

# Uncertainty shadows RCSD spending plan

Dade to propose budget amid many unknowns

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Superintendent Terry Dade will present a 2020-21 budget proposal for the Rochester City School District Thursday evening, despite his own misgivings about doing so with many unanswered questions regarding state revenue.

Typically the administration presents a budget proposal in mid-March. Dade proposed delaying it until April 7 because of the particularly precarious financial situation in which the district finds itself this year.

RCSD has not yet heard whether it will receive an advance on state aid to close a \$35 million budget deficit in 2019-20, not to mention the final amount of state aid it will receive for 2020-21, when an even greater deficit is projected.

That was all true before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has turned the state budget and everything else upside down. The state is projecting a huge decline in tax revenues, and Dade said he's now much less optimistic about how much help the district can anticipate.

For that reason he said he would prefer

to issue the budget proposal — which is already substantially complete — after the state budget is passed April 1.

“We have zero savings. Zero,” he said. “That increases my anxiety about not having accurate numbers from Albany.” Board members Beatriz LeBron and Natalie Sheppard pushed back strongly on the idea of a compressed budget review timeline, saying the board and community needed as much time as possible to review the spending plan.

“When the board has had (more) time in the past to review the entire budget, they didn’t, and here we are with a \$60 million deficit,” she said. “So to say we’ll have the time to review it even more in less time — that’s a lie.”

The teleconferenced meeting quickly became contentious. LeBron and Board President Van White loudly accused each other of rudeness and Dade took offense at Sheppard’s suggestion that his administration was “hiding something” with the shifting timeline.

After a lengthy discussion, LeBron and Sheppard were joined by board members Ricardo Adams and Cynthia Elliott in directing Dade to present the budget now, not later. They agreed to give him until Thursday night so he can inform people whose positions stand to be eliminated.

Thursday’s board meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. and will be broadcast live at

10,000 meals a day at its food distribution sites while children are out of school.

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**The Rochester City School District headquarters. STAFF FILE PHOTO 2011**

[www.rcsdk12.org/youtube](http://www.rcsdk12.org/youtube), as well as on the district's Facebook page.

Dade also said Tuesday that the district has been providing more than