

EAST GREENBUSH CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING- PUBLIC HEARING
WEDNESDAY MAY 27, 2020

Transcription of remote proceeding:

Michael Buono: Let me call the meeting to order. This is the public hearing for the budget. Attendance tonight as I just announced Ms. Massey will not be here and we will check on Ms. Muth. Everyone else is in attendance either virtually or here. Mr. Mann is here, he's just off screen a little bit. With that will you please rise and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance?

Everybody: Pledge of Allegiance

Michael Buono: Thank you. So as I mentioned earlier this is our public hearing for our budget. What I think we need to do is cover the information for a public meeting and Mr. Simon's presentation, so in our agenda we have the call the meeting which is a notice of public hearing and we do cover that like I said so I need a motion to waive the the reading so we have a resolution on the table to waive that. Can I have a motion. I see Michelle, and I need one more.

Mark Mann: I will do it.

Michael Buono: Mark Mann. All those in favor? All right, we will waive the reading. Thank you very much, and we will go into the presentation, the budget by the Superintendent.

Jeffrey Simons: Thank you, Mr. Buono. Can everyone hear me? Can you give me a thumbs up if you can hear me? Ok, thank you. Tonight we are presenting the budget for the next school year. The school Board adopted the budget at its last meeting on May 20th. Included for the public and the Board are documents that are available on Board docs this evening. As we move through the public hearing we will let the public know where you can obtain a printed copy of these documents should you want to review the proposed budget. The public hearing notice has been waived through an approved resolution of the Board. At this point we will review the requirements of the public hearing notice, which include notifying our voters of the location and the times of the public hearing. We will also discuss the availability of budget documents, where voters can obtain budget documents to review, the voting date as well as the propositions which will provide an opportunity for the public to vote on three propositions. We will describe the process of the election of the Board members as well as identifying voting districts. This year there is a change, due to the COVID 19 we will only have one methodology to cast a vote and that will be through absentee paper ballots. The polling sites in the voting districts are applicable in some sense because our vote will be recorded by voting districts. That recording will take place when the votes are counted and that will be on June 9th. Additionally, there is still an opportunity for anyone who is not registered to vote, to register. There will also be an opportunity when the vote is closed, the voting registry is closed and available for public inspection. We will talk about the qualifications to vote on a school board and budget election as well as the entire absentee ballot process. The notice of public hearing is published as required by State Education Department regulations which have been modified this year. They require two publications within 28 days preceding a June 9th vote date. Typically, the school budget is voted on in the third week of May, a Tuesday, that timeline has passed and due to the changes in State regulations our vote date will be June 9th. I will also emphasize at this time we don't have a second vote date which is typically provided to school districts in the event that the school budget is not approved by the community. All the information regarding our public notices that have been sent are available for community review on our website at [www. EGCSd.org](http://www.EGCSd.org). The availability of our budget packets online tonight, on Board docs. There is budget packet 1, budget packet 2. There are different sections of the budget related to the function and object codes that are funded through the budget. They are available upon request at Central office and available at all of our buildings. The East Greenbush, North Greenbush, Sand Lake and Nassau libraries, which are currently closed however you can obtain that information through the District clerk's office. We are still obligated to send

the documents to those locations. Additionally, all the documents that we publicize related to the budget are available on the website and we are providing a review of those documents here at our virtual public hearing for the Board and the community to review. The first packet called Packet #1 provides a revenue summary. The main sources of our revenue include local property tax levy as well as our State aid along with PILOT agreements, which are payments in lieu of taxes agreements as well as other miscellaneous revenues. In addition, in Packet #1 there is an expenditure summary which lists by function and object code all of the District's expenses in various categories. Our current staffing levels are reflected in our budget packets, and those staffing levels are also available online. Mr. Edson, in coordination with Ms. Cannon's office does an excellent job of ensuring that document is updated so the community and the Board can see how many positions we have in various job categories. Enrollment history, the District does a very good job of studying enrollment through a contract with the Capital Region planning commission and that enrollment study is shared with the Board's budget review and advisory committee on an annual basis. The property tax report card. The presentation is not showing??

Peter Goodwin: Yeah

Jeffrey Simons: My understanding is the presentation is not showing right now. Mr. Goodwin is gonna try to enable that. Bear with me. There is a PDF available on Board docs. If there are any members of the public who want to go on Board doc which are on the Board portion of our website. You should be able to see the PDF which is the same presentation that we are trying to upload at this time. Can someone give me a thumbs up if you can see the slide show, or a thumbs down if not?

Peter Goodwin: Ok they can see it now.

Jeffrey Simons: Ok, we were talking about the availability of documents including the budget packets, we discussed what was available in Packet #1 and we were at the point where we were talking about the property tax report card, which is a required notice that we have to not only make available to the public, but also file with the State Education Department. We are also required to provide a breakdown of our budget in three portions. We call it the three part budget. It is the Administrative budget, the Program budget and the Capital portions of the budget. The largest part of the budget is the Program, which covers all of our educational and extracurricular programs. There is also a requirement for Administrator salary disclosures. Mr. Edson can you give me the threshold of money, of income that we are required to report?

Lawrence Edson: It is anyone who has the title of Superintendent title and anyone earning over \$141,000 a year.

Jeffrey Simons: That information is available for public review. School tax exemptions, we have to publicize the exemptions that are available for various members of the community. Those exemptions require an application for the exemption through the town. We have also a fiscal accountability supplement which is a required report as well as a disclosure of our students with disabilities, and the ballot propositions themselves. In budget Packet #1, we have the enrollment data, we have our grades 3-8 assessment data. Our District performs far above the State average on our grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Math assessments. Additionally, the School Report Card is comprehensive and provides not only academic data regarding our test performance, our graduation rate, it also provides a demographic information regarding our student population as well as financial information regarding the financial status of our District. The student and educator report is an additional requirement to give you a little bit more information about the District's profile. Voting has changed this year. The voting date will be June 9th. Again, as we indicated earlier, through absentee ballot only. I'm happy to report that that process has gone smoothly and to not steal Mr. Edson and his staff's thunder, I'm gonna ask Mr. Edson to talk about an important event that happened today.

Lawrence Edson: The important event that happened today was that all 22,228 ballots, return envelopes and outer envelopes went to the post office. It was a major accomplishment and I thank all of the Central office staff for putting it together yesterday and today. Stuffing the envelopes, sealing them and making sure they were posted and so people should have them within a few days and when they receive them, they should read the instructions for the ballot, mark it accordingly and return it in the return envelope. Look on the back of the

envelope because there is a certification, and the certification needs to be signed by the voter. Only one ballot shall be replaced in a return envelope. Don't do it by family, each family member who is registered will receive their own envelope. One ballot to a return envelope, and thank you everyone.

Jeffrey Simons: Thank you Mr. Edson for a great process, but it was challenging. The room that you are looking at right now was filled with boxes, envelopes and paper as of this afternoon and it was cleared up very nicely and they did a great job. I want to talk a little bit about the counting process. While there has been a lot of discussion about this issue across the State, based on the advice of counsel, the ballots cannot begin to be counted until 5pm on June 9th. Is that correct, Mr. Edson?

Lawrence Edson: Yes

Jeffrey Simons: And the process does allow Districts to continue the counting process until it is completed into another day. We will see how we do. We may be able to complete it that evening, we may not, but accuracy is the key, not speed and we are going to also offer the public an opportunity to observe that process through livestream. Typically we are required to have the election result/counting process open to the public. It will be open to the public through livestream. Based on the social distancing requirements and the amount of work that our staff is going to need to do we honestly would prefer that members of the public as well as the Board, view the process of counting through livestream so that the room is not overly occupied so that we can go through that as an efficient process. Even myself, will probably be watching it through livestream in my office, just to avoid confusion and make sure the process goes smoothly, but it is open to the public to review and those results, as I indicated earlier are tabulated by voting district. Voting districts are Donald P Sutherland Elementary School, which is voting district #1. Again, DPS will not be open for voting, however we will be tabulating the vote, votes that we receive through District #1. Voting district #2 is the Green Meadow zone, which is for residents in the Town of Schodack, which also includes a Nassau mailing address. Bell Top Elementary School is the voting district #3 for residents of the Town of North Greenbush. Residents of the Town of East Greenbush district #4, typically vote at Howard L Goff Middle School, again all of the votes will come to Central office via the mail and will be counted by voting district. If you have not registered or voted in a school district election in the past 4 years, there is still an opportunity for residents to register in order to vote. In person registration, which typically occurs is suspended by the Governor's Executive order, however anyone who has not voted in a county and/or a school district election in the past 4 years can still go online to the New York State Dept of Motor Vehicles website and register to vote in the school budget and Board election and the last day to register for that is, bear with me because I can't see it on the screen, I'll look on my screen, is Tuesday, June 2nd because the rolls will be secured for public review beginning on June 3rd through June 8th. Anyone who would like to inspect the vote registry can do so between the hours of 8 and 4 here at the Administrative Center of the District, at the office of the District clerk, which is in the business office. In order to vote on the school budget and Board election, you need to be a citizen of the United States, 18 years of age, resident of the District for 30 days preceding the date of the vote and as we indicated you need to be registered to vote. Absentee ballots have been mailed, as Mr. Edson has indicated. They have been issued to all registered voters and 22,000+ ballots have been sent out. We met our own expectations by two days. We beat our own deadline, they went out today, May 27th. As Mr. Edson indicated, it is critically important to follow the instructions to ensure that your vote is counted. Mark your ballots with an X or a check mark. No stray marks on the ballot. Importantly, when you put the ballot in the envelope, turn the envelope over and there is an affidavit on the back of the envelope for all voters to sign. Envelopes that are received with ballots, ballots that are received in envelopes that are not signed cannot be counted and if you have any questions once you receive your ballot, or require clarification contact the District Clerk. Additionally we will be putting out some public information to assist voters at casting their ballots including a video demonstration which we are working on through Mr Adam's office and a family of residents in East Greenbush who have agreed to do that for us. The return ballots include postage paid by the District, as required by the Executive order. There are ballot boxes available only at... We changed that, right Mr. Edson?

Lawrence Edson: We're evaluating that at this point.

Jeffrey Simons: Alright, we may only be able to drop off your ballot here at the District office. We weighed that option but we were concerned about security of the boxes.

Lawrence Edson: We are checking with the attorney on that.

Jeffrey Simons: We are checking with the attorney on that one. The deadline again is 5 o'clock on June 9th to the District Clerk. And that deadline is ballots received by the District clerk at 5 o'clock not put in the mailbox. We will not be able to count any ballots that arrive after June 9th. Here is a picture, image of the envelope itself. You can see at the bottom of the envelope there is a "Statement of Absentee Voter", that is required to be signed and this one in particular is signed by John Q. Voter. In addition to the budget vote, we have an opportunity for the voters to cast votes for three candidates for the Board of Education. Each of those three candidates are running for three open seats. Michael Buono, who is our Board of Education president, Kathleen Curtin, who is a long time member of our Board, and our Board vice president, Mark Mann. Three incumbents running for three seats on the Board. We have no other candidates running for election this year. And we thank our three candidates for agreeing to continue to serve on our Board. Proposition #1 you will see on the ballot is a proposed budget for the 2020-2021 school year of 99.8 million dollars. The second proposition is for the purchase of eight school buses through a reserve. This year we are not proposing any borrowing to purchase buses. Any member of the public can look at our replacement plan and our fleet schedule on our website, which is very detailed, it also indicates the ages of our buses, as well as the plan to trade in those buses and replace them with more modern, safe and better mileage, brand new buses to keep our bus fleet safe. And then we also have the proposition for the election of the three Board members. The proposed budget includes a one and a half percent increase to the tax levy which represents more than 800,000 almost \$900,000 of needed revenue for the District to be able to maintain programs and services. That one and a half percent increase is the lowest proposed tax levy associated with a District budget in 5 years. I want to thank the Board for supporting the budget. We also want to let our public know as we roll out the budget presentation tomorrow evening and to other community groups, that we are not recommending any reduction in positions at this time. However we are holding off on filling available vacant positions until we see what may happen with the projected reductions in state aid. The governor has indicated that he may cut school aid if we don't receive federal assistance by as much as 20%. Twenty percent of our foundation aid is 3.4 million dollars in the event that does occur and federal monies are provided we will have to look at potentially reducing positions either between now and September or during the school year depending on how that falls. Additionally we are utilizing reserves and fund balance to offset any further tax increases above the 1.5 and to offset where we can potential program reductions and staff reductions. However we don't know how the 1.5% tax levy will impact tax rates. Tax rates are impacted by Town assessment. They're also impacted by differences in the residential rates versus the commercial rates in East Greenbush. The state establishes equalization rates that tries to level off the value of your property assessments to its market value as well as changes in New York state tax computations. This year with the executive order, we are only really going to get one bite at the apple so to speak. We believe that the State will not authorize districts to go out to the public for a second vote. Typically will be able to do that. We believe they'll be one vote on July 9th in the event that we have to go to a contingency budget because the budget does not pass, we are not able to yield the one and a half percent increase in the tax levy and we will have to reduce the expenditure side of the budget by \$863,479 which also represents the revenue we would yield through the tax increase and we would have to look at non mandated programs. As we look at this list, we see such things as social workers, security supervisors, SRO's, honors courses, AP courses and in people might scratch their heads and say why aren't those required? Those are critically important to our students and those are programs and services that meet our communities expectations for it's school District. We agree with that, however we can not reduce non mandated programs, excuse me, mandated programs. So these are the things that we would have to look at an event of the contingency budget and we don't want to go there. We prefer to pass our budget move on and start planning for next year. The buses include eight total buses at a total cost of \$736,000. We reviewed these bus purchases to make sure that we felt that confident that they needed to be replaced this year. One of the factors

that is entering into school district planning right now is how many buses are we going to need in the event that we have to change or reduce the number of kids on a bus next year? So we do have about a hundred and two or a hundred and three in the fleet. We will be replacing these, but we're going to need the buses particularly if we are required to reduce ridership. We look at the mileage of our buses, as well as student and staff safety. We look into how much we are putting into those buses to maintain them, with our mechanics and our maintenance costs, fuel efficiency. For every dollar that we spend out of our transportation reserve to purchase a bus the State will replenish that reserve \$.65 on the dollar. 65% of the money that we spend on the bus just comes back right to the district reserve and we use that to continue to sustain our bus replacement plan. So it's a good deal for the District. The important dates to remember, we are here on May 27th at a public hearing on the proposed budget. Again, June 9th is a critical day. If you receive your ballot tomorrow or the next day we encourage you to fill it out, sign it and return it, so that it will arrive in plenty of time for June 9th. And at this point we'll take any comments, questions or concerns either from the Board or the public regarding the proposed budget.

Michael Buono: Comments by email?

Jeffrey Simons: Let's take a look.

Peter Goodwin: Is it ok to stop presenting?

Jeffrey Simons: Yes

Michael Buono: So at this point we're just checking to see if there's any comments from the public via the email. Mr. Simon's will sign on, sign on to the computer and just double check, but while we wait are there any comments from the Board members as we get back to the presentation and I can see you?

Jeffrey Simons: No public comment.

Michael Buono: Ok Board members any comments? I just got to go around. Mr. Mann, anything?

Mark Mann: I'm all set.

Michael Buono: Good? John Dunn, good? Michelle? Good. Karen? Good. Joann? And Deanna? And Kathleen is out of town, I just heard. Did we get everybody? Good, and I want to thank the superintendent and the administrative team for the budget this year. The presentation, we did the Town board meeting yesterday, it was the Town was very supportive of the budget. I just want to thank the district for the transparency, the information that they shared with the community so they can make an informed decision about voting and again please follow the instructions that are out there. It is a little different process and we hope that that when you get that any questions please refer to the website and the little video that we present. Hopefully that will be a fun way to show people how to complete that process.

Jeffrey Simons: Thank you, Mr. Buono

Michael Buono: You're welcome. Based on no other comments, I need a motion to close the public hearing. If you want to make a motion just unmute. Can they unmute, Peter?

Lawrence Edson: They are raising hands.

Michael Buono: Raising hands? Ok, I see John Dunn and I see Karen. All those in favor to close the hearing? Approved, thank you very much. Let's go to... moving from the public hearing to the regular board meeting.