

**SYNOPSIS**  
**URBANA SCHOOL DISTRICT 116**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**STUDY SESSION**  
**JANUARY 3, 2006**

Last night's monthly board study session centered on two topics – both of which are laden with dollar signs and significant impacts on the Urbana School District for years to come.

City of Urbana Chief Administrative Officer Bruce Walden gave the board an update on the erosion of the city's and school district's tax base due to University of Illinois expansion. Walden's first presentation was five years ago, when the UI's development into "private enterprise" was still a glint in their eyes. Today it's a reality and it's affecting our income tremendously – and not for the good.

The school district has lost millions of dollars in revenue due to UI expansion in the South and North Campus areas. The Gregory Place development in Central Campus is not quite the hole in our pocket, in that property contains retails which puts some change in the coffers of public entities. However, the crux of the matter is that UI expansion continues to be to the east, and it's Urbana that continues to be the "host" of the campus growth.

Walden estimates it will take \$150 million in development to begin to make up for the erosion of our tax base and for the continued loss of those tax parcels from our income. He said we need to take our own case to the UI. While Walden emphasized our local economy certainly needs everything the UI has to offer, it's not our entire local economy that pays the price for what the UI takes away.

Efforts last spring and summer to pass a legislative agreement that basically shares the joys and the pain of UI expansion and development were unsuccessful. Walden says this is the time, with the strong leadership of President Joseph White and Chancellor Richard Hermann, to focus resolution of these issues with the UI Board of Trustees.

Board member Cope Cumpston questioned Walden about input in President White's strategic plan, which is in process right now. She thought community input on the topic would be essential to the plan, especially since White spoke to our staff in August about the importance of quality schools in attracting faculty to the university. Walden isn't aware of the strategic plan, nor has he been asked for input.

The second study topic was on the increased high school graduation requirements. While UHS graduation requisites have generally been above and beyond the state requirements, the new laws (effective with this year's freshman class) call for implementation of specific classes, where before the subject matter could be covered within a more general class. Writing this synopsis and putting this extremely complicated subject in black/white is doing this issue an injustice. The overall impacts are that these new requirements will cost us thousands of (unfunded) dollars, will most likely lead to the addition of either a "zero" hour or 9<sup>th</sup> period and flex time scheduling for high school staff, we'll see some high failure rates among our high school students, and the 60 percenters – the college-bound with good grades and the need to take electives in order to meet college requirements – may be short-changed on a well-rounded education because there simply aren't enough hours in a day to provide *everything*.

It's amazing to me, as a writer, how one mere sentence on paper can actually contain hundreds of hours of labor and millions of dollars. And that became apparent in last night's presentations.