

**Transcript of Special Board of Education Meeting
February 10, 2021**

Mr. Buono:

It is 7:01, I'll call the meeting to order. Welcome to the East Greenbush Central School District Board meeting for February 10. All members are in attendance either virtual or in-person. With the exception of myself and Frank Yeboah in-person all the other Board members are present virtually. With that, please rise and join us for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ALL:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, everybody. First order of business on the agenda is to open up in a public hearing on our Smart Schools Investment Plan presentation. This is regarding our technology purchases, and I will turn it over to Mr. Simons for the public hearing portion.

Mr. Simons:

Very good. The Board has been supportive and really had a very positive vision for improving access to technology during the last several years. We would never have anticipated the high utilization amongst students and staff resulting from the current situation with the pandemic, but through the Board's support and the public support, we have been able to benefit from the State resources that are available through the Smart Schools Investment Bond to purchase technology outside the general fund budget using state monies. When Smart Schools was first approved by the State, each district received an allocation. Our district received approximately \$2.3 million dollars.

Mr. Simons:

This is our third plan that Mr. Goodwin, Peter Goodwin, our Director of Technology will be presenting this evening. And I'm going to turn it over to the Director of Technology, Peter Goodwin, to do a presentation. This is a public hearing, and there'll be time between now and the final adoption of the Board, and before the plan is submitted to the State Education Department for the public to comment on it. There is an article on our website produced by Mr. Adam, and that article provides information on how people can review and comment on the Smart Schools proposal. Mr. Goodman.

Mr. Goodwin:

Thank you very much, Mr. Simons, and good evening to the Board. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our preliminary Smart Schools Investment Plan number three, but it's actually number four.

Mr. Simons:

First one was zero.

Mr. Goodwin:

Yes, it was. I am off camera, so I'm just trying to be socially distanced, so you can't see me, I apologize to that. Okay, so just a little background concerning the Smart Schools Bond Act. November 4th, 2014, Smart Schools Bond Act was approved by the voters of the State of New York. This authorize the issuance of over two billion dollars of general obligation funds to finance improved educational technology infrastructure, and to improve learning opportunities for students throughout the state. EGCS D received 2.3 and some change under that allocation. We have completed three Smart Schools Investment Plans known for short as ESIP, so if I say, "ESIP" that's what I mean.

Mr. Goodwin:

Our first one was directed at enhancing our district's Wi-Fi network. We completed that project and included the Wi-Fi access point in every instructional space. Our second plan was a number of interactive displays that we call ViewSonics, we also have ones that we call Prometheans that are used in classrooms. We completed that, as well. And our third plan, number two was the kickoff for our one-to-one lighthouse Chromebook program. And in that initial program we were able to purchase sufficient Chromebooks to start the program for grades three through 12.

Mr. Goodwin:

Okay. So allowance spending under the Smart Schools Bond act includes high-speed broadband and wireless connectivity, learning technology, interactive whiteboards, computer servers, desktops, laptops, Chromebooks, tablets, and high-tech security features. The District approved Instructional Technology Plan, which is for the years 2018 through 2021, this year, and it was approved by the State in November of 2018. Preliminary Smart Schools Investment Plan is where we are right now, is a public hearing at the Board of Ed meeting right now. We'll be asking for the Board's preliminary approval of the preliminary plan, and then at that point we will post the plan for 30 days on our website, open for public comment. And then we'll come back again on March 10th at the Board meeting, and we'll ask for final approval of SSIP O3, and we will keep that Smart Schools Investment Plan posted on our website for further reference.

Mr. Goodwin:

So the District conducted a district and community needs survey in June of this past year, 2020. It was about... The focus was digital equity and access. We had 2,800 and some change responses, which are per child responses. And the results of that were studied, and the district submitted the digital equity survey to NYSEC on 10/24/2020. Results of the survey said that as far as K-12 internet access, 94.8 percent of the students had access to the internet at a sufficient level to participate in learning activities, 4.8 percent had some excess, but insufficient to participate in learning activities, and .4 had no internet access. And this would be at their primary residence. We asked for the same questions at secondary residences because some students have two places that they call home. And the same questions are 84.1 percent for sufficient, 8.9 for some access, but insufficient to participate, and 7.1 had no internet access. So you can see that there's a difference between the primary and the secondary residence.

Mr. Goodwin:

So we had to plan, take that in under advisement, try to plan for that. We also found kindergarten and grade one access to a computer at home about 60 percent at the primary residence, about 39 percent didn't, and at the secondary residence, 44 percent yes and 55 percent no. So we took two actions at that point, we started making available to families in the district Kajeet Wi-Fi hotspots so they could have a

cell phone based hotspot, but they could use it at home to gain access, and to date we're a little bit shy of 160 of those.

Mr. Goodwin:

We also extended the Chromebook one-to-one program to include grades K through two, so now the program now has Chromebooks for K through 12. We had no way to know just how important those moves would be last March, but they really paid off for us, and a lot of this came about because of good planning. Together with the Technology Committee and many administrators here, we were able to establish some goals in our Technology Plan, a few snippets from it. One of our goals was to improve the overall ease of access to the network, especially for K2 students. Increase equitable access to applications on all computer systems, establish an online site dedicated to access and delivery of professional development. We had the, we call it the tag website, it's an internal website. And also in September of 2020, we held an asynchronous PD and we used the bitmoji. You might recognize my little bitmoji picture there on the screen, a little snapshot from that. The teachers really enjoyed that, and I noticed throughout the year that many teachers have gotten interested in using bitmoji making it part of their instructional process online.

Mr. Goodwin:

We also had in mind to develop a telepresence based facility in all classrooms at each level. Although it might not be the way we planned it out, we ended up achieving that with Chromebooks and webcams for our desktops. Okay. So one thing that we did include in the plan was the idea that sustainability of the plan for the Chromebooks requires planning. And we tried to think about, well, we have some Smart Schools money that we could use, but what do we do after that? And so we had a little schedule here and I snipped that out of the plan, the plan is also online on our website. If you ever want to review it just go under academics and then technology and you'll see it there. And you can see laid out each year to replace basically what I've done is you could make a plan, but sometimes you can meet the plan, and sometimes you can get close.

Mr. Goodwin:

So the first year we were placed for grade six and then the next year two, this this, the third year of the plan, a little bit delayed because of COVID, but we are at the point where we're aware that these devices are three years old now and it's time to replace many of those devices. So that's when we decided to do the... Accepting all three. The non-public schools in our District are always considered and contacted. Our non-public schools in this District are Woodland Hills Montessori and Holy Spirit. We've determined that the focus of this Smart Schools Investment Plan will be Chromebooks and Chromebooks only. So to the extent that we have additional monies that we can offer to those schools, we will do that in terms of those Chromebooks.

Mr. Goodwin:

Our anticipated spending, if you were to approve this preliminary plan, would be for the next model up of the device that we're using now, which is the HP 11G8 education edition. We've had really good experience with that. We currently have several thousand of them in service, and that is a budgetary estimate for the device. The price has gone up most likely due to supply chain issues and also COVID pandemic, and each device also needs a management license so that the district can control the policies out to the machines and keep children safe. So the process after the board issues this preliminary approval and we receive a process, a public comment, and we change the plan a little bit. That's the

point of a public comment, we would go for final approval, and then we would go ahead and submit the SF to the state. And then the process gets there where they would do their initial review, ask for resubmissions, there are always little changes that they request. They're very thorough.

Mr. Goodwin:

Then if necessary, they may deem this as we just want to purchase Chromebooks. So we don't think any of these areas would delay us for very long, but their processes is area review, depending upon budgetary categories could include the office of education design and technology, could include the office of facilities planning, could include the office of early learning. So there's an expenditure review, which is a detailed review of specified budget items, the descriptions, the quantities, the prices, and other budgetary questions. Then send for review to the board staff to SUNY and review the relevant professional development collaborations that've gone on at teacher prep programs and then sent to the department of budget for complete review, and then it's approved hopefully. And then that's a long and arduous process.

Mr. Goodwin:

One of the points that I wanted to make tonight is that Smart Schools Bond act money never expires. So there's not a set timetable to spend money, and what we mostly need to do in making this accept is to have your approval to capture these thoughts so that we can designate them for this purpose. And once we gain the approval from New York State Education Department, the District can decide to purchase up to this amount of Chromebooks at the pace that's comfortable for us and that fits us. We don't have to buy them all at once. So the process includes the ability to submit updates and modifications to the plan. So it's built in there to transpire over a couple of years, or it could just be a couple of months. So we would have flexibility in all the approval of this plan would do, would just allow us to apply to capture that money. And at this time, that's all that I had except to ask you, if you have any questions for me.

Mr. Buono:

Wait, can you bring up the-

Mr. Goodwin:

Yeah, can you stop sharing?

Mr. Buono:

Stop sharing? Yeah.

Mr. Goodwin:

Yup, and then stop sharing.

Mr. Buono:

So we had... I can't see it yet, so wait till we're stop sharing and then it should go. Go ahead, so... Someone is trying to get into the computer it says.

Mr. Goodwin:

Oh, is that-

Mr. Buono:

It's somebody McDonald who's-

Mr. Goodwin:

Oh, yeah. Admit. Admit, yeah.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. Now I can't see you very well, so any questions for Peter? I think I saw Michele who's right here.

Ms. Skumurski:

So Peter, are we looking at basically replacing these every three years?

Mr. Goodwin:

Yeah, the projected life of a Chromebook is three to five years. Our experience has been a little different in the first two years. We use them quite a bit. Ever since COVID started, we used them a lot. So our experience with repairing them, keeping them going would be to say, it's time for us to get a replacement. They're a computer asset, they're a consumer electronics product. They're going to wear just like your phone would over a couple of years, you need to re up your phone, so yeah.

Ms. Skumurski:

So do you know how successful we've been with keeping them in good condition? How many have we broken, or the students broken, or anybody else that may... On an average, what's our disposal a year on ones that are broken?

Mr. Goodwin:

That's a great question. We planned in about a 10 percent breakage, and by my estimates, we are well below that.

Ms. Skumurski:

Oh, great. Okay. Thanks.

Mr. Goodwin:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mr. Buono:

Any other questions? I do have... So the timeline, how long does the approval process take with the review of SED and then what's kind of the timeline for, or because I'm concerned that they were just replacements for the fall anticipated ordering would be very, very far in advance, I would assume.

Mr. Goodwin:

Yeah, there are a number of variables. And when we initially filed our Smart Schools Investment Plan, it took almost two years to get it through. I don't think that that's going to happen now that the State is aware that there's a tremendous need now, especially with COVID pandemic, they've kind of stepping up a bit. They're meeting again on the 24th of February, so anyone at that meeting, but things to

consider are not all the Chromebooks break at once. And so we don't necessarily need to... Yup. Don't forget, we're going to have some seniors graduating, so we have every year we have a fresh supply of books, so there is...

Mr. Goodwin:

I talked to the vendor just yesterday and they're saying two months right now for their backlog. They have about a million Chromebooks of this kind with Hewlett Packard that are back ordered, but Hewlett Packard is saying that they're wrapping it up. They'll probably have that within two months, and then at that point they think things will return back to normal.

Mr. Buono:

Good, excellent. Thanks, Peter. Any other questions? I missed anybody on the Board? No? All right, with that I will close the public hearing and we have to do a resolution for preliminary approval, Peter?

Mr. Goodwin:

Yes, that's right.

Mr. Buono:

We do? Okay. So on the agenda is the resolution for preliminary approval of the plan. I'll just read that. Resolution approval preliminary Smart Schools Investment Plan 03 as presented on February 10th. Final approval, the Board of Education submission to the State Education Department will occur upon completion of the third required for a public comment period concluded on or about March 10th. I need a motion to approve that. Kathleen, Second?, Mark, all those in favor.

Mr. Buono:

Approved.

Mr. Simons:

So that'll be posted for public comment. So we will close the public hearing and move to our student council representatives , Katie and Ryan over here. Yup, you guys. You have the floor.

Ryan Seely:

Hi. Last week we met with Mr. Harkin to plan a school spirit event, and we decided on having students dress in red, pink, and other Valentine's Day accessories on Thursday and Friday. And we're excited for some school spirit in the next few days, and today we decorated the school for Valentine's Day with about 15 students after school, which now looks very festive.

Mr. Simons:

Very nice. I saw it coming in, it looks great.

Ryan Seely:

Thank you.

Mr. Simons:

Thanks. Good job. Katie?

Katie Asenbauer:

So as for fundraisers this month, the freshman classes decided to raise money for the American Heart Association in correspondence with Valentine's Day. So throughout the week, they've been posting informational signs throughout the building that have QR codes that you can scan for different resources. And along with that, the senior class is going to be having a flower sale on Thursday and Friday. And then after break, we're going to start fundraising for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and our plans right now, we're going to have either a COVID safe hot chocolate sale or candy bar sale. So we've been meeting with Mr. Harkin about that, and we're going to finalize things following break, and that's all we have tonight.

Mr. Goodwin:

Great. So you're going to invite Mr. Simons and I to the next meeting, right? Or one of these?

Katie Asenbauer:

Yes.

Mr. Goodwin:

Okay. I'll be looking for the invite. All right.

Katie Asenbauer:

That'll be awesome.

Mr. Simons:

Thanks guys. All right, appreciate it. Have a great night. Good to see you. You're welcome to hang around. We have a special guest here that I want to introduce. There is normally board forum, but just to modify the agenda, Assemblyman McDonald has joined us. Welcome, sir, to our Board meeting. You're kind of in a mix here, looking at a big screen and you're far away, so I apologize if you can't see very well. Can you hear me okay?

Mr. Goodwin:

He's muted.

Mr. Buono:

I think you're still muted, John.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

So I am muted-

Mr. Buono:

There you go, there you go. Welcome.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

It's good to be here. Actually, it's interesting. Just for orientation perspective, out of all the different platforms, believe it or not, the only time I ever used Google Meets is when I meet with the schools. Otherwise, we pretty much are Zoom and WebEx to that. But I'm looking at our students who just spoke very briefly, know that language is a good trait to have as you go out in life. I think I've got a few school Board members on here. I think. Then we've got Jennifer, Joanne, Michelle and John, right? And then I see... Is there a school Board members in the library where you are meeting or no?

Mr. Simons:

Yeah. Myself and then Frank Yeboah is here.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Okay, okay, okay. Okay, and there's Jeff, as well. Okay. Well, good. If you don't mind, I just get right into it. We're starting that time of year again where we're visiting our school Districts to kind of give you the good, bad, and the ugly. What's going on in Albany right now, and as you know, this year the governor... Just a bunch of that's really the tale of two budgets, and one's a small problem. One is one big problem. In other words, hopefully we'll get six billion, but really we need 15 billion. And for all intents and purposes this is all going back to Congressman Tonko this morning. We're looking at somewhere between 12 and 13 billion coming this year from the federal government just to the state, and then they'll be also money going to local governments, as well. So that's good news, and my understanding that once they get through this week's activities, that congress seems to be tied up with and they will start to move on that. So that's a good thing, as well.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

It's always good to have some certainty when you're looking at the budget. The budget posts to me is a four. I don't think it's going to get any worse by any stretch of imagination. I think there's room for improvement. There's a little bit of a card game going on right now, or shell game in that the governor has proposed... for East Greenbush. It looks like there's a little bit of increase in aid, but it's really using federal money that was allocated prior. It's not using in the last stimulus, which was approved back in December. And really the State has actually cut about three to \$400 million statewide from its usual annual operating budget. So the bottom line is we have room to do because we have a commitment to education, and we need to make sure we follow through on that commitment.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

We also have to do it in a responsible manner to make sure that we don't just see a one-year jump up in aid, and then the next year you see a significant drop it's always difficult to pull it back once you've given it. On the other hand, if it's given in small measured doses, at least you can plan accordingly and have realistic expectations. We are pushing back in a couple of the other governors proposed... I saw... Let me finish up revenue real quick. I'm sorry. We've had a conference for the last seven hours we've been on Zoom discussing what revenue enhancers we would like to consider, and we have a very broad mix from throughout the state of different representatives, and there's six different revenue enhancers, and there's a large contingent from the city that wants all six, which is an ambitious task.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

There's \$50 million dollars, which would be great to spend with, but the question is, would we get it? And then there's other answers about taxing those who are extremely wealthy, those who are multimillionaires and those are reasonable things to be talking about. Kind of what we're selling. We are

in the part now where we've been briefed on what the governor's proposed, we have letters coming to the speaker in the next four or five days or we'd like to see. Then by March 1st, we will put forth, give or take, a one house budget on what the Assembly thinks its priorities are. I would expect to see an increase in aid for education in that and the Senate will do the same, and then we will negotiate with the Governor through the month of March, and by March 31st or April 1st, April 2nd our budget will then roughly be approved.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

That's for sure, which is good and gives you some surety in regards to when you got your school budget votes. Hopefully we're not moving the school budget vote again this year. I think that we need to stick to that date. I'm having some problems with some Boards of Elections. I've told them to play nice with districts that have used their machines in the past. I don't know how you... Last year you probably conducted, Jeff, I would think by paper ballot, correct?

Mr. Simons:

Yes.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

And has there been any direction? Of course, me asking you... You should be asking me this but I'm very transparent. Has there been any direction given to school boards yet or school districts on how to proceed with ballots this year?

Mr. Simons:

No. There's only been communication among our associations, NYSCOSS, and NYSSBA asking for our views, but there really hasn't been any clarification regarding the vote date or whether or not if it's going to be in person voting would be permitted or whether it would be similar to last year, the sending out paper ballots, and everybody voted via in the mail.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

I would like to think just as a... Well, this is my personal opinion only because things are moving in the right direction. Vaccination has started to increase infection, increase over that, and it would be ideal to actually allow for in person if it could be safe, but I know that's always a delicate issue. So I know that the paper ballots are a little bit extra work, it's actually a significant expense too if I remember correctly to the district, so I'm very sensitive to that, so I would prefer to see it in person, but that's a discussion we really haven't had yet because the budget's consumed everything.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Getting back to budget on the expense side, one other thing that's important, the Governor proposed is to consolidate all the expense pay states. So your BOCES AID, pre-K aid, you're general aid... Transportation aid and trying to connect it all to one so they can just take a flat number off the bottom, which is really not good. That's been going on for the last four or five years. We fight it back each and every year, we will continue to do so. I like to think we're down, but we will see, I don't make any guarantees until after we've got an answer because that's the only guarantee to make around here.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

There is a lot of tinkering going on with the Star program again. The Governor wants to... For those who've owned their homes for a period of time, you would have what's called a Star credit, which is taken off your actual school tax bill, and that's the Star program we've always known, as well. The Governor has been moving towards this Star rebate because it's really a numbers item. A rebate that's actually money that they can pay out, whereas the credit is actually something that comes against his claim to fame of keeping growth below the two percent. It's really a dynamic... I personally had problems with getting rid of the old Star program because personally you're trying to diffuse the concept of high property taxes. Why have people court hoping for a rebate check, which is what the rebate checks are for? That's just my philosophy.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

He wants to expand it to senior citizens, so that makes it even more difficult because there are many great, smart senior citizens, but there are a lot that just are totally clueless, and so I think that's going to lead to more confusion, aggravation, and in this day and age with all that we've walked through in the last 12 to 13 months, why would we want to step up for more confusion and aggravation? We already have significant mental health issues that are going on at all ages. We worry about the children appropriately so, but it's also happening with the adults. So I don't know why we want to put more spice into this, but being as it may, that's our battle to fight this year, it's just inevitable.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

So that's the numbers game, I've given you an idea of timeline. As you know, I'm a pharmacist. I really like questions and answers to be honest with you. I'd be more than happy to start off with the board, which after if there's any questions or comments.

Mr. Simons:

Okay. I'll ask the Board members who are present virtually if they have any questions first for Assemblyman McDonald? Kathleen?

Ms. Curtin:

Hi, Assemblyman McDonald. I want to say thank you for coming, number one. I actually was able to participate in the virtual conference with NYSSBA this past week, and they were talking about the budget and you actually represented pretty much what they said very, very well. My question would be how much the Assembly has discussed changes with the formula aid, because the formula aid was put out there to kind of give us some predictability in our funding from year to year. And the Governor chooses, for the most part, not to follow it in that the formula is... It needs tweaking. There's parts of it that really don't fit, now the PILOTS are not a part of it. There's a lot of little things, so can you speak to what the Assembly is talking about as far as the formula aid goes?

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Well, if we look to the Assembly there wouldn't be a thing called tax cap. You know that. There wouldn't be a swimming test. We tend to focus on putting money into foundation aid. Foundation aid, foundation aid. We've found an area of community schools, which is helping some of the very poor districts. The challenge with tweaking the formula is who does it benefit, and when you're benefiting one, you're hurting another. So it gets very, very challenging on. For example, what would you like to... And I'm not being smart, I'm just asking a general version, what would you like me to change? If we had this, what would you like to change? Because there's 40 different pages to the formula and a lot of it's focused on

a variety things. It could be anywhere from AWI out of 12th the next, it could be a function of is it rural, is it city, is it suburban? It can be free and reduced lunch. I'm sorry, I'm giving you some examples.

Ms. Curtin:

They've have been a lot of discussions statewide about this. So my question, again, is how much of this are you really sitting down and not asking me, Kathleen Curtin about the formula aid, but talking to the State and bringing all of that together and coming up with something that will be actually used instead of out there every year, and then we out the Governor in the final budget. And actually, not just the Governor, the state legislature in the final budget, doesn't even stick with it. And we have no predictability. We've also got the problem, you brought up the two percent tax cap, which is not two percent. Could we make it two percent, could we stop with the ridiculous formula, and we make it two percent?

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:33:04]

Ms. Curtin:

... with a ridiculous formula and make it 2%?

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Yeah. Let me try to answer things because I can tend to jump around a variety of different things. When we talk about putting more money into the foundation aid, what we're trying to do is close the gap that every district has, and I'm sure you've seen the charts. And then, your associations, whether it's NYSSBA whether it's the Superintendents, even Nysec, they're all on the same page, basically. Now, where you are with foundation because you're at 67%, our goal is to move it up, to get closer to 100%. And I've been here nine years, so I can remember back when Gap Elimination Adjustment was plaguing education districts. Most board members don't even know what Gap Elimination Adjustment is these days, you do. It was painful, right? It was very painful. We're not having that conversation, by the way, which is a good thing. That's a very good thing. I mean, that was millions of dollars a year to this district alone. I remember it very clearly.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

But we're trying to move everybody towards 100% funding, but we also are trying to slow down the districts, which are usually wealthier districts, that are at 107 and 110% because for years, particularly in Long Island they've had that. Now, don't get me wrong, the amount of aid per pupil is higher in the districts that have a lower percentage, but we still want to close that gap. In regards to the tax cap, now that it's permanent, it's going to be very difficult to appeal it and get it to where it should be, which is 2%. Because you're absolutely right, that was the bag of goods that were sold. It was a 2% increase and that's it. But there is a convoluted formula that is problematic because...

Assemblyman John McDonald:

And actually, I just recently reintroduced legislation that's been sitting on the sidelines for four or five years. It wasn't mine originally it was originally the majority of the new Assembly. Well basically, allows PILOT, payment in lieu of taxes. Which is usually, when you say it to a school board, it's like the bane of your existence because school districts don't like PILOTS. As a former mayor, I can tell you that PILOTS, at least when I was mayor, were treated fairly. I used to actually... I inquired on the IDA board because I

appointed [inaudible 00:35:40] that school district got representatives so they knew what was going on, and they could have input in decision making.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Well, one of the things is PILOTS actually come against the calculation for the tax cap. And the tax cap is supposed to include what's called a growth factor. In other words, if your communities grow, you should not be penalized, you should be able to increase your tax rate that little percentage more it impacts it. Because technically, if it's growing, the municipality, the education system are being required to spend more to service that growth. Well, PILOTS actually work against you in this situation. So my approach is in most situations when IDAs are contemplated, it is leading to growth. This may or may not impact you, right? And I don't know if I'm getting geographically challenged because as you know, I only represent North Greenbush over there versus all of East Greenbush although some days I wish I was representing East Greenbush.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

But let's take Schodack for example, they've got the Amazon project, that was done with a PILOT. That PILOT actually is now contributing to the actual formula, which would allow your cap to be higher. Not yours but Schodack's. Regeneron obviously, is a major investment in East Greenbush, and that is also I believe through a significant PILOT. But you should be able to get... If the layout was flat, and there was nothing there, and it was only yielding a dollar a year... Regeneron puts on this \$800 million a year and jumps up to \$10, you should be able to take that \$9 and add that in because you're going to have to... In one way or the other, you have the right to have that revenue, to service the community. So you brought up PILOT, I didn't, but I was privy to it. We're going to try to slip that into the budget this year to try and get something done. That was the long answer to a very short question.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you.

Ms. Curtin:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Any other board members have questions? John, done?

Mr. Dunn:

Good evening, John. Thank you so much. I always look forward to having your visit and these very candid conversations that you handle so well. I guess part of my statement and leading into a question is the governor, he creates a lot of challenges for everybody involved in this forum though, from you to us, to the local governments as well. And he's preaching fiscal accountability constantly to us with all his programs and mandates, but yet I feel like he's playing Three-card Monte all the time and it's just what you said, in the end, just call it what it is and just get the money where it needs to go.

Mr. Dunn:

And my concern for our district is the long term equity. Like you said, you alluded to, you get these [inaudible 00:39:03] pages from the federal government, we got to stop the bleeding this month, but

we're also tasked with long term planning for this district. And with this not being addressed on the long term situation puts a lot of duress on all our taxpayers. And because we're a high functioning district, we get overlooked a lot, but the tax burden is equitable to everybody, especially during COVID because income is so restricted. If we go to the community and try to squeeze more money out of them, it's just not right in these times. So I guess my question to you is, at what point does the Assembly and the State Representatives really... Can you drive home this point and actually have a result with the Governor? Because it seems to be the same conversation and I've been on the Board for nine years along with you. And it's a very similar conversation year to year.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

A couple of comments then, and I can't say it specifically to East Greenbush, right, I have to look at it wholistically throughout the district. Our goal is to raise the overall foundation aid and shrink the equity. And to be honest with you, for the last six to seven years, and not last year, six or seven years prior to that, we made progress. What was a regular lament gap elimination adjustment and then lack of programming has turned around to where we were able to start adding these programs back, and these programs back. So we're making progress, but it's not at lightning speed by any stretch of the imagination.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

The challenge of education is we will probably never be fully funded to the level it's supposed to be because there's just never going to be enough money. Unless we find a way to raise another 10 to \$20 billion sustainably each and every year. That's just, unfortunately, a fact of life. I think the other disadvantage, and it's a disadvantage particularly for the Capital Region... I've said this before, you guys have heard this. In Syracuse, they follow the Orange. In Buffalo, they follow the Bills. And in Albany, we follow... Well, we follow Siena, I'm a Siena fan, but we mostly follow politics. So every time the Governor says something, which he's speaking to a statewide [inaudible 00:41:49], we follow it. And you just hear some of his stuff and say, "Hey, this doesn't apply to me. This doesn't really help our district."

Assemblyman John McDonald:

On the other hand, we do get some things done, but they're not sexy. They're not worthy of front-page or page three in the Times Union. They're just kind of like, "Well, that's your job, you're supposed to get it done." And that's part of the challenge with the whole process is that... And I could do a little bit of a forensic review and actually, my staff probably did it, I forgot to bring it tonight. Where's foundation aid and where's overall aid has been in the past eight, nine years ago, and where's it tonight? But to be honest with you, people don't really care what you did in the last five, six, seven years. They want to know what you're going to do with this budget season to get it done. And our job is to drive as much aid as we can equally and equitably to every district. The problem is that depending on the cause of the day, the Governor will start focusing on that. And it just turns people off sometimes, and it's not applicable to our region.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Here's a good example. He talked about increasing vaccination rates of a minority community in Queens that doesn't do us any good up here in East Greenbush. It just doesn't. And then you walk away again, you hear on the news, you're like, "Jesus, forget it." And that is how your image ends up being of the guy. I don't really dislike the guy. I don't really have a love for him. He's the Governor, he's elected by the people, and he's got to try to balance things out. Our job is to counterbalance it as best as possible.

Mr. Dun:

Well, thank you. That's what I wanted to hear. And I guess the takeaway from this if you can take something from me when you have the conversations, is on the local level, yes, we want to get through this pandemic and we will, we're restoring programs. And I do agree with the climb that you said, we put things back to where at least we were operating where we were nine years ago. But now this is going to set us back some more and then it's going to probably take us longer to recover.

Mr. Dunn:

So I guess the question or the statement I have for you is if you can reinforce the long-term effect of this along with the short term because what concerns me on a state level, when I hear things about taxing wealth. Taxing wealth is a temporary solution to a long-term problem. And the only thing that I see as an upstater and have some business interests, you're just driving... A lot of the wealth is just going to leave New York State with that type of rhetoric. It's one thing to have to do it, but to make it a platform, such a public platform, we're just driving new Yorkers out of this state at such a rate because of that perception. So again, thanks for your candid conversation. I always look forward to hearing from you.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Thanks, John. You raise a great point and I'm very careful about this Tax the Rich thing. It's true. If you're making half a million dollars a year, you could probably pay a little bit more and do your fair share. But the sad part is, and I noticed this with our new members in the Assembly. Now, for those who follow me on Facebook, we get the opportunity to get an Assembly license plate, which is helpful when you need to get someplace sometimes because if they see your plate, that gets you through. And I'm always running late, so it works out well. Anyways, and by the way, we pay \$190 every two years for that plate, so it's not given to us. Just being clear about that.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

But my plate number is now 65. It was 149 eight years ago. It's in seniority, that means 84 members have left out of 150 member body only in eight years. So we have a lot of new members, 20% of the new members this year, out of 150, 31 of them are new. The majority of them from New York City. The majority of them are extremely far left. I'm not knocking them, they just have a very far-left ideology. They make Bernie Sanders look like [inaudible 00:46:19], right? And that's fine. That's fine. That's their decision because they're elected from their people and that's why they're elected, but they actually scream at rich people like they fear for their life. And, listen, people are wealthy, that's fine. If money makes them happy, that's fine. I think wealth is measured more in your happiness and your heart than it is by what you have in your wallet.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

But the reality is, and I say this all the time, here's my point, 70% of our personal income tax, which is the largest part of our revenue here in the State of New York, the largest part... I'm talking about, our State operating budget is about \$100 billion for state ops, all right? And so we drive about 50 to \$60 billion a year from taxing 70% of the State, which lives in New York City. New York City. We can't afford to drive them out. We really can't. And we can talk for hours about the impact of COVID-19 on our youth, on our education system, on mental health in general. But the other thing that's happened is that COVID-19 has truly demonstrated things that people never thought could happen. Number one, you can visit your doctor or your nurse, by sitting in your bathrobe. They're telling us, "You can." Healthcare can be done virtually now. I don't know if it's a good idea all the time, but it can be done.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

But the other thing is the office environment, as we knew it, is no longer necessary that way. People have learned... And we meet with our economic advisors by ways and means... Which is the fiscal body of the Assembly, we meet every July, we meet every December. We met in December this year virtually. And we're talking about the leading economists in the country. And one of them is from Goldman Sachs, she said, "By the way, just so you know, we are moving the majority of our offices to Florida. We realized that our younger folks that are coming on that are not financial advisors, but they're technology advisors because it's all technology now. They want to live in Florida, they want to live in a warmer climate."

Assemblyman John McDonald:

So what's happening is people that we normally would be taxing, that are making 1 million, 2 million, \$3 million a year, are moving too. And then when you scare out the rich, the real rich, we got a problem on our hands. So we got to be very mindful of that. I was just talking before this to my colleague in Westchester, in the Assembly. And we were talking about our colleagues pushing this six package bill of Taxing the Rich. And he said, "They don't get it. There are people..." He lives in Westchester, very rich, he told me. He says, "I have constituents that count the days, how many days they're living in Florida versus here to make sure they have Florida residency, but they stay up here [inaudible 00:49:27]." So this is the game we're playing. And it's a very dangerous game because we need more people making a lot more money living in the city so we can tax them to help support our operations. People may not like to hear it, but it's the truth.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, John. Any other questions for him? Jeff, do you have anything?

Mr. Simons:

Just a thank you, John.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Yes, of course.

Mr. Simons:

And then, well, really just a question for maybe a future discussion. One of the things you know is that Assembly member McDonald has been very responsive with the school districts, so we meet with John maybe less this year because of the virtual limitations, but we meet with John regularly along with the superintendents. But he's always very responsive to our questions and our concerns. One of the things that John did for us last year, which was really appreciated, when we were inundated with executive orders and not sure how to interpret various things that were coming down on schools in the spring and into the summer, I reached out to John to ask for some questions and some clarifications. I particularly remember one where we weren't sure whether we had the authority to move the GCC Childcare Program back into the schools. And John was able to get me an answer within a day from the Governor's office. So, John, I appreciated that. It helped us to respond to the issues that we were experiencing and it brought parents relief that we could bring the Childcare Program back into the school where it had operated.

Mr. Simons:

And the other thing I'd leave you with is we may need some help from the legislature to help respond to our parents. Our parents right now, we're operating under a hybrid. Most districts in New York are operating some version of a hybrid, but with all the national conversation about getting kids back in school, we're going to make some changes tonight to bring kids in more in person at some grade levels. But the Department of Health guidelines that we're operating under now, don't enable our districts to have full person, five day a week in-person learning. And we're just hoping that the State, DOH, the governor's office, and the legislature will at least start beginning to have the conversation now about what September is going to look like. I know a lot of things are still uncertain but our parents are, in some cases, at their wit's end, despite the great job our teachers are doing. And we really need some information about what September might look like so that we can respond to the needs of the kids and the families.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

No, and you raise a good point, Jeff. It's interesting, kudos to whatever type of programs you've had that gives children the opportunity to be in school. I can tell you this candidly because I meet with my colleagues from Binghamton and Buffalo and Rochester, there are many districts and there are many school districts within their Assembly districts, the kids haven't been at school since March of last year. The Capital Region has done an extraordinary job of trying to do that. I know for those who aren't happy, it's hard to believe. But the truth is, they've done an extraordinary job. I know that in some of my readings, the CDC is going to be coming out with some enhanced guidance to shorten that distance of how much space you need between children in the schools. There's more and more evidence coming out about the infection transmission so that's important.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

It's been clearly, clearly stated just in the medical journals I read that it probably won't be until 2022 when children get vaccinated at this stage of the game. This is a disease that's really had more negative impacts on the adults so that's where the focus is. But I agree with you. I said earlier we had a seven-hour conference call about revenues and stuff. I had to jump off for two hours because myself and two other members had a meeting with the Governor and his staff on the nursing home issue which you may have heard about, and that was a lot of fun. But anyways, in the course of it, it got into discussions about loosening up our standards. And it seems like... And it's not political, it's just it seems that there seems to be a better cooperation going on between the CDC and the other 50 States. So things are starting to open up a little bit more, and I think people are starting to be open to more suggestions like you're mentioning, Jeff.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Now, the challenge is going to be we all want the kids in school, but they got to get there. And if you can't get bus drivers, you got a problem. And once again, we still have a lot of adults who are coming... I do COVID testing. So I test people every day and they're positive, still, to this day, which amazes me. And so we got to strike that balance. But I agree that September, I would like to think the doors will be wide open. I still think districts are going to probably have parents that are having some hesitancy, and they're going to have to try to keep that virtual option there. But I think the focus will be pushing on any child who wants in classroom education, should get it.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, John, I appreciate that stance. And thank you for being here.

Mr. Buono:

Yes. Thank you, John, and we appreciate your-

Assemblyman John McDonald:

My pleasure. Unless there's any other questions, I'm going to jump off to my next meeting that starts at eight.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. All right. We appreciate it.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Take care.

Assemblyman John McDonald:

Night.

Mr. Buono:

Night. All right. A lot of good information shared. And I think we've made our point on how we should proceed. And I thank you, Jeff, for mentioning the piece on getting kids back to school and helping our families. So that leads us right into the other parts of the board forum, the superintendent's report. What I'd like to do is have Jeff go through the items, A, B, and C with the team, and then we can open up to the Board comments at that time. So, Jeff?

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. Good evening, everyone. Again, to our Board and our members of the community who are participating through the live stream. We have been monitoring the current situation regarding the COVID-19 rate of infection within our region and our County specifically. We're very encouraged by what we are seeing in the pattern that is indicating that the number of cases within the community gone down dramatically since January. We know at previous meetings, we had talked about the fact that we would anticipate a post-holiday surge. The numbers were up in the mid 10%, seven day rolling average at one point. And as of today, they're at 2.6. So we're very encouraged by what's happening. And we had indicated to our community that we were continuously evaluating what we could do with a priority for our youngest children in our elementary grades. And we have heard from a number of families over the course of the last few weeks in anticipation of the district, hoping that the district would make a change of some kind to provide more in-person learning.

Mr. Simons:

We are ready to do that in somewhat of a staged way. We want to focus first on kindergarten. We did a capacity analysis more than a month ago to look at whether or not we could bring all of our kindergarten children in five days a week for in-person instruction. We would still maintain the full remote option for our kindergarten families. Prior to the holidays, we were proposing a model that would require in some instances, children to change classroom teachers and teachers to change grade

levels. We have developed a different idea, which we think is better for the students, for our staff, and for our families. And that model, which I will describe, would not require any students to be reassigned to a different teacher. It would not require any teachers to be reassigned a grade level. It would require the district to allocate teaching assistants to each kindergarten grade level in each building.58 ;44

Mr. Simons:

And we will be utilizing some of our existing teaching assistants but we need to hire two additional teaching assistants. Those teaching assistants will be assigned to the kindergarten team. And by bringing in more students every day, the teaching assistant and the teacher would work together collaboratively to ensure that those kids are grouped in separate classroom spaces so that we are still maintaining the six-foot social distancing. So we will not have as a result of this proposal, any more kids in any one room or any additional encroachment on the social distancing requirements and the procedures that are in place right now. The principals have worked with Mr. McHugh to identify classroom spaces that are available and suitable for this model. The principals have been working diligently to inform staff that in some cases, particularly at Genet and at Bell Top but also other schools that certain spaces within the building are larger and lend themselves better to the model that we are proposing.

Mr. Simons:

And so there'll be some small numbers of shifting of rooms, but not an overwhelming number of rooms. There's just a few but no teacher changing their assignment of kids, no teacher changing their grade level, no parent disappointed that their child in March has to move to a different teacher. They will simply be physically moving the classroom spaces. And I think in a few instances to locations that have already been identified and those moves are already been planned and they could occur over the February break. Ms. Cannon's office has already advertised for the two additional teaching positions. Each of those two positions would be at Bell Top because that's where the need is. And there is a part-time teaching assistant currently working at Genet who would be working as a substitute in the afternoon to support the kindergarten program.

Mr. Simons:

We are leaving it to the discretion of the teachers and the teaching assistants to work out the instructional groupings, the methodologies of instruction. We'll be meeting with the teachers tomorrow. The teachers do have technology in the event that they determined that they want to simultaneously teach the students that are with the TA and the students that are in the class. That may be used in some cases, for example, for a large group, when a topic or activity is being introduced to all of the students. And it also would enable our teaching assistants and teachers to focus on the kids in small groups to provide differentiated support based on students' needs.

Mr. Simons:

So we feel very good about this because it is not going to disrupt any students by reassigning them. It is not going to in any way, press us, in terms of the six-foot social distancing. We had felt that we could do it after the February break. We need to go through the hiring process of the teaching assistants. And we would like to begin this if the Board supports this. Again, this is five days in-person instruction for any kindergartners currently in the hybrid or any that come back. But we think we can start this on March 1st. We're ready to go. So I'd like to take some comments and some questions about the kindergarten, then we'll talk a little bit about the first graders through the fifth graders.

Mr. Buono:

Great. Thank you, Jeff. Questions from Board members? I'm seeing some happy faces. Okay. So no questions. I certainly support you to lean forward with this direction, thinking of the timetable, and appreciate the work that's going into that. And the ongoing work to hire, to talk to our staff, and to work with our party leaders to make this happen. We really appreciate it and our families will appreciate it, so thank you. One thing I would like to say too, there may be questions that come about the process so the committee members who are listening and those who have questions, let's let the process work out. I think that the best communication would be through the principal as this evolves. If you have any follow-up questions, rather than... I know the announcement just came today, I mean, there's a public forum, your welcome to comment, but for specific questions, let's make sure we direct them to your building principal, okay? That's it.

Mr. Simons:

Yeah, that sounds great. Thank you, Mr. Buono.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Mr. Simons:

One thing I wanted to do is just ask before we shift topics, Mr. McHugh if you have anything you want to add? Mr. McHugh has been working with the principals more directly than myself on this. So, Jim, I don't know if you have anything you'd want to add.

Mr. McHugh:

The thing I would add is in some cases because of the student enrollment for all of our students coming back in with their teacher, it was really important that we maintain that consistency. We're entering the third and final trimester of the school year on March eight, so we didn't want them to have to rebalance and re-shift students. The only thing that will also be impacted... There are some instances where the special area, art or music, may need to go to the classroom rather than the students going to the traditional art room or music room. And that's a requirement for that social distancing. So that's the only additional change that needs to be implemented.

Mr. Buono:

Yeah. And I think it's going to take some... I think the timing will work well because we're coming into the break next week. Our families can prepare their kindergartners for that transition. You're going from a two day a week to a five day a week, cut them off virtual for those who choose to come in five days. And I think that part of that responsibility will be to prepare our families and your children to make that adjustment because it's been a long time since they've been in full-time, so.

Mr. Simons:

I'm meeting with the teachers tomorrow.

Mr. Buono:

Yep.

Mr. Simons:

Each of the kindergarten teachers. Principals, I have already spoken to them on an ongoing basis. The other thing I would just mention is because we have a GCC program on Wednesdays and we still need that [inaudible 01:05:24] has planned for kindergartners under supervision of the monitors and teaching assistants, I think in one or two cases, that our kindergartners will be delivered lunch, will be eating lunch in the classrooms so that the cafeteria space can still be utilized by the GCC. And he's worked all of that out.

Mr. Buono:

Right. Excellent. And I want to thank our administrators for all the work and thought that went into this, Jim, the team, Jeff, to make this a reality for our families.

Mr. Simons:

On the topic of first graders through fifth graders, just to revisit some-

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [01:06:04]

Mr. Simons:

Graders to fifth graders, just to revisit some information that we shared in the past. We have to be mindful of the New York State Department Of Health guidelines and as schools across the country are talking about opening up, like elected officials are talking about opening up, we heard tonight from Assemblyman McDonald that the CDC is considering different information. It's really important for our families to understand and we really want the kids back full time, but we are not permitted by the social distancing guidelines to bring them all in, in every grade level because of the limitations of the rules and also our classroom space. We can do it in Kindergarten, but we can't yet do it in first grade through fifth grade. However, we have talked about eliminating virtual Wednesdays, and we need a little bit more time to talk with our teachers, our teacher's union, about how that will occur, but it is our intent to do what we can to have our first graders and our fifth graders coming in for a third day of in-person instruction on Wednesday every other week.

Mr. Simons:

One of the things we want our parents to be aware of, is when we make that shift it's three days of in-person instruction. Week one, for example, to be followed by week two, in which the other group is coming in on that Wednesday. So, it does result in an additional remote asynchronous day for their children every other week. So you pick up an additional in-person day, but you also have an additional asynchronous day, the following week.

Mr. Simons:

So, we have a survey ready to go on this issue of eliminating virtual Wednesdays and how that might impact our families. We're going to send that out tomorrow, along with the Kindergarten notification. Once we get that survey back, we'll be talking with our teacher's union next week. Our teachers' union has agreed to come in over the break and talk with us about virtual Wednesdays and other matters that will happen early in the week next week. We're aiming to try to do this on a timeline that meets everyone's considerations, but we are working on that and we'll hope to be able to accomplish that sometime soon after the Kindergarten's. It won't be the same week because there's more statistical imbalance.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. Any questions for Jeff on that idea?. I think it's a right path for it again, and I appreciate the work that's going into that as we try to provide more in-person instruction. Is there any of the elementary principals who would like to comment on this and see if you have your own? You're Speechless, okay. Let me... we did meet with the administrators this morning just to touch base on any principal is free to speak up. So we did have a really great conversation this morning about this all, if anybody has anything they want to add, feel free to do so.

Mr. Grignon:

Hi, Jeff. This is why you're done, just wanted to say that, from our conversations with our teams, I know that the generic kindergarten teams excited about the opportunity of having their kids back five days a week, there will be the growing pains of making sure that we have everything ready to go, but we've got the time if the board supports it to get everything in place. So that way we can make sure that it's a seamless transition for our teams and more importantly for their kids as well.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, Wayne. All right, if there's no other comments from [inaudible 01:10:13] having principals where members were supportive of that. Questions a hundred percent.

Ms. Skumurski:

No, we're, I think we're all very supportive of that and we appreciate all the hard work that the teams put in and the dedications with the faculty and the staff in the schools, and I'm going to put in the cart in front of the horse, but I'd like to see if we can eventually go with the middle schools too... we got to keep them all equal there. So the big... [crosstalk 01:10:40]

Mr. Simons:

The conversation about the middle school today, but it was only a small conversation and you still have to have further discussion on it.

Ms. Skumurski:

I know we have to take little steps before we start running, but I really am excited. So thank you, it's a big step.

Mr. Buono:

Yep. And we know that as Jeff mentioned earlier, that there is always more guidance coming in from the federal level, from the CDC about schools reopening, and maybe we can see some of them might be in the tunnel to see that those documents come out in our, hopefully our State follow suit. Any other questions for on those two topics? Comments? All right.

Mr. Buono:

So path forward has been set. So appreciate the Board's support, thank you. The next topic is regarding instructional extracurricular of all things. I think one of the things that we just wanted to highlight is the fact that throughout the school year, we have tried to provide our students, whether it's virtually or somewhat in person opportunities to do other things outside of that school day that they can do. So we have a presentation, Jeff, and a slide...

Mr. Simons:

Just brief, Mr. McHugh put together some information just to highlight we're offering currently. Even though we're operating in a hybrid. So it has to be good. You want to just do a brief overview of this?

Mr. McHugh:

Sure. Recently, everyone is aware that winter sports, the higher risks sports were approved to begin February 3rd, 2021 through March 13. But in addition to the winter sports, we successfully ran a full sports season, cross country, field hockey, golf, boys soccer, girls soccer, girls tennis, bowling, the end December, 14th. In addition to those opportunities in athletics, in the area of the arts.

Mr. Simons:

Let me just interrupt you for just a minute. I'm sorry, Peter we're on 5e. We're not on the wrestling slide yet, we're on 5e.

Mr. Goodwin:

My apologies.

Mr. Simons:

Okay. Sorry everybody we haven't been following along, watch it with you. Thank you, sorry Jim.

Mr. McHugh:

Okay, slide two. In addition to athletics in the area of arts, I think it's important to recognize that even during this challenging year, we have run studio art, advanced art, computer graphics, drawing, painting, ceramics and sculpture, cartooning and we granted a new course that we worked on over two years for introduction to video game development, we're still running our course instrumental music, jazz band, wind ensemble, orchestra, chamber singers, guitar, music theory, and our spring concerts are being planned. And our Columbia players are also planning for their spring performance.

Mr. McHugh:

In the area of clubs, there's numerous clubs, but we have run all the clubs that we would run in a non-COVID year for the most part. Amnesty International Art club, Computer Club, our yearbook driver's education is occurring, Ethnic Coalition, FBLA, Gay Straight Alliance, German Club, National Honor Society, Interact Key Club Mastermind, Science Olympiad, Garden Club, PE Recreation, our student newspapers, SEAD Students for Environmental Action Defenders of The Mother Earth, Enrichment Club, Guitar Club, My Trial team, Model Congress, Peer Leadership, Student Council, Labyrinth Editorial, Financial Leadership Today Leading Tomorrow, TV Multimedia Club has been running, Coding Clubs in our building, drama clubs and Morning Scholar Club.

Mr. McHugh:

In addition to that in the area of academic support, I think it is very important to note that we have run our academic intervention services K through 12, we have done tremendous planning, even thinking about when we return to a normal school year, what we may be looking at in regards to trying to best support students that may have some academic loss and our learning resource center, Columbia High School is still running. Our teachers are running office hours. We have initiated operation launchpad at

Columbia High School where our students are coming in on a live virtual Wednesday. They're coming in and working on almost an individual basis with teaching assistants to get caught up on work.

Mr. McHugh:

We're offering all of our counseling services and social work services. Operation Graduation is running jumpstart, our Columbia Alternate Program, CTAEP, our Middle School Alternate Program, we have a [inaudible 01:15:42] County mental health counselor, our special education students, full day special classes, integrated co-teaching or coming to school for in-person instruction four days per week. We have tutoring services K through 12 that we have implemented to best support students that are struggling in this current hybrid model. And our English language learners were offered four days of in-person learning per week. And we have active child study team meetings and all seven of our schools where we are looking at students on an individual basis and using every possible resource. We have to try and support those students during this time. So I think it's important to note that even within a challenging year, that all of these things are up and running and they're here for our students.

Mr. Buono:

I remember I saw the recent story about several students who graduated early, it was great to see too. Thank you Jim any questions or comments on the program offerings?

Mr. Dunn:

I want to comment.

Mr. Buono:

Okay John.

Mr. Dunn:

Again, Jim and Jeff and your team, thank you for bringing that to the public eye. One of the things that's captivating, a lot of news is a reinstatement of the sports programs. And it's good to hear that we're continuing our commitment of equity for all students that we're offering so much more on these very difficult times. I look at what we're doing in a training model would be crawl, walk, and run, and we've crawled for quite a while we've accomplished a lot and we're getting ready to walk. So let's keep the focus on where it is and we'll forward at a nice pace with the goal of being able to hit the ground running in the fall. So thank you for your team's commitment to continuing to vital programs for all students.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, John. Anyone else? Okay. Moving to item C updates on the TD payments and the budget development process, is that Jim, Linda?

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. I just wanted to give the Board a quick update. In addition to Assemblyman McDonald's information tonight on February 4th, I attended a business officials meeting through Questar and the Executive director of the New York State Association of School Business officials joined us Brian check, Mic check Nicki and he did indicate to us that the 20% withholding that has occurred will be restored to us prior to March 31st. We don't have an exact date yet, but we will be receiving that for this district

that, amounts to \$316,469. That was an excess cost, a receivable and oppose gait receivable that we had on June 30th. We did recently receive a small amount from New York State reimbursement for our lunch fund for the May 20th, meals of \$84, but every dollar counts. And we currently have outstanding grant balances that we are waiting on. These are for grants that ended August 31st, of 2020 and that account that amount of two \$91,315. So money we'll be starting to trickle in.

Ms. Wager:

We did receive an update on our TRS rate for the 2021/22 school year. We previously received a projection of 9.3%, and that has been increased to 9.8%. I wanted to make the Board aware again, that phase one of our Capital Project is complete, and we have not been able to file all of the final cost reports yet due to a dispute with one of the contractors. So I applied for early aid and that was approved and so that will start the aid flowing this year. And then finally the asset financial transparency report was filed in December that is taking our actual expenses from 1920 and allocating them by building to a per student allocation. So that has been filed. We have since received some questions on that and provided answers. So that's in the works as well. It's all I have to say.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you Linda, any questions for Linda on the financial update? Okay. We will now move to the Board members any general comments. I'll just kind of go with the screen in front of me, starting in line. You're aware I see, Michelle, anything good? John? No? Kathleen?

Ms. Curtin:

As I mentioned to Assemblyman McDonald , I did do that NYSSBA conference the other day. And whereas at the state level, it honestly sounded like the Assembly and the Senate were very much in line with the concerns that we have, the fact that a lot of the aid coming in is federal aid. And they kind of see a cliff happening after this year because the money that we're using won't be there in the following year. So that is definitely a big concern. The other thing that they, when a representative from the governor's office spoke, he just kept saying any advocacy efforts should all be focused at the federal level.

Ms. Curtin:

So they were really pushing it. Don't ask us, ask the other guys. So they are, as far as the money goes, that's really where they're trying to push all of us to, start asking for money at federals. They had a couple other concerns that I will bring to the advocacy committee, and we'll actually speak with Jeff so that we can, cause I know we had some talk about possibly organizing some advocacy efforts and we had some parents so far will indicate it's an interest, so I will be speaking with Jeff and, helping kind of organize that with a little bit of the information that I have, but I would encourage other Board members to go to the news website, the presentation they did on the governor, the budget is excellent. It's very well put together and very easy to understand and it shows exactly where there's some areas of concern. And like I said, the Assembly and the Senate seem to be pretty good with all that though.

Mr. Buono:

Great, thank you for the work in participating in giving us the update Kathleen I appreciate it. Mark you're good? Joann Taylor and Jennifer?

Ms. Massey:

Thanks Kathleen and I was able to join a portion on it the other day and I just want to say, I can also send the link to some of them this year as well. Some of the reporting, great information if anyone on the Board is interested in that as well and it's great information and I would agree with Kathleen's assessment and definitely being pushed in that direction on federal advocacy versus State. So I think this year is going to be a tough one, but I do encourage our community very much to get out and still continue to advocate at the state level and I'm excited to see what comes out of the advocacy committee and what Kathleen brings forward there. So whatever I can do, obviously I'm behind that 150% to see if we can get special needed funding. So, that's it.

Mr. Buono:

Great. Thank you, Jennifer, good okay. Frank? All right. Okay, that concludes the Board performance report. We'll now move to our public forum., Residents, students, employees, and business representatives of East Greenbush Central School District may address the Board on matters concerning the programs and or operations of the district. Other than matter, involving personnel members of the board do not directly respond to citizens concerns during the public forum. If a response is appropriate, the president or superintendent will contact [inaudible 01:24:41]. Those persons which will address the board will be recognized with the chair of the meeting and should state for the record, their name, address, affiliation in the district or business.

Mr. Buono:

While the board does not wish to infringe on free speech protections, it must be stressed that the visitor's forum is not going to be open for the board. The vice-president will conduct the forum of the word efficient operation of board business. In addition, any remarks would be considered a mandatory or stigmatized or prohibited will cleared out aboard. As we have been doing through our virtual meeting process, we do have a link to email that's on the website, public comment.

Speaker 7:

I think it's changed.

Mr. Buono:

It's changed, it's on the website as a public line?

Speaker 7:

Yes.

Mr. Buono:

And I apologize if there was some... It was not available last meeting and if you do send email to the Board, please state your name, your connection to the District where you reside and the concern, I think, do we have any emails to read?

Ms. Wager:

We do.

Mr. Buono:

We do? How many do we have?

Ms. Wager:

We have two.

Mr. Buono:

We have two, so Linda will read those.

Ms. Wager:

Okay, I just wanted to clarify the link is boe.comment@egcsd.org.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Ms. Wager:

The first is a letter that we received. I was asked to read during public forum. It is from Susan Alviene, who is an East Greenbush resident and a consultant on social, emotional learning and trauma informed teaching practices. Now more than ever, we need to consider the social and emotional needs of all stakeholders invested in educating our students during this worldwide pandemic. In an opinion piece by Ed Surge entitled schools will never return to business as usual. Here's how they can make the most of our reality futurist Andrea severity States that uncertain conditions, demand creativity and innovation and emotional should be considered a necessary skill to manage the overwhelming feelings of grief, despair, and anxiety. This pandemic has triggered. In response to how COVID altered the way we now instruct our students, teachers and schools have built new capacities for reaching students. Our teachers have done an incredible job and their emotional needs must not be overlooked as we ask them to manage this new plan and what that will require of them.

Ms. Wager:

Specifically as the East Greenbush school board considers its modifications to school reopening plans at the K5 level, I encourage you to carefully consider the impact. This change will have on all staff in the district prior to coming to any decisions. The school board district administrators, principals, and teaching staff have faced great challenges in meeting the educational needs of our districts, students and these challenges still exist considerations for the reconfiguration of space for distancing in classrooms, cafeterias, playgrounds, and gyms should be determined prior to bringing all students fully back at any grade level because space issues are a real concern. The psychological needs of staff, as they continue to work diligently to maintain safety while also addressing the needs of students can be an overwhelming burden at times, not to mention the in-house healthcare requirements for adequate nursing staff to respond to the increased demands on our school health care personnel as well.

Ms. Wager:

The collaborative for academic social and emotional learning known as CASEL is a national leader in social and learning, social, emotional learning, SEL initiatives. Among its many resources I ask the school board to review the document reunite, renew, and thrive SEL roadmap for returning to school. This CASEL document has developed a matrix for ranking priorities and critical action steps when planning toward returning to school using data and SEL considerations at the forefront of the decision-making process. CASEL's SEL trends also have, has shared lessons from the field that includes how many districts have stated that they mistakenly focused entirely on building the social and emotional competencies of

students without also considering the SEL needs of adults who are engaging with students every day. We all want to go back to normal, but as we consider what the new normal will be, please don't take your eyes off our critical first line of educators who have held up courageously. They need your support to continue to work tirelessly for our district. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you Linda [inaudible 01:29:49] a little bit. So I appreciate the comment and as always, we do as a district care and want to make sure that those needs are met for our staff and we think about that every day, as well as our field. So we appreciate it.

Ms. Wager:

And then I have one other email from Rawan Ali and this is to the Board members and she would like to know why did you decided to be on this organization's board?

Mr. Buono:

Okay. So, that's not really something that I think we have time to answer. It sounds like one of the questions we get from participation students. But if you want to send that to me, I'd be glad to respond in writing to the question. How's that? All right, no more comments. All right. That concludes our public forum. We now go to our discussion item 7a, which has to do some updates on our [inaudible 01:30:54] athletics and then scheduling of COVID testing plan and [inaudible 01:31:00] or

Mr. Simons:

Yes. The Board was supportive at the special meeting last week, approving our winter sports categorized as higher risk sports. We did say at the time we would like to have further discussion of ways that we could perhaps engage our students who are participating in wrestling, but we have not yet approved wrestling as the winter offering. We ask the coach to serve it down, to submit some ideas regarding how the wrestling program of some sort could operate within our school. He did that Mr. McHugh and Mr. Leonard reviewed that and have some information that they will share with the board tonight. We do have a number of schools in a suburban council that are moving forward with the wrestling we can talk about that after Mr. McHugh and Mr. Leonard present their information. But we've got about 50 kids who start the wrestle and we're looking to see whether or not everyone's comfort level is such that we could at least begin some no contact drills. I'm sorry, Mr. McHugh and Mr. Leonard understands that better than me. So I'm going to turn it over to Mr. McHugh.

Mr. McHugh:

Wrestling has been approved by section two, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association, Rensselaer County, it's been approved as a winter high-risk sport that was allowed to begin February 3rd. It's a very short season begins March 13th. School districts throughout New York State section two, and within our suburban council have responded to that allowance a little differently. What has happened recently, the section two executive committee was discussing whether or not to allow wrestling to occur during this winter season or push it into the spring. So a few of the districts in the suburban council were waiting to see what the result of that decision was executive council section to executive council, determined that it was not going to be moved at the spring that it was going to occur during the winter. As a result of that, the following suburban council schools are wrestling this winter, Averill Park, Forest Hills, Guilderland, Saratoga, Shaker [inaudible 01:33:35]

Mr. McHugh:

And my recommendation at this point, especially in light, that it is a shortened season is to approve the wrestling program to begin non-contact conditioning girls at this time. We have about 40 to 50 students participate in wrestling every year. We have seven seniors currently that have invested at least six to seven years in the sport of wrestling and this is their senior year, something that they looked forward to. In addition to that, the mentorship that our coaches provide to our student athletes is definitely a perk. I know coach Servidone requires his athletes to produce a weekly academic report and he monitors their attendance. So, that ability to connect with the student athletes this year is going to produce some dividends. I am a little fearful of that without that contact this year. Some of those athletes that miss a full year of the sport may not return to that sport.

Mr. McHugh:

I know that is a tough thing to discuss, and I respond to emails daily. I know Mr. Simons does as well and so this, Mr. Buono that it's almost geological that we're not allowed to bring our students back in without that social distancing requirements, but we are running athletic sports. We don't make the rules, we plan on a regular daily basis, we are prepared when those regulations and requirements are lifted or at least loosened up a little bit, we're ready to go. This is an opportunity for our students and as illogical as it may seem to somebody looking in, we want to make sure that we're taking advantage of every opportunity. So with the school board being scheduled for February 24th, I was endorsing wrestling to be approved for practicing and having non non-contact conditioning types of activities. We can monitor that and Mr. Leonard can monitor that and we can revisit it again on February 24th to see if we want to continue along that line, or maybe open things up even further at that time.

Mr. Buono:

So if the question, if we have the, if this moves forward, based on the board's input, will the student athletes have enough practice days to participate if we go forward on the 24th.

Mr. McHugh:

So that's a great question. New York State Public High School Athletic Association rule is 10 practices. So for all of our sports that began this week have that 10 practices before they're able to compete regardless. So, these practices would count towards the bad practices, but that's a great question.

Mr. Buono:

So I welcome input from the board and the recommendation from Mr. McHugh and Mr. Leonard and coach is to begin with the what's described as a non-contact conditioning full on in this time. So feedback from board members, any questions? I guess I would support this I think it would be a way for the wrestling athletes to start process of conditioning, which a very physical activity obviously and I think that if the board members support it, we can move the resolution to approve the coaching and or the wrestling first, we can do the resolution and then we can move the approval of the coaches to the consent agenda under the personnel items if that's acceptable, but I want to hear from the Board members, if that plan would be appropriate at seat, John comes up, anybody else?

Mr. Buono:

I see it's a positive result, anybody have concerns they want to express? I think that based on our experience now and the assurances we have monitoring and Mr. Leonard and coach's, we will move forward. So I'll in a motion to approve the resolution, to move forward with a non-contact conditioning.

Kathleen, I need a second, John, those in favor. All right, very good. And we will move the resolution for the coaching appointments to the personnel section. Now Jeanie can you just note that? All right, so we get to the consent agenda we'll act on that item and the next item was the testing program.

Mr. Simons:

We've been working over the course of the last couple of weeks to see if it was feasible to operate a testing program, COVID-19 testing program for our winter sport athletes. We have met with our nurses. We have discussed this with the coaches and we have a model that we think will work effectively, provide an additional layer of assurances to the district to the players and the coaches and the parents. The model that we're proposing is a little different than some other districts in our County and also.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:39:04]

Mr. Simons:

... some other districts in our county and also in the suburban council. In part because some of the county district's medical directors only approved winter sports if a testing program was in place. Our medical director did not indicate that he would require a testing program. We're doing this on our own initiative.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, some of the other counties have required testing. And in some cases, the districts are doing more larger scale surveillance testing because they're in [Albany 01:39:38] County and Albany County has provided more direct support to be able to do that. Our county hasn't provided that support.

Mr. Simons:

So we have a model that's based on consent of the parent and it is also ... those consent forms have gone out. And I'm going to turn it over to Molly McGrath , who I hope is here, because Molly has really worked with Mr. Leonard , and the nurses, and the testing teams along with Ms. Cannon and Mrs. Wager to put this in place. We think it's a very good model because it's flexible. We can respond to our team schedules and have the nurses to be able to do it. And I'm going to turn it over to Molly.

Ms. McGrath:

I'm here, Jeff.

Mr. Simons:

Okay, very good. You're on, Molly.

Ms. McGrath:

Okay, thank you. So as a team, we've worked very hard to prepare for the original COVID testing plan if we were to be designated a yellow zone and required to test 20% of our in-person students.

Ms. McGrath:

Since the governor switched his focus to hospitalization rates, that plan never came to fruition. So we were able to easily adapt our plans to use the COVID tests from Questar to implement a student athletic COVID testing program.

Ms. McGrath:

So currently we have eight teams operating with approximately 300 students. There's a chart attached that shows you the approximate number of students on each team. And we have four nurses and 25 support staff who are willing to participate in the COVID athletic testing program.

Ms. McGrath:

So we've adjusted the plans for the nurse to work with the head coach and coordinate weekly testing of our athletes around their practice schedule. So a nurse would be assigned to the team and work with the coach to pull students who have consented during their practice time to complete the rapid 15 minute test.

Ms. McGrath:

As Jeff mentioned, all student athletes received a consent form yesterday afternoon explaining the testing program, and we've asked that consent be returned back by tomorrow or Friday at the latest.

Ms. McGrath:

Once we have the number of students who have consented, we plan to start COVID testing next week over February break. So the tentative schedule would be on Wednesday, February 17th. We would test a percentage of the boys and girls in your track team that returned consent. Thursday, February 18th, we would test our cheerleading team. And Friday, February 19th, we would test the boys' and girls' basketball teams. So we're eager to see how many families return consent and we could start as early as next week if we have a good response rate.

Mr. Simons:

One of the reasons we set it up this way was because it's very uncertain what the game schedule is going to be, so we really didn't want to say we have a designated date and a time that brings everybody together because the game schedules are very fluid. Different districts were being given permission to participate at different times, were just starting to put together games for later this week and matching up the nurses with ... and the testing with the coaches. It gives us the flexibility to work around the closest practice times.

Mr. Simons:

Okay. So we want to just encourage as many families as possible to give us the consent to do it because it's just another layer of support to make sure that the students, not only those on the team, but those students within our schools are healthy and safe. The 15 minute time period allows us to isolate a student in the event that they are positive during practice, contact the family, and those students of course would be subject to the same quarantine requirements that everyone is, but we think this is a feasible way to go about it. It's once a week and hoping that as many students as possible, families will consent.

Mr. Buono:

Questions for Molly or Jeff regarding the testing, please?

Mr. Buono:

I had a question. So the plan is to do a percentage of the athletes on the team at any given day? Not everybody?

Mr. Simons:

No, it won't be everybody. It would only be those students whose family has consented.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Mr. Simons:

Once a week.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Ms. McGrath:

But if there's, say, 75 students on girls' track, we wouldn't be able to test them. If 50 return consent, we would probably take a portion of that 50, since practice only gives us a two hour window.

Mr. Buono:

Yep, yep. The other thing is, are the consents a condition of participation?

Mr. Simons:

No.

Mr. Buono:

We want to encourage more participant consent testing.

Mr. Simons:

We were advised we could do it either way. Initially we were advised that consent was required voluntary [inaudible 01:44:50].

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Mr. Simons:

After some other districts had checked, we could make it a condition to play but we chose not to do that.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. And are some schools going to make it a requirement to compete with them? Is that our understanding?

Mr. Simons:

Those schools whose medical directors or counties requiring it as a condition to approve the sport, it's mandatory for all of their student athletes.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Mr. Simons:

So there's a range of different things going on. For example, I believe Rensselaer City School District and Schodack's medical director had only approved their sports [inaudible 01:45:34] if there was a testing program. So in that case, all of the athletes have to be tested.

Mr. Simons:

Shenendehowa and some of the larger districts that we compete with, [inaudible 01:45:45] and [Bethlehem 01:45:45] County had already initiated surveillance testing-

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Mr. Simons:

... so their athletes are already included within a testing program that they have as I understand it. I don't believe that and I'm not certain that they're doing a separate student athlete program [crosstalk 01:46:03] they're just including their athletes into those programs.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. Very good. Okay.

Mr. Buono:

Anybody else? Questions? All right. [crosstalk 01:46:14] on Friday. [Kathleen 01:46:18]?

Ms. Curtin:

Mr. Simons, could you just ... I know you've sent something to us, but could you just say for the public, the schools that have started their testing program, what percentage of those tests are coming back positive?

Mr. Simons:

I had a meeting ... That's a great question. I had a meeting with the suburban council superintendents last Friday, and some of our districts reported their results of their surveillance testing. And those districts are as large as us or larger. It was zero in most cases. And in one district, it was one or two students. So ... and that was a sample of anywhere between 300 and 400 students being tested [inaudible 01:47:03] they were getting zeros.

Mr. Buono:

Excellent. Thanks for sharing that good question, Kathleen. Anyone else? All right. Thank you for putting the plan together and keep us posted on how things are progressing. Thank you, Molly.

Mr. Buono:

Moving on the agenda, we are now moving to committee reports. We'll start with Marissa.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. The committee on appendix D met on Tuesday, February 2nd. We continued our-

Mr. Buono:

Can you guys hear Marissa?

Ms. Cannon:

We continued our-

Mr. Buono:

There we go.

Ms. Cannon:

... discussions on potentially an hourly rate to fix the cost matrix with a tiered system. So what we did during this committee meeting was we had drafted two tiered systems as potential cost structures. Mrs. Taylor, Mr. McHugh, and myself prepared and chaired an appendix D tiered system on a scale of one to four. One being the highest level tier, four being the lowest. And we looked at each club and removed the human element and we really looked at the design of that club, the intent of the club, and a lot of the historical information.

Ms. Cannon:

Mr. Romanowski and Ms. Hosier designed a compensation tier with tier one equaling 1,000, tier two equaling 2,000, all the way up to tier five, 5,000. So they have looked at it a little bit differently and tiered the clubs based on compensation. So the committee agreed to look at both draft tier systems, and we looked at the top tier first to see what commonalities could we find.

Ms. Cannon:

So we had discussed student council in regards to how involved those groups are at various levels, Columbia High School, Goff Middle School, and at the elementary level. We looked at our Science Olympiad teams at Columbia High School and Goff Middle School and we feel that that club in particular would be at that top tier.

Ms. Cannon:

We had asked for a little bit more information on the Goff Science Olympiad team prior to our next meeting to gather more information, to see if both teams would be placed at that same top level.

Ms. Cannon:

We also discussed Yearbook Club. That is another club that's very time consuming. A lot of preparation goes into each year. And we discussed again, the hourly component. Some of our committee members feel like it would be hit or miss in terms of efficiency. Other individuals feel like there's just too much

unknown for an hourly rate. There's a suggestion that we tier each club with a set stipend, so we are open to that idea.

Ms. Cannon:

There's also some concerns about potentially monitoring the hourly component week-to-week. The music clubs we believe are a component to the appendix D system that we have to have a lot of further conversation with. We had thought potentially bringing in someone from the music department in a future meeting to talk to us about the intricacies of the music department. The tiered design system that was tied to compensation, it looks to be about \$42,000 of an increase.

Ms. Cannon:

That is not something that we're looking to do right now. We're looking to keep that compensation level to what's budgeted for. So at the end of the meeting, I had recommended we take another look at that tier compensation spreadsheet. It did look very similar to what the stipends are now and I think we have to look at those end of year reports to determine what the clubs are doing present day, to see where we can make changes to that compensation level.

Ms. Cannon:

So the committee did agree to look at the end of year reports dating back to the '17-'18 school year. At this time, the entire committee has those reports in electronic format and we met yesterday and we started to analyze those reports and start making some friends with the data.

Ms. Cannon:

So we are set to meet again the week following February recess. And I would just like to welcome Mrs. Taylor, Mr. McHugh, if you have anything to add.

Mr. Buono:

JoAnn?

Ms. Taylor:

I just want to say that I think, Marissa [inaudible 01:51:56] of the more you dig, the more questions we have. There is no easy fix to this, to look at it and say that this club only does this. When you dig deeper, we have to look at the clubs that are doing things off-campus, volunteering, raising money for other groups. There's just so many different little nuances that we need to look at. It is going to be a big work-in-process, but we are working through it. I think we've made a lot of progress at yesterday's meeting and we're looking back at historical data, which I think will help us to look past the pandemic years and see what we were doing pre-pandemic.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, JoAnn.

Ms. Taylor:

I'm encouraged, I think we've made good progress there.

Mr. Buono:

Excellent. Thanks. Thanks, JoAnn. Thanks for ... Any questions, board members, for Marissa? None to report? No? Good.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Marissa. We'll move to Linda.

Ms. Wager:

We had a health insurance committee meeting ... Can you hear me?

Mr. Simons:

Can't hear you.

Mr. Buono:

They can't.

Mr. Simons:

Okay.

Ms. Wager:

Okay. We had health insurance committee meeting on Monday, February 1st. All of the negotiating units are invited as representation and we thought it was ... A suggestion was made to us to review the Blue Shield PPO plan side by side with the upcoming Cashic PPO plan since there are several employment groups that will be moving to that on July 1st.

Ms. Wager:

So I invited Mr. Noth, Chris Noth, from AmsureAssociates, and he did a side by side comparison for us with that. He also talked about the drug plans and the reserves that we have on file with Cashic and how that can help us to balance out our premium increases for next year.

Ms. Wager:

And we also talked about the differences between the basic formulary prescription plan, which most employees have now and the AYSO custom formulary plan, which is the administrative services only custom formulary plan. And basically the basic plan was lacking in controls. And so that's why we're looking to move towards this AYSO custom formulary plan.

Ms. Wager:

And we just discussed our status and Cashic and we will have another meeting on Monday, April 26th.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Linda. Any questions for Linda? No? Very good, thank you Linda. Jim??

Mr. McHugh:

Yes, the committee for curriculum study met Wednesday, February 3rd. We met through Google Meet. 39 members were in attendance. At that meeting, our English language arts program review was

presented to our committee for curriculum study was endorsed by the committee and will be presented to the Board of Education on March 24th.

Mr. McHugh:

Our science program review was presented to CCS and endorsed. That also will come to the Board to be presented to you on March 24th.

Mr. McHugh:

Both program reviews were very impressive. There's quite a bit that has been accomplished and there's a solid focus on where we need to go moving forward. In addition, Howard L Goff Middle School, there was a presentation from their administrative team on a review of their CTE classes. They discussed what the New York State Education Department requirements are at the middle school level. They talk about some possible options, some minor changes, nothing that would have an additional cost associated to it. But we looked specifically at CTE, career and technical education, and we looked at integrating some digital literacy into the sixth grade technology curriculum.

Mr. McHugh:

We want to make sure that we don't lose all of the tremendous work that our CTE department in middle school has done over the last three summers. We wanted that coding element and the robotics element to remain within that technology course. So that will be presented to the board on March 10th.

Mr. McHugh:

Mrs. Barker if she is listening in and that's news to her, that she's presenting. And then the summer application for curriculum writing was sent out to all of our [inaudible 01:56:44] members. That's due back March 26, 2021.

Mr. McHugh:

And we talked about [inaudible 01:56:49], literacy department with East Greenbush Central School District. That collaborative effort, that first professional development session was run today from 9:00 AM until 12 noon. 32 over teachers participated and what was really impressive was all five of our elementary principals joined that professional development and I thought that sent out a tremendous positive statement.

Mr. McHugh:

Again, that was presented by Dr. [Donald Scanlon 01:57:18] from the University of Albany and Peggy Connors . The focus for today was developing the knowledge and expertise to address literacy learning, organizing instruction and responding to students' needs. And the focus is on early literacy within the primary grades.

Mr. McHugh:

In addition, Kate Banks shared the work that was completed by our school library specialist. She shared that link out to a website link that they created regarding school justice reform and global awareness. So that's a pretty impressive site, if folks get a chance to take a look at that. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, do you have any questions for Jim? Thank you for the ongoing work with the committee. Just to clarify, so middle school presentation, March 10th, science on March 24th and then ELA-

Mr. McHugh:
March 24th.

Mr. Buono:
... as well. [inaudible 01:58:15]. Mr. Simons?

Mr. Simons:
Just briefly in the interest of time, we did a school climate survey in the fall, late fall. We have a subcommittee of the safety committee that is currently looking at the survey results. We did have a very good response rate. Overall, there are general issues that we're looking at in terms of how people perceive our schools, do they feel welcome, do they feel safe, do they feel accepted. Areas looking at in terms of how students treat each other, how staff treats students, how everyone feels about climate and overall the indicators were very positive, but we're digging a little bit deeper into areas for recommendations for potential growth.

Mr. Simons:
Expect that we will take this up at the safety committee meeting and prepare a formal presentation for the Board and the committee on the results of the survey and then distribute those to the parents and staff

Mr. Buono:
So [inaudible 01:59:16] late March, early April?

Mr. Simons:
Probably early April.

Mr. Buono:
Early April.

Mr. Buono:
Any questions for Mr. Simons? We will move now to the approval of minutes for January 27th, all Board members who are present. Any comments or revisions to the minutes of January 27th? Say [inaudible 01:59:41] the motion to approve those.

Mr. Buono:
Frank, Second? Michelle all those in favor? Approved. A special meeting on February 2nd. Any questions, comments, revisions? No? Need the motion to approve those. Jennifer, second. Deanna, all those in favor. The minutes are approved.

Mr. Buono:

Moving to regular business, approval of programs for resident children with disabilities. Question or comment? Motion approved. Michelle, that's all right. Second, JoAnn, all those in favor? Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Moving into some more detailed resolutions regarding the [inaudible 02:00:23] operations and technical supervisor association. Approval of the contracts, any comments ... Jeff, want to-

Mr. Simons:

Just for public information. This is a small bargaining unit representing our employees who serve as supervisors and directors. For example, our director of facilities, our food service lunch manager, our transportation director, and our senior accountant, treasurer in the business office. .

Mr. Buono:

Any questions or comments on the resolution? Seeing none, I need a motion to approve that? John , second. Mark, all those in favor?

Mr. Buono:

I think you got to get your hand up, [inaudible 02:01:10], we can't tell. That's [inaudible 02:01:10]. Approved. Very good. Confidential employees, memorandum of understanding. Any questions [inaudible 02:01:15].

Mr. Simons:

No, this is an agreement with our confidential secretaries for three years that outlines their compensation and health benefits and some other changes we previously recommended for-

Mr. Buono:

Very good.

Mr. Simons:

... four years, excuse me.

Mr. Buono:

Four years?

Mr. Simons:

Four years.

Mr. Buono:

Four years. Very good. Any questions or comments on that agreement? No? The motion to approve that. Frank, second. Kathleen, all those in favor? Approved.

Mr. Buono:

So we do have the two resolutions regarding the emergency project at the transportation center. The first one is the emergency project resolution for the State Environmental Quality Review Act, SEQRA. Did I say that right?

Mr. Simons:

Yes.

Mr. Buono:

SEQRA? Any questions or things you want to notify us about that, Linda? Anything relate to that?

Ms. Wager:

Yes, so both of these resolutions have to do with our emergency project at the transportation center.

Mr. Buono:

Yep, yep.

Ms. Wager:

As you know, the tanks failed inspections recently and need to be replaced. So the first resolution has to do with the state environmental ... I'm sorry, I just went to the wrong one ... the State Environmental Quality Review Act and our March associates, our architect, determined this to be a type two action, which is the effect on the environment and it did not raise to a higher level because we are not building construction. So we will have some soil remediation associated with this.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Ms. Wager:

That's the first resolution. The next resolution has to do with an ordinary contingent expense resolution. And basically our architects have put together a budget for the removal and replacement of these tanks. They estimate the cost of this project to be \$629,044 and we'll need board approval in order to move forward with that.

Mr. Buono:

Are there any questions on either of the resolutions regarding the emergency project? I'd like to do that as a ... two items by consent, if that's permitted.

Ms. Wager:

Two separate items.

Mr. Buono:

They'd have to be two separate items, two separate votes. Okay. The first one is on SEQRA.

Ms. Wager:

SEQRA.

Mr. Buono:

SEQRA. Need a motion to approve that. Kathleen ... I'm sorry, Michele, JoAnn, all those in favor. Sorry. They're getting smaller and smaller on that screen. All those approved. Yes. No one opposed? Good.

Mr. Buono:

A little tired ... bear with me. The next one is the emergency project resolution that Linda just indicated. Any questions or comments? I need a motion to approve that. Jennifer second, Kathleen, all those in favor? Any opposed? None? Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Reports and presentations, the superintendent of schools?

Mr. Simons:

Nothing further.

Mr. Buono:

Nothing further. I have no table motions. All business board members, anything that we missed from last meeting? No? Good. All right. We'll get into the consent agenda. We have items A through G. Any comments or questions regarding those items? Anything, Jeff, you want to add? And again, this would include, just to note, this would include the coaches for the wrestling appointments that were earlier on the agenda.

Ms. Taylor:

Mike , I'd just like to offer my congratulations to Mrs. Anderson-Greene, Mr. Kelvin and Mrs. Kirwin on their impending retirement. A lot of years when you total up the number of years I've been with the district, and I wish them well in their retirement. Best wishes for a happy retirement.

Mr. Buono:

Yep. On behalf of the board, we send our congratulations. Thanks, JoAnn, for mentioning them.

Mr. Buono:

Any other questions on the consent agenda items? Hearing none, I need a motion to approve the consent items A through G. Kathleen second. JoAnn, all those in favor? Approved. We're good.

Mr. Buono:

Moving on, any new business board members? No? All right. We'll move to the second public forum. Linda, do we have any-

Ms. Wager:

No public comments.

Mr. Buono:

No public comments. Second board forum. I'll start here in the building. Frank, anything? Good? Let's see, Kathleen? All good. Jennifer?

Ms. Massey:

I just wanted to say thank you to everyone working in the district for keeping things moving forward, all the hard work and commitment, everything that is happening to support our students and our families and parents in the community. And again, I know a lot of hours, a lot of commitment is happening right now and it's very much appreciated and recognized. So looking forward to, and I love John's analogy of crawl, walk and run and hopefully we'll be walking and hopefully running come fall or at least maybe later on this year. So thanks again to everybody for their hard commitment and tremendous amount of work.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Jennifer, very nicely said. John, you good? Michele? Mark? Okay. JoAnn? Good. And Deanna? Good.

Mr. Buono:

I think the ... just final comments, some of ... I have is that, like Jennifer said, the district has been through a long process for this school year in the hybrid model and our parents and families and kids have been extremely patient, worked with us through all the ups and downs and we're getting to a point where things are improving. We see ... I don't know if that ... I don't think that was me, but the technical ... You guys hear that? Sorry, I apologize for whatever that was, a little feedback issue there.

Mr. Buono:

As I said, I think everyone's been patient. Things look like they're improving for us in terms of the COVID positivity. Things are opening up. We can see from the governor's messages. So the arts, so the sports, and now it's time for us to do our part, to help our committee and try to do the best we can to get our kids back to school. Watching everything, being safe, being safe with our staff and knowing that the best place for our kids is in their schools and we'll get there.

Mr. Buono:

Please bear with us. We know how important it is for our families and we're working hard. The district administrators, the principals, everyone, the teachers, everyone behind the scenes is working hard to keep everyone safe and to make sure that we can come back in the right way and a safe way.

Mr. Buono:

I will always support, as much as we can, to get our kids back to school. So that being said, we do have need for an executive session for the purpose of contract grievance hearing process. And what we'll do is we'll ... either we'll send out the separate email for the executive session and do we know who else has to get that ?

Mr. McHugh:

Peter knows that.

Mr. Buono:

Peter has the list of folks. All right. So those members of the committee and the administration who're here, thank you very much for participation. I need a motion to go into executive session. Jennifer,

second, Mark, all those in favor? Approved. So thank you very much, have a great evening, and we'll see you all in about five minutes.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [02:09:47]