

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
PLAINVILLE, CONNECTICUT  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2023**

**Special Meeting Topics:** ► **Additional Review and Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for FY2023-24**  
► **Continuation of Board Budget Development Session with potential determination of BOE budget, which will officially be voted upon at their February 13<sup>th</sup> Regular Business meeting**

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

**Members Present:** Rachel Buchanan, Cassandra Clark, Chair Lori Consalvo (7:20 PM), Rebecca Martinez, Laurie Peterson, Crystal St. Lawrence, Becky Tyrrell, and Foster White

**Members Absent:** None

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

**Early Departures:** None

Mr. LePage called the special meeting of the Plainville Board of Education to order at 7:11 PM.

Superintendent LePage presented the Board with a new PowerPoint of the proposed 2023-24 Budget for Plainville Community Schools. He will discuss the following: 1) Address questions raised at the January 19<sup>th</sup> Budget worksession; 2) Review of primary budget drivers; 3) Review Summary of Risks and Opportunities within this proposed budget; 4) Share statewide proposed Superintendents' budget numbers to date; 5) Review Proposed Budget details and monetary impact of any proposed changes; 6) Finalize direction on the Board's position at this time.

Mr. LePage provided information to the following questions which were asked during Workshop #2. He provided information/job descriptions related to special services personnel; information about Nurses' supplies; further details on ESSER funded certified staff positions; and he summarized the risks and opportunities in the proposed budget.

**Information/Job Descriptions Related to Special Services Personnel:**

He began by showing Board Members a matrix consisting of overlapping and unique rates of Specialized Pupil Services personnel, consisting of School Counselors, School Psychologists and School Social Workers. Mr. LePage also updated contractual estimates.

He also referenced the Pre-K program, stating that there are currently 124 students in the program. There is no cost of the program this year. This was made possible by Ms. Trzcinski's efforts in obtaining Smart Start Grants and other grants that help sustain the program. Ms. Trzcinski noted that Plainville hopes to obtain NAEYC re-accreditation this year.

**Description of Supplies Used by School Nurses:**

The following information was submitted by Julie Simard, Lead Nurse Coordinator:

- The supplies for the health offices would include medications such as Narcan, EpiPens, Benadryl and First-aid cream, etc. These generally expire yearly and need to be replaced. The District attempts to get some of these free from the manufacturer such as the EpiPen for Schools program, but they don't always provide them.
- Purchases also include first-aid supplies such as bandages, bandaids, ice packs and new equipment like a blood pressure cuff.
- Every few years, nurses need their clinical guideline books updated as well.
- Nurses do not purchase any pamphlets for distribution.

**ESSER Funded Positions:**

The ten listed certified staff positions are funded through the ESSER grant that expires on 09/30/2024. They are as follows:

PRE-K TEACHER—Added due to expanded Pre-K numbers since height of COVID, offset by ECS increases.

PSYCHOLOGIST—Added to provide much needed extra support to special services needs at Toffolon and MSP.

FAMILY SCHOOL LIAISON—This recovery position has been invaluable for addressing significant attendance issues, family crisis situations, working with courts, DCF and other functions we would like to continue, one way or another.

MATH/SCIENCE RESOURCE TEACHER—Expanded role provides needed leadership, data collection, analysis and use, and teacher training to support teacher growth and student recovery. We are looking at how we can continue at least one of these positions through other reductions.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE TEACHER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD—The Instructional Resource Teacher for Early Childhood (Pre-K) is being evaluated and likely not continued. The teacher would return to the classroom position previously held. TBD

SPECIAL EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT—The Special Education Instructional Assistant was doing the online special education support, then filled a long-term sub position due to a maternity leave, now filling another long-term sub position.

3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE TEACHER—An additional teaching position was added to Linden between grade 1 and 3 due to needs specific to those grades in that school. We plan to retain that position in 2023-24 and assess the need further during the year.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER—Special Education Teacher added to support growing numbers and needs, first a Toffolon, then moved to the Life Skills Program at PHS and supporting children with the most extensive needs. Evaluation of SPED staffing and adjustments will take place with a full staff evaluation, with the goals of placing resources where most needed and removing some positions.

ELL BILINGUAL TEACHER (SPANISH)—Required by State based upon EL population.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE TEACHER—Expanded role providing needed leadership, data collection, analysis and use, and teacher training to support teacher growth and student recovery. We are looking at how we can continue at least one of these positions through other reductions.

**Contractual Increases (Estimates):**

Mr. LePage stated that typical contractual increases alone would amount to about a 4.3% increase compared to the district's historical average increase of less than 2.0%. Town leaders and the Superintendent have been advised to use a 10% increase for Health insurance. He estimated an overall inflation factor of 4.0% for non-salary related items, but this is not included in the budget.

**Risks and Opportunities in the Proposed School Budget:****RISKS:**

1) *ESSER and the Fiscal Cliff:* This budget brings back software and security personnel costs that are currently funded by ESSER. Without this, the budget would decrease to about the same amount as contractual increases (4.3%). *Risk:* We have our work cut out for us next year as we remove ESSER offsets from budget calculations, so starting this now helps reduce the slope of the fiscal cliff.

2) *Inflation:* For the second year in a row we have proposed budgets without taking into account price increases for programs and consumables. Holding on this cost in reality means we will have to do more with less.

3) *Utilities and building costs:* We have budgeted for these areas aggressively.

**OPPORTUNITIES:**

1) We have used ESSER funding for a number of projects and programs. The funding has moved us forward in terms of COVID recovery and more, setting us up for further success ahead.

2) We still have the final year of ESSER funding as a safety net. We likely would not have budgeted as aggressively in some areas were it not for this.

3) Our administrative team is well aware of the situation and has been actively planning accordingly.

All things considered, we believe the 2023-24 proposed school budget is right for Plainville.



Mr. LePage then spoke to the Board about some of the 2023-24 Area and Statewide Proposed Budgets. He once again reviewed the Superintendent's proposed budget. On January 17<sup>th</sup>, Mr. LePage proposed a budget of \$43,397,399 or 5.06%. Mr. LePage stated that Mr. Adlerstein and Mr. Buden met with Insurance Brokers during the week 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. With that said, the new Board proposed budget was changed on January 19<sup>th</sup> to \$43,271,797 or 4.75%, a difference of \$125,591. Mr. LePage also reviewed the additional impact of any proposed changes to the current 4.75% proposed budget.

A question and answer session then ensued:

Mrs. Clark asked about the printing costs and needs for Object Budget page 5501 Communication and Printing/Binding. She asked for more information on what has been spent and what will be spent on specific items for transparency reasons. This account includes communications for PCS and Adult Education program printing costs. It also includes school printing needs (letterhead, forms, etc.) and some of the expenses related to the growing School Business Partnerships. Costs are adjusted to reflect most recent experiences including expanded Field Work Experience and College and Career Pathway promotion efforts. Mr. LePage noted that Mrs. O'Brien, the District's Adult Education Coordinator, also seeks out many grants for Adult Education projects.

Mrs. Martinez stated that the Board has to keep the risk factor in mind when preparing the budget.

Mr. White stated that the Board is creating a risky budget by increasing by only 4.75% as it can cause problems down the road.

Mr. Adlerstein stated that all administrators know this is going to be a risky year and they are mindful of that fact.

Mr. White stated we are at the razor's edge with regard to risk.

Mrs. Consalvo questioned the Fiscal Cliff and asked what happens if we hit bottom. Does the Board go back to the Town Council?

Mr. LePage explained the process and stated that the Board and administration must work responsibly. He stated that next year's budget will be very hard with many reductions which will ultimately affect all areas.

Mrs. Clark stated that when looking at line items to prepare for next year, maybe the Board will see something collectively through a different lense. She stated that it is a hard conversation when speaking to others.

Mr. LePage then reviewed the budget process and stated that much do diligence goes into the budget process.

Mrs. Martinez stated that it is the Board's responsibility to make sure that the students have the necessary things they need, and that there are no extras in this budget.

Mr. LePage stated that we have no buffers, so anything cut is a risk.

Mr. White stated that over the years, all unexpended funds have been returned to the Town. He stated that the Board needs to rely on the expertise of the professionals who bring this budget forward. The budget is reviewed at several levels, then brought to the Board. He stated that the job of the Board is to set guidelines for administrators to follow throughout the year, not to micromanage.

Mr. LePage wanted Board members to understand that this is not a push back. The administration did the best they could to make sure the students have what they need. He then reported on the many various savings that were sent back to the Town, the realizes savings for the PHS turf field being placed into the fund for use when needed, etc.

Mr. LePage asked the Board if they wanted to move the 4.75% budget forward for approval at their upcoming Regular Business meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>. A consensus was then taken as to whether to move the 4.75% increase forward:

Rebecca Martinez: Yes, but is concerned about positions.

Crystal St. Lawrence: Yes, but concerned about the risk factors

Laurie Peterson: Needs more time, not sure at this time.

Becky Tyrrell: Yes, but concerned about the risk.

Cassandra Clark: Needs more time to consider.

Lori Consalvo: Yes

Rachel Buchanan: Needs more time to consider.

Foster White: Yes, this is a sound budget. He is concerned with regard to inflation. This is a well thought out budget but there is not much wiggle room.

It was the decision of the Board to meet again on Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup> for further discussion. It is hoped that the Board will be able to agree on their budget amount so it can be voted upon at their Regular Business meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Mr. LePage asked that Board members please ask if they have any questions or concerns.

No action was taken at this meeting.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY FOSTER WHITE TO ADJOURN THE SPECIAL MEETING AT 8:20 PM. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY REBECCA MARTINEZ. THE MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED 8-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joan Calistro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joan" and last name "Calistro" clearly distinguishable.

Joan Calistro

Recorder of Minutes