

Regular Board of Education Meeting – Draft Minutes
Wednesday, March 20, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Town Hall Meeting Room

Present Board Members: Liz Barlow, Heather Lombardo, Monica Logan, Donna Nolan, David Peling, Karen Richmond-Godard, Rosemarie Weber and Chase Alexander and Katie O’Neill (Student Representatives).

Absent Board Members: N/A

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Monica Logan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance and on Zoom.

II. Chairperson's Report

Ms. Monica Logan, Board Chair, stated she attended the musical *Footloose* this past weekend and said it was fabulous. She thanked the cast and crew as well as the newly formed GMHS Fine Arts Booster Club and the Granby Education Foundation for the grant awarded for sound equipment. She also gave thanks to the PTO for sponsoring a visit from author John Patrick Green. Ms. Logan also shared a series of events which happened at the middle school on Friday, March 15th. First, there was a tripped fire alarm that occurred and Superintendent Burke is working with facilities to remedy this issue. Shortly thereafter a pipe burst leading from the well to the ecology center. DEEP was called in to assist with the fish and 300 older fish were safely released. Students had an opportunity to assist with the release. Saturday morning the source of the leak was determined and water flowed again later on Saturday. Additionally, both boilers went down at the middle school; one was fixed and the other is beyond repair. The school can operate for the remainder of the year on one boiler. Ms. Logan stressed that aging infrastructure of our facilities as well as inflation are driving up the budget. Finally, Ms. Logan shared that this past Monday was Superintendent Burke’s birthday and presented her with a peace lily for her office.

III. Awards and Recognition

The Board recognized Evie Bunz, 7th grader at Granby Memorial Middle School, for her first-place finish in the National Young Writers Contest. Evie was also recognized for her first-place finish in the UK.

Superintendent Burke recognized the Board for Board Appreciation Month and stated that being a Board member today is challenging. A token of appreciation was given to the Board made by high school art students.

IV. Public Comment

KC Petruzzi, Science Teacher, thanked all Board members for their hard work. Ms. Petruzzi spoke on behalf of the Granby Education Association as its President and stated she wanted to give a perspective to conversations of the staff’s response to decisions that are made about our schools. Ms. Petruzzi spoke about the issue of teacher recruitment and retention statewide. Granby has historically had excellent teachers who have had long tenures in the system. In recent years, staff turnover has presented challenges in maintaining that quality. Ms. Petruzzi expressed her thanks to the community for demonstrating their support for competitive pay for teachers with contract negotiations this past fall. She expressed concerns that cutting 6.0 FTEs might be finding efficiencies right now but the message of cuts sent to potential new hires is one of unreliable job security. She concluded by stating education is a service industry that costs money to do it well with fidelity and asked the Board to consider what they are being asked to do to cut services to meet a figure. The Board has an obligation to students, their families and employees – not just taxpayers in town.

IV. Student Representative Reports

- Katie O’Neill shared the sports report stating all spring sports have started practicing and scrimmages are scheduled for boys’ and girls’ lacrosse, baseball, softball, and boys’ and girls’ tennis this week and next week. Track will have their first track meet on April 2nd. Softball and baseball teams will hold a golden ticket fundraiser which is a coupon book for local establishments.
- Chase Alexander reported students participated in a world language Jeopardy game in advisory today, answering questions that tested their knowledge of different cultures around the world.
- *Footloose* was held at GMHS this past weekend which he attended and thoroughly enjoyed.

- There will be a FAFSA completion workshop on March 27 from 8-10 am during the SAT period for seniors and their families interested in learning more about the Federal financial aid process. An NHS-sponsored first responders' dinner will be held in the cafeteria tomorrow night, inviting local first responders to enjoy a meal organized by National Honor Society. The event starts at 6 p.m.
- Student government will host a dodgeball tournament on Friday from 6-8 p.m.

V. Reports and Discussion

V.A. Schools in the Spotlight

Ms. Ann Buckley, Science Teacher at Granby Memorial Middle School, and 7th and 8th grade students in the Fish Kids Club presented the history and activities performed at the Salmon Brook Ecology Center. Ms. Buckley stated that for 17 years she has been in the shadow of Sue Alender who ran the Ecology Center. She informed the Board that a timeline was in their packet to review which provided the history of the Ecology Center and stated the Ecology Center allows her to see students in a different light. Students presented information about the Ecology Center to the Board. Noah Woodman shared what is housed in the Ecology Center, such as tanks for raising the juvenile fish as well as the water flow system that goes through the tanks explaining that it is a closed loop system. Callum Tomala explained the classes held in the Eco Center where students look at the Alevin (under a microscope). Thomas Ladouceur explained the weights and measures of the fish which help to determine how much they are fed. Thomas Erickson spoke about the nursery stating the eggs live in trays in the nursery until they are ready to hatch. Evie Bunz shared that hydroponics, the art of gardening without soil, was used in the Eco Center which uses 90% less water than traditional agriculture. Lastly, Annabelle Leitao spoke about the Fish Kids Club and explained the purpose of the club and also explained the jobs performed by students in the Eco Center as well as necessary things that need to be done. Fish Kids are also responsible for measuring the food for the weekend as well as scrubbing the tanks which is essential for keeping the system clean. Board members had a chance to try the measuring skills and to view the equipment.

V.B. Business Manager's Report

Anna Robbins, Business Manager, presented the February 2024 Statement of Accounts to the Board stating the general fund shows an unfavorable full-year forecast of \$91K which is \$150K better than last month. Regular education is under budget \$56K which is \$25K better than the previous month. Continuing to monitor line items closely in order to achieve forecasted balances. Special education is forecast to be over budget \$148K which is \$125K better than last month. The main driver is out-of-district tuition as placements continue to fluctuate. Out-of-district transportation is under budget \$23K which is \$10K better than last month. The Pupil Services Department and our transportation provider have worked diligently to consolidate transportation where possible. Revenue to the town is unfavorable \$294K which is \$12K worse than the previous month. The forecast for the Quality & Diversity Fund continues to be positive. Ms. Robbins stated things are looking up in February.

V.C. First Reading of Revised Policy 3542.43 - Food Service Charging

The Curriculum/Policy/Curriculum/Technology Subcommittee recommended revised Policy 3542.43, Food Service Charging, to the Board for a first reading. Karen Richmond-Godard stated edits to the policy needed to be made after the food auditors report. This policy will go to the Board for a second reading and approval at the next meeting.

VI. Business Requiring Action

VI.A. Minutes

A motion was made by Rosemarie Weber and seconded by David Peling that the Granby Board of Education approve the minutes of the March 6, 2024 Board of Education meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 7:50 p.m. A motion was made by Rosemarie Weber and seconded by Heather Lombardo March 13, 2024 Board of Education Budget Workshop. This motion passed with one abstention (Liz Barlow) at 7:51 p.m.

VI.B. FY25 Budget Discussion/Approval

The Board continued its discussions on the FY25 Budget. Superintendent Burke reviewed the operating budget chart showing the increases in line items, such as salaries, transportation, health insurance, and special education. She also shared the process of the budget since the Plus One Budget was presented in December at 6.43%, rising to 7.04% with current needs in February 2024 to her proposed budget of 5.67%. Ms. Burke then

reviewed some additional questions by the Board. One question was for further exploration of the 0.2 FTE for the *Strength & Conditioning and Human Performance* course offering. She shared that the course is offered as a half year course and gives students experience of weight training and conditioning along with anatomy and physiology. Students will receive a .5 STEM credit for this course. The next question raised was around administration at the high school. Ms. Burke shared Granby is very similar to many surrounding districts having 3 leadership positions at the high school level. A \$50K reduction was already assumed in the salary line item and she informed the Board of some possible reorganization ideas for a GMHS leadership team. With regard to other questions around the baseball fields, an update was given to the Board regarding improvements made to this point; what repairs are needed/planned for in the future; and, what the role is of the booster organizations relating to funding. Other questions about the baseball fields were answered with regard to safety concerns; options to use town fields for soccer or baseball; as well as other solutions to consider, i.e., adding in a Seasonal Groundskeeper for 20 hours per week for 16 weeks (\$8K); add a part-time Groundskeeper (\$32K); or, install a turf infield (\$1M).

Ms. Burke stated in order to get to a 5.43% budget, \$86,745 would need to be cut and stated the following savings can be realized: locked-in diesel fuel price savings (\$18K); one retirement at GMMS (\$12K); elimination of Freshman Field Hockey (\$4,366); reduction of dues and fees (\$10,500), reduction of retirement and severance (\$9,250); and, reduction of 1 GEA family plan participant (\$27,947). She shared if the BOE accepts these recommendations, an additional \$4,682 reduction will need to be made and listed other considerations as follows: Do not add 0.2 FTE for PE (\$13,431); only add 0.1 FTE for PE (\$6,715); reduce one lunch monitor at GMMS (\$8,963); or, further reduce supply budgets across all four schools (\$4,682).

Rosemarie Weber inquired if the events of this past weekend with the Eco Center and the boiler at the middle school have an impact on the budget. Ms. Burke stated there is not an immediate need on the existing budget but rather these are large capital issues and do not impact the budget that is being voted on this evening. Liz Barlow commented about the student who spoke about losing the Mandarin program at the recent PAC Meeting and stated she is uncomfortable losing both Mandarin and elementary Spanish. Jennifer Parsons, Assistant Superintendent, stated student interest drives courses offered and the middle school Mandarin sections have decreased; however, there are approximately 20 students per year taking Mandarin. She stated those students still need to take a language and there is still a puzzle that needs to be solved around servicing these additional students. Ms. Burke stated there is an opportunity to save staff as they will be able to teach other courses across the district. She also stressed that there are no layoffs anticipated but rather attrition, retirements, etc.

Monica Logan stated the Board has a responsibility to get the budget to an appropriate level to bring forward to the Board of Finance on Monday evening and one that the taxpayers will approve. She will ensure the final appropriation will get what the district and students need. She stated she is committed to the entire budget and is hopeful the 0.2 FTE for the PE/Wellness Teacher can be found. The Board continued to discuss the addition of the Seasonal Groundskeeper as well as the reduction of 0.1 FTE for the *Strength & Conditioning and Human Performance* course in order to get down to 5.43%. Ms. Logan suggested not adding in the Seasonal Groundskeeper and only adding the 0.1 FTE for PE. Rosemarie Weber stated she is most comfortable only adding the 0.1 FTE for PE as well. Liz Barlow inquired about volunteers assisting with the fields and Ms. Burke stated she thinks that is absolutely possible but would want to speak to union leadership first. A motion was made by Rosemarie Weber and seconded by Liz Barlow that the Granby Board of Education adopt the FY25 Superintendent's Proposed Budget, as amended, with the modification of reducing 0.1 FTE in PE at a rate of \$6,715. This motion passed unanimously at 8:55 p.m.

VII. Committee Reports

VII.A. Board Standing Committee Reports

VII.A.1. Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communication

This subcommittee has not met. Approved minutes are in the packet.

VII.A.2. Finance/Personnel/Facilities

Donna Nolan reported this subcommittee met this evening and discussed the Statement of Accounts; reviewed and approved a sabbatical leave-of-absence; reviewed school bus rotation schedule; and, reviewed a request to

purchase a plow truck from small cap. Ms. Nolan also shared that although the financial forecast is unfavorable, it is improving.

VII.B. Other Board-Related Reports

VII.B.1. CREC/CABE

Nothing to report

VII.B.2. Granby Education Foundation

Ms. Logan stated the Board is still looking for a member to join GEF which meets on the third Monday of the month at Central Services.

VII.C. Calendar of Events

Monica Logan stated the calendar of events is as presented.

VII.D. Board Member Announcements

There were no Board member announcements this evening.

VII.E. Action Items

There were no action items this evening.

VIII. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Burke expressed gratitude for collaboration by all the Boards to support the school district. Congratulations to the cast and crew of the recently performed musical *Footloose* this past weekend. Thank you to the GEF for awarding the grant to purchase new sound equipment in time for the production.

Thank you also to the PTO for sponsoring an excellent author visit by John Patrick Green this week.

There will be a virtual PTO meeting on Monday, March 25th at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

All things budget will be in the next edition of the *Vision*.

A reminder about the community conversation being held on Tuesday, March 26th at 6:00 p.m. regarding restorative practices and supporting your children at home.

A Superintendent's Community Conversation will be held on April 4th from 6-7 p.m. Please contact Linda Powell for the link.

The next opportunity to discuss the FY25 Budget will be at the Board of Finance Meeting on Monday, March 25th at 7:00 p.m. The Public Hearing will be held on April 1st with the town-wide vote on April 15th.

IX. Adjournment

A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Liz Barlow to adjourn the Board of Education Meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth H. Barlow
Board Secretary