

SYNOPSIS
URBANA SCHOOL DISTRICT 116
BOARD OF EDUCATION
BUSINESS MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2005

Board approves Janice Mitchell as new parent/community liaison: The administrative recommendation to hire Janice Mitchell, longtime volunteer in our schools, was approved by the board last night. Mitchell replaces Christina Donaldson, who left the district this summer to join the Palm Beach (FL) School District. Human Resources Director Carmelita Thomas told the board earlier that an interview committee made up of school district staff and community members was interviewing the finalists for the position. Mitchell worked closely with Donaldson to create the summer Sankofa program at Urbana Middle School, and she's a founder of the group, Parents Investing in Education (PIIE, Inc.) Her community involvement is extensive as well.

Final budgets approved: The board approved a final budget document last night – one that calls for \$47.1 M in expenditures and about \$47.3 M in revenues. The surplus funds continue to pay back about a \$3.5 M deficit from three years ago. (The board wanted at least \$500,000 per year to be applied to that debt reduction.) Business/Finance Director Carol Baker said she had also built some increases into the utilities account, given the predictions for much higher natural gas prices this winter. The school district already belongs to the Illinois Energy Consortium that provides us with some savings in the bulk purchase of natural gas. Baker is also paying back the district's working cash fund, which could be paralleled to an individual's savings account. The balance in working cash, according to auditors and school business officers, should be about \$3.5 M. At one time last year our balance was at \$500,000. Baker said that the board should be able to look at "put backs" – replacing personnel from the budget reductions that were made three years ago – with next year's budget.

This year's official budget document that gets filed with state includes another \$1.1 M in revenue, which is the first-time Carle real estate taxes. Those funds must be held in escrow though, until the pending legal process determines if Carle is tax-exempt or not. If Carle wins, the school district must return the funds in escrow, however the school district may retain the interest made on those funds.

Adult Education budget is taking big hit – Urbana Adult Education, which operates on state and federal funding and grants and NOT local tax dollars, took a \$64,000 decrease this school year, based upon losses from most funding sources. The decrease has resulted in some staff cuts that had to be made around the beginning of the school year. Board vice-president John Dimit chastised the state on its timing, because the funding amounts weren't made available to UAE until late August. He also said the funding issues "forced cuts of highly qualified staff." Baker anticipates more funding cuts from the state and federal government next year as well.