

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
LEVITTOWN UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
LEVITTOWN, NY**

DATE: JANUARY 24, 2024

BUDGET MEETING

MINUTES

THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, was duly called and held on Wednesday, January 24, 2024 in the Board Meeting Room of the Levittown Memorial Education Center.

CERTIFICATION:

The District Clerk certified that pursuant to Section 104, Open Meetings Law, notice of meeting was sent to the local newspapers, the Public Library and posted on the district's website. Further, all members of the Board of Education had due notice of said meeting.

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

Board of Education

Ms. Jennifer Messina, President
Ms. Peggy Marengi, 1st Vice-President
Ms. Christina Lang, 2nd Vice-President
Ms. Marianne Adrian, Trustee
Ms. Phyllis Dalton, Trustee
Mr. James Moran, Trustee (Excused Absence)
Mr. Michael Pappas, Trustee

Administration

Mr. Todd Winch, Superintendent
Mr. Michael Fabiano, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance
Ms. Debbie Rifkin, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
Dr. Beth Ziropiannis, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

Others:

Ms. Vanessa Esposito, District Clerk

Ms. Messina opened the Meeting at 6:02 PM

RESULT: MOTION CARRIED (6-0)

MOVER: Marianne Adrian

SECONDER: Phyllis Dalton

AYES: Michael Pappas, Jennifer Messina, Christina Lang

ABSENT: James Moran

Mr. Moran is excused from the meeting.

Ms. Messina adjourned the meeting to go into Executive Session at 6:02 PM

RESULT:	MOTION CARRIED (6-0)
MOVER:	Michael Pappas
SECONDER:	Marianne Adrian
AYES:	Jennifer Messina, Christina Lang, Phyllis Dalton, Peggy Marengi
ABSENT:	James Moran

Ms. Messina called the Budget Planning Meeting to order at 7:37 PM

RESULT:	MOTION CARRIED (6-0)
MOVER:	Michael Pappas
SECONDER:	Marianne Adrian
AYES:	Jennifer Messina, Christina Lang, Phyllis Dalton, Peggy Marengi
ABSENT:	James Moran

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Moment of Silence

Ms. Messina asked all in attendance to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and to observe a moment of silence to remember all those fighting for our Country at home and overseas.

II. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

A. Student Academic Presentation - Abbey Lane School

Mr. Winch introduced students and staff from Abbey Lane Elementary School's 3-D Club. There was a video slide show and a presentation from the students which included their inventions and final projects that were able to come to life through the 3D Software used at Abbey Lane. New technology and software affords the students this opportunity.

B. Budget Presentation - Second Draft

Mr. Winch introduced Mr. Michael Fabiano for an update on the second draft of the proposed budget. Mr. Fabiano discussed the Governors initial run on State Aid and stated that he will go more in depth at next meeting. Some surprises and changes were mentioned including 300 districts received less aid than in the past years. Mr. Fabiano mentioned that our foundation aid number increase does look good as we are slated to receive slightly under \$3,000,000. Mr. Fabiano is pleased with this news and the possibility of even more funding available. The second draft of the 2024-2025 Budget has our YTY change at 5.899% as of now. There will be more clarification and information at the next meeting on February 7th. The Budget vote will be held on May 21, 2024.

Mr. Fabiano stated that he was in Albany for professional development hearing from legislators and what is being done, he received a lot of helpful information including some on the current busing situation and what is being done to improve it. He is pleased with the standings so far. [https://www.levittownschools.com/boe/minutes/2023-2024/2024-01-24/2024-01-24%202024-2025%20Proposed%20Budget%20Presentation%20\(Draft%20\).pdf?v=2024012523](https://www.levittownschools.com/boe/minutes/2023-2024/2024-01-24/2024-01-24%202024-2025%20Proposed%20Budget%20Presentation%20(Draft%20).pdf?v=2024012523)

i. Transportation Budget Presentation

Mr. Fabiano introduced Transportation Supervisor Ms. Reeves. Ms. Reeves presented the transportation budget status, changes and proposed budget for 2024-2025, including issues such as driver shortages, bus route changes, comparisons between Levittown and Contractor transports, (there is one correction to be made on the Student Daily Transport Report to be updated). The Fleet Summary report summarized the buses available and those in use throughout the district from year 2000 until the present time.

Mr. Pappas asked how many buses we currently have; Ms. Reeves stated that we currently have 52 large buses and 32 small buses (including 10-15 emergency use spares),

Mr. Pappas asked the life expectancy on the buses; Ms. Reeves stated that realistically they will last 10-12 years, we do have buses that are older in stock in case of emergencies.

Mr. Pappas mentioned that he had in his records that we purchased 2 buses in 2012, yet that was not on the slide. Mr. Winch stated that the delay in purchase order to completion and delivery would affect the date we have in possession and that is the way the purchase orders get recorded. Ms. Reeves visited the factory and was able to watch the buses being made from start to finish and it could take a year to receive any orders as the production takes some time.

Mr. Pappas mentioned that we have 40% less drivers than we had 6-7 years ago so would we need to replace buses this year and how many buses does each driver require. He also asked if 50 routes are split up among drivers; and how many buses do we need with the amount of drivers and routes in current times. Ms. Reeves stated we need to always have 10-15 spare buses for emergency usage. Ms. Reeves said we need 55 vehicles to utilize for 50 routes and 42 drivers. She stated that we have routes that are tripled in some cases due to the driver shortage.

Ms. Reeves acknowledged that we can put a pause on purchasing any buses but also need to make sure there is availability for repair on current vehicles. Mr. Pappas suggested that we should scrap the older buses. He also mentioned that bus drivers are underpaid. Ms. Reeves acknowledged and agreed stating that private industry bus drivers will always be paid more as their budget is higher than public schools.

Mr. Pappas stated that benefits are \$40,000 per family and it would take 40 weeks of work to accumulate that amount; he stated that our salaries have to be competitive to others as we need to keep employees. Ms. Reeves agreed and said there needs to be a compromise although public schools follow the holiday and school calendar which is an incentive to work for the public school districts.

Ms. Reeves discussed the pandemic and the negative effect it had on the transportation department and its budget.

Ms. Marengi asked Ms. Reeves to get her a copy of a weekly amount of students on the late buses since November. Ms. Reeves will get that for the Board of Education to review. Ms. Reeves stated that elementary students are the highest population of school bus riders.

Ms. Reeves acknowledged the shortage of drivers and explained the hiring process and what is entailed and is working diligently on future recruitment. She also explained that Levittown Elementary schools transport more than 1,000 children in comparison to the contractor routes which transport approximately 200. She was aware of the need for improvement and will continue to monitor the situation and keep the Board of Education updated as such.

Mr. Pappas asked if there is a way for families who do not utilize the bus to opt out for the purpose of expanding routes and saving costs. Ms. Reeves was not sure if legally you may request this. Mr. Winch stated that we did a survey during Covid regarding this however the attorneys said that you cannot deny anyone their bus services.

Mr. Fabiano introduced the anticipation of the start of electric buses and what that would entail financially. Mr. Winch mentioned the effect this may have on taxpayers.

Ms. Reeves gave an update on the annual report on the stop arm camera violations. There were 804 on Wantagh Avenue, 172 on Gardiners Avenue, 120 on Division Ave, 68 on N Jerusalem, and 53 on Jerusalem Ave, all at a cost of \$250.00 each.

Ms. Marengi mentioned her concerns regarding after-school bus service prior to the driver shortage, which is worse now and she felt that what we need to do for public schools and private should be the same. She said, we need to make sure we have enough drivers for all routes including afterschool, sports, etc. rather than expanding in other areas at this time. Mr. Winch indicated that we have a policy enacted stating that if we have an adopted budget, we will then provide late buses. If the Board wishes to discuss this further, it will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Ms. Reeves presented the primary budget on drivers, the addition of full time bus drivers would go up \$214,529.00 and the adding of contractual routes would go up \$850,000.00.

Ms. Messina asked if the increase costs included BOCES Services. Ms. Reeves answered that, "it does not". Mr. Winch stated that once the transfer from GC Tech to BOCES occurred, there has been a vast increase in students attendance at Barry Tech. Ms. Messina asked about the \$850,000 increase in year. Mr. Fabiano stated that the comparison is from 2023-2024 and that we spent \$3,500,000 in 2023 and will possibly spend \$4,000,000 in 2024 and are in a shortfall already; and there was a deficit from last year which is what this amount reflects. He does not feel that we need any more buses at this time. He also stated that last year's budget allocated \$225,000 for buses, we will have to do something with that money, or put into a tax reserve. Mr. Fabiano and Mr. Winch spoke of the implementation of electric buses coming soon and were meeting with Officials on Friday at 4:30 to discuss the idea of districts having to facilitate money to pay for the costs which will burden the tax payers. Mr. Winch feels this should be handled by the Government, not the schools. He also mentioned the costs of charging stations and buses will increase the tax levy and residents will not have a positive response to this and should not be their responsibility. He would like to get one electric bus to prepare and see how it goes before they become mandatory.

Mr. Winch will update Board after the meeting Friday.

Ms Adrian asked why the Island Trees, Wantagh, and Plainedge School fuel are budgeted buying fuel but was under assumption that they buy it from us. Mr. Fabiano responded that we budget an appropriation and make transfers. Mr. Winch said he believes it came from auditors wanting us to account for it. Mr. Fabiano said that he will work with them to simplify the presentation but that it does help offset the costs of fuel purchasing.

Ms. Reeves proposed budget includes the purchase one large bus and one small bus for the 2024 year budget to be utilized for the 2024-2025 year as well as the continued use of the ParentSquare system and the Stop Arm Camera Program. She also suggested adding Wi-Fi to the buses for destinations that are far away. Mr. Winch asked to be sent more information on this suggestion and Ms. Reeves will have that done.

<https://www.levittownschools.com/boe/minutes/2023-2024/2024-01-24/2024-01-24%202024-2025%20Transportation%20Budget%20Presentation.pdf?v=2024012523>

ii. Technology Budget Presentation

Mr. Winch introduced Mr. Todd Connell to present the Computer Departments proposed 2024-2025 budget.

Mr. Connell emphasized the importance of cyber security to keep the District safe at all times. He discussed the introduction to the program, ParentSquare, which is utilized by staff and parents as a communication tool which has been well received by all users and is a positive addition to the District. His emphasis is to expand online forms and options to parents as well as upgrading hardware and software platforms for new features. Parents can enter and update all necessary information in this program as opposed to papers going back and forth. Parents are pleased with this portal and the immediate communication that they receive, and can choose text, email, or calls. Teachers can communicate with the parents this way as well in real time. Mr. Winch stated that parents are opting to receive text messages as opposed to the phone calls indicating that this software is being utilized.

Mr. Connell stated that the Division Lab Makeover was completed in 2023.

Mr. Connell explained phishing software and the safety it provides by blocking unsafe websites or emails.

Ms. Marengi asked if this software generates reports to IT so they can monitor any incoming threats. Mr. Connell said yes they do and so far have been relatively low. Mr. Winch stated that Mr. Pappas requested that the district should get involved in this last year and it was a good decision.

Mr. Connell stated that they have distributed all 500 chrome books to kindergarten students.

Mr. Connell stated that a digital chain of command has been added to the website to allow parents to get information on who to contact specifically with any questions or regards in the most timely and direct fashion.

Mr. Connell talked about looking ahead keeping hardware up to date, refreshing older and desktop computers, continuing chrome book usage, transferring the district registration from in person to online processing, and offering professional development courses for teachers. The increased costs will include hardware cost increases, current and new software subscription renewals which go up in cost annually. Mr. Connell stated that the BOCES aid that we utilize provides a 74% return on every order. Mr. Connell discussed the implementation of student kiosks. Mr. Winch explained that this keeps bathroom visits during passing under control and not disruptive. Mr. Winch said the feedback on the test trial at the school was positive.

Mr. Connell spoke of the increase in lanyard purchases as all students will be required to wear them. Mr. Connell stated that the year to year change proposed budget will be an increase of \$44,911.00, just under 1%.

Ms. Marengi thanked Mr. Connell for all the hard work.

Mr. Winch asked Mr. Fabiano to speak as he wanted to thank some staff members. Mr. Fabiano stated that we received a \$229,000 from FEMA and are awaiting another \$800,000.

He thanked Dr. Kolodnicki for all her hard work and thanked his secretary Sue Tam for her relentless work on these grants with FEMA.

<https://www.levittownschools.com/boe/minutes/2023-2024/2024-01-24/2024-01-24%202024-2025%20Computer%20Department%20Budget%20Presentation.pdf?v=2024012523>

III. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Ms. Messina asked for a motion to conclude the Budget Planning Session portion of the meeting at 9:30 PM

RESULT:	MOTION CARRIED
MOVER:	Marianne Adrian
SECONDER:	Peggy Marengi
AYES:	Jennifer Messina, Christina Lang, Mike Pappas, Phyllis Dalton
ABSENT:	James Moran