

Burlington Board of School Commissioners Special Meeting Minutes

Hunt Middle School Library

January 22, 2018

Attending Board Members: Kathy Olwell, Mark Porter, Mark Barlow, Anne Judson, Stephanie Seguino, Liz Curry, Kat Klemen, Susanmarie Harrington, Jeff Wick, Ryan McLaren

1.) Meeting Called to Order by 6:20

2.) *Motion to Approve Agenda*
(Commissioner Seguino/Commissioner Judson)

3.) Public Comment/Questions:

Scott Hubbard: BHS Golf Coach for 16 years. Program is over 75 years old; kids who have never played learn how to play; Athletic staff were not informed; Everyone's included Fundraise each year; District never paid for uniforms; 15-20 kids

Kait Hale: Math interventionists at Edmunds. Kate explained the various ways that interventionists work in the classrooms to help with the District's identified mission.

Christine Harvey: 25 years as a math interventionist at CP Smith. All students are impacted - backs interventionist instruction.

Jeff Comstock: Ward 7 community member. "I support my school board" sign on Platts ave. Disagrees that salesmanship should be at the foreground of budget discussion. Ed property tax, like income tax, paid by small amount of people with higher incomes - which is why budgets pass. Help us live within our means

Gayle Botelho: District PLP coordinator. Speaking on behalf of cutting 1 FTE phys ed teacher. Cuts to phys ed are also a cut to EL because phys ed classes help fill EL schedule and allows them to immersify themselves in the language- one of mainstream classes that EL kids will take. Critical for learning to have phys ed during a school day to wake up brain. Over 900 students would have 2 phys ed teachers. Content licensed teacher to oversee phys

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ed credits .5 of 1.5 can be given to flex pathway - already offer flex pathway to students for various reasons.

Karen Ruben: CP Smith parent and PTO leader. Para at Edmunds. Free public education for all means somewhere we have to fund it. Our response to pressure from the State level is to cut. Are we committed to free public education or aren't we? I want the Board to ask for the funds that they need. We are making investments in our infrastructure and our community.

David Jenemann: Father of Student Representative Isaac Jenemman spoke in support of maintain the BHS Alpine Ski and Golf Team.

Carol Livingston parent of a BHS senior. Reconsider major cuts to elementary staff.

Ken Hampel: Parent of Ski Team athletes. Does not support the reductions considering they are miniscule in the grand scheme of the budget scenario. Lifelong sport.

Shannon Lipkin: Parent of middle and high school student. Sports are more about building a community with teammates. Where will those 50 athletes go without golf and alpine skiing?

Roxanne Sully: BHS freshman parent on the alpine ski team. Please reconsider cuts made to a team that does not turn anyone away and that encourages community building.

Tony Shaw Parent of 3 children who have gone through the school system. Also here supporting the proposed cuts to athletics. Skiing is a huge part of the State's economic system.

Linda Walsleben: EL teacher and ward 4 resident. There are 65 EL students at Edmunds with 1.5 FTL EL teacher. Not seeing the staff support in closing the achievement gap.

Janet Joppe Halpin: Literacy interventionist at Edmunds elementary. Works with over 30 students in one day. We work directly with students during tier one instruction and intervention blocks.

Marley Tipper: BHS alpine captain. Super fan. Not going to race for rice.

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Shelley Mathias: Principal at Edmunds Elementary. Every year have experienced cuts at elementary school. Research on level of investment and outcomes over time - consistent with BSD math data.

Bruce MacDonald: speaking as a parent on behalf of his son who is a co-captain on the alpine ski team. These programs have in some aspect the largest fundamental aspect. Burlington lends itself to the fundamental experiences of the sport itself.

Ann MacDonald: Supporting the Ski Team. Kids that can barely ski become amazing skiers due to racing pillars. This sport has so much dedication. The economy is skiing here.

Jeff Kahl: Parent of BHS sophomore ski team member. Kids are learning self improvement.

Charlie Tipper: Father of Marley Tipper. Reiterated the opinions of those before him.

Greg Gillan: 5th grade teacher at Edmunds Elementary. Supporting interventionists in schools.

Lilly and Alden: Juniors and captains on the alpine ski team. Pleaded not to cut the ski team.

A. Board Reflections

Commissioner Wick is humbled by the turn out of folks sharing their testimonies. He claims these are the subject matter experts.

Commissioner McLaren wants to appreciate everyone that has come out tonight and reached out to the Board providing feedback on every platform. Feedback is welcomed and impactful. As we continue to deliberate, he wants everyone to know their feedback is heard.

Commissioner Curry said, “we stay focused on the trees while the forest is on fire. We all want all our kids to push beyond their limits. How do we work as a community to push our neighbors past their limits on what they can afford. So please be there when we have to sponsor this budget. To preserve what we have we have to go above.” Getting mired down

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in trying to understand the education formula takes away from the economic benefit that education delivers.”

Commissioner Judson believed the District’s budget survey was informative. Commissioner Judson wants to work with homeowners to explain the budget. This is because of 3 or 4 situations coming at us from the State. We are doing our best to figure out how to cut without impacting students. But cuts will impact our teachers. Specifically teachers will be impacted if they suggest more cuts to central office.

Representative Jenemann thanked the students for coming out. At the end of the day it is the students we are here for.

Commissioner Seguino wanted to share her own frustration. We [the US] have a tax distribution system that weighs too heavily on the bottom. “All of the investments made in a school are an investment to each individual student’s success. Without the pressure from Montpelier, we would not have to make any reductions, we would be able to add all of our investments without nearly as high the tax impact. If we can collectively move forward, I think we can get there better together than divided.”

Board Reflections closed at 7:30 PM

4.) Budget Update:

A. Questions from the Board members:

Commissioner Wick inquired about the ballot language, wondering if we can use words rather than numbers for people who are not well versed in math.

Commissioner McLaren wonders if all the scenarios shown assume no enhancements proposed at the last meeting. Director Lavery told him that was correct. Commissioner McLaren is very thankful for the information provided. He also spoke on the intersectionality between success in team sports and academic excellence.

Commissioner Olwell said that since the ‘90’s the Board has been working to get class sizes down to 15, and now they are driving ratios back up. She would rather see us put all 9 FTE positions back in and she could go out supporting that.

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Commissioner Harrington has specific questions about athletic philosophy that she will save for another day. She is still wondering how interventionists will be used to help us meet our academic achievement goals .

Commissioner Barlow asked clarifying question around intervention strategy. Original intention was to focus on grades 1-3, but if they are working under that model, and students grade 4 & 5 needed support- how would they get that support.

Superintendent Obeng explained that energy would be focused on targeting critical areas, which is backed by research that identifies those age groups at critical learning intervals. Commissioner Barlow also question a hypothetical default budget. The Superintendent explained a failed budget would be more harmful than anyone can anticipate.

Commissioner Kleman explained her heart wants to buy back all 9 positions, but she's worried about going over 8%.

Commissioner Wick questioned the cut to gym teaching positions when he knows from narratives in the community that students struggle to fulfill gym credits. "Can we allocate positions before we are jumping to cuts? We need some more give in the system so we are not just operating in the margins."

Commissioner Curry thanked the budget team for addressing sports curriculum. She believes the community should be leveraged for athletics sponsorship to bring resources the whole department, not just cut specific teams.

Chair Porter agrees that it is in the best interest of educational success as well as the most cost effective to target grades 1-3. He also explained that a failed budget does much more than what you think: leadership and employees feel devalued and the voters feel they aren't getting value. "We have to stop doing things the way we've always been doing it."

Commissioner Barlow asked if the Superintendent needed any more direction from the Board. The Superintendent explained if the Board wants to see anything or make any requests, now is the time.

Commissioner Curry asked to see the impact on a \$250k home?

Commissioner Seguíno asked to see percentage of tax impacts for each budget scenario.

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5.) Adjournment

A. *Motion to Adjourn*

(Commissioner Wick/Commissioner McLaren)

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