

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION
PLAINVILLE, CONNECTICUT
THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023**

Special Meeting Topics: ► **Additional Review and Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for FY2023-24**

► **Continuation of Board Budget Development Session**

Place and Time: Plainville High School Learning Commons at 7:00 PM

Members Present: Rachel Buchanan, Cassandra Clark, Chair Lori Consalvo, Rebecca Martinez, Crystal St. Lawrence, Becky Tyrrell, and Foster White

Members Absent: Vice Chair Deborah Hardy and Laurie Peterson

Also Present: Steven K. LePage, Superintendent of Schools
Sam Adlerstein, Director of Business and Operations

Early Departures: None

Board Chair Lori Consalvo called the special meeting of the Plainville Board of Education to order at 7:20 PM.

Superintendent LePage presented the Board with a new PowerPoint of the proposed 2023-24 Budget for Plainville Community Schools. He stated that on Wednesday, Insurance Brokers met with Mr. Adlerstein and Mr. Buden regarding the State's Partnership Plan providing their projected rate renewal. The new range is 8%-10%, improved from 8%-12%. This is because the September to September claims comparison is more favorable than the June to June comparison used in November. According to the State, the trend is toward "normalization" that they hope will continue. Mr. LePage explained that with coordination with the Town, the plan is to reduce its budgeted health increase from 12% to 10%. With that said, the new BOE proposed budget has been changed from \$43,397,399 with a 5.06% increase to \$43,271,797 or 4.75% increase, a difference of \$125,591.

Mr. LePage then gave an overview of the Budget Cross-Section. He stated that the budget summary cross-section variation provides a different perspective on how the individual object accounts are spread across the many different departments. Essentially, the cross-section provides a look at the same budget dollars summarized in the budget object pages, but aligns them to the more specific department areas they were derived from.

During the budget development process, first taking place at the department and school level, each department leader develops a requested budget to meet their needs. Supervisors of these departments review each request before rolling them up to the school and/or larger department budgets. All school and department budgets are then reviewed by the Superintendent and central office team before rolling them up into the full budget and then broken out to their respective Object summaries shared within the budget book. Ultimately, each request is reviewed multiple times before being allowed in the Proposed Superintendent's Budget.

He then answered questions submitted by Board Members regarding various topics of discussion.

He then reviewed the changes that were made to Administrator requests. He stated that \$73,448 of Administrator Budget requests were reduced during the budget development process. In some cases, the requested funds will be satisfied in other ways, including ESSER/ARPA funds, specifically several facilities improvement requests. A number of one-time or infrequent expenses were removed from the proposed budget as well, as they are good applications for one-time ESSER fund use. Some larger projects that were hoped to be funded through ESSER were also denied based on a review of overall need and priorities with limited resources. Some of these included a proposed PHS athletics fieldhouse and weight room, PHS auditorium sound and lighting system upgrades, a low-ropes course proposed for Toffolon, and a number of smaller projects deemed to not be feasible or less of a propriety need at this time.

Positions funded by ESSER:

A significant number of instructional and support staff were added to the district throughout the COVID crisis in order to support a multitude of temporary needs, and some for more permanent and ongoing needs. As shared last year during the budget development, we are taking great care to assess the value of staff additions, and also assessing what pre-COVID staffing could be reduced, to reduce the slope of the fiscal cliff and to avoid a significant gap between needs and resources. This is an ongoing point of focus for the administrative team, and this careful analysis and downsizing will need to continue over the coming year.

One of the questions that came in asked if the free lunch program will continue to be offered since the State no longer provides funding for Free Lunches for all public-school students.

Mr. LePage answered by saying free meals will be provided to any student seeking a meal through the end of the 2022-23 school year, utilizing realized savings/profits from the food services program's successful management and operations throughout COVID. Funding will not be available at the local level to support continued free meals next fall. Legislation is being proposed that would provide this ongoing option across the state, and he plans to advocate for this benefit in legislation forums as they become available. The district will have surveyed families and approximately ½ indicate reduction in participation next year. Of the other half, many will continue to be free or will pay reduced prices. The district will plan focus groups and further follow up as we ready for next year.

Another question was asked about the teacher/administrator shortages. Does the district anticipate a higher-than-normal staff turnover rate for either Teachers or Administrators for the Budget year 2023-24?

Mr. LePage stated that he does not expect higher than normal administrator or teacher turnover in 2023-24. We had several teachers leave for a number of personal and professional reasons during the last couple of years, but doesn't anticipate this to continue. In negotiating the new teacher contract, we assessed longevity of each teacher leaving the district since 2009. That median teacher longevity was 9.42 years. We then negotiated a higher base pay for earlier steps in the contract and more even and consistent movement up the step chart through step removal and smoothing. This, combined with a number of less tangible benefits of working for Plainville Community Schools, makes Plainville an attractive district. He stated that we are hopeful to keep the current administrative team intact, as they are a committed group of professionals. We have not learned of any intentions of administrators to leave us in the coming year and we will hope for the best. However, we do continue to experience high turnover of our non-certified staff, particularly paraprofessionals, building substitutes and other hourly positions.

Mr. LePage went on to answer a few more questions. He told the Board that discussions can resume next Tuesday, January 24th and it is his hope that the Board will be able to agree on their budget so it can be voted upon at their Regular Business meeting on February 13th. He also mentioned that there is another placeholder meeting scheduled for January 31st if needed.

No action was taken at this meeting.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY RACHEL BUCHANAN TO ADJOURN THE SPECIAL MEETING AT 8:47 PM. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY CASSANDRA CLARK. THE MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Joan Calistro
Recorder of Minutes