

This represents a loss of \$1.1 million in PPR, as well as \$71,000 in mill levy override money and some student fees.

MA has had to make significant adjustments to its budget but has tried to keep cuts away from the classroom, Gustafson said. MA restructured its teacher compensation to be more competitive and has fully funded its debt service bond payments. Gustafson said that the team went through every single line item looking for opportunities. He noted that tax revenues come in between February and July. Increased interest income has helped, along with new special education (SPED) grants. A \$400,000 emergency connectivity grant was received, which had been applied for by MA's former CFO Marc Brocklehurst. He noted that thanks to Operations Manager Jake Dicus, there were facility rental revenues from both campuses and that MA had used gifts and donations to help balance the budget but was still a little short at East Campus.

Under expenditures, Gustafson added a line item for MA to purchase land for a parking lot at West Campus and looked at revising its HVAC, copier, shredding, custodial, and custodial supplies contracts. He thanked principals for enforcing color copy rules since each color copy costs 10 times what a black-and-white copy costs.

In summary, he thinks MA is well-positioned for the 2024-25 fiscal year when he is expecting a 5% increase in PPR or about \$700 per pupil. He said that MA will not have the big costs for the modular buildings this coming year nor the big Internal Revenue Service (IRS) penalty it had two years ago. MA will be more conservative with its budget and try to make sure it will be in compliance with bond covenants. Finally, he noted he was working on restructuring the Finance Department with his transition.

The board unanimously approved the resolutions to appropriate funds for the midyear amended budget, to use a portion of its beginning fund balance as required by state statute, and to approve an interfund borrowing resolution. The interfund borrowing resolution allows MA to borrow \$250,000 from its general fund and \$100,000 from the preschool fund. The resolution does not specify the use of the borrowed amounts but states that the loans must be repaid when those funds are required to meet obligations or no later than three months after the beginning of the following budget year. In last month's article on MA, Buczkowski noted that the Finance Committee had discussed borrowing from the West Campus to lend to the East Campus (see <https://www.ocn.me/v23n12.htm#ma>).

Enrollment/retention marketing plan
Interim Chief Operating Officer Kim McClelland introduced Kendra Kuhlmann from Marketing, Elementary School Registrar Lena Gross, and Secondary Campus Registrar Laura Polen to present their strategic plan for enrollment and retention.

Gross said the team had made changes they hoped would make a true difference. They had gotten a 96% response rate from the West Campus and an 89% response rate from the East Campus. They added "undecided" as an option and asked what the most important factor would be in parents' decision. The team expected to begin calculating the enrollment numbers and sharing them with the administration team.

Polen said the previous year's enrollment process has been revised and streamlined. One change was to have a separate form for preschool since they ask about potty training. The data is automatically transferred from a Google form to a spreadsheet, eliminating manual data entry. The data is displayed by grade, and they can see waitlist numbers and priorities by applying a filter in addition to showing who has an MA sibling and tracking MA's responses by email or phone.

The team also created email template re-

sponses that they can customize and have coordinated on tour information. Polen said that the team does a pre-enrollment record request, and Kuhlmann added that they might meet with parents to discuss attendance issues and create an attendance contract. Polen said that the ParentSquare system has been very helpful in getting out information and ensuring they are not duplicating efforts. The team has exit interviews if a student leaves midyear, if they accept but don't show up, or if they don't send in their "intent to return" survey. They can generate reports on who intends to report, wait lists, and seat offers for daily review, Polen said.

Gross said the team focused on celebrating community and connectedness after reviewing data and performing a market analysis. Kuhlmann said they surveyed students and families on what they were looking for in a high school. The top words and phrases were community, safe, academics, and quality teachers. Gross said the team used SchoolMint to determine micro factors for choosing alternative education and found that top responses included student achievement, innovation and programs, customer service, and school safety. The team has made an effort to increase its availability. Other families' opinions outweigh data. They noted that 26% of MA's students come from out of district, which is more than other charter schools.

Finally, Kuhlmann said that MA has taken ownership of its Google sites for both campuses, which will allow it to ask for Google reviews and to leverage Google Analytics to understand how its website is being used. Gross emphasized that communication is key, and that MA should keep in touch with families who have been offered seats between February and August. The team suggests hosting a summer festival and facilitating a quarterly information night for prospective families. Gross also said they would initiate an incentive program for current families to bring in new families offering free dress passes for K-8 students or a preferred parking pass for high school students.

Fundraising plan
Dicus gave a presentation about the current state of fundraising as well as ideas for the future. He explained that there is a difference between fundraising and donations, with the former raising funds for specific programs or projects and the latter giving without expecting something in return. The annual gala is MA's biggest fundraising event; Grandparents Day is a fundraiser and there is an opportunity to sponsor library book dedications. School sponsorships are another way to support MA at various levels; MA has a brochure that includes MA's mission and vision. Finally, grants are another form of fundraising that includes the \$400,000 connectivity grant already awarded, as well as a Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grant, the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC) program, and a school security grant that is in process.

For donations, the Lynx Fund has been a success, said Dicus. People can donate monthly or on a one-time basis or \$1,996 (the year MA was founded) as Lynx Legacy donors or repeat do-

nors. MA received a school furniture donation worth \$99,000 for the cost of \$5,000. A family donated track uniforms. Greater Grounds Landscaping redid the West Campus playground and is adding turf for a total value of \$20,000.

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