

THE WOODLAND PARK BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 15, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

N.J. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this act the Woodland Park Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be published by having the date, time and place thereof posted on the door of the Woodland Park Board of Education Administration Building and was provided to the North Jersey Record & Herald News

FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL

Members Present – Kim Galbraith, Shannon Marren, David Amanullah, Glen Grimes, Julissa Rodriguez, Gina McQuin, MaryAnn Perro, Mark Salemi, Joe Giammarella
Also Present - Michele Pillari, Paul Murphy, Adam Weiss

Dr. Giammarella read a statement. He said that as a Board member he wants to make sure that our budget is fiscally responsible to the taxpayers of Woodland Park. He noted that at the last meeting he was in favor of just a 2% increase of the budget. He stated that after reviewing the scope of work needed in the Buildings & Grounds department and the curriculum needs of the students, this was not a realistic number. He asked that the Board reconsider and increase the preliminary budget to satisfy the needs of the district.

Dr. Salemi added that the B&G committee met after the preliminary budget meeting to discuss in detail the necessary needs of the district. After in depth review, he agrees that we need to increase the budget over the 2% originally voted on.

PUBLIC HEARING

Please remember that this is a public meeting. Anything you say will be public record. As a result, pursuant to law, the Board Members cannot respond to you publicly concerning certain matters, such as those regarding an individual student. If there is a matter that you wish to remain private concerning personnel or students, please contact the Superintendent's office. In accordance with Bylaw 0167, statements will be limited to 3 minutes in duration.

Karen Criscione – 49 Wallace Lane

Mrs. Criscione asked if the Board was going to publicly discuss the items that Dr. Salemi was referring to regarding the district improvement/repair needs.

The Board held a lengthy discussion regarding the 2024-2025 School Budget. The preliminary budget was approved at the 2% cap but the Board was brought up to date on many necessary, costly, improvements needed in the Buildings & Grounds department and programs needed in the curriculum department. It was discussed to raise the budget above the 2% to help cover the cost of these improvements/repairs. The most costly of the repairs are new roofs at Memorial & CO, which has an approximate cost of \$4,000,000. Mrs. Perro asked if we could get estimates from roofing companies, as opposed to the solar company. Dr. Pillari added that the core issue is that the roofs need to be replaced. Mr. Weiss added that another option would be to go out for referendum. Dr. Pillari also stated that the Board needs to come up with a long term plan for the property at ECC as there will be financial implication involved with that. Her vision would be make the property at ECC all of the Pre-K, which would involve construction of buildings. School #1 all Kindergarten, CO 1-3, BG 4-5 and Memorial 6-8. Mrs. Perro wanted to clarify that even if the Board does decide to increase the budget above the 2%, the amount of money will not even be close to cover the costs of the necessary repairs. She just wanted it to be clear that if it is raised that will not fix the problems. Dr. Pillari responded that Mrs. Perro was correct but if we don't do something this year, it will only compound the problems for next year. Mrs. Perro feels that the increase amount could be found within the budget between grants and state aid and save the taxpayers an increase in taxes. Mr. Murphy stated that it is possible if grants and aid come in at higher amounts than expected but you cannot predict that. He also stated that if we don't use any of the bank

cap this year, aid comes in lower than expected and next year we go to the full bank cap, it will have a bigger impact on the taxpayers. Mr. Weiss stated an option to get the roofs replaced would be to work with the County on getting a bond. Mr. Bolen arrived to the meeting and spoke in more detail as to the B&G needs in the district.

Mrs. Criscione stated that over the many years she has been coming to Board meetings, she has seen how B&G issues get put on the backburner. She is glad that the Board is taking the time to address the needs of the schools. She also stated that it has been publicly said many times that the Pre-K program & the ECC would not cost the taxpayers any money. She stated that the list of costs at the ECC has gone above and beyond estimates. She asked why we didn't have any kind of inspections done before agreeing to this rental/purchase agreement. Mrs. Criscione feels that the problems at the other schools are being neglected because the money is going towards the ECC and even though it's money that is in the budget, it is taxpayer money. She feels the ECC is bleeding the budget dry.

Mr. Weiss responded that an inspection is not done when it's a lease. When the time comes to purchase, a full inspection will be completed. He also stated that much of the funding for these projects was through the preschool expansion grant but not for renovations. Dr. Pillari added that in the long term, we will be owning the property so any money put into it will benefit us. Mrs. Criscione asked why the landlord isn't responsible for any of these repairs which is customary when you rent. Mr. Weiss stated that part of the lease negotiations included that we would take responsibility for repairs and in turn we got a locked in purchase price. Mrs. Criscione asked if we pay property taxes on the property. Mr. Weiss stated that since it is a privately owned property, we have to pay the taxes on it. He also stated that we could go to the town and ask for an abatement on it but there's no guarantee that they will approve it. Mr. Murphy stated that we have applied for an abatement through the county but it was denied. He said even though it's changed hands, since it was previously a preschool and it still a preschool the county doesn't take into account who is running it, it's still considered the same use of property. Mr. Murphy also stated that the rent and taxes are paid through the grant.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:06 p.m. by MARREN, Seconded by PERRO

Voice Vote: 9 YES