

March 7, 2019

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SUMMIT, NEW JERSEY

The Board of Education held a Special Budget Meeting on Thursday, March 7, 2019 in the Summit High School Library/Media Center beginning at 7:22 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 160 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.

President McCann thanked everyone for coming and opened the floor to questions from the Board of Education members.

DISCUSSION – BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

Ms. Primack asked how the leasing of equipment vs. purchasing affected the budget. Mr. Pepe responded.

Ms. Miller asked for clarification of the correlation of reducing class sections and introducing the FDK program. Mr. Chang and Mr. Pepe responded.

Mr. Bonner asked for clarification regarding the percentage change from last year's budget and how much the FDK program represents as a percentage. Mr. Pepe answered.

President McCann then took a general poll of the audience to determine the number supporting the budget, and those opposed. It appeared to be approximately 50-50.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Parents, community members, Common Council members, and past Board of Education members asked questions and gave their opinions on the 2019-2020 budget, class size, and full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Bonner read the following statement:

*“As educators, administrators and board members, it is our sacred duty to continually try to find ways to improve academic opportunities and positive social-emotional outcomes for kids.*

- 1. The Constitution, via the Equal Protection clause of the 14th amendment, requires that all kids be given equal educational opportunity no matter what their race, ethnic background, religion, or sex, or whether they are rich or poor, citizen or non-citizen. I believe that the current tuition-based system is NOT in keeping with the spirit of the long standing clause. I believe that regardless of your income, if a district formally and officially offers an academic curriculum, it should be universally free and accessible. Additionally, we must stop charging FDK tuition to families who qualify for the Federal free and reduced lunch program. If the NJ school lunch reimbursable rate is \$3.125, that works out to \$562.50 per year over 180 school days. If our government has determined that a family with one child should receive free school lunch with a household income of \$27,014 or less, I do not understand why we would ask them to pay \$550 per child to access FDK considering those of us in the business of running schools know for a fact and believe longer school days have greater outcomes for students who live at or near the poverty line. A tuition based lottery system is inherently unfair and I will not vote for any budget again that includes it.*
- 2. It is a well-documented and accepted fact that early childhood education is important and valuable to the development of children. However, studies are somewhat inconclusive as to the benefits of half day vs. full day programs at the kindergarten level. Much of this incongruence has to do with how the studies themselves define “full day”, who is funding the study, and what population of students the study is looking at. Additionally, FDK has become the standard (75% of U.S. kindergarteners attend a full day program) and funding to study it has become less important. A 2014 study by Chloe R. Gibbs which is commonly recognized as one of the most comprehensive studies on FDK, shows sizable learning advantages for full-day students at the end of the kindergarten year. Interestingly, this study looked at students who were assigned FDK by lottery. Most notably, this study determined that the advantage for Hispanic full-day students over other Hispanic kindergartners is nearly twice that seen in the overall sample. We have a sizable Hispanic and ELL community and we must meet the needs of ALL of our students and families whether it’s universal or a targeted curriculum.*

*I have read every for or against email that has come to me or the board on this topic. A majority have been in favor with the against emails commonly fast and furious over the last few days citing unnecessary or unfair tax increases and a lack of local studies that produce data to support FDK. I understand your concern and there is a solid business case not to do this. However, I am not the COO of the business, I am the Operations Committee Chair of the Summit Board of Education. I, like you, understand that an increase to the tax levy is not ideal if we look at this from a purely financial lens. I am a taxpayer too and I, like you all, will likely pay for this budget increase with increased property taxes - subject to the city budget. Public education IS taxpayer funded education, whether it’s local, state or federal, we all pay for it even when we are retired or don’t have kids - this budget is no different. Unfortunately, the way we as a nation have chosen to fund public education is inherently unfair when we tie it to property taxes. New Jersey school district borders are drawn along municipality lines that reflect years of residential segregation. We will always see budget increases if we continue to provide a quality healthcare program and continue to reward the district staff and teachers with appropriate salary and merit increases. Districts with low tax burdens and high academic performance are few and far between. So unless you want to move to Murray, KY or Mason, OH, the majority of us live in a “you get what you pay for” education system. Most of us knew that, and have essentially already voted with our wallets to get access to great public schools by moving to Summit. I am not trying to tax you more, I am trying to support a world class public school system that rightly or wrongly is funded in a more direct form from all of us in this room so we bear the burden and reap the benefits - not every district is so fortunate.*

*I encourage those of you who are unhappy with our higher than average tax burden in relationship to the quality of our public schools to engage with your city, county and state representatives about our education funding system. I have been a manager of taxpayers’ dollars for over 25 years and have always tried to be a good steward of public funds. I feel this budget is responsible, is an investment in our schools, our community and MOST IMPORTANTLY is what is best for kids. Our superintendent, our Chief Executive Officer for Education, has made this a priority over all other items and I support him in his choice. Due to the added benefits FDK can provide to our ELL community, to our families that live at or near the poverty line, and to the fact that I believe a tuition/lottery based system is fundamentally unfair in the public education space, this is the right decision. FDK is not the only driver of the budget increase. It includes a 5% healthcare increase and a 2.8% salary increase that we must pay to our world class teaching staff. I believe the social and emotional learning reinforced in a strong kindergarten program taught by experienced and talented professionals is a vital component in the quality education system the people of Summit actually want. At this point, we cannot go backwards and must go forward so I vote yes to this budget.”*

ADOPTION OF THE TENTATIVE BUDGET 2019-2020

Ms. Miller 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 Expenditures	\$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

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; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the public hearing be held in City Hall Council Chambers, 512 Springfield Avenue, Summit, New Jersey on March 25, 2019 at 7:00 PM for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on the budget for the 2019-2020 school year.

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. Primack. The roll was called, Ms. McCann voted “Nay” and all others present voted “Aye.” The motion was declared adopted.

At this time, Ms. McCann stated that the Board would now go into executive session and asked that the appropriate resolution be presented. The following resolution was then presented:

A. That it does hereby determine that it is necessary to meet in Executive Session on Thursday, March 7, 2019 to discuss:

1. Personnel

B. That the matter discussed will be made public if and when confidentiality is no longer required and action pursuant to said discussion shall take place only at a public meeting.

Motion by Ms. Primack, seconded by Ms. Miller, and carried to Executive Session at 9:47 PM.

The Board returned to Public Session at 9:58 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Bonner, seconded by Ms. Primack, and carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Secretary