

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 on March 11, 2020 at the Brooklyn Schools Central Office Conference Room. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Mrs. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Atchinson, Mr. Phaiah, and Mrs. Hackbarth. Mrs. Jolley was absent.

Also in attendance were Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, and Mr. Otter, Board of Finance.

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

Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

2. Budget Discussion

Mrs. Lyons stated that there will be public comment and since there are so many people present that they ask them to state their name and address for the record. Also, direct their comments to the Board of Education. They aren't permitted to engage in discussion on the subject, but will take note of their comments. Public comment would be limited to 2 minutes allotted to each speaker to a maximum of 20 minutes, which would be allotted to 10 individuals. If you're in agreement with what another speaker has said, then state that you're in agreement so you're not repeating everything. The meeting is scheduled for 1 hour and there isn't a lot of time.

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 reviewed the BOE Proposed Estimate of Expenditures from the February 26, 2020 Budget Workshop, which is \$20,102,289 or 7.7% increase over the 2019-2020 budget.

Mrs. Buell also discussed the list of additional reduction items for the Board to consider in bringing the budget down. Item numbers 13 through 22 would bring the budget down to a 6.3% increase. The Board wanted Mrs. Buell to continue with additional reduction items before discussion. Item numbers 23 through 33 would bring the budget down to a 4.9% increase.

There was discussion about item number 29, Preschool Tuition, in regards to having all students going five days a week and how it may be too much for 3 year olds. There was also discussion of doing 3 days per week and 5 days per week, eliminating the 2 days per week. There was discussion in regards to eliminating 3 year olds as well. No decision has been made.

There was also discussion on item number 24, Pay to Play for sports. The Board recognizes that the school needs to generate revenue somehow, but students may not want to play due to having to pay.

Mr. Otto wanted clarification on where they stood through item numbers 23 on the budget with the librarians versus paraprofessionals in the library. Mrs. Buell stated that the funding for the librarians haven't been removed from the budget and that they would be reassigned to other positions. He wanted to remind everyone that they received a letter last meeting from Sharon Loughlin, who recommends strongly that they don't remove the librarians from the library. Mrs. Lyons stated that they have received multiple letters from staff members and members of the community. Mrs. Hackbarth would like to see the librarians stay in the library. She feels they offer a lot more to the students when they're in the library. They're professionals at it versus a para. The Board isn't ready to make a decision and feel they should hear from the public and take time to digest everything and bring it back to the next meeting, which is March 25, 2020.

A motion was made to accept the Special Education Tuition, High School Tuition, and Voag item numbers 13, 14, and 15 from the additional reduction item list.
(Perkins-Banas/Hackbarth)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Mrs. Buell stated the budget is now at \$19,888,381 or 6.5% increase.

There was discussion on item number 18 for the Reading Interventionist from the additional reduction list.

A motion was made to accept item number 18 from the additional reduction list.
(Atchinson/Perkins-Banas)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Mrs. Buell stated the budget is now at \$19,852,760 or 6.3% increase.

There was discussion on item numbers 16, 17, and 19 through 22 on the additional reduction list.

A motion was made to accept item numbers 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, and 22 from the additional reduction list.

(Hackbarth/Phaiah)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Mrs. Buell stated the new budget, now that item numbers 13 through 22 have been removed, is at \$19,836,558 or 6.3% increase.

The next Board of Education Budget Workshop is Wednesday, March 25, 2020.

3. Public Comment

Mr. Ives was chairman of the BOE when the Board instituted pre-k. He stated they felt it was important to have socialization and to give the kids a head start, which was before kindergarten had a curriculum. He feels it's even more important now and feels it's important to keep it for free. He stated he was on the BOE 33 years ago when they voted to designate Woodstock as a designated high school with transportation. He stated it's getting hard to continue to afford. He knows nothing can be done for this year's budget, but urges the Board to take a closer look at high school alternatives. He stated that there is \$350,000 on his budget for high school capital, which we pay every year. Sooner or later people are going to say enough and people are going to be saying school versus non-school. The BOE has worked very hard to make this a school system that we're proud of. If this budget is deemed to be too high, there may not be a town meeting. We may have a petition to have a referendum and the town doesn't usually do well when there is a referendum, which could also mean multiple referendums and then no one wins.

Amy Landis, 65 Fairway Drive, stated that the Board knows how she feels about the library media specialist. It was her understanding after the last BOE meeting that the BOE and the public would be able to see what it looked like on paper to keep the library media specialist in the library and taking out the paraprofessionals.

Chelsi Carpenter, 26 Mason Hill Road, stated she's a stay at home mom. She's lived in Brooklyn her whole life. Her daughter is in first grade. Her son will be 3 and going to preschool in the fall. They won't be able to afford tuition to attend a preschool program. He also has never been in a daycare setting. Putting him into a five day program would be too much for him. He was also just evaluated by the birth to 3 program because he has trouble with his speech. He didn't qualify for it but what would benefit him is when he begins preschool being around the other students interacting with them. Her daughter excelled. Preschool isn't just playtime anymore. In kindergarten now they need to know how to spell, write their name. If she puts her son in kindergarten, he would fail. They can't afford the opportunity anymore if they charge for preschool. She feels it would be a

huge loss for a lot of people. Instead of it being a privilege, it's now they can't afford to send her son to school. She would be devastated if this were to occur.

Jessica Solis, 22 Juniper Way, agrees with the Board about the 4 year old preschool being important. She recommends to keep it for free. She doesn't think putting kids in kindergarten without the opportunity of going to preschool is a setup for failure. If the Board felt they needed to get some revenue to consider having the 3 year olds pay for school and keep it free for 4 year olds.

Lucy Krause, 30 Grant Hill, she's lived in Brooklyn all her life. She stated it's nice to compliment the parents that care, but there are parents that don't care and they would spend their money elsewhere rather than spend it on preschool. She thinks every child deserves preschool. She thinks it's important for them, as people from Brooklyn, to take care of all of them.

Rich Baker, 157 Herrick Road, stated he has no children in this school system. Chelsi Carpenter is his daughter that spoke earlier. He has a grandchild. His biggest concern is when you start having to pay to go to school and imposing an additional tax on working families of Brooklyn for something that is a publicly funded school. He heard someone state that it costs \$16,000 to educate 1 student and allow someone to come in at a lower rate of \$10,000. Who comes up with the difference? The taxpayers or the town? Or the parents that pay for preschool? As a taxpayer, he believes in quality education. He thinks it's a bad idea when you have to start paying to go to school.

Kelly Carchidi, 69 Fortin Drive, her oldest was in preschool last year and her youngest will be going next fall. Her husband and herself are both full-time working parents. They already pay the cost of daycare, which is expensive, and they would also not be able to pay for preschool. They also moved to Brooklyn to come to this school. She hopes the Board will take it into consideration to not have to pay for preschool for at least the for 4 year olds.

Ailla Wasstrom-Evans, 17 Elliott Road, she wanted to thank the Board for all that they do. They have a lot to do with dealing with small amounts of resources for educating the kids. She wants to urge them to keep the librarians and to keep the free pre-k for all students. For over 20 years, Brooklyn has offered free pre-k to the kids. This has come up in the past and the Board has chosen not to and found ways to balance the budget by keeping pre-k. Pre-k results in better educational outcomes and if you're talking about back tracking, it'll get worse. She also stated that she started a petition with dozens of signatures to not cut pre-k. She read some of the comments from residents that signed the petition. She respectfully submits the petition for their consideration. She also urges them to not cut the librarian. Libraries are places where kids grow their love of learning and get lost in books and get excited about adventures they go to.

4. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.
(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)
No discussion, unanimous vote to approve