

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

**DATE: MARCH 6, 2024**

**BUDGET MEETING MINUTES**

**THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**, was duly called and held on Wednesday, March 6, 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 (Excused Absence)  
Mr. Michael Pappas, Trustee  
Mr. James Moran, Trustee

**Central Administration**

Mr. Todd Winch, Superintendent of Schools  
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:**

Mr. Bob Cohen, Attorney  
Ms. Vanessa Esposito, District Clerk

Ms. Messina opened the meeting at 8:32 PM

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

Ms. Dalton is excused from tonight's meeting.

## II. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

### A. Draft Budget

#### i. Budget Update - Mr. Fabiano

Mr. Winch introduced Mr. Fabiano to present the budget update. Mr. Fabiano stated that we have just one more planning session and will be adopting the budget on March 20<sup>th</sup> that will go to the voters on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Rifkin will give her final presentation on March 20<sup>th</sup> and he will be updating the final 5 year capital facilities plan. The budget hearing is scheduled for May 8<sup>th</sup>, and the Vote is on May 21<sup>st</sup>. The initial budget including all requests came in under 6 %, budget to budget increase is down to under 4.2%. He stated that some appropriations will have to be reduced or revenues to be increased or additional reserves applied, or a combination of all three to total 1.2 million dollars. The district is using \$500,000.00 in additional reserves from the ERS Retirement System because the ERS went up by \$500,000.00 this year. Mr. Winch said that the reason to use ongoing reserves is because they are designed to be a potentially one year bump. The goal is to utilize when it is at a peak and not be used as an ongoing revenue. He stated that this is a good use of this reserve opposed to the healthcare reserve which never goes down. He continued that there is a gap and that all districts have ongoing gaps to be fixed and we will start to see schools trying to find ways to cut. We were able to get a good increase in foundation aid last year and were able to close in very good standing, however at some point we will also need to utilize ways to use reserves in the future as inflation continues. He thanked Mr. Fabiano and his department on all the great and hard work

Mr. Pappas asked about the formula for ERS/ TRS and asked if we would be seeing a decrease in these. Mr. Fabiano agreed and said 2023 was a good year and 2024 is also coming in strong and thinks it's a calculated decision and we will see a decrease in the contribution reserves. Mr. Pappas asked if we would have to out up 2% from the 1% that we are currently at. Mr. Fabiano said that we can contribute no more that 2% of the salary base. He said we will have TRS fully funded by next year, but ERS does not have the same constraints. The full budget presentation can be viewed at the below link.

[https://www.levittownschools.com/boe/minutes/2023-2024/2024-03-06/2024-03-06%202024-2025%20Proposed%20Budget%20Presentation%20\(Draft%203\).pdf?v=2024030826](https://www.levittownschools.com/boe/minutes/2023-2024/2024-03-06/2024-03-06%202024-2025%20Proposed%20Budget%20Presentation%20(Draft%203).pdf?v=2024030826)

#### ii. PTA Advisory Committee

Mr. Winch introduced Ms. Galina from the PTA to do her budget presentation.

Ms. Galina stated that she does not have any requests from the elementary level this year. At the secondary level, Ms. Galina stated that Division Avenue is requesting the continuation of the Flex Room Initiative, and accompanying signs along walkways and acknowledging various organizations for their success, the door alarms system update, and an athletic field house similar to that in Bethpage. Mr. Winch commented that that is an amazing fieldhouse and would be a

wonderful addition. He explained that it is an external gymnasium with heat and indoor turf which is low in cost and is something we can consider in our annual budget. Ms. Galina also added that DAHS requests LED lighting and monitors similar to those in Abbey Lane. Ms. Galina continued that SALK is requesting 6 portable microphones for their auditorium and that MacArthur is requesting 4 decorative lantern style lights to highlight a sign and lighting in the parking lots, and a tree and benches to be in front of the shared parking lot.

Wisdom is requesting updating lighting in the parking lots.

Mr. Moran asked if the county still owns the space that they are requesting the benches to be placed. Mr. Winch said he will find out.

Mr. Winch thanked Ms. Galina and the PTA for all their hard work and time and effort.

### iii. Curriculum and Instruction - Dr. Ziogiannis

Mr. Winch introduced Dr. Ziogiannis to present the curriculum and instruction budget presentation. Dr. Ziogiannis thanked the Board of Education and the Superintendent and her leadership team. The points of pride for the department include the rollout of the new ELA program in Grades K-5, foundations and geodes, as well as the implementation of a K-5 instructional coaching model along with the two coaches working hard to facilitate google classroom programs and provide support to all staff. She thanked the Director of Elementary Education, principals and the classroom teachers.

Dr. Ziogiannis discussed the expansion of the Levittown Literary Incentive Program, #LEVtoReadLPS also having created a climate survey given to all students and staff to provide feedback on the programs and school climate, which she will collaborate with consultants to provide support and feedback. By early March the surveys hope to be completed and put to use as a guide going forward. The 8th graders at both middle schools will take a trip to the Holocaust Museum and 7th graders will be attending an assembly given by the HMTC. Dr. Ziogiannis said it gives her great pride to teach the students how to read and love to read. The initiative #LEVtoReadLPS added monthly book read a longs that she reads to the students. The feedback on the transition to ParentSquare has been positive in this department.

The return of the Adult Continuing Education Program has been well attended and the spring registration is successful, especially with pickleball selling out within 30 mins of the opening registration. The community feedback has been positive. Mr. Winch thanked Dr. Ziogiannis and her team as pre covid this program was not as successful and he is pleased with the restoration and positive feedback.

Dr. Ziogiannis discussed the new adoption of a financial literacy graduation requirement. This summer teachers will be drafting assignments for this requirement.

Dr. Ziogiannis said that on March 19<sup>th</sup>, Elementary Parent University will be held at Abbey Lane. Dr. Ziogiannis said that Eastboards was tremendous at Wisdom Lane and now is introduced at Salk and will be in both high schools, which include learning arenas being constructed. The improvement of library spaces are essential to the programs. They will include new furniture and shelving as well as enhanced displays. Some painting and upgrading will be

done, all 10 schools are working on updating their libraries. Summit Lane and Abbey Lane's libraries were shown on the slide that is available at the link below.

Dr. Zirotiannis. stated that the mid Atlantic college tour camp will be on July 22-24th. Dr. Zirotiannis stated that some teachers are taking the National Board Certifications. Mr. Pappas asked what goes into National Board Certification, Dr. Zirotiannis. said that teachers undertake a self reflective study taken for several years to evaluate themselves personally.

Dr. Zirotiannis highlighted that this spring the curating of all classroom libraries will begin. More points of pride include that this year there is a social studies curriculum project being introduced by BOCES that 31 teachers have signed on to utilize and new planned initiatives being introduced, College Anatomy, Marine Biology, Small Car & Engine Maintenance, Future Teachers and Real Estate. Mr. Moran asked if BOCES has a Maintenance course that is also taught at BOCES, Dr. Zirotiannis said that these courses are an opportunity to start and see if students will like to pursue the field which would allow students to engage in career exploration. Dr. Zirotiannis introduced the launch of a new elementary career exploration class to replace the current literary class center to be launched in the fall.

Mr. Winch said that the idea for this was sparked in Orlando where they were shown a similar program available in the California areas and now Levittown is designing a version for their district.

Dr. Zirotiannis. and her staff will continue to promote public outreach on all programs to the community and use the gold card, which has 230 members currently.

Ms. Messina asked who creates the Parent University, Dr. Zirotiannis said that they have a plan in place to form a committee.

Dr. Zirotiannis said that Salk began a kick line program which has been successful and Wisdom will add one as well.

Dr. Zirotiannis. said that the planned initiatives include continuing use of learning spaces, curation of libraries, magma math, inner orbit NGSS assessment program, ELA 6-8, and I-Ready data analysis to inform instruction K-8.

She thanked the principals, teachers for all of their hard work.

Ms. Messina asked if magma math is sustainable and asked what it is used for.

Dr. Zirotiannis said that it supports they type of learning we are trying to create and something we took a year lease on and are looking and deciding if is the best choice before making a decision.

Ms. Marengi asked what digital programs there are for enrichment.

Dr. Zirotiannis will discuss with Dr. Towers on what tools would be best.

Ms. Lang asked how the science standards were being implemented. Dr. Zirotiannis said that the most work is being done at the high schools, and is more of a roll out to the younger students and that the new assessments will be given out this coming year. She said the budget will increase by 4.24% mostly due to the BOCES increase. Mr. Pappas asked if that increase was aid able, Mr. Fabiano said it will be for the following year. Mr. Fabiano said we received about 5 million from BOCES aid.

Mr. Moran asked Dr. Zirotiannis explain the financial literacy course.

Dr. Ziogiannis said the program will be a financial planning course which will assist students in their future lives.

The full Curriculum and Instruction presentation can be viewed at the link below.

<https://www.levittownschools.com/boe/minutes/2023-2024/2024-03-06/2024-03-06%202024-2025%20Department%20of%20Curriculum%20and%20Instruction%20Budget%20Presentation.pdf?v=2024030826>

#### iv. Special Education - Dr. Farber

Mr. Winch introduced Dr. Farber from the Special Education Department to present the budget proposal. Dr. Farber stated that Levittown prides itself on a least restrictive environment and that we have a lot of students with special needs and one of the goals is to support the children and parents in the best possible way.

Dr. Farber thanked the staff for their hard work and support in this very intricate process.

Dr. Farber explained the trends of classification that are increasing at a high rate in CSE and CPSE. The home instruction numbers have had a slight decrease as have the hospitalization rates.

Mr. Pappas asked what is the furthest that we can transport.

Dr. Farber said that we transport as far as Suffolk County.

Mr. Cohen stated that the legal distance can be up to 50 miles for transport. Ms. Marengi asked for the reasons why children are doing home instructions. Dr. Farber said that some of it is suspensions, she will look for the exact breakdowns and get back to her.

Dr. Farber said that the out of district trends have also gone up. The staff has been provided Orton Gillingham Training, Responsive Classroom training and Threat Assessment training for teachers. The department continued the Prom Boutique, which is created for students and will take place on March 13th at LEMC.

Dr. Farber said that CPSE and CSE transition meetings were available and well attended.

Dr. Farber said that they have rebranded the MacArthur 5 star program that has a pop-up generals course that provides business training for the students.

Mr. Winch praised the program and its success.

The department initiatives include expanding the teacher's tool box in specialized reading, training IEP development, NYSAA students, and increased behavior support within the district, expansion of threat and suicide prevention.

Ms. Messina asked if the expansion is in regard to living skills.

Dr Farber said yes that they are looking at which programs to utilize in the classroom and in the home as well.

As far as the budget, Dr Farber stated that the primary budget drivers classification rates have increased by 13%. Dr. Farber stated that the severity of needs in students with disabilities is steadily increasing yearly, 2020-2021 had 66 students, currently we are at 100. These students are in need of many different specialized services.

Ms. Marengi stated that these numbers in the district are very alarming to her.

Dr. Farber stated that the increase in students coming in with severe disabilities from outside districts are also increasing.

Mr. Winch stated that the out of district students with severe disabilities have needs that are changing and are much more substantial all across Nassau County.

Ms. Marengi stated that both herself and Ms. Adrian wanted to know what is driving the influx of out of district students to come into the district. Dr. Farber said that many students were in BOCES already or moving in from another district, some are both dealing with both ENL and some coming from other countries.

Ms. Marengi asked Dr. Farber to provide a list with numbers of how many out of district children have come in and stressed the fact that this is not a reflection of the districts program, however just a concern as to why the numbers are increasing so heavily. She also stated that COVID should not have driven up any numbers of children with special needs. Dr Farber said that the highest classifications are those with Autism, emotional anxiety, depression and speech impaired.

Ms. Lang asked if the district is utilizing the amount of teachers to students ratio as is fit.

Dr. Farber said that their classes are very full, and do run to capacity.

Ms. Lang asked how long is the wait after entering the district from another country to be tested being that it may be a language barrier rather than special needs.

Dr. Farber said that they never want to over identify a student and do not rush into evaluating students, that there is no magic number as to how long to wait but that they spend a lot of time working with students and bilingual evaluations.

Dr. Farber said that the year to year change in budget has increased 2.21%.

Mr. Winch acknowledged that the rates are alarming, however, he is certain that the district is careful in classifying children with special needs. He also stated that he does not know the reason for the numbers going up although a lot of work has been done trying to close the gap in the county and there is still no specific answer to why, and thanks Dr Farber and her staff for the terrific job being done in the department.

Ms. Marengi said that everyone thinks that COVID is the explanation, however sees the need to ask questions and do research and try to come up with a better understanding on how to proceed with some type of solution.

Dr Farber stated that the birth rate with autism has also been increasing.

Ms. Marengi stated that she is referring to the grade level evaluations and we need to find out what can be done to close this gap.

Ms. Messina stated that the effects of COVID can be manifested in different ways.

Ms. Lang asked what type of training do we offer to the mainstream teacher and is it feasible to have training for co teachers.

Dr Farber stated that there were trainings done and that it is definitely a direction we can look into as well.

Mr. Winch thanked all presenters for their hard work.

<https://www.levittownschools.com/boe/minutes/2023-2024/2024-03-06/2024-03-06%202024-2025%20Pupil%20Services%20and%20Special%20Education%20Budget%20Presentation.pdf?v=2024030826>

### III. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Ms. Messina called the meeting to close at 9:54 PM.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>MOTION CARRIED</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Marianne Adrian
<b>SECONDER:</b>	Peggy Marengi
<b>AYES:</b>	Jennifer Messina, James Moran, Michael Pappas, Christina Lang, Marianne Adrian, Peggy Marengi
<b>ABSENT:</b>	Phyllis Dalton

Ms. Dalton is excused from tonight's meeting.