forward

What does the School Board Need to do to move Jeffco forward and regain trust? It comes down to two things: effective use of money, and accountability. Here are suggestions.

More Effective Uses of Money

- Resurrect a version of Jeffco's 1999 Performance Promise Mill Levy Override (MLO). Tie some component of MLO funding for salary increases to student achievement benchmarks.
- Incentivize improved academic performance by paying better teachers more than weaker teachers. There's likely a normal distribution of teacher effectiveness. Implement a 360-degree annual evaluation that includes ratings by peers, coaches, principals, parents and students to obtain a well-rounded picture, and pay higher performing teachers more.
- To address claims of teacher recruitment issues, start a "Grow Your Own" program. Offer 200 Jeffco graduates each year $20,000 annually for four years college tuition stipend/loan to obtain a teaching degree and come back to Jeffco to teach. Recipients would be expected to teach in Jeffco schools for 4 years with a $10,000/year salary reduction to partially offset program costs.
- Cut expenses. Despite recent school closures, there are still multiple schools in Jeffco that are underutilized and not providing the same educational experience as schools with higher enrollments and more funding. As enrollment continues to decline, the district needs more right-sizing. In addition, there are several district programs that, in the light of recent research, may not be providing benefits commensurate with costs, such as 1:1 Tech and SEL. Comprehensively review those programs.
- Currently Jeffco contributes 21% of each employees' salary to the state retirement plan, PERA. There are many scenarios where employees could obtain the same, or better, retirement benefits at a lower cost. Some of the current contributions could be converted to increased regular salary. Explore those alternatives.
- Wait to ask for capital money until the Strategic Capital Plan has been completed.

Stronger Accountability

- $133 million per year in new funding is a lot of money. Expecting community members to oversee those funds through citizen oversight committees such as those put in place after the 2018 MLO and bond, has failed in the past. Instead, to restore trust and full accountability, it is imperative that Jeffco retains accounting professionals to perform those oversight responsibilities. That would entail yearly financial audits from fully independent auditors for the MLO and biannual Performance audits on capital projects to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- While many good things were done in managing the 2018 Capital Improvement Program, other parts were badly mismanaged. Now, with a new COO and Executive Director of Facilities, Jeffco needs to capture those successes so they can be repeated, and identify the problems so they can be corrected, before any new money is spent. This can be easily accomplished by performing a Performance Audit on the 2018 program. Critics will say that this will cost money. We say that this will be money well spent and will prevent costly missteps going forward.

Until Jeffco implements significant changes with real accountability, the vote must be NO.

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