

MINUTES OF THE HYBRID SPECIAL WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Wednesday, January 4, 2023

South Assembly Room Beecher Road School

Via WebEx <https://woodbridgeps.webex.com/woodbridgeps/j.php?MTID=m4a37d36edfded003b6ea24f1163e2e8b>

Meeting Number: 2498 799 5563

Meeting Password: uJZ8D9aXaT4

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Piascyk, Chair, called the meeting to order (5:10 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair (in-person); Dr. Jay Dahya (in-person); Ms. Sarah Beth Del Prete, Secretary (remote/in-person 5:47 PM); Ms. Brooke Hopkins (remote); Mr. Steven Lawrence (in-person); Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair (in-person); Dr. Michael Strambler (in-person) and Ms. Erin Williamson (in-person).

STAFF: Vonda Tencza, Superintendent; Analisa Sherman, Principal; James Sapia, Assistant Principal; Donna Coonan, Director of Business Services / Operations; Carrie Borcharding, Special Services Director and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

GUESTS: Christine Syriac, Interim Superintendent.

Interim Superintendent Syriac presented the budget at the December 19, 2022 meeting. Prior to any action on the budget, Board members had the opportunity to review the budget and ask questions. Initially, 5 questions were received and responded to. Last evening 14 additional questions were received from a Board member and while Board members received the responses this afternoon, all questions and responses would be shared this evening. All questions and responses are also available in [Board Book](#) in their entirety.

The 2023/24 Budget Proposal was developed using three Guiding Principles:

- Provide a high-quality educational program that serves all students while advancing the District's goals over time.
- Identify and prioritize opportunities to improve operational efficiencies. Reallocation of funds.
- Develop a budget that respects the taxpayer.

Key Drivers of the Budget are:

- ❖ Salary and Benefit Increases
- ❖ Preparation for Increasing Enrollment and Increasing Student Needs
- ❖ Special Education
- ❖ Increasing Energy Costs
- ❖ Reallocation of Resources to Increase Efficiencies

It was noted that our current budget does not include the \$167,500 from last year's Excess Cost Grant allocation from the Town. The budget is developed based on known needs and not what we think may or may not happen in the future.

Discussion ensued on utilization of reallocating the funding of five (5) unfilled teacher assistant positions to fund a new administrator Assistant Principal position that is split between general education and special education and to increase the Multi-Lingual teacher from 0.5 FTE to 1.0 FTE for a total overall increase of \$37,000. Questions were raised relative to servicing the special education population year-to-year, future projections, and program evaluation for delivery of those services and staff resources in support of that program. The district is mandated to service the needs of all children and those needs are continuously changing and our resources could be used more efficiently. Even with the restructuring and possible reallocation of staff, it remains unclear if we will still need more paras. There are more questions than answers and with the changes in leadership we are shifting directions in several areas.

The Board has a responsibility to ask for what it needs and those needs should be added to the budget. It was suggested that hiring an administrator may not be the right direction and questioned whether the Town would support the hiring of an administrator. It was noted that the Board might need more time to do research on what staffing option would best serve our district. It is possible that a curriculum writer or a teacher to conduct PPT's could be a feasible option. More communication should have occurred with the Town before adding an administrator.

The Board was reminded that administration has prioritized the “needs” versus the “wants” as part of a very thorough and comprehensive internal budget process. The budget presented provides the responsible groundwork to make informed decisions for future years to move the district forward and utilizes all resources efficiently to support the needs of all students. It also provides a roadmap for adding back the STEAM teacher during the next year’s budget process, reallocating current staffing resources and is respectful to the Town and taxpayers.

Questions were raised relative to adding additional staff and to the process that would be followed should the Town reduce the budget. It was noted that the same process that has been in place for many years would be adhered to. The Board would convene special meetings to adjust and reduce the budget as the Town does not have line item control over the Board and allocates a specific funding amount for the Board. Concern was expressed for not voting this evening and scheduling another meeting. It was noted that the Town deadline was January 6 and there was insufficient time to post for another meeting between this evening and Friday. The majority of Board members believed that additional time was not necessary.

MOTION #1 – 2023/24 BUDGET ADOPTION

Move that we approve the 2023/24 budget as amended with the addition of 1 general education paraeducator for a total of 10.6, 1 STEAM teacher, and all associated benefits for the teacher and paraeducator for a total budget increase of 4.3%, without consideration of the additional monies received from the town, for a total ask of \$17,225.331.

Dr. Madonick

Second by Ms. Hopkins

IN FAVOR: Ms. Del Prete, Ms. Hopkins, Mr. Lawrence, Dr. Madonick, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Strambler
and Ms. Williamson

AGAINST: Dr. Dahya

MOTION PASSES 7-1

A Board member requested that an Executive Session be called. Chair Piascyk noted that as this was a Special Meeting, the agenda could not be modified, that an Executive Session was not posted on the agenda, and therefore, an Executive Session was not possible.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (8:53 PM)

Ms. Williamson

Second by Mr. Lawrence

UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board