

Board of Education Ellington, Connecticut

January 26, 2019

A special meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Saturday, January 26, 2019 in the School Administration Building.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Mrs. Kiff-Judson, Chairperson.

Present were: Dr. Young, Mr. Purcaro, and Mr. Blanchette; Ms. Kiff-Judson, Nord, Picard-Wambolt, Socha, Kupferschmid (depart 11:55), and Dzen; Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services; Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations; and Mr. John Collins, Director of Technology. Dr. Foster and Student Representative Amanda Marcus were absent.

Also attending were: Mrs. Trudie Luck-Roberts, Principal, Center School; Ms. Susan Nash-Ditzel, Principal, Crystal Lake School; Mr. David Welch, Principal, Windermere School; Ms. Jennifer Kinne, Assistant Principal, Windermere School; Mr. David Pearson, Principal, Ellington Middle School; Mr. Michael Nash, Assistant Principal EMS & EHS; Mr. John Guidry, Principal, Ellington High School; Ms. Becca Aldred, Assistant Principal, Ellington High School; Mrs. Liz Cole, Curriculum Supervisor of Science, Technology and Math; Ms. Michele Murray, Curriculum Supervisor of ELA/Social Studies; Mrs. Melissa Haberern, Special Education Supervisor; Ms. Sara Spak, Special Education Supervisor; Ms. Jennifer Brown, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent/Human Resources Coordinator; Mrs. Cate Hatt, Windermere School; Mr. Paul Breton, Superintendent Intern; Mr. John Rachek, Board of Finance (BOF) Chair; Mr. Michael Varney, Board of Finance Liaison; and Mrs. Melinda Ferry, Board of Selectmen (BOS) Liaison.

Chairperson Kiff-Judson thanked all those who had a role in preparing the budget, especially Dr. Nicol, Mr. Greenleaf, the Administrative team, and Jen Brown for setting up the event. Mrs. Kiff-Judson also thanked John Rachek and Michael Varney, Board of Finance, and Melinda Ferry, Board of Selectmen, for attending. Mrs. Kiff-Judson asked each Board member, Director, Administrative Member, and Town Official to introduce themselves. Introductions were made all around.

All Board members had a binder which included the detailed Superintendent's Proposed Budget 2019-2020 document. The budget document will be available online following budget approval.

Dr. Nicol stated that the Budget is a process that will run through to spring – early summer 2019. The agenda would be as follows via a Power Point presentation:

- Setting the Tone
- Building Level Context
- Analysis
- Budget Numbers
- Notable Accounts
- Q & A – BOE and guests

Setting the Tone

Dr. Nicol began by quoting from, *What School Could Be*, by Ted Dintersmith. The reading was required reading for the BOE administrative team as they met and discussed district improvement and drivers for the budget this year and into future years. Dr. Nicol compared the passage to the trajectory of the school district, incrementally and continually moving and changing every year. Overall, the district does the work required in the present but thinks towards the future.

Dr. Nicol shared the district's Vision and Mission statements as related to Improvement and Accountability; he described how Equity, Innovation, and Efficient Operations are interwoven through the district's Core Beliefs, Vision of the Graduate, Superintendent's Goals, and the District and School Improvement Plans.

Dr. Nicol shared another excerpt from *What Schools Should Be* of a chart that compared a century-old model of education and a new vision. The district is now straddling both models in a balancing act that is held together by Management and Leadership and will be seen throughout the budget workshop. As stated in the budget documents, the focus is in finding cost neutral ways to improve the school district by making operations efficient, developing emotional/social connections, and enhancing the safety and security of the Ellington Public Schools.

Building Level Context

Mr. Guidry, Ms. Spak, and Mr. Pearson addressed the Board. Mr. Guidry was able to do data assessment when he began last spring, and he discussed the "Arc of Improvement" over the last two years at the high school. The Arc for year one includes the *mechanics* for building a high performing school, such as Resources, Safety/Security, Discipline, Logistics, Recordkeeping, PPT/504s, and Interventions. The Arc for year two includes the *art* of building a high performing school, focusing on Student and Faculty Climate, Curriculum and Learning Culture.

Ms. Spak discussed the elementary/special education lens and stated the theme of this workshop is that the landscape of education is changing. She went over the social/emotional needs of students, roles teachers play, relationship building, and ever-increasing educational mandates.

Mr. Pearson provided his perspective of being a principal that started in 2005 and his leaving in 2019. In comparison, his daily schedule looked drastically different in 2005 compared to 2019; in 2019, his calendar is almost completely filled with mandated meetings, committees and managerial work all done in efforts to create and maintain safe schools. Mr. Pearson stressed the impact of social media over the last fourteen years and the influx of great social and cultural diversity.

Analysis

Dr. Nicol stated that a collective mindset between the school district and the town is needed, that challenges are seen as opportunities and allow for flexibility as we move forward. He discussed managing the environment in respect to pressures on the district, including school choice, school safety, mandates, growth & investment, parent advocacy, and complex classrooms.

Trends in Ellington

Dr. Nicol stated that all trends in Ellington have increased from last year:

- Number of Students (2733)
- Diversity (23.8%)
- English Language Learners (2.0%)
- Special Education (13.5%)
- Free or Reduced Lunch Eligibility (16.2%)

Ellington's growth in student population since 1999 is roughly 24%. He compared median incomes in surrounding towns. Dr. Nicol discussed per pupil spending over the past decade, and he noted that at the current rate, the gap between other districts will get larger and larger and will eventually not be sustainable. The increasing disparity between the unique needs of Ellington and our current trend of funding will challenge Ellington's future sustainability to be a competitive school district.

Dr. Nicol also touched on Budget Increases, Projected PK-12 Enrollment, and Projected Enrollment in each Ellington Public School.

Spheres of Influence

Dr. Nicol discussed national, state and local effects of budgets, grants and trends. He explained Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) revenue and that the new formula being phased in over ten years works in Ellington favor. Ellington is projected to receive an extra 40 K.

	<u>2016-2017</u>	<u>2017-2018</u>	<u>2018-2019</u>	<u>2019-2020</u>
Educational Cost Sharing	\$9,684,435	\$8,406,850	\$9,699,780	\$9,739,683

2019-2020 Proposed Budget Numbers

As a result of the budget review process, the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for 2019-2020 is \$39,750,319, which represents a proposed increase of 3.78%, or \$1,448,958, over the current fiscal year.

To put this into context, the BOE Budget increase for 2018-2019 was 3.88%, or \$1,429,392.

The major drivers of the proposed budget for 2019-2020 are:

	<u>Increase</u>	<u>% Impact</u>
• Salaries and Benefits	\$ 968,147	2.53%
• Technology and Operations	\$ 356,229	0.93%
• Outside Tuition	\$ 48,820	.13%
• Instructional Budgets	\$ (84,238)	(0.22%)

The proposed budget is the result of two primary areas of focus:

	<u>Increase</u>	<u>% Impact</u>
• Maintenance of Effort (MOE)	\$1,288,958	3.37%
• Long-term Investment in the Future of Our Town (LIFT)	\$ 160,000	0.42%
Total	\$1,448,958	3.78%

Dr. Nicol went through detailed breakdowns of the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Summary and LIFT or the Long Term Investment in our Town. For the MOE, he noted positions added last spring that generate potential revenue for the district currently and in the long run, the decrease in Special Education accounts, the increase in Transportation costs, and the Choice Funded Unassigned Elementary Teacher.

The Investment Summary for LIFT is as follows:

	<u>Increase</u>	<u>% Impact</u>
• Instructional Budgets	---	---
• Outside Tuition	---	---
• Technology & Operations	\$ \$5,000	0.01%
• Salaries & Benefits	\$155,000	0.40%
Total	\$160,000	0.60%

Here, Dr. Nicol noted the need for a Full Time Assistant Principal for EMS & EHS (1.0) and a Data-Driven Technology Investment (Edulastic). There is already a split EMS/ EHS Assistant Principal Position.

Dr. Nicol then reported on the increased transparency in terms of revenue funding. He discussed revenue generation over the past decade and projected revenues with the 2019-2020 proposed budget. Of note are the following positions/programs funded by revenue:

- 1.0 Special Education Teacher (MOE)
- 1.0 Unassigned Elementary Teacher
- Forms Management Software (\$5K)
- Security Training Software (\$4K)
- Security Projects (\$15K)
- Server Upgrades (\$7K)
- Partial Funding for Late Bus at EMS (\$12K)

Dr. Nicol also summarized items and staffing not included in the proposed budget including an Athletic Director/Supervisor of Wellness.

Mrs. Kiff-Judson recessed the meeting at 10:45 a.m. for a break. The meeting was called to order again at 11:00 a.m.

Notable Accounts

Mr. Greenleaf, Mr. Collins, and Dr. LaPorte presented the Notable Accounts, which are the main drivers of the budget (approximately 90% of budget).

Mr. Greenleaf broke down the accounts of Salaries & Benefits. Main points included:

- Salaries increased in Certified Teachers, Administration, and Support Staff
- Increases are offset by retirements
- Teaching and aide positions to revenue funding
- 1.0 FTE reduction: model for peer leadership

Mr. Greenleaf broke down the Health Insurance account. Main points included:

- Currently 3.55% increase
- Total account offset by \$175K Open Choice funding
- Holding 7.75% premiums increase (9.5% offer)
- Negotiated Contractual Agreements
- Trends in claims
- Changing outlook for high cost claimants

Mr. Greenleaf discussed short term actions required and long term solutions in terms of self-funding. He also went through the accounts for Social Security & Retirement, Property & Workers' Compensation Insurance, Utilities, Transportation, and Outside Tuition.

Dr. LaPorte broke down the Special Services account. Main points included:

- Decrease of \$118K
- Changing student medical needs
- Shifting of resources (Occupational Therapist)

Dr. LaPorte discussed Special Services Outside Tuition & Transportation, including unpredictable out-of-district placements, more outplacements for partial year, and increase in Magnet School Special Education. She summarized the Special Education programs in-district that keep students in Ellington, which keeps costs down.

Mr. Purcaro posed a few questions but asked to reserve detailed discussions for the Finance Committee. His goal is to seek areas in budget that can be fine-tuned or the possibility to work in partnership with the administration to find significant cost savings.

Topics questioned included:

- Outside Tuition
- Medicaid Reimbursement
- Compensated Absences
- Pension Liability/Workers' Comp Liability
- Electricity
- Cell Phones
- Custodian Account
- Medical Insurance
- Medical Reserve Account
- Cyber Security

Mr. Collins reviewed the Technology & Equipment budget. Main points included:

- Maintain the current Student:Chromebook ratio
- Replacing Chromebooks in a systematic way
- Year 3 of 4 in building to a flat level of funding
- New Initiatives:
 - Form Software
 - Know Before
 - Edulastic

Coming Into Focus

Dr. Nicol wrapped up the presentation by reemphasizing the position and collaborative partnership the BOE shares with the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen, along with other town offices. He noted that this is currently the Superintendent's Proposed Budget. The Finance Committee is set to meet on January 29 to discuss the budget prior to the Board of Education meeting on January 30. At the January 30th meeting, the Board will be expected to adopt a budget, which will then be the Board of Education's Proposed Budget.

Mrs. Kiff-Judson invited Mr. John Rachek, Board of Finance Chair, to comment upon the budget process. He stated that he was impressed and had a great deal of respect for all the administrators and staff for the depth and dedication that went into the budget process. He noted that the BOE budget is a major portion of the Town budget, so it has a big influence on the entire town. He commented that there is a new Legislature and a new Governor, so much is yet to be determined. Mr. Rachek also stated that there will need to be a balance between what is what the town's taxpayers' *need* and what they *want*. He stated that there will be other departments in the Town requesting money, but he considers education one of the top services that the Town can provide. Mrs. Kiff-Judson thanked him for his feedback and support.

Mrs. Kiff-Judson invited Mr. Michael Varney, Board of Finance Member, to comment upon the budget process. He stated that an outstanding job was done by all key staff in preparing the budget. He thanked Mr. Pearson for his years of service and leadership. Mr. Varney believes the entire EPS staff understands the culture of the town, and he appreciates how a creative approach to financing and investment in technology has increased the Board of Education's flexibility to meet goals. Mrs. Kiff-Judson thanked him for his comments.

Mrs. Kiff-Judson invited Mrs. Melinda Ferry, Board of Selectman Liaison, to comment upon the budget process. Mrs. Ferry commented on the importance personal relationship building that supports EPS staff and students beyond the numbers and maintain communication with the public, especially in regards to "Mandate Mania." Mrs. Kiff-Judson thanked her for her feedback.

Mrs. Kiff-Judson thanked the Board, directors and administrators for all their work on putting the budget together.

A motion to adjourn was made at 12:10 p.m.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt 2nd. M. Young

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Picard-Wambolt, Secretary

KPW/amd