



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
PRESS CONTACT:**

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Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent
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Ellington Board of Education Adopts Budget of \$45.1M

Superintendent directed to continue to look for savings and to ensure transparency of the budget process

ELLINGTON, CT - The Ellington Board of Education unanimously voted on January 31st to adopt a budget for the 2023-2024 school year of \$45,109,347. The budget request represents an increase of \$2,103,118, or 4.89%, over the current year's budget. The Board charged the district administration to continue to look for ways to bring down the request over the rest of the budget process.

Earlier in January, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Scott Nicol proposed a budget request that was \$210,250 more than the Board of Education (BOE) adopted budget. The BOE's Finance Committee held two meetings to further discuss the request and recommended a wide array of cuts. Approximately one third of the cuts (\$67,000) came from more aggressive stances on reserve balances in self-funded dental and medical benefit programs. The proposed budget does limit programs by trimming the overall number of additional electives at Ellington High School.

Liz Nord, BOE Treasurer, stated, "The Board of Education's process of reviewing the Superintendent's budget was comprehensive, going line by line through the request. We did our best to limit cuts in areas that do not affect programs. With high inflation in accounts that have been held flat for years, there's not a lot of room to go without affecting programs."

The Board of Education's budget request will now be formally submitted to the Town by the Charter deadline of February 15th. From there, the BOE and administration will present to the Board of Finance on March 8th. The public hearing on the entire budget is scheduled for April 11th.

Discussion at the Board meeting focused on the next steps, balancing the needs of the community with the needs of the school district. Dr. Nicol discussed the BOE's challenge: a thin staffing model and low per-pupil expenditure. He indicated these factors don't give the BOE a lot of room to cut without affecting programs or passing costs on to families through higher fees (e.g. Athletics pay-to-participate, field trips, classroom supplies).

“Our town has a long budget process and this is just the first step for the Board of Education. We will continue to look for ways to save money and will continue to collaborate with the Board of Finance, through Chair Purcaro, as we have done every year. Fiscal discipline will be required to ensure continued services and the long-term stability of Town finances in 2023-2024 and beyond.”

- Jennifer Dzen, BOE Chair

Other parts of the Town’s budget process are not yet known, including overall Grand List growth, projected state revenues, fund balance projections and the Town departmental budgets. The Board discussed how the unassigned fund balance—the Town’s reserve account—has been spent down over the past two years (a *potential* reduction of approximately 50% based on the 2022-2023 budget). This offset tax revenues, keeping current mill rate lower (0.1 mill) than 2019-2020, but dipping into these reserves leaves the Town in a more challenging financial position moving forward.

Ultimately the Board of Finance sets the overall budget and mill rate for the town, including the total education appropriation.

Dr. Nicol stated, “We want all Town residents to be informed as we move to the next steps in the budget cycle. The school district will continue to communicate the steps, facts, figures, and impacts—based on our [Transparency for Trust](#) approach—over the next few months.”
