

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 virtual budget workshop on April 8, 2020. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Mrs. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Atchinson, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Jolley and Mrs. Hackbarth.

Also in attendance were Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, Mr. Otter, Board of Finance, and Stephanie Levine, Business Manager.

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

Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Mrs. Buell stated that each member will introduce themselves and their title since the meeting was being held by video on Zoom and being broadcast live on Facebook.

2. Public Comment:

Questions and comments are by phone: (860)774-9732 x1.

Mrs. Buell stated that there have been no email public comments as of yet. No public comment phone calls.

3. Budget Discussion

Mrs. Buell stated that all budget documents will be posted on the Brooklyn Schools website at www.brooklynschools.org as well as the Town of Brooklyn website at www.brooklynct.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 March 11, 2020 Budget Workshop, which is \$19,836,558 or 6.3% increase over the 2019-2020 budget. Since the last meeting, there have been adjustments made with line item numbers 23, staffing changes, 24, Magnet School Grant, and 25, para funding for SR and IDEA. These adjustments bring the budget currently to \$19,726,712 or 5.7% increase over the 2019-2020.

Dr. Perkins-Banas wanted clarification that the current budget continues to consist of preschool for 3 year olds, eliminating the 2 day session and having 3 and 5 day sessions. Mrs. Buell stated that the 3 year olds are still in the budget and the 2 day session has been removed.

Mrs. Buell discussed the items included in the budget as well as the items that are not included in the budget. She also discussed the fixed costs of \$1,105,425, which includes high school/vo-ag tuition, increased insurance costs, and salary increases. The fixed costs cannot be reduced.

Mrs. Buell also stated that there are things to be considered: After a very long stretch at home for students, Brooklyn Schools anticipate additional needs for students who are likely to return to school dysregulated. Additional social worker support may be needed as well as some programmatic changes and IEP changes. Students who demonstrate high risk behaviors to the health of others may require alternative programming. Brooklyn is currently seeking training or programming that could benefit our tier III students in special education.

There was discussion in regards to the library media specialist positions as well as adding a social worker with the data that was shared with the Board in January. Also discussed was what the administrators in each school had stated their priority was for their building if they couldn't have both a social worker and an instructional assistant. In the budget currently, the focus for the middle school is to have an additional social worker and the focus for the elementary school is to have an instructional coach.

Mr. Otto wondered why they think that the teachers won't be able to deal with the adjustments when the crisis is over and when they return school. There was discussion about the need of having additional social worker support for the students who are likely to return to school dysregulated. After extensive discussion, the Board agreed additional social worker support is needed.

Mr. Otto stated that he wants the Board to realize there is already a reasonably high projected budget. He also stated there are other expenses outside the education system in town and there is a situation where the taxpayers in town are not going to have a say in what this year's budget will be.

Mrs. Buell stated that the Board of Education budget is scheduled to be presented to the Board of Finance on May 9, 2020. The Board will need to approve a budget prior to May

9, 2020 for the Board of Finance to review. Mrs. Buell and Mr. Otto both mentioned that there will not be a town meeting for residents to vote on the budgets due to an executive order by Governor Lamont. Mr. Otto did state that there will be one public hearing. The Board of Finance will pass a budget and set the mill rate by the middle of June to have tax bills out for July 1, 2020.

Mrs. Buell asked Mr. Otto to state what may or may not happen with capital budgets. Mr. Otto stated that the town may forgo any capital expenditures this year. He stated the capital committee or the taxpayers don't always react positively to all capital spending. He sees the town entering a situation where the taxpayers are not going to act positively to big increases in budgets and also not liking they didn't have a say in the budgets.

There was also discussion in regards to removing 3 year olds from preschool, which may eliminate a teacher and a paraprofessional or reassigning the paraprofessional. Mrs. Buell did state that they do need to have a few 3 year olds in order to maintain the school readiness grant.

Mrs. Lyons wanted to discuss the Librarians. She knows there's one for each building, but wanted to know if there has been any thought to having a library media specialist that would supervise both buildings. She knows it was done a couple years ago and wanted to know how that worked out. She feels that the library media specialist could work with the students on computer skills. If they eliminate the 3 year olds from preschool, maybe keep one library media specialist even though this isn't reducing the budget. Mrs. Buell stated it's something they can look at.

There was further Board discussion in regards to the preschool program, library media specialists, social workers, and instructional coaches.

Dr. Perkins-Banas asked if a vote needed to take place this evening or do they have time to have another budget workshop. Mrs. Buell stated there is still time. The Board of Education's approved budget isn't presented to the Board of Finance until May 9, 2020. They can schedule another budget workshop just before the Board's regular meeting April 22, 2020.

Mrs. Jolley feels the budget needs to be reduced since there's been increases over the past few years. She also asked Mrs. Buell when the Board presents the budget, there isn't going to be a budget vote because there isn't going to be a town meeting? Mrs. Buell stated that there isn't going to be a town meeting due to the Governor's executive order. Mr. Otto stated that there will be one public hearing where the Board of Education and the Town of Brooklyn will present their budgets to the Board of Finance members. The residents will have access to the public hearing and will be able to phone in questions or send them in electronically in advance to the meeting.

The Board members did feel after discussion that the budget needs to be reduced further. Mrs. Buell discussed other areas that they may want to look at to cut from. The Board

agreed they need to have another budget meeting. They discussed again about removing the 3 year olds, except for the ones for the school readiness grant. This would remove item number 37, reducing a preschool teacher for \$74,000 and reassigning the classroom para to helping teachers in other classrooms. After discussion, Mrs. Buell stated that removing the \$74,000 would bring the budget down to a 5% increase. Mrs. Buell mentioned that there are smaller items that were requested that the Board can look at as well to reduce the budget, such as new microscopes for 7th grade that costs approximately \$15,000. Mrs. Buell stated that removing the \$15,000 from the budget would bring the budget down to a 4.9% increase. There was discussion about item number 33, instructional coach, and item number 34, social worker, from the possible reduction list. Removing the two items totaling \$100,672, brings the budget down to a 4.4% increase. There was further discussion. No final decisions have been made.

The Board isn't ready to vote on the budget. The Board would like to have another budget workshop. The next virtual budget workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Mrs. Buell will make the above adjustments, moving item numbers 33, 34, and 37 up to the reductions taken list, and bring the budget back to the Board at the next budget workshop so they can see what the budget looks like afterwards. They would also like Mrs. Buell to make a list of any other possible small items that they may be able to consider to remove.

Mrs. Buell stated that 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.

4. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.
(Perkins-Banas/Jolley)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve