

March 25, 2019

BOARD OF EDUCATION
SUMMIT, NEW JERSEY

The Board of Education held a Special Budget Meeting on Monday, March 25, 2019 in City Hall Council Chambers beginning at 6:30 PM. Those present: Ms. McCann, presiding, Mr. Bonner, Mr. Colón, Ms. Miller, Ms. Primack, Mr. Weinreich, and Ms. Wong.

Also present were Mr. Chang, Superintendent, Mr. Pepe, Assistant Superintendent/Board Secretary, and Ms. Sarno, Assistant Business Administrator. There were 56 members of the public in attendance.

NOTICE OF CERTIFICATION

The following notice was presented:

Let the minutes reflect that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in accordance with the regulations of the Open Public Meetings Act.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Chang informed the Board of Education members and the public that the 2019-2020 annual school budget had received approval by the Executive County Superintendent of Schools and that he would hold his comments until the Board of School Estimate meeting.

Mr. Pepe informed the Board and public that the budget had been approved with no changes, and therefore the board would simply be approving the final budget with no changes to the tax levy or impact on the average home.

President McCann thanked everyone for coming, and explained the process and purpose of tonight's Board of Education and Board of School Estimate meetings.

DISCUSSION – BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

Mr. Colón thanked Mr. Pepe and Ms. Sarno for their dedication to enhancing our great educational system and their efforts on this budget. He stated that universal full-day kindergarten is the foundation for our elementary system and approving this budget supports this foundation. He supports FDK.

Ms. Miller made the following statement:

“In years such as this one when a budget includes a new or expanded program, it is to be expected—in fact it is only right—that the new or expanded program should receive extra emphasis and diligence.

Since this past September the members of this board and I have thought about, discussed, agreed and disagreed about expanding our Full Day Kindergarten program. We have done so in conjunction with the educational leader of our district and his administration. We have done so with a keen ear

towards the input from our school and town communities. Above all, we have done so knowing that our ultimate responsibility is to do what is best for the education of our students.

I have zero doubt that every board member at this table has taken seriously the responsibilities of their role: We have been cognizant of our responsibility to our community—we understand the financial burdens it bears; I also that know that every person at this table has had to reconcile that, to the best of his or her judgment, with the needs of all our students and their achievement.

I have tremendous respect for my colleagues and the energy they brought to this task of reconciliation as we explored expanding our kindergarten program.

This evening, however, I am not charged with voting on a single program. I am charged with approving or disapproving a budget in its totality. In giving my vote on the entire budget I offer two points that have been important to my decision:

First, this is a budget that continues to support our students from K-12. It's a budget that maintains or enhances our programs. Some months ago I was unsure if we would present a budget that could do so. But we have. It maintains or enhances programs that support academics, athletics, the arts, and our endeavor to create people ready to be strong citizens to our community and our country.

Second, this is a budget that continues to support our teachers. Our commitment to those who serve our children in varied capacities is seen in this budget through the tools, resources and ongoing development that it provides.

Students. Teachers. The educational welfare of our community is my charge. Despite the periodic, sometimes strong, urge to prioritize concerns other than this in my deliberations, I ultimately hold myself accountable to our students and teachers.

I therefore vote yes to the totality of this budget.”

Mr. Weinreich made the following statement:

“I would like to add my perspective on the BOE budget process and the role of the community.

In Board meetings we listen to public comment without responding and I can imagine that at times the community feels their thoughts and opinions are not heard. The public should know that board members read every email that is sent and listen to every comment made by the public.

Our decision making process however, is informed by a number of key considerations.

First among them are the thoughts and opinions of our professional educators and staff. Our superintendent and staff labor long and hard to balance important needs against scarce resources in an effort to achieve the best long-term outcome for our students, faculty, and staff.

Our standing committees then challenge the logic and assumptions implicit in the budget as we grapple with the difficult task of allocating scarce resources amongst necessary and worthy needs with a single-minded focus to establish and maintain the best possible school system with our limited funds.

Our diverse student body has very different needs and interests so it is not surprising that investments in academic programs, athletics, the arts, FDK, infrastructure, class size, or any number of other important initiatives can be a very high or a very low priority for different students. And the same is true of course for families with differing needs and perspectives that are affected by these decisions.

It is for this reason that individual programs or investments should not be determined based solely upon a narrow return on investment analysis, nor by measuring popular support in the community in favor or against a specific program.

In my opinion, a better way to calculate a return on investment is to evaluate the overall school district to determine if we are getting good value for the taxpayer dollars being spent in support of our school system.

It is understandable that people are so passionate about something so important, and so costly, as an excellent school system and I hope we continue this dialogue united in the common goal of maintaining our high standards subject to budgetary constraints in a respectful and disciplined way.

It is worth remembering that sometimes the priorities in the budget will reflect your sensibilities and priorities, and other times they will not.

Our job as fiduciaries of public funds and the education system is to support and enhance our school system and to respectfully consider competing viewpoints but not to succumb to short-term thinking to manage long term problems and opportunities.

I am happy that for the most part we have been able as a community to discuss and argue and share in a respectful fashion that models good behavior for our community and our children and keeps our eye on the prize ... a strong vibrant school system ... one that supports our amazing faculty to provide a welcoming and challenging environment for our students to develop their intellectual, social, artistic, and athletic talents and interests.

I commend the superintendent for consistency and clarity on the timely importance of FDK, the community for sharing their truths on both sides of this issue and I salute the hard work and integrity of the Operations Committee who made thoughtful and reasoned decisions in reaching their unanimous support for this budget.”

Ms. Wong made the following statement:

“As a BOE member, I wrestled with us going over the budget cap. I listened to the community’s comments at the BOE meetings and read all of the emails; of the 207 emails that I received, ~83% of the emails were in favor of FDK. The community also came out and expressed great arguments in favor or against the raising the taxes to include FDK. I too am concerned about unexpected future costs including uncertain state funding and increasing health care costs.

In addition to the expressed community support for FDK, I looked for hard data and facts about the benefit about FDK. What I found were mixed results and studies that were tough to conduct without introducing biases, especially as more children attended full day kindergarten. I could only find one truly randomized study conducted by Gibbs in 2014, where a lottery was used to allocate students to either full-day or half-day slots in overcrowded Indiana schools. As pointed out in the last BOE

*meeting by Mr. Bonner, Gibbs reported that that children randomly-assigned to full rather than half-day kindergarten scored slightly higher on a literacy assessment by the end of the kindergarten year with even larger benefits for Hispanic children **and** children who began kindergarten with relatively low literacy skills. In fact, Gibbs states that an investment in full day kindergarten yields better results than other early childhood and grade interventions such as Head Start and class size reduction. This proposed budget removes the lottery and should increase the overall literacy of those with the most need. I hope that the improved literacy gained at a younger age would lead to better performance and confidence building that would offset the downstream effects of poor literacy without FDK.*

Beyond FDK, this budget also includes funding to 1) maintain and upgrade our facilities (for example, exterior security cameras, parking lot restriping in LH) 2) improve academic programming (for example, curriculum writing and targeted math programming) and 3) a 5% healthcare increase plus a 2.8% salary increase that will allow us to continue draw strong teachers. This current budget is similar to many other corporation budgets; ~88% of the budget is tied up in the teachers and their benefits, the administration and buildings (maintenance and upkeep). This investment should allow for continued improvement for all of our kids. After I deliberated over the various pieces of information, I am voting yes on the overall budget.”

Ms. Primack read quotes related to the importance of education, and hopes the Board of School Estimate supports the educational system of Summit and that universal full-day kindergarten is implemented upon approval of the budget. She stated that Summit has always promoted “above and beyond” learning and that this community values going beyond academic standards, and this budget supports all of these facets. She supports this budget. Ms. Primack thanked Mr. Chang, Mr. Pepe, Cabinet members, administrators and all staff.

President McCann stated that she and Mr. Bonner will save their comments for the Board of School Estimate meeting.

APPROVAL OF 2019-2020 SCHOOL BUDGET RESOLUTION:

Mr. Weinreich moved the following:

RESOLVED that the Summit City Board of Education authorize the approval of withdrawal from capital reserve in the amount of \$257,953 for the following projects:
bleacher replacement at LCJSMS \$66,154; bleacher replacement at SHS \$162,799; brick repointing (chimney) at SHS \$29,000.

RESOLVED that the tentative budget be approved for the 2019-2020 School Year and sent to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools in accordance with the statutory deadline for review and approval:

	GENERAL FUND	SPECIAL REVENUES	DEBT SERVICE	TOTAL
2019-2020 Total Expenditure	\$70,780,078	\$ 1,261,895	0	\$72,041,973
Less Anticipated Revenues	5,111,219	1,261,895	0	6,373,114

Local Tax Levy to be Raised	\$65,668,859	0	0	\$65,668,859
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And to advertise said tentative budget in the Local Source in accordance with the form suggested by the State Department of Education and according to law; and

RESOLVED that there is a need for \$383,157.86 of the unused spending authority, known as "banked CAP," to be included in the base budget; and that this amount of unused spending authority must be completed by the end of the budget year and cannot be deferred or incrementally completed over a longer period of time.

NOTE: Figures subject to change up to the time of adoption of this resolution based on state aid figures or other adjustments

Seconded by Ms. Miller. The roll was called, Ms. McCann voted "Nay" and all others present voted "Aye." The motion was declared adopted.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Weinreich, seconded by Ms. Primack, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Secretary