

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLAINVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION
PLAINVILLE, CONNECTICUT
TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024**

Special Meeting Topics: ► Continued Review of Superintendent's Proposed Budget FY2024-25

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

Members Present: Jered Bruzas, Cassandra Clark, Roberta Lauria, Crystal St. Lawrence, Chair Becky Tyrrell, and Foster White

Rachel Buchanan, Lori Consalvo and Vice Chair Rebecca Martinez attended the meeting via Zoom

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Brian Reas, Superintendent of Schools
David Levenduski, Asst, Superintendent of Schools
Sam Adlerstein, Director of Business and Operations
District Administrators: Vicki Trzcinski and Kevin Ross

Early Departures: None

Board Chair Becky Tyrrell called the special meeting of the Plainville Board of Education to order at 7:04 PM. She then called upon Superintendent Brian Reas to discuss the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for FY2024-25.

Superintendent Reas presented a PowerPoint in answer to the proposed questions asked by members of the Board of Education at their January 18th meeting. Mr. Reas stated that he hopes to fill in the blanks, give appropriate background information and will respond and work through each question. The topics in question consist of the following:

Changes in Special Education Needs (Requiring Paraprofessional Support)

- Students moving in with special needs is increasing
- Students with needs entering vs. exiting is approximately 2:1 or 27in/14out
- 5+ students moving in with intense adult support
- Students moving to 18/22 programs needs more paraprofessional support

Pre-K Special Education Enrollment and Needs are Increasing

- There's a linear increase with or without Special Education
- Next year's enrollment looks to be stable but it is hard to predict

Special Education

- Legislation changes eligibility to 22 years old for students requiring transition services (finish the school year in the year of their 22nd birthday)
- Increases tuition by another year
- Increases Paraprofessional job coaches

Special Education Outplacements

- Approximately \$95K per student
- Per student costs increase substantially

Administrators' Requests Not in the Budget

- PHS Technology Education Teacher
- PHS Fine Arts Teacher
- MSP Italian Teacher
- Wheeler Special Education Teacher

Staffing Information for Questions

- One FTE Psychologist added in SY2021-22
- Open Positions include: Instructional Resource Teachers; Math Science Resource Teacher (Elementary); Instructional Assistant for Special Education (Elementary)
- Eliminating 3 additional positions through attrition

Academic Return on Investment

- New district reference groups (DRG's) were recently developed by the CT Finance Group
- Same formula as what the CSDE used originally
- Before this change, the most recent DRG revision was in 2016
- DRG's range from highest "A" to lowest "I"
- Plainville status change over the three iterations: 2006 "F", 2016 "E", 2023 "G"
- How Plainville compares to the other districts in DRG G in the State Accountability Index:
 - ▶ Plainville score—75.5
 - ▶ DRG G average = 67
 - ▶ Plainville scored 8.5 points above the average
 - ▶ Plainville ranks #1 in the DRG with the highest score (1 out of 16)
- How Plainville compares to other districts in DRG F in the State Accountability Index:
 - ▶ Plainville score—75.5
 - ▶ DRG F average = 65.7
 - ▶ Plainville scored 9.8 points above the average
 - ▶ Plainville would rank #1 in the DRG with the highest score (1 out of 10)
- How Plainville compares to other districts in DRG E in the State Accountability Index:
 - ▶ Plainville score—75.5
 - ▶ DRG E average = 72.1
 - ▶ Plainville scored 3.4 points above the average
 - ▶ Plainville would rank #4 in the DRG (top 50%)
 - ▶ Plainville's score is only 0.9 points below top district score of 76.4
- How to compare to select districts in higher DRG's:
 - ▶ Plainville score 75.5
 - ▶ Higher than DRG B districts Canton, Oxford, Redding and West Hartford
 - ▶ Higher than DRG C districts Regional #6, Regional #8, Salam, Sherman, Southington, Suffield and Woodstock
- How to compare to select districts in higher DRG's:
 - ▶ Plainville score 75.5
 - ▶ Higher than DRG D districts Branford, Clinton, Cromwell, Enfield, Hamden, Ledyard, Mansfield, Milford, New Milford, Newington, Regional #4, #19, Seymour, Shelton, Wallingford, Waterford, Watertown and Windsor

Object 1112, Certified Substitutes

--The reduced budget provides for 14 building subs, 3 in each school, offset by one intern, Object 3301. We have used, on average, eight long-term subs for coverage over the past several years. The overall run rate of sub costs is down, also, in part term due to lack of availability. Overall this account is trending favorably.

Object 3201, Instructional Software

▶ Early Literacy: Professional Learning systems such as Wilson Language, Lexia Learning, and Curriculum Associates	\$ 6,400
▶ MSP: Special programs, guest speakers, ADL, No Place for Hate, etc.	\$ 2,000
▶ District: Noteflight Premium	\$ 600
▶ District: Encyclopedia Britannica	\$ 600
▶ District: EBSCO	\$ 530
▶ District: Screencastify	\$ 500
▶ District: NoodleTools	\$ 350
▶ District: Go	\$ 225
▶ District: Mastercam Learning Edition	\$ 120
	<u>\$11,325</u>

How Does National Gas Compare to Oil?

--Eversource provides a calculator that compares the cost of oil compared to natural gas. We provided the contracted gallons and cost for oil in non-school town buildings for comparison. We save ~45% vs. our cost if we used oil for heating.

--Number of gallons of oil used in the last 12 months:	25,000
--Average price per gallon of oil:	\$2.98
--Annual cost of oil:	\$74,500
--Equivalent therms of natural gas:	34,750
--12-month average price of therm of natural gas:	\$1.182
--Estimated annual cost of natural gas:	\$41,074.50
--Estimated annual savings using natural gas:	\$33,425.50

Object 6103 Maintenance Supplies

--This account includes supplies not associated with a particular repair from general supply vendors such as Grainger, Lowes and Home Depot. This account also includes contractually required uniforms and safety shoes.

Object 6114, Instructional Software

This account includes special education and school-based instructional software. Much care is used in purchasing only software that meets legal obligations or adds educational value to students, resulting in savings. Elementary Markerspace materials have been added to FY25 that previously were ESSER funded, offset in part by a reduction for special education IEP software now funded by the state. Prior to ESSER, Makerspace was funded through CIP.

Are there incentives related to the PHS Boilers?

--As part of the process between our consultant and mechanical contractor, we have already applied for any available Eversource incentives. Incentive programs frequently become offsets to the operating budget through loans that are incorporated into the Gas or Electricity invoices. Given the overall cost of the boilers, this is not feasible.

ESSER Staffing FY24 Projection = \$755,938

--\$1,065,185 of salaries were planned as offsets to the Board of Education expenditures in FY24. Some of these positions were removed early. Those remaining for the most part support special needs in a variety of areas across the district.

ESSER Update as of January 23, 2024:

--As of July 1, 2023, \$1,932,432 remained in ESSER funding. Funds still remain for approximately \$100K additional projects. Larger projects have been individually approved by the Board, and all projects are periodically reviewed.

Mr. Reas and Mr. Adlerstein then discussed ESSER Projects by the month of July to January which equals \$699,740.

ESSER Projects Planned and Encumbered

Unencumbered \$191,701

Encumbered: \$187,451

Current Employee Tenure

Some concern has been expressed pertaining to employee turnover within PCS. Employees hired in 2023, employees with 1-2 years of service, 5 years, 20 years and 20+ years, for the following categories: Administrators, Certified Teachers, Custodians/Maintainers, Office Professionals, Paraprofessionals, Nurses and other non-bargaining positions. More than 1/3 of our current staff started at PCS during or after the pandemic. More than 20% are currently in their first or second year. In the last teachers' contract, pay on earlier steps was increased to help with retention.

What is the average teacher tenure and is it changing?

As for current teachers, the average age is 44 and average tenure is 12.35.

Three Year Teachers' Contract Settlement

- Three year % increase, teacher contract settlements 2022
- Of the thirty teacher contracts negotiated at the time of settlement, the majority were equal to or higher than Plainville.
- All but a few were higher than 11.00%
- Most are settled within a narrow range as they are based upon common economic conditions.
- The few outside of that range are generally due to non-financial items.
- The most recent bargaining unit contracts with the Plainville Board of Education include:
 - Administrators 2022-25
 - Nurses 2023-26
 - Custodians 2022-25
 - Office Professionals and Clerks 2022-25
 - Paraprofessionals/Tutors/RBT 2021-24
 - Teachers 2023-26
- All union contracts may be found on the Board's website, www.plainvilleschools.org

Collective Bargaining and Binding Arbitration

Teachers and the Board come to a negotiated salary agreement every three years. Both financial and non-financial terms are negotiated. The Board forms a negotiation committee and a Town Council representative is also included. The Council must also approve the agreement. If the parties are not able to reach an agreement, Municipal and School Employees in CT have binding arbitration. Under the State's Municipal Employee relations Act (MERA) in 1975 and the Teacher Negotiation Act (TNA) in 1979, municipalities and school districts in Connecticut settled labor impasses using a form of arbitration called "Last best offer, issue-by-issue" binding arbitration; strikes are illegal. Arbitration is both compulsory and binding, meaning that the school board and union must submit to arbitration when negotiations break down, and the results of the arbitration must be followed by both parties.

The Mill Rate reduced by ~10% or almost 4 mills through use of non-recurring funds

- Last year the mill rate was decreased to a level last set in 2013. Most often the mill rate increases a small amount each year.
- The past two years have been the opposite. Last year was a revaluation year. The overall proportion of tax burden shifted from high to lower assessed properties because those lower assessed properties increased more in value, comparatively.
- In non-revaluation years, the rate change affects all properties equally.
- The mill rate reduction was enabled by use of savings and >\$2M returned school funding related to the pandemic. It was further enabled by supplanting some costs to temporary pandemic related funding (ESSER). The FY25 BOE budget asks, "Which of those activities that had been supplanted should continue?"

Mr. Adlerstein showed the increase of the 5-year assessment revaluation.

Plainville Housing Market—Investment in Schools:

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, there is a definite correlation between school expenditures and home values in any given neighborhood. A report titled, "*Using Market Valuation to Assess Public School Spending*," found that for every dollar spent on public schools in a community, home values increased \$20. These findings indicate that additional school expenditures may benefit everyone in the community, whether or not those residents actually have children in the local Public school system.

Preliminary FY Town Budget: 2) BOE and 3) Debt

State and other revenues include \$500K added MRSA and Offsets \$500k additional transfer to the Debt Management Fund as the Town has presented. This also includes ECS increase from \$11,367,911 in the FY24 budget to \$11,896,907 published by the State. The net of these changes is 1.15mills. A 3.67% increase to the Collectable Grand List would offset his increase.

Discussion among the Board ensued.

Rebecca Martinez: The Board is responsible to meet the needs of its students. She feels the budget is sufficient.

Foster White: Also feel this budget will meet the needs of Plainville's students. Should move forward and bring this budget to the Town Council.

Cassandra Clark: Would like to reinstate the stakeholders portal to see how the public feels.

Becky Tyrrell: The Board is the only body who can speak for the budget.

Crystal St. Lawrence: There are no extras in this budget. If the budget is reduced what will it mean, programs cut, larger class sizes?

Jered Bruzas: Concerned that when electorates see this budget, along with the amount of the MSP Renovation Project, they will vote "no" to the budget.

Rachel Buchanan: Has been hearing about the fiscal cliff over a few years. She didn't expect to see extras. She too is for the Stakeholders portal. She asked if the Board could use the Town's Resource link.

Roberta Lauria: Would like to see actuals to understand the budget before making a decision.

Lori Consalvo: Would like to meet again on Thursday for more discussion.

No action was taken at this meeting.

Mrs. Tyrrell stated that the Board will reconvene on Thursday, January 24, 2024 at 7PM in the High School Learning Commons.

FOSTER WHITE MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN. CASSANDRA CLARK SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED 9-0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM

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