



MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of Plymouth Public Schools is to challenge, inspire, and prepare all students for success in an ever-changing and complex world.

SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
PLYMOUTH BOARD OF EDUCATION
TERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
CAFETERIA
33 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE
TERRYVILLE, CT 06786
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023

7:00P.M.
MINUTES

Erin Calhoun
1225 FEB - 8 AM 9:55
TERRYVILLE, CT

Present: Mr. Seaman, Mrs. Kulesa, Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani, Mr. Perugino, Mr. Zbuska, Mr. Showers, Ms. Tilton, Mr. Foote

Absent: Mrs. Lucian

Also Present: Mr. Falcone, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Tencza, Business Manager

1. Call to Order & Pledge to the Flag

Mr. Seaman called the Special Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education to order at 7:01 p.m. and the group joined in the Pledge to the Flag.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

MOTION: To adopt the Agenda by Mr. Showers, seconded Mr. Foote and the vote unanimous.

3. Budget Workshop #I for 2023 - 2024 Budget

Budget was presented by Superintendent Falcone and Matt Tencza, Business Manager, to the Board last week. The budget was opened for discussion noting a 4.3% increase overall or \$1,074,015; total budget presented is \$26,149,100.

Mr. Falcone distributed information from slides on the budget increase and on the back is a DRG budget comparison. Chairman Seaman stated at the 4.3% there are cuts to the budget, reviewed cuts.

Questions:

*Outplacement placeholder? Mr. Tencza stated a place holder in expectation of outplacements anticipated but may not be identified yet on top of current number.

*Pension of \$20,000; how can this be cut? Mr. Tencza stated we are required to fund original pension participated in, old and new. This \$20,000 cut he feels comfortable making as in 2 previous years, we funded additional money at the end of the school year and are about 70% funded and actuary numbers allow to push forward. We have been ahead of the curve as well as predecessors have.

*Early retirement cut? Mr. Tencza stated the number at the end of the year for anticipated retirements, if you retire you get so much and comfortable with number based on looking forward to who might be in the category. Incentive was not offered this year for the 2023-2024 school year. Mr. Falcone stated he did send an email to teachers and bargaining units asking to let him know and it would be kept confidential if they were considering retirement and he does have a number of people who responded.

*10% reduction in supplies? Mr. Tencza stated he reduced line items in all categories to get to this and it is a realistic number. A discussion was held with Ms. Suffridge on the cut to FES who feels there are currently enough supplies within the school so that she can cut it down for next year. Three schools in the following year will stay flat but Fisher will need to go up.

Chairman Seaman asked if this is realistic and getting to 4.3 with utilities, fuel, etc. and hard to judge the end of next fiscal year. If we don't get the 4.3 there will be more cuts. Mr. Falcone stated a lot of risk in this budget and he could have come in higher but impact is what is fair and comfortable. With layoffs you also need to budget unemployment. The list is actual budget of salaries and other place for benefits.

*FES field trips in 2023 budget is \$3500 and then zero. Mr. Tencza stated based on conditions and creations of budget, we did not feel we can fund transportation for field trips in upcoming budget year and reduction consciously made. To bring back we have to find that amount to cut somewhere else. Field trips at all schools can happen if they do fundraising if needed to supplement.

*Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani stated she went through and only increases are items we cannot control. Mr. Tencza stated salaries are contractual, transportation is working off of current contract just renegotiated and did well by having it done, diesel fuel is best guess and we did reduce somewhat, utilities we are at a risk and put in 10% and running high this year, health insurance is capped at 8.4 or 8.5 and we are budgeting at 7.5.

*Mr. Falcone stated he has had questions on custodians and \$156,991 savings is for 3 custodians; a third salary would be to pay part time employees to cover buildings.

*Mr. Perugino (a) stated at Eli Terry the PE salary went down over \$10,000; Mr. Tencza stated this happens when someone leaves and new hire is at a lower rate. Also, field trips at Eli have been zeroed; Guidance salary is moved to Special Ed noting all guidance, social workers, counselors etc. are now under Special Education or Pupil Services. (b) questioned Technology Salary lines. Mr. Tencza stated Technology is broken out in multiple levels; director is gone and

below have Tech Consultant Services and budget based on model talked about the other night and if we do something different this will change. Technology Specialists had several salaries and below broke it out as 2 different functions.

*Mrs. Kulesa asked how many building subs in elementary schools. Mr. Falcone stated 3 budgeted and 2 full time with this cut.

*Mr. Perugino noted Districtwide that Homebound Instruction went from \$30,000 to \$17,000 to \$30,000. Mr. Tencza stated in 2022 we budgeted \$17,000 and when created last year's budget it was carried along but ended last year so high and due to the number of students not back in school and we are responsible to provide services, this is a more realistic number.

*Mr. Seaman asked if it has been calculated what it would be without any cuts; what is the increase? Mr. Tencza stated 7.3%

*Mr. Perugino asked (a) Legal Fees are we ok at \$50,000. Mr. Tencza stated the reason that \$50,000 is there this year it was only budgeted at \$50,000 but we had surplus at end of last year and paid for retainer and we are just entering this year's 50,000. We should be ok through this year based on bills but we will go through that \$100,000. Under normal circumstances he would be comfortable with \$50,000. (b) Overtime for janitors and it says Park and Rec. Mr. Seaman stated the \$10,000 under Facilities and the Board had decided to enter in a MOU with Parks & Rec that we would not charge for schools, up to \$10,000, as long as they use that \$10,000 to offer more programs for children in community and they have done that. They have plans to move forward with plans i.e. February vacation we are closed and they will use the school as long as the school is able to find someone to work i.e. custodian and they would pay for custodians. The Director of Park & Rec has told him that they have grants and if anything the BOE would like to do within schools to reach out. Mr. Falcone stated they are running a fishing derby, safety class and sounds like a good partnership. Mr. Tencza noted the reason separate, all custodial overtime, here is OT for school and OT for Park & Rec, and do budget increase here. We track expenses incurred and we will send statement so they know where they stand. (c) Building Space Rental of \$1300. Mr. Tencza stated that is the POD on the hill which is an expense. (d) CAFE dues \$4500; Mr. Tencza stated for Brian, board members or Kathleen and is the fee charged for non-members. (e) Capital Improvement – what we are going to pay – does the town understand that we are going to need roofs on buildings at half a million dollars each; Jim Kilduff, Chairman Town Board of Finance, stated the BOF is aware. Mr. Perugino stated he wanted to make sure taxpayers in town are aware of what is going to happen as years ago they let buildings go and do not want to see buildings get in that condition again. Are there grants out there for cameras for safety. Mr. Falcone stated a number of superintendents have received grant applications and we applied twice and hope 3rd time is the charm. Mr. Tencza stated the last time he applied we were not awarded and we just get notified we did not get it and not where it went. Discussion held.

*Mr. Showers stated all of his questions were answered.

*Ms. Tilton stated she is new to this and asked with budget cuts, what happens if not approved, what else can be taken away. Mr. Falcone stated if the town makes the decision to reduce and we are cut, we are looking at certified teachers. If cut to 3% how bad; it is \$300,000 and change; basically the sinking fund or \$328,000. Staff and programs in school will be affected.

*Mrs. Kulesa asked (a) with the loss of a reading coach and tutor at the middle school, what is the plan to increase reading support at FES to mitigate kids going to middle not having strong skills. Mr. Falcone said the coaching position would move to the elementary school and would have high school/middle school coach for both schools which is not a bad thing; tutor position has not been filled all year and not a significant loss. At the middle school the kids in intervention have intervention period and all are being seen. (b) you have a structured reading coach and then reading tutors and anything in between. Mr. Falcone stated the reading coach is a certified teacher who works with staff and have realized each grade level was not on the same page. The reading coach is in common planning times to coach and prep and go offer lessons and getting feedback. In elementary there is one reading coach at PCS and one at FES; one math coach for PCS and FES. At high/middle, they have a math coach and a reading coach for both schools. Mrs. Kulesa asked if the reading coach works with adults, who works with kids. Mr. Falcone stated a certified interventionist.

*Mr. Perugino asked regarding the outplacement of special ed, can we get them back in our schools. Mr. Falcone stated he has met with Wolcott and Thomaston and programs they have available for their special needs students and they just don't have the room. We are probably in the best position to take on some of their students; number of outplacements have stayed the same but the number charging for services has increased. Excess cost has never been fully funded.

*Mrs. Kulesa asked how many full time custodians do we have now. Mr. Tencza stated 16; Mr. Falcone stated during the day there is one head custodian in each school and 2 maintenance guys and the custodian director; the rest are night time. Total is 17 which includes Dennis K and he is .4; also have a part timer in place here twice a week. Sixteen now covers everything we need. Mr. Tencza stated after cuts, Jim Mazon is relatively comfortable he would be able to cover with 2 part-time coming in a night. Mr. Falcone said part time might be students to vacuum, wipe down desks for 4 hours. Mr. Seaman asked who oversees them at night. Mr. Falcone stated the regular night custodians will oversee them. Mrs. Kulesa stated custodian is a good job for high school students.

*Chairman Seaman stated every year we are told to tighten our belts and we have done that. Looking at proposed budgets for what is being proposed for this year. Mr. Falcone stated deceiving as we had 2.13% but had sinking fund to plug hole. Mr. Tencza stated information from other boards as shown on the DRF F Budget Comparison, the state average proposed budget is running around 5 or 5.something percent.

Mr. Seaman stated every other town agency will come in with increases and in town anything over 3% goes to referendum; historically referendums fail and Council can set at 3. He is not comfortable going below the 4.3%. If lower, everything we put forward will be undone. Discussion held. Mr. Seaman stated he is comfortable with 4.3 as presented going to the Board of Finance. Mr. Perugino stated cost of living is up 8% and we are looking at half of that in the BOE budget.

*Mrs. Kulesa stated that everyone is aware that we have been getting enrollment is going down and it went up and we should stress that and should be getting more. She feels part of the reason why teachers work for lower salaries is due to atmosphere and we have great schools and great kids and they have a lot of benefits in places that may pay higher. Mr. Falcone stated the overall goal is to maintain what we have. If go below the 4.3 we have very hard decisions to make.

Chairman Seaman requested final round of Board input/questions:

*Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani stated she is good as presented and her comment was agreed to by Mr. Perugino, Mr. Zbuska, Mr. Shower, Ms. Tilton and Mr. Foote. Mrs. Kulesa stated if anything, she wants more and realizes we cannot have it.

MOTION: To adopt the budget as presented by Superintendent Brian Falcone and the Business Manager to the Board with an increase of 4.3% to be presented to the Board of Finance, by Mr. Perugino; seconded Mr. Showers. Discussion: none. Vote: unanimous

4. Public Comment (3-minute limit per speaker)

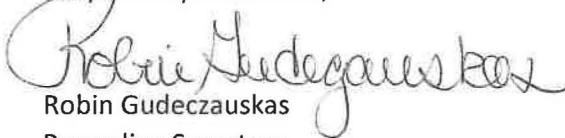
Jim Kilduff, Board of Finance Chairman, stated on roofs or any building, they are very open to that; have worked a few years ago on roof issues and you have to fix those before anything else. They are taking each issue as it comes and with IRPA money approved to fix the WPCA roof and need to be on those right way. On shovel ready projects, absolutely right and that money is going to the big city with 20 year plans. We apply for things as soon as we can and it was submitted; no details on that. Need to apply and get whatever we can.

5. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn by Mr. Showers, second Mr. Perugino. Discussion: none. Vote: unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Robin Gudczauskas
Recording Secretary