

Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting - Budget Workshop

Tuesday, January 31, 2023 7:00 PM

Board of Education Conference Room E, 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801

1. Call to Order

Speaker(s): Policy
9326

1.A. Roll Call for Quorum

1.B. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Budget Workshop (Schools/Athletics)

3. Correspondence

Speaker(s): Policy
9326

4. Public Comment

(Please note: The Board welcomes Public Comment and asks that speakers please limit their comments to 2 minutes. Speakers may offer objective comments of school operations and programs that concern them. The Board will not permit any expression of personal complaints or defamatory comments about Board of Education personnel and students, nor against any person connected with the Bethel Public School System.)

Speaker(s): Policy
9326

5. Adjourn

BOE Members 2023-2024 BUDGET Q & A
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#	Name - Initials	Question(s)	Answer(s)
January 24, 2023 - Facilities			
1.	BF JL SC CS	As we have had in the past could we get a breakout of those items included in "School Building Repairs and Maintenance".	Yes, it is now posted in the shared drive. Hardcopies are available at the budget workshop.
2.	JL	In C)313 preventive maintenance why such a large cut in #5 Clock/Intercom/Public intercom system 50%?	We are in the process of replacing the PA Systems at three schools, BHS & BMS, and Berry. We are anticipating that the new systems will require less maintenance in 23-24.
3.	JL	In C313 preventive maintenance why the cut to line 14 roof warranty/maintenance?	Roof Warranty maintenance is increasing from \$11,000 to \$13,000.
4.	BF	Which projects have not and will not be completed this year that were listed for this year?	BHS: Replaced damaged restroom wall partitions BMS: Replace restroom wall partitions Johnson: Install loading dock doorbell for deliveries Berry: Additional Parking Lot Signage Berry: Re-striping of vehicle parking - rear teacher's lot Berry: Repair and/or replace worn areas of carpet * Rockwell: Install loading dock doorbell for deliveries Rockwell: Paint boiler room flooring * * Prioritized out of 23-24 budget
5.	MO KD	Follow up to comment 1. above, does proposed budget for building repairs	The School Building Repairs and Maintenance budget includes only the repairs listed in the breakout. The funds for emergency repairs are in the Outside

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		and maintenance cover known and anticipated (including emergency) repairs?	Contractor Funding line.
6.	MO CS	Preventive maintenance contracts for HVAC are up nearly 25%. Please explain. If maintenance on new equipment increases, would repair costs on old equipment drop?	Historically, we have been paying for the majority of our HVAC work on a time and materials basis, as our existing maintenance contract only includes a cursory visual inspection of equipment. Our new contract will cover more regular maintenance as well as regular testing of equipment to identify signs of equipment failure. We have shifted funding from outside contractors and the boiler's maintenance line to offset the cost of the HVAC maintenance.
7.	MO	Roof warranty/maintenance shared with Town- what is the pro rata or formula to allocate this item between Town and District?	The current contract explicitly lists the fees for our five school buildings as \$11,081.67. The cost per building is based on the square footage of the roof.
8.	SC	Why are mandated inspections in C) 313 (alarms, sprinkler, kitchen hoods etc.) all up in cost? Are these costs all the results of inflation?	The budget for the state boiler and elevator inspections was increased by \$50 each in anticipation of an increase next year. The inspection and maintenance services for burglar alarms, fire alarms, sprinkler systems, and elevators were increased by approximately 3% each in anticipation of next year's fee increases.
9.	BF	Why do we need to upgrade the high school gymnasium bleachers to open and close electronically instead of manually?	Currently, the bleachers are difficult to open. It requires multiple people and we have had issues in the past when the bleachers became out of alignment. Also, in the past, the wheels damaged the gym floor, and we would like to prevent future damage by upgrading the wheels.
10.	BF	What is the status of the plan to install bollards at the high school?	Instead of installing bollards that look like posts benches were installed at the high school. The benches are secured to the ground and provide both security functionality and seating.
11.	CM	Do we need to upgrade our existing systems to meet new building codes?	We are required to update to new codes if we are doing work on the building or system. For example, because we had a leak in our sprinkler system, we are now

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			required to update to the current code when we fix the leak.
January 26, 2023 - IT, Curriculum, SPED			
12.	SC	6502: Tech Supplies and Software subscriptions. BHS has a \$17,161 increase. That seems like a very specific amount. Other increases are BMS-\$4,300, Berry-\$2,400, JS-\$3,300, RS-\$2,400. The total for the line is just over \$29k. These lines were "0" in the previous years What specifically is purchased with these funds?	6502 Tech Supplies and Software Subscriptions is a new account. BHS: \$17,161 - This amount was transferred from Software - Technology. The funds will be used for multiple software subscriptions including Pickatime (conference scheduler), Albert IO (for AP courses), Keystone (for credit recovery), Moby Max, and ALEKS for intensive support. BMS: \$4,300 - Funds were transferred from the equipment lines. They will be used to purchase IXL, Rosetta Stone, Noodle Tools, etc. JS: \$3,300 - Funds were reallocated from the textbook line to pay for IXL, Bloxels, Gale and Smart Music software subscriptions. Berry: \$2,400 - Funds were added to this line for Haggerty and Ruler. Rockwell: \$2,400 - Funds were added to this line for Haggerty, and Ruler. Previously the expense for Haggerty and Ruler was paid out of the curriculum budget and it is being transferred to Berry and Rockwell next year.
13.	SC	7306: Software-technology. Why the \$20k reduction at BHS and the \$3,300 reduction at BMS. These lines are "0" in other buildings.	This reflects a transfer of funds from the 7306 Software-technology (one-time license purchases "owned by the district") to the 6502 Tech Supplies and Software Subscriptions line (recurring subscription costs). BHS moved \$17,161 to the Software Subscription Line (6502). BMS moved \$3,000 to the Software Subscription Line (6502).
14.	SC	4440: Central Office. Leases- Fiscal Services- Technology: What do we lease for \$11,000 that had a \$2,000 reduction in one year?	We renegotiated our contract to lease a postage meter from Pitney Bowes, and the new lease costs less.
15.	BF	Bethel's Special Education	You are correct that special education percentages have increased both locally

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		population as a percentage of the total population has drifted up from 12.9% in 18-19 to 14.3 % in 21-22. My guess is it again has slightly increased in 22-23. The state average in the same time period has gone from 14.3% to 18.7%. Could you again briefly explain your thoughts as to why and where you think we will go from here?	and at the state level. This trend was established well before COVID. Fortunately, we remain below the state average. In my opinion, the primary factor is increased awareness and identification of disabilities such as Dyslexia, Autism Spectrum Disorders, and ADHD. However, post-COVID, we have also had a significant increase in the number of young children with disabilities. This may be related to difficulties with early identification and services for students between Birth and age 3 over the past three years.
16.	BF	Applitrack presently shows an opening for the position of Supervisor of Technology Infrastructure and Operations. Is it still open? If yes, your thoughts? Is IT experiencing turnover? If yes, what are your thoughts on why? Is it a compensation issue?	The Supervisor of Technology Infrastructure and Operations opening is due to a retirement. Yes, the position is still open. We did not have a large pool of candidates and there were only a handful of applicants that met the minimum requirements for the position, in part due to the fact that it was a mid-year posting. After conducting interviews, the interview committee decided to continue our search for a more experienced candidate that brings a balance of leadership and technical skills essential to the role. It is important that we provide a competitive salary for this position to attract high-quality candidates.
17.	BF	Please explain the decrease in IT Equipment -Technology from \$200,000 to \$132,000.	In order to hold the technology budget flat year to year and plan for the 3-5% increase in software subscription costs, the equipment line was cut by \$13,000. Also, cloud hosting to improve cybersecurity, and shifting of subscriptions from ESSER/ARP to operating budget, has impacted subscription costs. The remainder of the change is an accounting reclassification. Only Chromebooks are included in the IT Equipment Line for 23-24. The associated cases and Google licenses have shifted to Technology Supplies and Subscriptions (6502). In addition, as you are aware, much of the Federal grant money the district received as a result of COVID was used to support the technology infrastructure. This money was used to replace most of the staff laptops and communication boards within the classroom.

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18.	BF	Please explain the increase in instructional supplies under curriculum.	Spending patterns indicate an increase is needed, as our prior spending exceeded the budget in this line.
19.	BF	Please explain the decrease in mileage under the curriculum budget as well as in some other departments.	We are traveling less due to online conferences and an effort to manage expenses.
20.	KD	1215: BMS The cost of school monitors has gone up while the FTE has remained at .93 Please explain. How are the monitors used? I noticed the same in BS, JS, and RS- Is there an increase in pay?	The minimum wage increases from \$14.00 to \$15.00 per hour as of July 1, 2023. The monitors are supervising the lunch room and are used for recess at the elementary level.
21.	KD	1216: Paraeducators: Are the majority of paraeducators hired to support Special Education students? What other areas do the paraeducators support, such as K classrooms? What is the number of paraeducators across the district?	Yes. The majority of paraeducators are in special education. There are regular education paraeducators in the following roles: ● Library Media 3.0 ● Kindergarten 4.0 ● Reading paraeducators 2.0 grant ● Math paraeducators 2.0 ● TASK paraeducator 1.0 ● ISS paraeducator 1.0 ● 13 Total Regular Education - 11 in operating budget There are 71 special education paraeducators. The balance of special education paraeducators that are not in the operating budget is funded through grants such as IDEA, ARP/ESSER, and preschool grants. Some are also funded through COF tuition and Medicaid reimbursement funds.
22.	KD	7303 SW: Why the decrease in	I think you are referring to a reduction in request from \$4500 last fiscal year to

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		Equipment Instructional- SPED? What equipment is purchased with this line? Will the decrease have a negative impact on SPED programming/instruction?	\$1500 this year. We made some changes to multiple supply and equipment lines based on actual needs and historical usage over the past few years. There will be no impact on special education programming.
23.	KD	1110 SW: There is \$165,000 budgeted for curriculum. Is this for curriculum writing? Will curriculum writing continue in the area of ELA given the possible purchase of a program? What other areas do you anticipate curriculum writing will be needed? Is the bulk of it completed over the summer?	Yes, this pays for all curriculum writing. Additionally, it pays for any before or after-school paid committee work as well as certain district stipends such as mentoring, TEAM District-Facilitator, and Chemical Hygiene Officer. We are currently considering curriculum proposals for the majority of our subject areas including ELA Grades 3 - 12. Much of the curriculum writing occurs during the summer, but some of it is written after school during the school year.
24.	KD	1210 SW curriculum- There is a \$1000 decrease in this line. Why? What are the roles of the tutors?	We have been carefully watching our tutoring line. We have decreased the overall amount of tutoring support while still trying to provide programming for our students. Students receive tutoring for medical reasons, expulsion, and occasionally extra support to meet their academic needs.
25.	KD	6110 SW curriculum- There is an increase in this line. What instructional supplies are purchased? Why the slight increase?	See answer #18
26.	CM	In your presentation I believe you stated that we are spending \$841,000 more in placements, not including transportation. What would it be with transportation? And since our vans are already at capacity, how much will this affect us?	Mrs. Variale corrected me during the presentation. The \$841,000 reflects both tuition and transportation.

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27.	KD	In the tech department, what is the role of the communications and research service? It has been zeroed out in previous years. The same can be said for the secretary, tech supplies, and software subscriptions. Please explain.	Communication and Research Services (5304) is a new object code. This line includes telephone and voice communication services; data communication services to establish or maintain computer-based networking, and internet services; one-way or two-way video communications; and licenses for subscriptions to research materials over the internet (such as databases). The increase is due to subscriptions and services being reclassified to this budget line. Please see questions #12, #13, and #17 for information about Tech Supplies and Software Subscription reclassifications. The secretary position was funded by restructuring the IT department and decreasing the number of student technicians. It reflects a shift in funding and positions. The Board approved this restructuring after a vacancy allowed us to reevaluate our structure, job responsibilities, and compensations. The Secretary of Technology Operations has taken on the clerical work that fell on IT staff, allowing them to focus on technical responsibilities.
28.	CM	With a 62+ student increase, how much do you think that COVID has played a part in the numbers going up? Approximately how many children are behind because of the loss in instruction? Is adding only 5 additional paras going to be even close to enough?	There was an increasing trend in special education students even prior to COVID (see #15). However, yes, COVID has played a part in the increase in students with IEPs in preschool and early elementary school. Many of these students have significant disabilities (for example, Autism) and did not receive strong early intervention services prior to entering preschool. The 5 paraeducators currently work in our schools and are funded by a grant that will be ending in June. We cannot lose these positions; we will need these positions next year. This will be an issue again next year, when ESSER grant funding ends.
29.	CM	I believe you stated that Bethel has the highest class size in the region. How many SPED kids on average is a	I made that comment based on previous data that I have seen regarding class size in the region. I can get updated information to present to the board for the next workshop. Special education students are individually placed based on their

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		classroom teacher expected to handle at a time? And how does this affect the learning environment?	needs. Typically, it is below 25% of the total class. There are some settings, particularly collaborative settings (a regular and special education teacher teaching together), where the percentage is higher, but we always keep the percentage below 50%. The ratio of special education students to regular education students is appropriate.
30.	SC	How much special education reimbursement do we get from Medicaid?	In the fiscal year 2022, we received \$34,449.50. We use that money to fund paraeducators, as well as services, equipment, and professional learning that are not provided for in our operating budget.
31.	KD	A 10-year study is less accurate in enrollment the more you go out. So a year from now is more accurate. What is the projection for next year?	NESDEC projected our 2023-2024 enrollment would be 3231 students, which is below our 1/6/2023 enrollment of 3267.
32.	KD	When thinking about consumables, supplies, textbooks, etc, do you often pay for extra? Do you need to purchase anything additional during the school year?	We anticipate population growth by purchasing a little more so we do not have to purchase instructional consumables during the year. Oftentimes materials come in packs allowing for some extras. We do have to purchase additional paper and supplies throughout the year.
33.	KD	With the loss of 1 specialist, and 6 tutors, how will the need of students needing additional support in Math, Literacy, and EL be addressed?	Our specialists and interventionists will do their best to serve as many needs as possible; otherwise, classroom teachers will need to support their students.
34.	JL	What are the curriculum tutors and why is it decreased? Line 100.16.2210.101.1210	Please see question #24.
35.	JL	Why the large decrease in curriculum instructional supplies on line 100.16.2210.101.6110?	There wasn't a decrease . The line went up \$2,500. See answer #18.

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36.	JL	What is the increase in FTE on secretaries-sw-technology line 100.16.2230.119.1214?	Please see question #27.
37.	JL	Can I assume the decrease in line purchased prof & tech services and the increase in line tech supplies & software subscriptions are linked?	Yes, this is an accurate assumption. The reclassification in the proper object code resulted in a shift of funding amongst lines.
38.	JL	Please explain what the line communications and research serv 100.16.2230.119.5301 is for as it is new.	Please see question #27.
39.	JL	Certified staff for SPED does not list FTE and I assume the staff is included in each building but how many FTE are actually SPED? Is there any increase for this budget?	11 School Counselors 3 BCBA's 4 School Psychologists 2 Occupational Therapists 1 Physical Therapist 6.4 Speech and Language Pathologists (proposed) 5 Social Workers 3 Special Education Administrators 39 Special Education Teachers 5 Special Education Secretaries Please note some of these positions are charged to grants. Yes, all salaries were adjusted to meet contractual obligations.
40.	JL	In SPED the Behavior Analyst line has a 7.70% increase but the same FTE is this from wage increase or are we using outside BCBA's still?	Of the 3 BCBA's, only 1 was a 12-month employee. As a result, we previously contracted BCBA services for Extended School Year (summer). We are shifting from two 10-month BCBA's and one 12-month BCBA to two 12-month BCBA's and one 10-month BCBA. We will no longer be contracting for

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			BCBA support in the summer.
41.	JL	Why is the reference materials line zeroed out?	Changes were made based on actual needs and historical usage.
42.	JL	Why the large cut to Equipment Instructional line 100.16.1200.101.7303?	See question #22.
43.	JL	Do we have a large drop in homebound instruction as I see the line is cut by \$30,000.00?	See question #24
44.	JL	Is the increase in the excess cost line because of the increase in spending or expectation of the state paying 100%	The Increase in excess cost corresponds to the increase in special education spending. In addition, we expect legislative action this session to make adjustments to the tier thresholds. Currently, Bethel is reimbursed at the 73% rate, given changes in the 2022 legislative session. Even if they remove the tiers we could expect to see more reimbursement. It is unlikely it will be reimbursed at 100%.
45.	JL	We have been at 3.9 social workers for years I worry this is not enough to cover all the needs that have increased over the years, when was the last time we increased?	The 3.9 FTE is what is charged to the budget. We actually have 5 social workers. We increased the number of Social Workers from 4.4 to 5.0 in 2020. The additions are being funded through grants.
46.	JL	I see the .4 increase in speech staff and I am worried with the growth in preschool who mostly all get speech that this is not enough. How many students/hours are they servicing? Also how large are the preschool classes getting with the increase?	We are constantly monitoring caseloads for speech and language. Preschool classes vary. The current range in class size is 12 to 16. Currently, we have 3 full-day and 2 half-day integrated preschool teachers. We also have a self-contained preschool class. Next year we likely will shift to additional half-day sections to accommodate more students and to ensure developmental appropriateness.

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47.	JL	With the growth in SPED students over this last year are we budgeting enough not to have to freeze the budget like our current situation? The outplacement costs are large, but necessary and hard to plan for. Is there anything we can do?	Except for the Special Education department, all departments and schools have been held to a flat budget, not including contractual salary and benefits increases. Meeting these budgets will be challenging. The biggest risk would be needing additional outplacements. Every year we do an analysis of the number of students who are currently outplaced and those students who might require outplacements. We budget based on that projected analysis.
48.	MO	Last session we were told that some lines had shifted from prior years. It would be helpful to have that in writing.	Accounting reclassifications impact spending by object code. • New Supplies Code: Tech Supplies & Software Subscriptions (6000) • Reclassified technology expenses previously in Professional Services (3000) and Equipment (7000) to the new Software Subscription code (6000). • Moved Research Database Expenses from Library Supplies (6000) to Research Services (5000).
49.	MO	Some foundational questions for the public. Please explain what is meant by Tier 1 intervention. And what is the next step if it isn't successful? What type of needs trigger the supports provided by an interventionist?	Tier 1 intervention involves a classroom teacher providing differentiated grade-level instruction (extra supports and instruction) for a student. If we are not meeting the needs of a student through differentiated instruction, more targeted instruction and supports are provided, through a pull-out and/or push-in Tier 2 model. In this case, we may find a student who can be more than a grade level below, or a student performing below expectations on standard and nonstandard measures requiring more specialized instruction with more regular progress monitoring.
50.	MO	For the 165 Johnson and BMS students needing an interventionist, funded by ESSER II grant, how will they be impacted if the positions aren't included in the budget? And how will those students attain grade level and/ or improve achievement?	We will need to prioritize needs and assign our specialists and tutors to our most at-risk students needing intervention services. Classroom teachers will then need to support the other students through differentiated instruction (explained in answer #49)

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51.	MO	Please explain the comment in the budget presentation that the failure to provide adequate intervention early on to students is more costly in the long run.	If students do not receive the additional support/intervention needed, the achievement gap can get wider and may result in special education services for students which is more costly in the long run.
52.	MO	There were many questions about staff capacity to manage growing needs and numbers of SPED students. Please comment about keeping and retaining adequate qualified staffing.	Special Education Teachers have been a shortage area for many years. We do see more turnover of staff in this area, especially with paraeducators. Factors that retain staff include having the resources to do their job and the culture and climate of the district. With that said, pay and benefits are important to staff.
53.	MO	What can the District do to attract and retain all staff in the current environment of shortages and increased demands on teachers, administrators, and support staff?	Continue to fund appropriate resources in alignment with our Strategic Plan. See question #52.
54.	MO	Is the new organization and workflow of IT managing the workload better? Is staffing sufficient for current District needs?	Careful hiring has resulted in highly effective employees that are improving the department workflow. The retirement of the Supervisor of IT Infrastructure & Operations has impacted the workload. As we look for a replacement we have divided up job responsibilities within the department and are working with contracted services. The two student technicians that we allocated funding for the remainder of this fiscal year have been critical during this transition. We are prioritizing our work and strategically planning projects over time. As technology needs continue to grow, we are evaluating our systems, automating if possible, and exploring software that could assist with streamlining processes.
January 31, 2023 - Schools/Athletics			
55.	SC BF	What is the total \$\$ figure for new spending that is not contractual	Our budget increase is comprised of the following. Salaries \$1,428,767

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		salary raises and health insurance? Can you break these expenses down item by item?	Healthcare \$699,619 Special Education and Transportation \$841,347 Other: \$73,926 Other spending includes: \$43,986 for Contractual Benefits other than Health Care (Social Security, Life Insurance, workers' compensation, long-term disability) \$46,892 for our existing Bus Contract for In Town Transportation \$6,395 for price increases of existing Dues and Fees -25,338 for a reduction in technology services and equipment
56.	BF	Similar to 55. Is there any spending anywhere in the budget for new programs, initiatives, courses etc., that is not a mandate in some way? This does not mean additional SPED, required transportation, contractual obligation, and such. If yes, where and what is the cost?	There are no new programs or initiatives proposed in this budget. We did introduce some new courses but they will replace existing assignments of teachers. There is nothing added that is not a mandate.
57.	MO	Other than for Athletics, please advise what other school curricular and extra-curricular activities and programs charge student participation fees.	Other than Athletics there are a number of other clubs and programs that have student fees. As I have said in previous Board of Education meetings, if we are looking at eliminating pay-to-play from Athletics it should be considered for all other clubs and activities. For other clubs and activities many of the reasons why there are additional fees are to compensate for the expense of participating in winning Regional and National awards. This creates additional expenses to be at that level of competition. The numbers below represent the larger fee structures. They do not include much smaller fees for individual clubs nor fees associated with our extensive intramural program.

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			<table> <tr> <th>Group</th><th>Number who participate</th><th>Fee Collected</th><th>Total Collected</th></tr> <tr> <td>Marching Band</td><td>48</td><td>\$250</td><td>\$12,000.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>Regionals Music</td><td>10-15</td><td>22/35 per audition pp</td><td>\$1,000.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hockey</td><td>8-10</td><td>\$2,100.00</td><td>\$21,000.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>Winterguard</td><td>15 Varsity</td><td>\$1,050.00</td><td>\$15,750.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>Winterguard</td><td>15 Junior Varsity</td><td>\$650.00</td><td>\$9,750.00</td></tr> <tr> <td>Musical</td><td>35</td><td>\$125.00</td><td>\$4,375.00</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Total</td><td>\$63,875.00</td></tr> </table>	Group	Number who participate	Fee Collected	Total Collected	Marching Band	48	\$250	\$12,000.00	Regionals Music	10-15	22/35 per audition pp	\$1,000.00	Hockey	8-10	\$2,100.00	\$21,000.00	Winterguard	15 Varsity	\$1,050.00	\$15,750.00	Winterguard	15 Junior Varsity	\$650.00	\$9,750.00	Musical	35	\$125.00	\$4,375.00	Total			\$63,875.00
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58.	BF	Please reexplain how we account for pay-to-play. If we account for it by reducing various athletic accounts would it be more transparent by producing the true costs and account for the income some other way?	We calculate Pay-to-Play based on a historical analysis. The money that comes in offsets expenses for all sports. For example, that includes the cost of officials, transportation, etc. We do not reduce specific athletic accounts. Pay-to-Play reimburses the board a lump sum which is recorded on its own line in the HS sports budget as a credit. We are open to suggestions about being “transparent” about the costs. Officials' Fees have increased 9.3% in 5 years. Next year’s increase will be between 2-5%. Officials for SWC and State games are paid at a higher rate after the second round. Police/Extra Staff - Security: Each officer costs \$210 per game. Staff security costs \$75 per game.																																

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59.	BF	If we were to start a three-year plan to eliminate pay-to-play what would be the cost next year to go back to \$100/sport,\$300/family? It would be followed by \$50/\$150 second year then elimination in the third year.	Next year's cost associated with eliminating pay-to-play over a three-year period would be \$28,333.
60.	BF	HS What is in the Communications and Research Services category? is this new? Was this in a different account previously?	This is not a new expense. This funding is for multiple research database services including Gale, Infobase, and JSTOR. We reclassified these expenses from Library Books and Digital Resources (Supplies) to Communications & Research as per State classification guidelines.
61.	BF	HS. Please explain the decrease in General Supplies Sports and Clubs	This line was decreased to reflect an increase in Pay-to-Play revenue based on the new increased pay-to-play rates.
62.	BF	HS. Please explain the large decrease in Library Books and Digital Resources	This is a reclassification from Library Books & Digital Resources to Communications and Research. See question 59.
63.	BF	HS. Please explain the increase in Dues and Fees. What is in this category?	Fees for programs such as NEASC, College Board, SWC, National Honors Society, ISTE, History Bowl, Jazz Festivals, and US Bands. The increase comes directly from the organizations. They have increased personnel and materials costs.
64.	BF	All Schools Please review how tutors are used in each school. What is lost by not having any tutors in the MS. Please review again where the two tutors we are short would be used.	The primary purpose of tutors that work in our building during the school day is to provide academic support to a small group of students. They work under the direction of a specialist or certified teachers of English language learners, who plans the lessons that they implement. Tutors are paid hourly and do not receive benefits. BHS: 1 (1.5 hours per day) TASK (alternative ed program) credit recovery, & 1 EL Tutor (24 hours) to support EL learners BMS: 3 Literacy Tutors (2 ESSER and 1 Title I)- 28 hours each 1 Math Tutor (28 hours paid out of Title I).

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			Johnson: 2 Literacy Tutors (1 ESSER and 1 Title I) 28 hours, 2 EL Tutors (ESSER and Budget) both 28 hours 3 Math Tutors (28 hours each- 2 are paid from Title I and 1 is paid from ESSER) Berry & Rockwell: Berry and Rockwell share a math tutor (14 hours for each school paid out of Title I), 2 EL Tutors
65.	BF	All Schools. Please explain the variety of changes in the custodian accounts across schools.	0.5 Custodian was moved from the Middle School to Johnson school because after the renovation Johnson has more square footage to clean. The total number of custodians has not changed. Their responsibilities were reallocated. In addition, we frequently move custodians throughout the year based on need, our total number has not increased.
66.	BF	JS Please explain the change in Instructional Supplies	At Johnson the increase in instructional supplies is a reclass from textbooks as it was determined that this was a more correct classification for the books which they purchase. This is part of our normal purchasing review process and alignment with State classification guidelines.
67.	JL	Please explain what the custodian overtime is mostly from and if the amount spent is the same as another custodian why not just hire another?	Custodian overtime is used to prepare for the opening of school, covering events over the weekend or after hours, and snow removal. If an outside organization is using our facilities, they are responsible for the custodial overtime cost. If we know a custodian will be out for a longer period of time (such as a workers comp situation) we hire a substitute custodian at a reduced rate. Our custodian overtime costs \$77,000 per year. We rarely use overtime for regular cleaning. It is primarily used for special projects.
68.	JL	To go along with Bill's pay-to-play question how much is brought in by pay-to-play total yearly on average	We received \$56,740.44 in pay-to-play fees last year.
69.	JL	How many building subs do we have	

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		in each school and are they paid at the same rate as the daily subs? Also, are all positions filled?	The building subs are paid \$10 more per day compared to a daily sub. Berry school currently has two part-time building sub positions open. Most substitutes are paid through the operating budget. We use a combination of building substitutes and interns from local universities to fill the positions. When we received the Federal covid grant funds, we used part of the Federal dollars to add 5 building subs to the schools, one for each building. The COVID funding for the extra building substitutes will end in June. Then each building will go down 1 building substitute from the current levels. Bethel High School 7 Bethel Middle School 6 Johnson School 6 Rockwell School 5 Berry School 5 Circle of Friends 1
70.	JL	In the FTE line can you explain the changes HS 83.53 to 84.77 BMS 59.74 to 59.62 Berry 33.90 to 33.60 Johnson no change Rockwell 25.75 to 26.05	Bethel High School moved a special education teacher from the Middle School. Teachers with additional classes change from year to year. Bethel Middle School teachers with additional classes change from year to year Johnson School had no change Rockwell School moved a Special Education Teacher and class from Berry to Rockwell mid-year last year. We moved Berry PE Teacher back to Berry full time. Berry School PE Teacher was partially charged to Rockwell but is only at Berry now.
71.	KD	I have follow-up questions regarding Special Education. 1. While it is hard to predict the number of mediations, have you experienced an uptick in those this past year or the year before?	We haven't experienced a significant uptick in mediation or settlement agreements. These have stayed steady for us at 1-2 per year. We dedicate considerable energy to meeting student needs and maintaining positive relationships with families in order to avoid mediation. When budgeting, we do consider potential or likely settlements when making the outplacement tuition/transportation request. Yes, these are harder to predict,

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		2. Again, while it is hard to predict, do you account for those in your overall budget?	however, we use the information that we have access to at the time.
72.	MO	In Berry School, there are reductions to the lines for instructional Supplies and Other Supplies. Do we have sufficient funding for standard classroom supplies?	The shift was due to actual expenditures and principal allocation of expenses. Berry School has never gone over in the classroom or other supplies.
73.	MO	Since future enrollment is a best guest, consider an asterisk *an estimate only.	Correct. In November I actually presented our exact enrollment and rolled it up to the next grade. In the projection, Mrs. Variale created a projection based on an analysis of additional students we receive year to year. The idea of an asterisk is a good one with the notation that it's only a projection.
74.	MO	BHS lines for tutors and paras are down or flat. Does BHS have sufficient support staff for increased enrollment needs?	Planning for enrollment shifts at the high school level is different from K-8. Unlike at the lower levels, enrollment is based on graduation requirements, enrollment in courses, and specialized programs. Looking at current class sizes, enrollment by Department in the core areas in terms of class size is approximately: ● English: 20.7 ● Science: 19.1 ● Mathematics: 23.1 ● Social Studies: 22.7 Special education caseloads are a bigger concern, and will be a significant problem in 2024-2025 due to the loss of a special education teacher currently funded via ESSER.
75.	MO	Leases/rentals are up 42% at BHS. What is leased?	Most of the expenses under leases/rentals are for graduation. This includes the stage, chairs, sound equipment, lighting, etc. which they rent. It is a shift in funding because we no longer go to Western Connecticut State University.

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			We did not move the money in the last budget cycle because we were not sure if we were going to resume commencement at WCSU.
76.	MO	Gen supplies sports and clubs down 59.70%. Please explain.	See question 61.
77.	MO	At BMS cert staff up 5.18% with FTE down .12 FTE. Was the increase partly for the hire of more experienced teachers? If so are all or some subjects experiencing teacher shortages?	The percentage increase is due to hiring more experienced staff from other districts. The hiring was primarily in the area of English and special education. As we stated in previous meetings special education teachers, teachers of English learners, mathematics, science, and even now English tend to be the bigger shortage areas.
78.	MO	At BMS school monitors up 60.71%. Please explain.	The increase for school lunch monitors is due to the minimum wage increase. The minimum wage will increase on July 1st from \$14 per hour to \$15 per hour.
79.	MO	At BMS reduction of transportation for sports and clubs of 7.05%. Please explain.	Sports and Clubs transportation was reduced by \$592. The adjustment was based on actual expenditures.
80.	MO	Can you comment about our students that would benefit from support from an interventionist by grade level/school -elementary, middle, and high? Where most concentrated?	We have students that need additional support at all levels. Generally, the younger you address the needs the more effective the intervention. Right now, the biggest concerns with students needing intervention are both at Johnson School and Bethel Middle School. In literacy, third grade is really where you see the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. In addition, at later elementary levels is where you tend to see increases in gaps in mathematics. That is why we provided additional support at those schools with our COVID Federal grant money. Currently, we have 494 students that receive Tier II and III intervention support. In addition, Our tutors and interventionists push into regular education classrooms to provide additional support which we call Tier 1 watch. There are approximately 238 students being supported through Tier 1 watch in grades K-8.

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			Tier I watch is initiated when a concern is raised about a student's progress. Specialists will work with the classroom teacher and tutors to develop a plan based on the student's needs and provide additional support within the classroom targeted to the student's needs. The team monitors the student's progress. If a student continues not to progress, then the student is transitioned to a tier II intervention with a specialist. With the loss of ARP/ESSER funds and the adjustment of the Middle School schedule, this is the number of students that would not receive intervention: ● Literacy = 56 ● Mathematics = 77 ● EL = 74 Total: 207 As of Friday, 732 received intervention or Tier 1 Watch. With the loss of the ARP/ESSER funds as of this date, 204 students would not receive additional support.
81.	BF	The most recent enrollment estimate for grades K-12 is different than presented in November. There is a significant difference in grades 3 and 5. How were the numbers generated for both estimates? Why is there a difference in only two months? What is the present enrollment in grades 2 and 4? Grade 3 estimate exceeds the board's average 22 regulated average. Should we not add a third-grade teacher?	Present enrollment in grade 2 is 204 (next year's grade 3). If we go by actual enrollment, the average class size with nine sections is 22.6. Currently, our fourth grade going into fifth grade is 224. By moving a section from third grade to 5th grade it allows the average class size to be 22.4. Right now, I do not think it's appropriate to add an additional third-grade teacher. I definitely think, as we do every year, that we need to keep an eye on enrollment in all grade levels.

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82.	CM KD	Pay to Play: With our current rate vs our new VOTED ON and APPROVED rate, what is the total increase in revenue (or estimated if need be) that we would have received if it had been implemented at the beginning of this year based on current athletic enrollment. What does the delay from Spring until next year cost us in lost revenue?	It is approximately \$10,000 dollars. We did not change the family cap this year. This excludes the families that qualify under free and reduced lunch status. This does not affect next year's budget.
83.	CM KD	Are there any purchases like old equipment being replaced, safety issues, facility repairs, or anything else that the athletic department could use? Why can't we instead use the savings from the bus shortage to provide one-time needed improvements that would likely need to come out of another budget at some point anyway?	This does not affect next year's budget, only this year's.
84.	CM	With the dramatic increase in enrollment, the most likely underestimated increase expected, and already large class sizes, why are there no additional requests for FTE teachers?	Please see the answers to questions 74 and 81.
85.	KD	We have spoken in depth regarding our students in need of additional support through specialists, interventionists, tutors, etc. How are	We use multiple data points such as NWEA, Smarter Balanced, and NGSS, as well as a variety of district assessments to examine how students are progressing at all levels throughout the year. We have closely examined the growth of our students for several years now to ensure all students are growing, not just our students

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		we meeting the needs of our higher-performing students as well as the middle students? What evidence/data do we have that those students are growing? Are those students being discussed and planned for at SRBI meetings, PLCs, etc?	that are at risk. As a result of our examination of data, we have evidence that students at higher levels of achievement are growing. However, a focus area for us as a district has been for the students that are around what we consider goal. This has been why we have focused on strengthening our core classroom instruction to ensure rigorous expectations and continuous monitoring to ensure growth. One of the ways we examine data in PLCs for students is to focus on each of the proficiency levels (below, at/around, and above) to help plan for instruction and target the needs of students at all levels.
86.	KD	Please clarify, is there an opportunity to add back in a specialist? I know we are losing an FTE at Johnson, and in line with Courtney's question, would there be an opportunity to keep that teacher? What would be the increase in the budget?	The Board of Education has the opportunity to add any positions or dollar amounts back into the budget. Ultimately, the Board of Education makes a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. If the Board of Education adds in both specialists the total increase in the proposed budget would be .42%. The total amount, not including any potential Insurance savings would be 6.37%. Adding one teacher would not significantly change the class size.
87.	CM	Custodians over all schools combined: In the 21-22 budget we had 23 total FTE custodians, an estimated overtime expense of 68,465 but actual paid totaled \$108,092 in overtime alone. That's an almost \$40,000 difference. In the 22-23 and the projected 23-24 budget, we have no increase in FTEs and the same amount allocated in overtime for this current year and	YTD custodian overtime spending is \$61,372.58. Overtime for the rest of the year is largely dependent on whether or not we experience snow accumulations that need to be cleared. Because custodian overtime is periodically spent for special projects and snow removal it does not make sense to hire a person for this purpose. See question 67.

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		only an additional \$500 in the proposed 23-24 budget. How much overtime has already been paid out for this year? Are we on track to be over as much as we were last year? Even though the total average salary as proposed comes in at \$62,000 a year, would it be more cost-efficient to add another FTE custodian or even a .5? Especially with the increase in enrollment, additional total school building sq footage, and new facilities.	
88.	CM	Year after year we have had more needs than requested and have operated on a very lean budget. A decrease in our budget would have meant a loss in programs, even larger class sizes, and possibly even a loss in staff. Taking into consideration the mandated increases by the state, social-emotional needs of our students, contractual increases, additional health care costs, possible loss of funding, excess increase in essential items such as paper, cleaning supplies, gas for buses, etc., are the proposed increases in budgets of each school enough? What potentially happens if this proposed budget is cut?	Not including adjustments for potential changes in healthcare benefits, cuts to the budget will result in the following: • Reduced Intervention to our students in need who are not qualified for special education • Reduction in extracurricular activities, clubs, and sports including Band, Theater Programs, Winter Guard, ROTC, Middle and High School Athletics, Unified Sports, etc. • Reductions in elective courses and pathways at the High School, including AP Courses, Art, Business, Culinary, Music, ROTC, Support Courses, World Languages • Movement of regular education paraeducators into special education roles. This includes paraeducators in Library Media, Kindergarten, and Intervention.

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89.	CM	Cost per pupil: If our budget stays flat or only goes up by the contractual or mandated increases with no additional increase in funds for the actual needs of our children, how much potentially would this affect the already low amount per child? Taking into consideration the projected increase in students. Would the new total cost per pupil negatively affect the overall education of the student population?	If the budget increase does not remain on par with our student population increase per pupil expenditure will decrease. Based on our current enrollment, we will need to add over \$6M to the budget to reach the state average for per-pupil expenditure.
90.	SC	Has there been any consideration for eliminating the SEL coach in favor of a classroom teacher? Is there data to support the effectiveness of the role?	The SEL coach is a three-year position that is paid for via a grant. The SEL coach has a number of responsibilities K-12 as we implement new tier 1 social-emotional curriculums. We are in the first year of implementation of RULER, and a new curriculum at Bethel High School. There are no other staff members that have the time to support the implementation of this new program. Our student data continues to demonstrate a high need for social-emotional instruction, and we need to build the capacity of our teachers to integrate. We are certainly open to a discussion based on the data.
91.	SC	I noticed that the infield at the high school baseball field was re-sodded in the fall. Was this a school expense or a town expense?	The Town of Bethel Parks and Recreation department maintains the athletic fields. This was a town expense, not a school expense.
92.	SC	BHS 3201: Prof services: What are the itemized services?	BHS High School Professional Services Includes the following: Police Presence at Graduation Healthcare Shadowing through EdAdvance for the Healthcare Pathway Students Virtual High School

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93.	SC	BHS 4301: What repair and maintenance? Why separate from the 460 account?	This is for HS equipment repair for AVA, Art, Music, and Science as well as sports equipment repair and reconditioning. The 460 account is for building/systems repair and maintenance.
94.	SC	BHS 5301: This appears to be a new expense. Please explain	See Question 48 answer. Moved from Library.
95.	KD	Students are charged admission to football and basketball games, but not other sports. Why is that? Where does that money go? Is it to offset items outside of the budget? Students fundraise for their prospective sports. Is that money going directly back to the team or dispersed amongst all teams? Is the fundraising to support items outside of the budget?	Most sporting events outside of football and basketball would collect minimal gate fees. Some sports would result in a net loss due to the cost of staffing required to collect gate fees. The gate fees from athletic events are used to pay for officials and other athletic expenses. Athletic fundraisers are used to fund team wants and not needs. Our budget is limited to necessities only. Recent purchases from fundraisers include a pitching machine for softball, a ball tosser for volleyball, and a digital scorer's table.
96.	KD	Where does that money allocated for bus drivers go if it is not being spent on drivers for the buses to sporting events?	Underruns in specific budget line items are used to offset overruns in other line items such as Special Education Tuition and Transportation.
97.	KD	Students pay admission fees to games, what happens if a family is experiencing hardship and does not have the money for their child to attend the game? How do we support those families?	We currently do not have a program to support these students and families. Going forward we could consider issuing GoFan Season Passes to Free/Reduced eligible students and the parents of players on Free/Reduced lunch.

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98.	JA	Are there any activities/clubs/sports that we are looking to sunset because of low interest or lack of progress/success or funding concerns?	Every year we budget a certain amount for clubs and activities. We review participation and interest each year and determine what clubs and activities will continue to run. We also have a system in place through the Teachers' Bargaining Unit Agreement to pilot new clubs for two years to gauge actual interest.
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