

**Budget Workshop – Approved Minutes**  
**Wednesday, March 13, 2024, 5:30 p.m.**  
**Central Services**

**I. Call to Order and Welcome**

Monica Logan called the Budget Workshop to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance as well as on Zoom and thanked everyone for adjusting to the change in location.

**II. Public Comment**

David Peling and James Gentile of the GMHS baseball team stated they would like to see the Groundskeeper position in the budget in order to maintain the baseball field. They stated they attended tonight on behalf of the baseball team to have a nice field to play on the next four years.

Mark Selander, Candlewood Lane, stated his son Joshua played baseball in high school and stated it is a disservice to the team to cut the Groundskeeper position and that the current condition of the baseball field is an embarrassment and an issue with regard to safety and players getting hurt.

Jennifer Pelletier, North Granby Road, stated her son plays on the baseball team and is a senior this year. The field is below average and other towns make comments about its condition. She stated safety is an issue due to holes in the fields.

Jonathan Gentile, Haven Drive, stated his son James is on the baseball team and spoke earlier. It is a terrible disservice to cut the Groundskeeper out of the budget as it is a safety issue. Aesthetics of the field is further down on the list for him; however, for the level of athletics in this town, it is an embarrassment. His biggest concern is the safety issue and the fields need to be better maintained.

Chris Saunders, 6 Heather Lane, stated he is a coach for the baseball team and knows that maintenance workers for the district work very hard on the fields. The baseball field seems to be the last on the list with regard to maintenance. When the large athletic renovation was done, the baseball field was excluded. There are attempts at small fixes but they have not been maintained. The outfield is destroyed by the soccer teams in the fall as well as middle school and high school PE activities. He stated the little league fields at Salmon Brook Park are in better condition. Mr. Saunders also spoke about the maintenance issues of the dugouts and informed the Board that he has personally maintained a lot on his own which points out that maintenance assistance is needed.

Walter Oliver – 6 Thornbrook Drive, stated he had a few questions regarding the budget as follows: 1) Technology Support – what is the driver for the increase? 2) What is the reason for Bus Monitors not being budgeted? 3) Advertising increases from \$633 to \$1,915 – is this an increase in costs or the amount of advertising? 4) Conference and Travel increased between FY23 and FY24 of \$45.8K but a minimal increase between FY24 and FY25 – what drove the increase from FY23 to FY24? and, 5) There is \$41K budgeted for tutors – his sons struggle in English and cannot seem to get tutor services. He stated he would be willing to pay for tutors himself.

**III. FY25 Superintendent's Budget Discussion**

The Board continued to discuss the FY25 Superintendent's Proposed Budget in a workshop setting. Ms. Burke reiterated where the budget currently is after presenting the Plus One Budget stating the Superintendent's Budget came in at 5.67% and the BOF guideline is 5.43%. An operating budget summary was shared and Ms. Burke highlighted the reduction in personnel (\$632,885) as well as the net additions and reduction coming in at 0.10%.

Questions received from the Board were reviewed. There were a couple of questions related to the elimination of elementary World Language. Ms. Burke stated the district values this program and the decision was not made lightly. Another question was with regard to the elimination of the Mandarin world language program at the middle school and she shared current enrollment numbers. She believes 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders can be maintained and phased out of the program but

that plan is not in her current proposal; however, it is a conversation the Board could have. Additional information was shared about the World Language Program regarding where Granby stands in the District Reference Group (DRG) (out of 29 districts). Granby is the only district in the DRG that offers Chinese as a language as well as Spanish instruction in Grades K-2.

A question was raised about the new course, *Strength and Conditioning and Human Performance*, and if it was a good time to be adding this course. Ms. Burke shared the course was approved by the Board this past fall and there are currently 32 students who have signed up to take it. Rosemarie Weber inquired if there were other STEM-related courses that perhaps could not run to allow for the addition of this course. Another question was raised about a possible cut in administration with the decrease in enrollment at the high school. Ms. Burke stated she does not think there is a substantial decrease in enrollment; however, she was unable to publicly speak at last week's Board Meeting that Mrs. Groene recently shared her announcement to retire at the end of this school year. This will result in a savings of \$50K and has already been assumed. Mrs. Groene currently has oversight of the school counseling office at the high school but perhaps there are positions that could be realized as stipend positions going forward. Ms. Burke stated she does think that the level of support for students needs to be maintained. Donna Nolan inquired if the Assistant Principal position could be shared between the middle school and high school. Ms. Burke stated that the Board can and should have this discussion.

Percentages of the special education student population was discussed. Ms. Burke stated the percentage of special education students identified have remained consistent (15%) since October 2020; however, the number out-of-district placements has increased each year since 2020 which equates to higher transportation and tuition costs year over year.

A question regarding the placement of 3 current regular education teaching assistants currently proposed to be cut as well as the placement of the 4 added special education teaching assistants was reviewed. Ms. Burke stated the current 3 TAs are at the elementary level in Grades 3-5 and the proposed 4 TAs are directly related to student need per Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and a number of students joining Kelly Lane Primary School from preschool in FY25 require 1:1 support.

With regard to potential savings, questions were raised about cutting any sports/clubs as well as cutting the Campus Supervisor positions at the high school. Ms. Burke shared the cost savings of cutting the Freshman Field Hockey team for example with a savings of \$4,366. As far as the Campus Supervisor positions, she shared that there would be a direct impact on student safety and support at the high school if these positions were cut.

With regard to courses at the high school, there were some questions raised, specifically, which courses in the Program of Studies have not run in the last 1-2 years as well as if there could be a policy adopted not to run a course with less than 7 students. Ms. Burke stated the GMHS administrative team is in the process of reviewing all enrollment numbers and classes with less than 10 students do not typically run with the exception of AP classes. Ms. Burke stated she believes there will be a reduction of a 1.0 FTE in Science and at least a 0.6 FTE in Math due to low class enrollments in these areas. She also shared that two (2) full-time teachers have already been reduced in the Superintendent's Proposed Budget.

Personnel questions regarding a Teacher in Residence position and the Groundskeeper were raised. The district does not plan to hire a new Teacher in Residence in FY25 due to reductions in staff. With regard to the Groundskeeper position, Ms. Burke stated this position did make it into the Plus One Budget but ultimately did not make it into her budget. Fields would certainly benefit from this position; however, no new positions were added to the Superintendent's Budget.

The last questions centered around how the budget addresses improving student achievement. Ms. Burke stated that student achievement is at the center of all decision making. This is a lean budget; however, BOE class size guidance as well as essential support positions are maintained to provide intervention and enrichment for individual student growth.

In summary, Ms. Burke stated in order to achieve 5.43%, a reduction of \$86,745 is required. She outlined some anticipated savings, such as, diesel fuel price savings (\$18K); additional retirement (\$12K); Freshman Field Hockey (\$4,366); Dues and Fees (\$10,500); Retirement and Severance (\$9,250); and, reducing 1 GEA family plan participant from insurance (\$28K). This totals \$82,063. Further considerations for cuts were shared beyond the \$4,682 needed to meet the 5.54% guideline.

Ms. Logan stated timing does not help for passing this budget due to the change in the Town Charter. The goal is to be able to adopt and finalize a budget next week in order to get it over to the Board of Finance. She asked the Board to consider sending additional questions to Cheri for next week's Board Meeting.

*Action Items:* 1) High school administration; 2) Class sizes at the high school; and 3) Budgeting of field maintenance time - is there a different way to structure practices and games with the Town.

Rosemarie Weber stated she prefers to have a lunch monitor at the middle school rather than reducing the PE position. Ms. Burke stated she has already taken reductions in the supply line item and does not want to further cut that line item; she would take the reduction in the PE position and is confident the course will still be offered. David Peling expressed his concern over not having the ability to have a voice in the budget process from the time it is presented to the Board to the time it is approved. Ms. Logan stated she appreciated Dr. Peling expressing his concern and that perhaps a Board Retreat can be held to have a deeper conversation in this regard.

Ms. Logan thanked Cheri and Anna for their hard work on the budget and fielded additional questions from Board of Finance members.

James Tsaptsinos, Board of Finance Member, inquired about the Math Interventionist and if annual grant coverage was needed for this position. Ms. Burke stated an Interventionist meets the criteria to be Quality & Diversity Fund and there is revenue for that year over year; however, it would not need to be moved into the Operating Budget next year. Mr. Tsaptsinos also had a question regarding any savings with the BOE/Town IT collaboration. Anna Robbins, Business Manager, stated there was no savings for the collaboration but rather additional costs. The Town reduced an outside vendor and additional costs were added to the town side; however, there is no cost savings on the BOE side.

Kevin Hobson, Board of Finance Member, inquired about the increase in extra instructional stipends. Anna Robbins stated this is due to contract negotiations for a 1.65% increase in stipends in athletics, a reorganization for extracurricular stipends, and a reorganization of leadership stipends which was a total increase of \$65K.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Rosemarie Weber and seconded by Donna Nolan that the Granby Board of Education adjourn the Budget Workshop. This motion passed unanimously at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Barlow  
Board Secretary