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NEWS

Some complain as \$188 million SKSD budget OK'd

By Elisha Meyer Port Orchard Independent • August 19, 2023 1:30 am



The South Kitsap School District will move forward with a nearly \$188 million budget months after reduced attendance and a loss of COVID emergency funds led to the announcement of millions of dollars in planned cuts.

The budget was passed Aug. 16 on a vote of 4-1, with director Jeff Daily solely voting against as he commonly has. Monies for 2023-24 consist of a \$175 million general fund, \$2.2 million in transportation, \$8.8 million in capital projects, \$355,000 in debt service and \$868,000 in the Associated Student Body fund.

While it unsurprisingly passed, it did not pass quietly as members of the community gave their reactions. Some public comments gave pushback, citing complaints of continued educational struggle even as regular pay increases for staff occur.

“It is crucial that we thoroughly examine the correlation between salary increase and the overall performance of our students to ensure the investment in teachers is yielding the desired results,” David Cruz said.

Such a point continued to be vocalized by Daily, a common critic of the lack he sees in overall educational statistics. “The district has not shown that more money, more people, more everything is resulting in student achievement. We can’t just keep tossing things out and saying, ‘Let’s try this.’”

Other community members such as Judy Arbogast called the concerns being shared as nothing more than fearmongering, adding the district must remain competitive in salaries for incoming and remaining teachers. “This district has a very good record of having budgets that work to meet the needs of the students.”

Daily, who is closing in on the end of his term and did not run for reelection, stated that he was aware of his “whistleblower status” within the district and that the public should hold those whose names are signed on the budget accountable for where that money goes, implying he would not sign the resolution.

The 2023-24 school year for the SKSD is set to begin Sept. 5, a day after Labor Day weekend.