

KEEPING UP WITH THE BUDGET INSTALLMENT #5

A Word about Contracted Services

There has been much discussion about what services should and should not be included in a school budget. Some feel that, as educational institutions, we should only fund educational services. This is a complicated issue. There is no doubt that our primary function is to provide an education to all students.

However, we must provide a place for that education to take place. Therefore, we have to provide for a safe building that is stocked with necessary supplies and personnel to keep it clean and well maintained. Thus, we make provisions for maintenance and custodial functions. Years ago, the decision was made to contract out our custodial services while providing a Maintenance Director to oversee plant operations and to answer directly to the School Board. Tom McCaffrey has done an admirable job caretaking the building as if it were his own home. His professionalism and sensible approach keeps the building in excellent condition. We have been pleased with our contract with Kingdom Cleaners, whose contract with the district will be done next year. At that time, we will review our options and make the best informed choice to move forward.

If students are to be educated, then they must be transported to school. State law requires districts to provide transportation up through eighth grade to students living a mile or more from their designated school. Schools used to own and maintain their own bus fleet. But the costs were problematic and supervising licensed drivers was not an area of expertise for school officials. Many districts, ours included, opted to go with an established transportation business. We have been satisfied with our service from Butler's Transportation, whose contract will run out at the end of this year. It was felt that to ensure that we were getting the best service for our dollar, we should go out to bid to see what other possibilities existed. We are now in the process of reviewing the bids and will finalize plans soon.

Finally, if students are going to spend the day in school, they must eat. And for optimal learning, they must eat well. Carol Brill has, for years, provided healthy choices at reasonable prices, always thinking of the children first. Just as the District as a whole went into deficit without sufficient and verifiable figures over the years, so did the food service. This prompted an inquiry into whether or not contracting the food service out might not make more economic sense. Directed to do so, our Business Manager began the process of seeking bids from food services. We will choose an outside food service if, and only if, it meets our current quality standards, is affordable for our student body, and will provide us with a comparable product at a better price. We thank Carol for her years of service to our children and will wait to see if other arrangements for food service will be necessary.