

A meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Wednesday, March 15, 2023, in the Board of Education Conference Room, 47 Main Street, Ellington, CT.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Liz Nord.

PRESENT Liz Nord, Chair, Miriam Underwood, Steve Viens, Angie Moser

ABSENT Jen Dzen

ALSO PRESENT Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations
Ms. Stephanie Veturis, Coordinator of Accounting
Mr. Aaron Fliss, Director of Technology

AGENDA ITEMS

2022-2023 Budget Update

Mr. Greenleaf provided an update on the current fiscal year budget. Things remain exceedingly tight, which is why a “hard” freeze went into effect on March 1, 2023. The biggest areas of concern are utilities, HVAC, and retirements.

2023-2024 Budget Update

Mr. Greenleaf discussed that there are no large updates to the 2023-2024 budget at this time. A discussion about the strategy of using a Step 5 Masters level for anticipated vacancies in the budget was held. While many teachers over the past two years were hired above the Step 5 Masters level, Mr. Greenleaf explained that this did not have a budgetary impact as there is turnover after the budget is set. The district looks at each hiring process and determines the best candidate while staying within the total budget.

Ms. Nord responded that even though there was not a budgetary impact, there would have been considerable savings if teachers had been hired at Masters’ step 5 as opposed to hiring them at Masters’ Max. Twenty-four teachers were hired at Masters’ Max during the 21-22 and 22-23 school years. Another 40 teachers were hired below the maximum step.

Mr. Greenleaf highlighted that hires were the best candidates as determined by interviews held collaboratively by teachers and principals. Typically, candidates hired on a top step fall in the area of state-determined teacher shortage areas (math, science, special education, world language, etc.) He indicated that a decision to change that hiring practice could have a negative impact on academic performance and also violate equal opportunity employment laws. Additionally, lower-step teachers move on step and GWI each year, meaning budgetary savings may be wiped out by higher group increment costs.

Chromebook Leasebreak Plan

Mr. Greenleaf and Mr. Fliss presented the plan to stop the cycle of leasing Chromebooks in order to restore previous purchasing power over time. Increased cost of Chromebooks and interest costs have reduced the district’s ability to maintain the budget and the number of devices in stock. The plan requires a 4 year step-up of purchasing to return to “normal” with a pinch point of testing eligible devices in 2026-2027.

Healthy Food Certification

Mr. Greenleaf highlighted that the Board votes to adopt Healthy Food Certification each year, with the exemption for beverages and food sold after the school day.

MOTION

First: Liz Nord

Second: Miriam Underwood

To recommend to the Board of Education that pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Ellington Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION

First: Liz Nord

Second: Miriam Underwood

To recommend to the Board of Education that the Ellington Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

Motion carried unanimously.

Anticipated Executive Session - Unaffiliated Contracts

MOTION

First: Liz Nord

Second: Miriam Underwood

To enter into Executive Session for purposes of discussing contractual negotiations and to invite Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations into the session.

Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

First: Liz Nord

Second: Steve Viens

To adjourn the meeting of the Finance Committee (7:42 p.m.)

Motion carried unanimously.