

Burlington Board of School Commissioners Special Meeting Minutes

**Hunt Middle School Library
January 23, 2018**

Attending Board Members: Mark Porter, Liz Curry, Kat Kleman, Stephanie Segunio, Jeff Wick, David Kirk, Kathy Olwell, Anne Judson, Susanmarie Harrington, Ryan McLaren, Mark Barlow

Meeting Called to Order by 6:11 PM

- 1.) *Motion to Approve Agenda*
(Commissioner Kirk /Commissioner McLaren)

Motion for Chairman Statement after the budget vote
Passes 10 to 1

3.) Public Comment/Questions:

Erin Webster: Teacher at Sustainability Academy. She shared research in Public Policy that claims public organizations need to look at a street-level actor rather than a top down approach. She suggested the Board ought to look at decentralized approaches to budget cuts.

Joanna Elliott: District employee and Burlington taxpayer. Spoke in favor of buying back all 9 interventionist and elementary positions. Based on her math, the cost is \$.90 a week for taxpayers.

Christina Erikson: Ward 3 resident and parent of a student at Sustainability Academy. Spoke in favor of retaining the elementary staff and core interventionists that have been proposed as a budget reduction.

Nicole Twohig: Speaking in support of the elementary staff and interventionists.

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Maggie Graham (and daughter Apple): Parent of students who have received services from interventionists. She admits she feels under informed on the budget process and what has been discussed thus far, but wanted to express the impact these elementary positions have had on key instructional intervention for Graham's family.

Doug Brooks: Parent of two children at Flynn. Supporting the interventionists as a considerable key role in the learning of children that need it most.

A. Board Reflections

Anne Judson responded to a public comment that said there was no line item budget available. She informed the public that it is available on the budget website.

Commissioner Wick argued that he had not seen an official Fiscal Year '19 line item budget.

Nothing has been removed from the FY'18 line item budget, only numbers have changed to reflection reductions to specific programs. A FY'19 line item budget will be put on the website when it is approved by the Board.

Commissioner Curry thanked the public for coming and wanted to focus attention on an email she sent to PTO listserv dispelling misinformation that was circulating regarding cuts.

Board Reflections closed at 6:30PM.

4.) Budget Update:

The Superintendent prefaced the final budget presentation by reiterating to the Board what the purpose of this step is: to determine what level of tax impact the Board feels comfortable taking to the public for support. The Superintendent explained that the District needs this Budget to pass so Administration can begin the level of work that needs to be done to improve our schools and empower successful students. The Superintendent explained that they are prepared to implement measures in this context to whatever extent the Board is willing to imply.

A. Questions from the Board members:

Commissioner Harrington still feels like she is lacking the narrative that tells the public where the District is going with this budget.

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Commissioner Wick is in full support of keeping interventionists. In order to achieve that support, the budget he stands by is represented by 8.05%.

Commissioner McLaren's preference is to buy back all nine positions and athletics. He believes he can tell a compelling story based on this budget process to explain the 8.05%, in how it invests in our teachers and schools. This expenditure in education is justifiable to McLaren.

Commissioner Barlow would support 7.68%-8.05%.

Superintendent Obeng expressed, again, that he hopes the Board has enough information tonight to make a decision.

Commissioner Judson is also in strong favor in keeping interventionists. If curriculum directors and administrators believe they can be used in a more meaningful way, then they can decide how to best use those positions, she said.

Commissioner Curry told the Superintendent she believes he and the administration is capable of providing the expertise, and she does not question merit. She does feel like she was limited in her ability to ask all the questions she needed, but recognizes it is the process that makes that challenging. She digressed to ask the voters to see what they will support for our kids and community.

Commissioner Olwell would go for the 8.05%. She is concerned that those interventionists will not be doing intervention work at the elementary school. She also reminded the Board her main priority is the children in our schools.

Commissioner Kleman realizes that the interventionists will be flexible and the mission will be to strengthen classrooms with the most need.

The allocation of each resource is determined by the equity index. The best approach is to target where the need is. Everyone is talking about equity but they are really talking about equality. Equality does not acknowledge needs, capacity,

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Commissioner Kleman also realizes that in the current model, interventionists are not being utilized successfully. She would support 8.05%. “The fact that we can do something reasonably similar to the original scenario showing 10% is amazing.”

Commissioner Seguino does not have as much anxiety about interventionists because she understands that cohorts that change proactively have the most potential to be successful. She is sensitive to, and concerned for, people on fixed incomes, but the Board needs to remind the community that the case is Education Spending has increased by less than 1%. She would be willing to go and fight for 8%.

Chair Porter reminded the audience and Board that \$500,000 has been cut from Central Office and non-instructional positions. While these might not be teachers, they are still people who will be losing their jobs.

Commissioner Seguino suggested another \$35,000 cut from the budget to get the tax impact below 8%.

Commissioner Wick said, “I do not think we know what we are talking about. We should hear testimony from building principals about the value of the interventionists and their roles in the school.”

Commissioner McLaren didn’t see the value in continuing to have the conversation about what to do with interventionists. The conversation the Board should be having is about FTE buyback, he said. He believes the District and Administration has been fiscally responsible in utilizing resources.

Commissioner Barlow agrees that the Board should get down to below 8% because that is the rate people will be open to hear.

Commissioner Harrington agrees that the District has been responsible in attempting to contain costs and focus. She also highlighted that if this budget fails, we will face immeasurable repercussions.

Commissioner Kirk said with an increase less than 1%, the District is doing the right thing. He explained the tax implication is at the failure of our legislative body. The District has done a good job maintaining spending under the leadership of Yaw. He doesn’t like the tax impact, but the truth is that it is not the District’s fault.

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Chair Porter explained that the community needs to fundamentally change the way we consider and administer public education. Most people are willing to say let's keep things the way they are, his feeling is that this budget does not go the extra step he was hoping for.

Motion for the Board to put forth a budget that has an equalized pupil spending of \$15,111.81. Result in a tax rate increase of 7.99%.

(Commissioner Seguino/Commissioner Klemen)

This requires the Superintendent to find 35K to cut. The District has worked hard to retain spending. Investments have been made thoughtfully in a strategic way. It is with great regret I put forth a motion that increases taxes but the benefits outweigh the cons for our children. We can no longer afford to cut spending.

Commissioner Curry thanked Commissioner Seguino and Commissioner Kirk for their input. She requested an amendment that the entirety of the surplus not be applied to the budget. She requested another \$100,000 be taken out so long as it did not reduce instructional positions.

Commissioner Seguino did not accept the amendment. Commissioner Curry withdrew.

Motion to Approve a budget resulting in an equalized pupil spending of \$15,111.81. Result in a tax rate increase of 7.99%.

Approved 9-2.

5.) Chairman Statement: Nothing to do with the budget.

6.) Adjournment

A. *Motion to Adjourn*

(Commissioner McLaren/Commissioner Judson)

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