



Sweet Home Central School District of Amherst and Tonawanda

Office of the Superintendent
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Geoffrey M. Hicks
Superintendent of Schools

February 9, 2010

Dear Community Member:

The Sweet Home Board of Education began deliberations on the 2010-2011 school district budget in January. The initial stage of the process was to consider a "program maintenance" budget, whereby expenses and personnel roll over from this year to next year without any reductions. In normal years, state aid to Sweet Home would rise slightly, allowing for nominal tax increases to fund a program maintenance budget. The past two years, however, have not been normal. The Governor released his proposed 2010-2011 budget with a \$2.5 million reduction in state aid to Sweet Home, the largest decrease in the history of the school district and one that causes a significant revenue gap for next year.

The School Board has always utilized a two-fold approach to crafting a budget that includes protecting the core programs of the district while exhibiting fiscal responsibility with tax dollars. The drastic reduction in state aid to Sweet Home means that the Board has been looking at a variety of ways to reduce overall spending. It will not be possible to transfer the entire loss of state aid to the tax levy, the resulting tax increase would be exorbitant in these economic times. Therefore, the Board has considered significant cuts, in both efficiency items and personnel.

The Board will continue discussing the budget over the next two months. In an effort to personally inform community members about the process and allow for feedback, I have scheduled a **special open community budget meeting** on **March 9, 2010**, starting at 4:45 pm in the Norman Vergils Community Center. The meeting is not a Board of Education meeting, but rather a chance for community members to learn more about budget plans and voice opinions. The special meeting is open to all district residents.

The next formal budget study session of the Board of Education is scheduled for February 27th at 8:15 am. The Board will also consider budget items at the March 16th meeting and vote on the proposed budget at the April 6th meeting. Board meetings are always held in public and include opportunities for residents to speak directly to Board members.

This budget season will prove to be one of the most challenging in Sweet Home history. I am hopeful that you will consider attending the special open community meeting on March 9th. Please contact me at 250-1402 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey M. Hicks
Superintendent of Schools