

# The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn  
119 Gorman Road  
Brooklyn, CT 06234

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Mae Lyons, Board Chair  
Justin Phaiah, Secretary  
Isaias Sostre

Melissa Perkins-Banas, Vice-Chair  
Kayla Burgess  
Rick Ives

**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 their monthly meeting in the Brooklyn Middle School Auditorium and virtually on February 23, 2022 via Zoom webinar. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons (arrived at 6:10 p.m.), Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Burgess, Mr. Ives, and Mr. Sostre (arrived at 6:40 p.m.). Also in attendance was Mrs. Buell, Superintendent.

The Brooklyn Board of Education will hold multiple budget workshops to determine the needs and priorities for the 2022-2023 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 held in the BMS Auditorium 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](mailto:budgetquestions@brooklynschools.org). Budget questions and answers will be posted on the Brooklyn Public Schools website at [www.brooklynschools.org](http://www.brooklynschools.org).

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

Budget workshops for the 2022-2023 school year are scheduled for:

January 12, 2022	5:00-7:00 PM	March 23, 2022	6:00-7:00 PM
January 26, 2022	6:00-7:00 PM	April 27, 2022	6:00-7:00 PM
February 23, 2022	6:00-7:00 PM		

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

Quorum established. Dr. Perkins-Banas called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

2. Budget Discussion

Mrs. Buell stated the Superintendent's Proposed Budget was presented to the Board on January 12, 2022 for the 2022-2023 school year for \$20,890,071, which is \$1,260,697 or a 6.42% increase over the 2021-2022 school year. Mrs. Buell stated that there have been

discussions at the budget meetings and there has 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 26, 2022. There was a correction made to the Finance Director salary, a decrease due to part of the salary going towards a mentor. The insurance lines have been adjusted with confirmed numbers from the insurance company. There was an adjustment made to the audit services line, King, King & Associates have increased their costs due to having many grants that need to be processed and taking more time to complete the audit. Mrs. Buell stated that she used current numbers on high school enrollment, which is not set in stone due to Ellis Technical High School not sending their acceptance letters out yet. Mrs. Buell does not know how many students will be enrolled, which would reduce the high school tuition to either Killingly High School or Woodstock Academy.

Mrs. Buell stated that she included and discussed an Organization Chart for the Finance Office. She stated that the Board of Finance has discussed this, the Board of Selectmen will be discussing it as well. Mrs. Buell stated that the Board Chair and the First Selectman met yesterday, February 22, 2022, to discuss the structure of the Finance Office. There is one Business Manager that is shared with the Town of Brooklyn and with the Brooklyn Schools, which .4 is funded by the Town and .6 is funded by the Schools. She stated that the shared services allows for cross-training and good communication between the Town and the School, which has worked out well. Mrs. Buell stated that the struggle is the amount of work. She also stated it is a challenge managing and being the Finance Director for the Town and the Board of Education. There has been conversation of increasing staff in the Finance Office and the Organization Chart shows a few proposals. The office currently has three full-time Financial Assistants; one is designated by the Town, and two are designated/funded by the Board of Education. There is a benefit to having staff that can cross-train in that same job description between the Town and the Board of Education and has been very valuable. Mrs. Buell stated that they have discovered that the Town is funding one full-time Financial Assistant and the Board of Education is funding two full-time Financial Assistants; staff is not being used in that way. They are being used by the Town and the School evenly, 1.5 for the Town and 1.5 for the School. Mrs. Buell stated that this is being brought up now to clean up the budget, there will still be three Financial Assistants being funded. Mrs. Buell discussed the proposals on the Organization Chart with the Board. The Finance Director position has part of her salary going towards a mentor, which has helped in learning the school side of the position and Mrs. Buell would like to continue it into the next school year. On the Town side there is a different set of skills with bonding, different types of grants, revenue and income, while the School has different grant funding and projects; the Finance Director is learning two sets of jobs. Mrs. Buell stated that Rushie Bean, Finance Director, has done an amazing job and is working a lot of hours that is not sustainable. Mrs. Buell stated that looking at the history, it has not been sustainable for any of the Business Managers that have been in this position. She would like to continue with the shared services and stated it is beneficial to the community.

Proposal #1 is adding a separate Finance Director for the Town and there will still be one for the School, working together in the same shared space. In summary, there will be one Finance Director for the Town, one Finance Director for the School, and three Financial Assistants.

Proposal #2 is maintaining the Finance Director and adding a Finance Director Assistant, both positions will be shared services. She stated that there are benefits and drawbacks to both proposals. Mrs. Buell is asking the Board for their consideration on these proposals.

Dr. Perkins-Banas asked if it is harder to fill the school Business Manager position than the Town Finance Director and mentor the person to do both, is it hard to find someone that is school based? Mrs. Buell stated that it is harder to find the right person for the Town.

Mr. Ives is concerned about having separate positions. He felt it was important to have the single power over both entities. He feels that with separate Director positions, they will go in different directions before too long. He thinks an Assistant makes more sense. He doesn't want to see a Finance Director and a Business Manager.

Mrs. Lyons asked Mr. Ives about the different directions, in what way? Mr. Ives stated he believes there may be arguments that may get out into the public in Town meetings. He stated that it is hard to have similar presentations, not hard when it is only one person. He thinks it will be more difficult with the two positions.

Mrs. Burgess feels that Proposal #1 seems to be more common and asked how other districts have it? Mrs. Buell stated it is more common to have separate people and they may disagree at times. Mrs. Buell stated that we need to continue to support the Business Manager and/or Business Manager and Assistant positions. Mrs. Buell stated that there are only three communities in Connecticut that have a shared Business Manager, it is uncommon. She had asked the First Selectman about support that is beneficial for the Town side that has not been used. Mrs. Buell stated that the Finance Department between the School and the Town has come a long way since she has been the Superintendent, improving with the procedures and practices. The financial commitment for the Board of Education with Proposal #1 is an increase of approximately \$7,300 and with Proposal #2 is less of an increase. The Town would have a higher increase in both proposals. With all the additional funds through grants for both the Town and School, the Finance Director is responsible for managing it, recording it, creating budgets and reports, and submitting to the State, which is causing more work. Mrs. Buell stated that the new position could possibly be funded by grants.

Dr. Perkins-Banas asked Mrs. Buell if there is a need for an additional person? Mrs. Buell stated yes there is whether it is an Assistant to the Director or a separate Director for the Town. She stated that if using the current model, the position would be an Assistant to the Director. She believes that the Town is leaning towards the Assistant to the Director; they like the shared model.

Mrs. Buell stated that if the Board is going to support adding an additional person in the Finance Office, would the Board want her to use the higher impact and see if it can be funded using grants? Mrs. Burgess stated yes, administrative costs are more common in grants.

The Board feels that it is a need to fill the position in the Finance Department and if it cannot be grant funded, they will include it in their local budget as a need.

Mrs. Buell stated that the changes she discussed, not including the Finance position, would bring the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for the 2022-2023 school year to an increase of \$20,706,479 or 5.49%, which is a \$1,077,105 increase over the 2021-2022 school year for the Board to consider. Mrs. Buell stated that this increase could go down by another \$30,000, if the additional person in the Finance Office is funded by grants.

Mr. Ives asked when the Board of Education presents their budget to the Board of Finance. Mrs. Buell stated she has not been given a date yet. The numbers are pretty firm by the March Budget Workshop. She stated the Board can make a motion to approve, add or delete items from the budget. Mrs. Buell stated she presents to the Board of Finance sometime in April.

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

Next Budget Workshop is March 23, 2022 at 6:00-7:00 p.m.

3. Public Comment

None

4. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 6:45 p.m.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No Discussion

**Vote Count:** 6, 0

Unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,

*Donna L. DiBenedetto*

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Board Clerk

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Justin Phaiah, Board of Education Secretary

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Date