

The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn
119 Gorman Road
Brooklyn, CT 06234

Mae Lyons, Board Chair
Keith Atchinson, Secretary
Tana Jolley

Melissa Perkins-Banas, Vice-Chair
Justin Phaiah
Carolyn Hackbarth

Mission: The Brooklyn Schools will foster a drive for learning within each student to reach his/her greatest potential. To achieve this mission, the school will continually improve its educational programs and services to meet this community's expectations for a quality education for all.

The Brooklyn Board of Education held a budget workshop virtually on February 24, 2021 via Zoom Webinar. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Phaiah, and Mrs. Hackbarth. Also in attendance was Mrs. Buell, Superintendent and Mr. Otto, Board of Finance. Mr. Atchinson and Mrs. Jolley were absent.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Brooklyn Board of Education will conduct a virtual meeting in accordance with Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7B.

The Brooklyn Board of Education will hold multiple budget workshops to determine the needs and priorities for the 2021-2022 school year. There will be as many meetings as necessary to agree to a budget to be shared with the Board of Finance. Each budget workshop will be via Zoom and the public is welcome to attend. We will not be able to respond to questions live, but welcome comments or questions at budgetquestions@brooklynschools.org.

Budget questions and answers will be posted on the Brooklyn Public Schools website at www.brooklynschools.org.

This budget will be passed by the Board of Education once they have finished discussing the budget.

1. Attendance, Establishment of a Quorum, Call to Order

Quorum established. Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m.

2. Budget Discussion

Mrs. Buell stated that all budget documents will be posted on the Brooklyn Schools website at www.brooklynschools.org. Anyone that has comments or questions about the budget to email budgetquestions@brooklynschools.org. Budget questions and answers will be posted to the Brooklyn Schools website as well.

Mrs. Buell stated the Superintendent's Proposed Budget was presented to the Board on January 13, 2021 for the 2021-2022 school year for \$19,980,834, which is \$806,842 or a 4.21% increase over the 2020-2021 school year. Mrs. Buell stated that there have been discussions at the budget meetings and there have been no action to approve any budget items at this time.

Mrs. Buell discussed a few adjustments that were made to the budget from the last budget workshop on January 27, 2021. There is a possible increase to insurance of 23% due to a large town/district leaving the CT-Chip program and our broker is working on getting the increase down. Mrs. Buell also discussed the high school tuition, which she has received additional numbers and more accurate information on high school enrollment on tuition costs. There are some new grants that are available to the district, ESSER funds, which will be used to support student learning loss and to support the district as it relates to the covid experience. There is also additional funding from the American Rescue Plan Funds.

Mrs. Buell stated that the changes would bring the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for the 2021-2022 school year to an increase of \$19,279,236 or 0.55%, which is a \$105,245 increase over the 2020-2021 school year for the Board to consider.

Dr. Perkins-Banas asked in regards to the broker for the insurance company, is the broker confident that the increase will be between 15 and 17% and is there any guarantee the following year there would not be a surge in writing or is that not feasible? Mrs. Buell stated that the broker feels very confident that she can get the rate below 17%. Mrs. Buell did state that there is no guarantee.

Mr. Otto has seen some communication in regards to the American Rescue Plan Funds and not all funds will be going towards education. There are some people that work on the Town budget that believe a portion of the funds will be going towards the general government expenditures. He stated that it may not change the total situation and looks like there is enough revenues to overcome the budget Mrs. Buell presented. The rules of the use of the American Rescue Plan Funds have not been put out yet. He also stated not to consume too large of a fraction of the ESSER funds or other funds in this year in case they are needed to overcome expenditures the next fiscal year. Mrs. Buell stated that the ESSER funds that are planned for expenditures are less than half of what we are allotted for 2 years. She believes that learning loss cannot be recovered in one year, it will take 2 years.

Mr. Otto asked why there is almost a 20% decrease in heating costs and an increase in legal fees. Are the legal fees due to it being contract negotiation year? Mrs. Buell stated it is a negotiation year. Mrs. Buell stated that the decrease in heating costs is an estimate of what we have been using. She stated that they have over estimated for a couple years and continue to have excess fuel at the end of the year and it is a safe estimate in reduction.

Mr. Otto asked about the increase in salaries in athletics. Mrs. Buell stated that it was reduced this current year due to not having fall sports.

The next Budget Workshop is March 24, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

3. Public Comment

Lori Gibb stated she has been doing speech and language therapy with students at Brooklyn Elementary School for almost 16 years. In regards to speech and language students for next year, she knows the rationale of looking towards an additional special education teacher is to help students that lost assistance and curriculum instruction due to covid. She feels that applies to the students that have speech and language disabilities. She stated that there are a lot of students having difficulties doing the online service and some students are not able to go to school everyday. She believes that rationale also affects the students with disabilities. Speech and language disabilities may not always be the students main issue, but they usually include that. Mrs. Gibb stated last year the Board approved a full-time Speech and Language Therapist and it was changed to part-time. Due to it being a difficult position to fill, the position was not filled. This year they are using an online service to offset the position that was not filled. Mrs. Gibb would like the Board to consider using some of the ESSER funds towards making the part-time position a full-time position for a speech and language specialist to help with these students that have speech and language disabilities.

4. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:42 p.m.

(Phaiah/Hackbarth)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna L. DiBenedetto

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Board Clerk