

By the Harwood Unified Union School District Board

Dear Community,

There is a new budgeting process in the HUUSD this year. Brigid Nease, Superintendent, and Michelle Baker, Director of Finance & Operations, proposed the integrated model on behalf of the district administrative team in August, and our board unanimously approved it in September.

In the years before Act 46 and the creation of the HUUSD, all schools in Washington West Supervisory Union worked with their individual Board of School Directors to bring a budget to the town or towns that sent students to that particular school. Moretown voted on a Moretown School budget, Warren voted on a Warren School budget, and so on. Harwood's budget has always been approved by voters from all of our towns, but the budget was still school-specific. Last year, during the first budgeting season under the HUUSD banner, all of the individual school administrators worked with Superintendent Nease to combine the traditional budgeting model into a more unified presentation, but, as board members, we were still looking at line items that represented existing and potential staff, programming, and materials school by school. It focused heavily on incremental improvements and the challenges of that particular moment.

This year, all of the administrators in the district have been working with Superintendent Nease and Director Baker to bring the board a comprehensive plan we've been referring to as "One Budget." It will focus on enhancing student programming and sharing resources between schools while "laying out challenges the district is facing; goals, strategies, and initiatives being pursued; and the financial plan and any risks to long-term financial stability," according to the presentation given to the board.

As evidenced by our unanimous vote of approval, we anticipate this process to be an incredibly positive change for our district. A proactive and comprehensive approach to the HUUSD budget that includes a sustainable, multi-year strategy for more robust student experiences will better help us meet our goals of equity, excellence, efficiency, accountability, and affordability.

As always, we appreciate your feedback. Please visit the HUUSD website at www.wwsu.org/huusd-board.php to reach out to any and all board members with your questions, concerns, and ideas. We welcome input about this budgeting process during the public comment section of board meetings, each Wednesday 11/29-12/20, and be on the lookout for upcoming engagement events and surveys about community priorities.

Directors: Alycia Biondo, Rosemarie White, Jill Ellis, Lorraine Wargo, Rob Williams, Christine Sullivan, Peter Langella, Gabe Gilman, Tom Cahalan, Garrett MacCurtain, Alex Thomsen, Jim Casey, Caitlin Hollister, and Maureen McCracken.