



COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Colchester, CT

REGULAR BOARD MEETING - BOE BUDGET WORKSHOP

Tuesday, February 14, 2023
6:00 PM

Town Hall Meeting Room 1 (Hybrid)

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Alexander Oliphant, Vice-Chair Mary Tomasi (via Zoom), Secretary Margo Gignac, Donna Antonacci, Michelle Millington, Christopher Rivers

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Superintendent Daniel P. Sullivan, III, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Charles E. Hewes, Principal of Jack Jackter Intermediate School Elise Butson, Principal of Bacon Academy Amy Begué, Principal of Colchester Elementary School Judy O'Meara, Principal of William J. Johnston Middle School Christopher Bennett, Jack Jackter Intermediate School Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds, Colchester Elementary School Assistant Principal Meghan Amado, William J. Johnston Middle School Assistant Principal Stacy Ewings, Bacon Academy Assistant Principal Melissa Cyr, Bacon Academy Assistant Principal Michael Mal, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Amy Emory, Assistant Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Elisa Fabiszak

OTHERS PRESENT: Business Director Rachel Linkkila, Director of Digital Learning and Innovation Darren Smith,, District School Resource Officer Corporal Craig Scheel, Director of Educational Operations Mario Hurtado, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk Heather Petit (via Zoom)

1. **MEETING OPENING**

1.1 Call to Order

Chair Alexander Oliphant called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM

1.2 Roll Call

1.3 Pledge of Allegiance

2. ***PRIORITY DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

2.1 *Revised 2023 Meeting Calendar as the BOE has Returned to Individual Committee Meetings

Motion by: M.Gignac

To approve the revised 2023 Meeting Calendar as presented.

Seconded by: C. Rivers

Roll Call: All in favor

Vote: Motion carried

2.2 Review of Budget Priorities for 2023-2024

Superintendent Sullivan, Dr. Charles Hewes, SRO Corporal Craig Scheel, and District Administrators presented on priorities for the 2023-2024 budget.

SRO Scheel discussed safety and security priority for the district. SRO Scheel said the main change would be four safety officers; one in each school building. This increased staffing would further enhance safety for students as currently SRO Scheel is the only security personnel and has to split his time across four buildings. The safety audit recently conducted recommends that these changes take place as soon as possible.

Amy Emory, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education, spoke to budget priorities for special education. Priorities included communication and partnership, CT-SEDS , specialized instruction and programming, professional development, procedures and practices, and high quality IEPs and 504 plans.

Colchester Elementary School Principal O'Meara and Assistant Principal Meghan Amado spoke to reading and math instruction priorities at Colchester Elementary School.

Jack Jackter Intermediate School (JJIS) Principal Elise Butson and Assistant Principal Jennifer Reynolds presented JJIS budget priorities around student achievement and a connected community of learners.

William J. Johnston Middle School Principal Christopher Bennett and Assistant Principal Stacy Ewings presented middle school budget priorities including safety, student supports, and wellness.

Bacon Academy (BA) Principal Amy Begué spoke to budget priorities for the high school including academic growth, student wellness, supports and intervention, and safety.

The full presentation and supporting budget documents can be found on the Colchester Public Schools website on the Education Budget page found at https://www.colchesterct.org/board_of_education/education_budget.

2.3 Discussion on 2023-2024 Budget

Superintendent Sullivan has not received anything in writing from the First Selectman's office; however, there is a possibility that the town will be asking the school district to take over their own snow plowing. If that were the case, this would have to go out to bid and would potentially increase the budget.

Superintendent Sullivan spoke to median income and per pupil expenditure in both DRG D and area districts. Superintendent Sullivan said that the school district is a community investment.

Discussion was had regarding Safety Officers and what their responsibilities would include.

Discussion was had in regard to cuts and impacts on students and their education as well as ECS funding. Superintendent Sullivan reported that over the last five years, the district has only received a .68% increase which is part of the reason the budget is where it is at and that not funding education is not sustainable.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

3.1 For Public Comments, Please See Bylaw on Meeting Conduct

Jason LaChapelle, 48 Highwood Circle. Mr. LaChappelle expressed that he does not support the recommendation of 8.99% budget increase.

Ashley Zaugg, 250 Usher Swamp Road. Ms. Zaugg said she is in support of the increase and it is important that the town support the schools.

Bernie Denler, Hayward Avenue. Mr. Denler asked about special education and the large increase the district is seeing for next school year.

Superintendent Sullivan said the district has an obligation to provide a free and appropriate education for all students and when students are out placed, the district has to pay for the tuition, transportation and related services to meet each individual student's needs.

Scarlett Morsch, BA student. Ms. Morsch stated that she is concerned with cuts to the business department.

Joy Orlando; BA teacher. Ms. Orlando said that she is concerned with cuts to the Business Department and does support any more cuts to the budget.

Jeremy Ames, 41 Skinner Road. Mr. Ames stated that he is in support of the budget increase and is concerned what more cuts would do to class sizes.

Mike Egan, (on the Board of Finance but speaking as an individual). Mr. Egan said that the reason the budget is at this percent is because the town created a fiscal cliff by moving core budget pieces to grants knowing full well that eventually they would have to move them back into the operating budget. Those pieces along with mandated special education costs, a higher need for school safety personnel, and contractual increases also contribute.

Tiffany Moroch, 20 Oakleaf Drive. Ms. Moroch stated that budget cuts impact teachers and classrooms. Ms. Moroch asked if a possible solution would be for parents to purchase their own supplies.

Superintendent Sullivan thanked her for the suggestion but noted that the district by law must provide a free and equitable education. Dr. Hewes said it is also the obligation of the

Board to provide all the supplies necessary for programming.

Wendy Moores thanked the Board and administrators for their presentations tonight and expressed her support for the budget.

Vince Rose, 161 Shagbush Drive. Mr. Rose said that with the loss of money from the state, a 0% increase is unrealistic. Mr. Rose said the community should make responsible investments and more teachers per student is what is needed.

Bhupal Babajiyavar. BA teacher. Mr. Babajiyavar spoke of cuts in education and concern that content will be lost.

More board discussion was had on the budget.

Chair Oliphant thanked administrators and principals for their presentations and the public for coming out.

The next Board of Education Meeting - Budget Workshop will be held on Thursday, February 23, 2023 at 6:00 PM in Town Hall Meeting Room 1.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Oliphant adjourned the meeting at 8:44 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Heather R. Petit

Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk