

**Board of Education Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2021**

Mr. Buono:

All Board members present, either virtually or in person. So, I call the East Greenbush Central School District Board of Education meeting to order, 7:00 PM. Board members present live, which is John, Mark, Frank, Deanna, and myself. Virtually, we have Ms. Massey, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Curtin & Ms. Skumurski and several of the district Administrators. Welcome to our meeting tonight. With that, please rise and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Group:

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, everyone. As we do in the beginning of our meetings, we have student council to get us up to speed on what they're doing. Hey, Ryan and Katie. I saw the school, lobby looks good. All dressed in green, I'm sure you'll talk about that, so I will turn it over to Katie or Ryan.

Katie Asenbauer:

Hi. We just have two quick updates. Our first thing is our hot cocoa sales. So far on just Monday and Tuesday we've raised a little bit over \$200 for the Make-A-Wish foundation. So hopefully we double that by the end of Friday. And hopefully if it goes well, we'll either continue it or we're going to start looking into different events in the next coming month. And I'll hand it off to Ryan to talk about our decorations.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, Katie.

Ryan Seely:

Today after school we decorated the lobby and that is all I have for you tonight.

Mr. Buono:

We're just working on some volume quickly here so we can hear you. Were you all done, Ryan? I wasn't sure.

Ryan Seely:

Oh, yeah. Sorry about that.

Mr. Buono:

Okay, sorry. Yeah. We're working on the volume. Like I said, so we couldn't tell when you signed off. We're good on decorations and the lobby looks good. Painting the town green. Love it. All right. Any other things from student council? All right, we'll move onto the next section then. And we'll go to our public forum. As indicated in previous board meetings, while we're virtual, email is set up to for the public to communicate. Residents, students, employees, and business representatives of the East Greenbush Central School District may address the Board on matters concerning programs and or

operations of the District, other than matters involving personnel. Members of the Board do not directly respond to citizen concerns during the public forum. If a response is appropriate, either the Board President or Superintendent will contact the individual in the future. Those persons wishing to address the Board will be recognized by the chair of the meeting and should state for the record their name and address or affiliation with the district or business.

Mr. Buono:

So in those emails, please include that information. While the Board does not wish to infringe upon the free speech protections, it must be stressed that the visitor's forum is not deemed to be an open forum. The Board president will conduct the forum for the orderly and efficient operation of Board business. In addition, any remarks which would be considered defamatory or stigmatizing are prohibited, and will be declared out of order. So typically, Ms. Wager, our reader, will...

Ms. Wager:

There are no public comments at this time.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. Just so folks know, that are listening, we do have a second public forum. I do want to acknowledge that we have received emails from our public on a variety of issues. Typically, those issues have ranged from the opening of school, or I should say, reopening of the elementary and the concerns expressed about the reopening plan. And we hope tonight to answer some of your questions based on our agenda. I also want to, if you can see it in front of me because the camera's kind of far, I have letters and cards. I just want to recognize, acknowledge that our student athletes, cheerleaders and others, thanking the Board of Education for allowing them the ability, especially our seniors, to have a senior night and to have the ability to participate in athletics.

Mr. Buono:

When I read some of the cards and notes that I was able to open before the meeting, it meant a lot to them to be able to come back and participate in something, especially given the way the year has gone for our seniors. They really do appreciate that we've been able to do that for our student athletes and our cheerleaders and others. So thank you very much for that. And we're here for you, and you said to do those and provide those opportunities for you, we're glad to do it. So thank you very much for that. And if anybody wants to see some of those letters, I'll pass them around, and the cards. So thanks again. We'll now move to the Board forum. I would like to do, Mr. Simons, if it's okay, would you like to go on first for the advocacy and school reopening guidelines?

Mr. Simons:

Yes, that'd be great. Thank you, Buono. So this evening we want to provide the Board and the public with updates on changes that we have made and changes that we anticipate making to the district's current opening plan. The start of kindergarten students attending five days per week in person began on March 1st. The conversations with our principals and teachers and visits to the school, that transition has gone very successfully. I want to thank the teachers for the warm welcome and the work that they put into helping the students adjust to being back with their new friends or friends that they've only seen virtually in class. And everything went very, very well. Today, March 10th, was the first day of the one cohort of students at the K-5 level attending an additional day in person this week, to be followed

by next weeks' A cohort attending in person. That start today went very well and the students and the staff transitioned very, very successfully.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, leading up to today, the District has made a number of changes to include students who need additional support to be able to come in at the elementary, middle school and high school for more in person days that has occurred on virtual Wednesdays, it has also occurred on students' remote days based on student needs. For example, students who require special education programming, students who require English as a new language services, students who need more direct support to engage in learning. And we've been able to make those adjustments because we've had the need and we've had the space. Today, I am very pleased to inform the Board of a recommendation that over the last several weeks we have been studying and reviewing, we would like to bring all of our first graders who are currently participating in the hybrid program and all of our second graders back to five days of in-person instruction. We have some work to do to make the arrangements for that transition to go successfully. That work would include some classroom changes, reassignment of classes, really, in most of our buildings.

Mr. Simons:

We need to make adjustments to the way we deliver the art and music program. In some cases, library program, because we will be moving some of the classrooms to those spaces because they're larger. There's an analysis that's been done of the rooms, the number of students currently in the rooms, the number of students in each of the grade levels in each of the respect of buildings, who would be coming back. The board is aware that that analysis was done in July and August. And we moved furniture, we moved desks, we moved bookshelves, and we made adjustments to the classroom space. We've had to make further adjustments, or will have to make further adjustments in order to begin this change. There are some fixture, permanent fixture, student cubbies, some other types of bookshelves that we've had our buildings and grounds department review to make sure that those could be moved safely, that those can be moved within current code, including asbestos. There are no asbestos related issues to moving those cubbies. There's some work to do.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, we have supported some of these changes with additional part-time and or full-time teaching assistants. When I say part-time, it's only for the remainder of the balance of the school year, so the cost is less than it otherwise would be for a full school year. So we do need approximately four teaching assistants to be able to support this change. And because the lunch periods will be changed, there'll be additional lunch periods in some buildings. We need to increase monitors, hire a monitor for a three hour period. These changes are in line with our efforts to provide as much in-person learning as we can for our children who are our youngest learners, which is consistent with the guidance. We're ready to go effective on March 29th for first grade, and on April 13th, which is the day after the spring break for second grade. We want to give our staff time to plan, we want to give our staff, including our teachers and our custodial maintenance staff, time to make the changes. We have some technology issues that need to be addressed in certain spaces that will be used.

Mr. Simons:

I would say that these changes are being made well within the parameters of the New York State Department of Health guidelines. One of the things I want to be clear about is in the case of the New

York State Department of Health, their regulations, their requirements, that the district had to attest and sign off that we would be following during the beginning of the year. So the principals have been remarkably helpful in putting together this information. The Teacher's Union is informed of the changes. We've had a couple of discussions with the teacher's union, including today. The timelines are determined in order to make this change happen successfully and with the board support, we would like to move forward with our first graders and our second graders coming back in five days a week.

Mr. Simons:

And it's effective March 29th in the first grade, and for the second grade would be soon after the break, the day after the break. So I'd like to ask the board, if they have questions or discussions of that. Then I would like to specifically address some of the questions and concerns that we received regarding social distancing requirements, the flexibility that the district has and does not have related to that. And some of the information that we've been advocating to receive as a district, but have yet to receive.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Is there any questions for Mr. Simons? I'll start on the screen, our virtual attendees. Kathleen, Jen, JoAnn, Michele? Nope? Okay. Support. Yes. Good. Good. Deanna? Anything? Yes. Frank. Good. Mark? Any questions? Good. All right. John's good. I'm good. So yes. Excellent news. Let's move forward.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you. I appreciate it, the Board supporting it. I want to thank the teachers and the administrators for working on this. We've received a number of communications from parents since the time that the state approved participation and winter sports, higher-risk sports, regarding the requirements for operating our schools during the COVID-19 period. And there has been a lot of discussion regarding the regulations and the guidelines, both within the capitol region, within our county, and also across the state. And some of those discussions have also been the subject of media reports. For example, the newspapers in the Syracuse area reported that Onondaga County was permitted to provide schools with a change in the guidance, shortening the social distancing requirements from six feet to three feet. We also heard that some counties in other areas were advising schools that they have the discretion and the authority to do that, including Westchester County, among others. Every Wednesday, each week, Questar BOCES superintendents meet with our county Department of Health director, and we did so again, today. Last Wednesday at the meeting, I asked direct questions of the county.

Mr. Simons:

Do you have the discretion as a county health agency to permit our school districts to shorten the social distancing requirement from six feet to three feet so that we can address and respond to the concerns of the parents and the needs of the students? The answer I received last Wednesday was we do not. We have talked with other counties about this issue. We have not received any permission from the state, either the governor's office or the New York state Department of Health to do so. We don't have that discretion. We can't permit that. I asked that question again today, and I received the same answer. So counties are seeking clarification regarding this issue from the state. They have not received any answers to this question. I, personally, nor does our county know why it is that it has been reported that other counties have this discretion, but we don't right now.

Mr. Simons:

We are also planning for the fall, and through our advocacy committee, which we'll talk about later, as well as other forums, we are advocating for the guidance and the regulations regarding school reopening to be re-evaluated, to be changed and to be looked at by the New York State Department of Health and the New York State Education Department. We were advised this week that the New York State Education Department has planned to start those discussions. We have not received information as to the status of what the New York State Department of Health is thinking about or planning for September. We are aware of conversations that have occurred with the department of health, where Commissioner Zucker has indicated that the social distancing requirements and other requirements are being discussed, but there has been no decision and no formal information communicated in any direct manner with counties or schools that we have the ability either now, or in anticipation of September, to shorten the social distancing requirements so we can have more children in.

Mr. Simons:

It is my mind, and I believe everyone, including our board's, desire and interest in having all of our children come back for in-person learning, kindergarten through 12th grade, by September. Everything we are doing is evaluating what we can do to bring more kids in right now, and we are stressing the urgency and the time sensitivity of getting more information from our state so that we can let our families know, and our students know what to expect for September. And we are pushing to have a full school reopening, and the budget that I will present to the board later on in this meeting, reflects the spending plan that presumes that we will be fully open K through 12.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Thank you, Jeff. Does anyone have any questions regarding the information Jeff shared? No? Okay. And I think one of the things, we're always planning, we're always looking at opportunity. And if something comes through this school year, Mr. Simons, would we be able to shift, given that?

Mr. Simons:

We are ready to bring all the kids in for in-person learning, when we have the clearance and the direction from the State. I also want to mention that we have started the process of looking at what could be done for grades, the older grades, including the middle school and the high school. And we will be reporting back further information on that to the Board and the community. We're looking at student needs, we're looking at number of kids currently in classes. There may be some adjustments to the middle school and the high school so that kids can be brought in for more in-person instruction. We just don't know at this point how many students, so we're coming up with a criteria to really look at student academic performance and their social emotional needs and get an account on those kids and figuring out whether or not those children could be scheduled in within the social distancing guidelines.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Thank you. Any questions? No? John?

Mr. Dunn:

Just a comment. Jeff, maybe we can take the opportunity. One of the questions I receive pretty regular is why all of a sudden can we bring-

Speaker 3:

We can't hear you.

Mr. Dunn:

Sorry. [crosstalk 00:20:34].

Mr. Buono:

We got a microphone coming.

Mr. Dunn:

All right, can you hear me now?

Mr. Buono:

Yep. Thumbs up.

Speaker 3:

Yes.

Mr. Dunn:

One of the questions I received from the community is why are we able to start bringing kids back now, why couldn't we have done that in the fall? And we've had this conversation, but maybe we could remind the folks what has changed, in a brief summary.

Mr. Simons:

I think the biggest thing that has changed is the experience of our school district and the school districts with managing our schools and responding to the public health and safety issues while operating schools, if we're operating our schools. If you go back to July and August when we first received the guidelines and the regulation from New York State, prior to that there was a question of whether or not we were going to even be able to open the schools and what was going to happen. Questions about social distancing, questions about classroom capacity, questions about how many students could be on the bus questions. We didn't know as much about the infection that, COVID-19, that we do now. There was really a concern that rose to the level of a number of our families and a number of our staff, and families of our staff members that children coming to school would exacerbate, markedly increase, the infection rate spread within the school, and children would be going into the community and children would be going home to their families where there were older individuals who may be vulnerable to serious consequences.

Mr. Simons:

So that was the discussion in the summer. Should schools reopen and could we implement these requirements safely? Well, we've shown that we can. Our contact tracing, for example, has indicated that while we have had a number of individual students who've had COVID-19, through the measures that we've taken, we've been able to prevent those cases from becoming issues where the infection has been spread in the school. There is not one case that we can track back through contact tracing where we could say that a staff member or a child got COVID-19 within the school environment. In cases that we've had, it's all been tracked back to community spread, something that was contracted within the family. So one thing has changed is now we have the experience. We have the benefit of the experience of the health and safety requirements that we have put in place and a level of confidence that we can increase the capacity within our schools safely.

Mr. Simons:

The other thing that has occurred is we have more optimism regarding our state, our region, and our country's ability to deal with COVID-19. We have high percentages of our staff, I don't know the exact percentage right now, who have been vaccinated. We have more experience with this. And some of the options for providing in-person learning back in the fall were not available. We've had shifts, we've had students who have shifted during various periods of the year from the hybrid program to the full remote program, and then back again. So in the fall, we said we're going to have a slow and steady reopening under a hybrid. We talked about the fact that a large percentage of the districts in New York State were opening under a hybrid. And just as we were getting prepared to bring, to do what we're doing now, the spike occurred through the holiday spread and into the end of January. We come into the end of January, we start planning and now we're staging, and the increase in the number of kids coming in at the earliest grade levels.

Mr. Simons:

Our most recent analysis and indicated that the majority of the buildings, now, given the numbers, could accommodate two additional grade levels beyond the kindergarten coming in. We decided to do first and second grade because it made sense to get all of our K-2 students in for five days of in-person learning right now. We did consider the option of fifth grade, but not all schools could get first grade, second grade and fifth grade in because of space, so we decided it made more sense to do the K-2 continuum. In a nutshell, in summary, we've learned a lot about how schools can manage COVID-19, we've gotten through the spike period that occurred during the holidays. We're now in a much more optimistic and safe position regarding what is happening with vaccines, with our management of COVID-19, and the very low infection spread rate in schools. Schools are some of the safest places to be right now. We didn't know that was going to turn out to be true in the fall. And now we have, I think our families feel safer, our kids feel safer and our staff feel safer making these adjustments now.

Mr. Dunn:

Thank you. That was a very good explanation. And I think one of the things that I gather through this experience, everything has been changing daily. But one of the consistent things that we've tried to do as a Board and a district in your administration and teachers, is maintain our consistency in constantly evaluating and improving the conditions that our students and staff are working under and with the ultimate goal of bringing kids back to school full time. So thank you.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Any other questions? Nope. Okay. Now we will go back to item A, Board forum for general comments from the Board members. I'll start in person. I'll start on my right with Deanna. Anything? Nothing? Frank, anything?

Mr. Yeboah:

No.

Mr. Buono:

Mark? Good? John, anything else? Good? Jennifer Massey, anything?

Ms. Massey:

I just want to say thank you to the team for working really hard and continuing to work really hard every day to do what we can. I know, John, you said it very eloquently that as a Board, our only goal has been to do what we need to do to keep things moving and moving forward, as well as ultimately, we would like to see all of the kids back in school, in-person, and doing the best that we can to do that has been a struggle this year. And I appreciate the fact that you are ready to move should the guidelines change from the state. And I think that's a great place to be. And this phasing in is getting as many kids back as we possibly can in a safe and appropriate manner without violating any of the regulations. I appreciate you keeping on top of that and doing that with the ultimate goal, obviously, for next year hopefully.

Ms. Massey:

With September, that we'll be in a position to be able to reopen school in the new school year, but if we can, moving forward this year, bringing back as many kids as we can as quickly as possible should some regulations change as well. So I just wanted to say thank you. We are very, and I've been watching every email and reach out and having lots of chats with parents and others in the community, and keep the conversation going. We are open to those conversations, I'm open to those conversations. And again, ultimately with the goal of keeping everybody safe, getting everybody back as quickly as we possibly can, and still staying within the guidelines that we have. So again, I just want to thank everybody, the entire district, the community, for that support.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Jennifer.

Mr. Dunn:

Thank you, Jennifer.

Mr. Buono:

JoAnn, anything?

Ms. Taylor:

I do over a few effects tonight. Firstly, I want to thank the National Honor's Society. Over the past three or four weeks, they have done a food drive at Columbia. In additions, we have had students volunteer and come down once a week and work with us at the distribution center, packing boxes, sorting the food. I think it's been eye opening for those kids, and we are going to be getting the food that they're collecting and Mrs. Shatraw's room shortly, so we're excited about that. And happy that they were willing to help and they're looking to do more. And it's nice to see our kids working side by side like that. Secondly, I had a discussion with our account supervisor, Jack Conway, that I want to share with the board and the community. A couple of weeks ago, we had a student, we had some bad weather Monday night into Tuesday morning. We had a student have a slight accident going into Columbia.

Ms. Taylor:

Having experienced some of the side roads around Columbia personally on Monday night myself, I called Mr. Simons and told him I was going to reach out to Mr. Conway with his permission to discuss the

conditions of the roads going into Columbia. As many of you know, there are a lot of curvy, windy roads, all going into Columbia. Werking Road, Michael Road, Elliot Road. And although some of them are county roads, the majority are town roads. And we had quite a frank talk with Mr. Conway. And quite bluntly, I told him that we are failing, the town is failing our students when we're giving our most inexperienced drivers roads like that to be on. Before they come out of school, they encounter problems, their insurances is up, and the students and their parents who are paying taxes deserve better than that. Mr. Conway was in agreement with me. He said, "Yes, you are right. We need to do better for the students."

Ms. Taylor:

And that afternoon was talking to the highway department and he was going to be following up on those roads. I told him I would be in contact with him as I saw the need, and I encourage other people to. If people want to reach out to me, I can share information also. Just letting everyone know about that, need to keep our kids safe. Shout out to Sarah Lussier at Bell Top. It was great to open today's paper and see the learning barn and the maple syrup happening in our school. And that is an important thing of our schools and that's why we want on our kids back. That skill, that fun. My kids saw that learning barn and they learned, and they had fun. And one of the many reasons we need our kids back. But we need to feel it safely. And on that note, thank you, the administration, teachers, for what you're doing to get our kids back. And we look forward to the day that everyone is back safely in the buildings. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, JoAnn. Kathleen?

Ms. Curtin:

Not only Sarah Lussier this year in the paper, about Melanie Lyte also made it on TV, because I saw the learning barn last night on TV. I'm going to steal a little bit of Mr. Simons' thunder and mention the Advocacy Committee, which now has already met twice, last Monday and this Monday. And we are shifting the focus of the advocacy event that we are looking to plan. And the focus is shifting toward how to get consistent guidance from the State with those Department of Health regulations so that we can start looking to get our kids back into school. So it wasn't just our district. It's a number of districts from Questar BOCES, the district superintendent from BOCES also joined us. So this is not just us, this is not something that just East Greenbush is suffering with. That there are a lot of other districts who are also having a lot of problems.

Ms. Curtin:

And we are looking to work together to really get some consistent regulation so that one county is not doing something different than everybody else. Actually, the Superintendent, Ichabod Crane. Or, no. Excuse me, New Lebanon, mentioned that his district actually straddles two different counties and he literally has to check where a child lives before they do quarantine regulations for that child because the two counties have different regulations. So it is not just us. This is something that we need to bring attention to our leaders at the county level, at the State level. And most importantly, to the Governor. We need to start saying we need to get this taken care of.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Kathleen. And Michele? Good. All right. I don't have any comments. I think what we covered here today is really encouraging news and all the feedback. Thank you, Board members. And again, thank you, Jeff. And the team for beginning to make progress towards bringing our students back.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:35:04]

Mr. Buono:

And again, thank you Jeff and the team for continuing to make progress towards bringing our students back. I know our parents remind us regularly that we need to do that. I've been talking about this for a long time and continue to talk about it. And I think it's, the climate is very encouraging to see the pace that we're on and I'm hoping to get some of that relief, that we're hoping to get from the state. So thank you very much. Any closing comments at this time?

Mr. Simons:

No, I think Ms. Curtin covered everything regarding the Advocacy Committee very, very well. So thank you, Kathleen.

Mr. Buono:

And again, it's just, as we hear from you committee members and families, make sure your legislature hears from you as well. They're all part of this process and the more they hear from you in the community, the more they'll respond. Okay? So important to do that as well. Moving to our first discussion item, the 2020-2021 fund balance projection. I think Linda's going to do that. Okay, Linda.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. Can you hear me okay? Can everyone hear me okay? Good. Okay. So tonight I prepared for you a 2020-2021 fund balance projection. And the actual balances are as of February 27 of this year. In addition to this memo, there are eight pages of detailed information of which I promise not to go through line by line. However, I did want to talk to you about the importance of fund balance and how I came to some of these numbers. So the board adopted policy number 6245 which is fund balance and governmental fund type definitions. And the purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on fund balance. The Board recognizes the importance of maintaining a fund balance, and it is essential to the preservation and financial integrity of the school district.

Ms. Wager:

We have several categories of fund balance. We have restricted fund balance, non-spendable fund balance, assigned fund balance and unassigned fund balance. In our restricted fund balances, we have our reserve accounts, our worker's comp, our retirement contributions, employee benefits and accrued liabilities, capital projects, our tax tertiary reserves and our unemployment reserves. I am projecting, if you go to page one of the report itself, I am projecting that there will be no changes in the worker's comp reserve or the employee benefits and accrued liabilities reserve or the unemployment reserve. You will note that we are using \$900,000 of our ERS retirement contribution reserve, which was part of the budget for this year, so we planned that use. The changes that I'm estimating in the capital projects reserve is due to, we record the state aid that we receive on our bus purchases, we record that state aid in the capital reserve, and we report the expenditures for the current year buses, so that's the reason for the change.

Ms. Wager:

And the estimated change in tax tertiary reserves are the settlement of the tax reserves that we have, the tax litigations and the new litigations that are filed with the district. So all-in-all in the total restricted fund balance, I expect that there will be a change in the negative \$966,432. Our prepaid... our non-spendable fund balance is basically for prepaid expenditures and that is prepaid insurance basically. So those are insurance bills that have come in June that we pay, but they're for the following year.

Ms. Wager:

Our assigned fund balance is made up of our unappropriated assigned fund balance and our appropriated assigned fund balance. Our unappropriated assigned fund balance is our encumbrances for the year. At the end of the year. Those are our obligations at the end of the year where we have entered into purchase agreements, we have POS in place. And that represents that balance at the end of the year.

Ms. Wager:

We typically carry between \$350,000 and \$400,000 at the end of a school year. Last year was a little bit higher, you'll notice it was \$441,325 and that was due to the fact that we started purchasing as much PPE supplies as possible. And then our appropriated assigned fund balance is the amount that we appropriate to help fund, to offset the tax levy for the next year's budget. So that has not changed and that will remain at \$6,829,322.

Ms. Wager:

So then our unassigned fund balance. This is the fund, the portion of fund balance that is subject to our 4% limitation. So at June 30th of 2020, we carried an unassigned fund balance of \$5,671,424, which represented 5.68% of this year's budget. So that was over the 4%, but you will record remind you that we had conversations about carrying forward excess fund balance because we didn't know what we were going to face in this year.

Ms. Wager:

So on the next few pages, there are detailed information of revenue, our actual revenue from last year, our budgeted revenue for this year, our year to date revenue as of February 27. And then what I project our revenue will be as of 6/30. You will note that I am projecting that our revenue will end at \$94 million, which is actually above our estimated revenue before our appropriated fund balance. And the reason for that is some of the items that are a little higher than expected than originally estimated are our state aid, the numbers are coming in a little bit higher. I've also estimated that we will get some of the FEMA reimbursement money that we applied for. We have submitted an application for \$311,000 and I'm hoping I estimated in there \$250,000 after they review. So we haven't received any notification on that yet.

Ms. Wager:

Then some of the revenue categories have declined, and that's because our buildings have not been open to the public this year. We are not providing bus transportation for the field trips, for the towns that happened during the summer. So some of our revenues items are down, others are up, but I do expect it to end around the \$94 million mark.

Ms. Wager:

Our expenditures on the other hand, our expenditures I expect will come in less than budget, below budget. Our total expenditures, I expect to come in around \$96.7 million. The way I came to that is I looked at the expenses that we have so far. So the 10 month employees had been paid for six months of salary already. The 12 month employees have been paid for eight months of salary already. So I projected the balance of those salaries out. And I also looked at our actual expenditure so far this year, as compared to last year, as compared to the year before.

Ms. Wager:

So while I expect that we will come in under budget, I still expect that our expenditures will be higher than our revenue. So therefore it will be a decrease in our fund balance. But if you go back to page one, the ending unassigned fund balance that I project is at about \$3.9 million. And that puts us back in that three to 4% range of the following year's budget, as is determined by the Board. So that's basically what I did, I can go into much more detail if you have any questions or I could answer any questions that anybody has.

Mr. Buono:

Any questions Board members?

Mr. Buono:

No.

Ms. Wager:

Okay.

Mr. Buono:

No, I think it's good for me. It's excellent information. It gives us a really good picture of where we stand, where we project and how it compares to previous years. I think this is really helpful information for our public to see where the expenditures are, but our regular picture looks like the reserves that we tapped into and then will potentially have a little bit for next year that's available to be tapped into the future, if needed.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. I also suggested that perhaps I do another one of these maybe in May-

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Ms. Wager:

Because I want to look at where we're at and perhaps we can take some of those expenses that we're projecting for next year and try to get them into this year, but we'll need to get further into the year for that.

Mr. Buono:

Sounds good. Well, let's plan on a May meeting and to review that and see what we can do to shift some things to this year, if possible. Thank you, Linda. We always appreciate the detail and the level of

transparency on the information that you're sharing and it's great for everyone to see how our fiscal matters are being managed.

Mr. Buono:

Moving on from discussion items. We'll go to committee reports and we'll start with Marissa.

Ms. Cannon:

None at this time.

Mr. Buono:

Nothing from Marissa. Linda, you want to take a break or you want to go ahead. Go ahead, okay.

Ms. Wager:

I will quickly report that we had a BRAC meeting on Monday, February 22nd. And at that meeting, we had a few guests, Philomena Prinzo and Christine Hennessy, our local realtors, and they joined us in and they talked to us a lot about the market right now and how this East Greenbush School District is appealing to people moving in from the other areas. And we have some families moving into the area. So that's all positive news for us. We also had Josh Tocci is from the CDRPC, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. And he went over the 2020-2021 enrollment projection report. And I believe we talked about having him come to a future meeting and make a further presentation for you on this.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you. Everyone should receive either electronic or hard copy of the CDRPC report in a moment, which is a great information in there for the barter protections and what we anticipate for our enrollments for potentially for next year, it should be prudent.

Mr. Buono:

Moving on to Mr. McHugh Jim?

Mr. McHugh:

I just want to provide the Board with a quick update on the UAlbany collaboration with our East Greenbush teachers. We've had four professional development sessions as of today. That's 12 hours of professional development, a classroom instruction that's been delivered to our teachers. We've had about 36 to 38 of our faculty members participate in these sessions. A real positive is that our elementary principals have been engaging in those sessions as well. I think it sets a great example for our teachers to see our building administrators involved. Those sessions have really focused on the importance of teacher expertise and delivering high quality instruction for early literacy.

Mr. McHugh:

In addition to the four, three hour sessions, whole group sessions, Dr. Scanlon and Peggy Connors have visited our elementary buildings to provide embedded support to our teachers in their classroom. And each professional development session has been recorded. What is nice is that we were limited in regards to how many faculty members we could have participate in this collaboration. There is additional teachers that are interested. The sessions have been recorded. We put them in a Google drive and we have additional teachers accessing those recordings and watching those sessions as well. So

we're off to a good start. I believe Mark Adam is working on a communication piece that will go out to our school community soon.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks Jim, great initiative. Any questions for Jim on the collaboration? Again, another activity to help our younger learners and how we can support them. Which will be so critical as we return to school. Mr. Simons, something you'd have to say?

Mr. Simons:

I think we've covered that topic other than to mention we were joined by a number of new parents on the committee.

Mr. Buono:

Oh, great.

Mr. Simons:

Elementary parents and a parent of elementary, middle school and high school students. So we have more parents on our advocacy committee and they're going to work with us to hold together that forum.

Mr. Buono:

Awesome. Very good. Looking forward to that.

Ms. Curtin:

Also really quick, Mike, also wanted to mention that they've also got a bunch of high school students on that committee, including one that is involved with one of our CTE programs through BOCES so that we're trying to get a wide variety of students to use their voices to then help us make our move.

Mr. Buono:

Yeah, very good. Think they always want to hear from the students. Right. Excellent.

Mr. Buono:

Moving on to the approval of draft minutes for February 24th. Board voted for present,. Mr. Mann was a little bit late. Any questions, comments, revisions to the minutes? Seeing none. I need a motion to approve that. JoAnn and the second, Frank. All those in favor? Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Moving to our next item, regular business approval of programs for resident children with disabilities. Any questions or comments? Need a motion to approve that. Deanna, I need a second. Kathleen. All those in favor? Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Next item is the employment agreement for the director of human resources. Any questions or comments on that? Need a motion to approve. Mark, second, John, all those in favor? Approved. Congratulations Marissa.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

And then the next item is the amendment to the contract for the Superintendent of schools. Any questions or comments on that? Need a motion to approve that. John second, Kathleen. All those in favor? Approved. Congratulations Mr. Simons.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you to the Board for the support. I appreciate it very much.

Mr. Buono:

And we also want to, again, extend our thanks for your service to our District. And the fact that this year you did not take an increase in your salary. So it shows that you care about the District, you care about our kids, and we feel that your leadership has been instrumental in getting us through this pandemic. And that was your team. So again, thank you for all your service to the District.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you very much.

Mr. Buono:

With that, we get to put you on the spot about the budget, right? So preliminary discussions, 21-22 budget discussions, we'll move to Mr. Simons will go up in front of the camera and present to the community and to the board, our very preliminary first round of how we're going to do the budget. So this is our first budget workshop.

Mr. Simons:

Well, you could try to present this to the way that everyone want you to hear me and also see the slides. I am vaccinated. So if it's okay with Mr. Dunn and Mr. Mann, I'm going to remove my mask temporarily. Very good. So I have worked with Linda Wager and our principals, our administrative team among others put together what we would consider to be a very preliminary budget. And if the Board is aware that in years past, when we do our initial presentation of the budget, we generally do not have a full accounting of what our projected revenues will be for next year. Nor do we know all the details regarding our expenditures. So we would anticipate that this is a first brush at the budget, that there will be changes based on the board's feedback this evening, as well as any other information that comes from the state.

Mr. Simons:

But this kind of gives you a framework for our starting point. I will say that this is my fourth budget in East Greenbush. It's my 14th budget as a school superintendent and I've never developed a budget during a pandemic. So there are a lot of unknowns typically at this time of year, there are even more

unknowns because we have to presume that we're going to be operating in September with all of our children in K through 12. And we've made some assumptions that some of the requirements will still be in place but we don't know the scale of those requirements. And I'll explain that as we go along. So again, this is very preliminary.

Mr. Simons:

I'd like to start by just reminding the community that each and every year, our Board of Education, our administrative team and our staff, we revisit the Board's goals when we present the spending plan for next year. The first thing we look at is are the categories which we pose to offer the budget to the community, align with the Board's direction of where the board would like the district to head. So we look at our Board goals and put together priorities.

Mr. Simons:

We also want the budget to be an opportunity to celebrate all of the great accomplishments of our students, of our faculty and staff. And particularly this year, as we have approached the budget, we really want to credit the remarkable work of everyone in the educational community and when we use that term educational community, we maybe haven't thought about it at the same way as we have since March of last year, we're talking about every single student in our district, kindergarten through 12th grade, coming from all different backgrounds, with all different needs, who are doing a great job, under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. We're talking about every single parent at every level who's contributing to their child's education. Maybe even more so than they have in the past because of the nature of which learning and teaching is occurring right now. And so our parents and our students are a reflection of the educational community and important contributors to our overall district's efforts.

Mr. Simons:

And we have our teachers, extraordinarily talented teachers, some who've received statewide and regional recognition, and we have a great team of administrators, including our central administration, our principals, who help us operate the district and done a remarkable job during this period. Our tremendously talented and dedicated support staff are members of our SRP, our CSEA, our school nurses, our secretaries, our security folks, our monitors, our teaching assistants, custodial and maintenance grounds. Everyone. If I missed a group I'll come back to it later. Everyone is contributing to this educational community under very difficult circumstances. And we're all looking forward to what the budget may bring and the school year might bring for September.

Mr. Simons:

So we've got a lot to highlight and we've got a lot to appreciate, and we've got a lot to be proud of as we put together this spending plan. We also look at historical information. Miss Wager mentioned tonight that we look at prior year's expenditures. We look at prior year's revenues and we try our best to predict or estimate what those revenues are going to look like and those expenditures are going to look like in future years. We have a tax cap. We're going to explain to the best of our ability. And I'm going to have to defer this explanation to Linda Wager because generally we refer to the tax cap as a 2% tax cap, but it really is unique to every district. And there's a specific formula which the tax cap is calculated. And as we reported at the last board meeting, our tax cap was very low this year because we anticipate increases and payment in lieu of taxes, revenues to be received from the district. Particularly associated with large increases in pilots associated with Regeneron development.

Mr. Simons:

So, and we have our projections and revenues, which are subject to change at this point between now and April 14th. And the board of education is tentatively scheduled to adopt the proposed budget and May 18, which is we anticipate will be the vote date in which our budget and board election will go out to the community and we'll highlight the important dates.

Mr. Simons:

So, as Boards goes, the Boards continues to stress the importance of focusing on academic excellence. Academic excellence, for those students who are working their way through the school district, the elementary level, where we talk about our performance being well above the state average, as our students are transitioning in the middle school, making sure that our courses provide not only an opportunity for kids who are anticipating what to get in the high school and going to college, but also students that may be anticipating different types of careers that are available right here in the region that may not require a four year college but require some technical school training or some level of post-graduate training and experience but not necessarily a four year college. And our board has emphasized that we define academic excellence in East Greenbush as making sure that every student has an opportunity and a pathway to success.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, we want to make sure that not only our educational services are being coordinated effectively, but that our staffing and our financial resources are aligned to what we want to accomplish. So when we hire individuals for all positions, we want to recruit the best, we want to support them in training and support so that they continue to grow and contribute to the district. And we want to make sure that we can budget to be able to meet our academic goals. By making sure that we have well supported and trained people who are bringing the services for the students in the community.

Mr. Simons:

We work very intentionally at facilitating positive relationships with our families, our parents, business organizations in the community. We have a business advisory committee that works with our district on partnerships that enable us to help our kids and our staff understand what requirements are needed for children to enter into the various career fields. We also have great partnerships through our Questar Boces and many of our local and state colleges, that help us offer different programs and opportunities and services to the kids.

Mr. Simons:

And we want to remain a progressive, innovative, and safe school environment. And in the last couple of years, we have not only focused on physical safety, making sure that our security systems, our procedures, our safety plans are up to date and that people are well trained in those areas, but also making sure that we have a welcoming inclusive school climate, which includes some very intentional work being done by our committee for global education. Issues around diversity of our student population and our families. So those are the board's goals. We revisit them every year and we align our spending plan with those four broad areas of expectation shaped by our board.

Mr. Simons:

In the area of academic highlights. 90% of our class graduated last year, went on to college and or vocational school and Columbia High School recently announced that we maintain our 97% graduation

rate, which is one of the highest graduation rates in the Capital Region. I don't know exactly where we rank right now. Last year we were in the top three. I know that we are in the top five regarding graduation right now in our region. Columbia High School and Red Mill Elementary School have also been recognized by New York State Education Department as recognition schools, or not only high academic performance in state standard areas, such as English, Language Arts and Math. But in closing the gap between students who are typically considered economically disadvantaged and all students and other special populations of students. Not only are all of our kids doing well, but in these particular buildings, these buildings have been recognized because they're closing the gap in groups that, across the state, tend to trend a little bit lower in terms of their academics, the performance, and compare it to all students.

Mr. Simons:

So we congratulate Columbia High School who has received this recognition twice and Red Mill School who received it last year. All of our schools in New York State are considered in good standing. And that comes about from the work of Mr. McHugh, our principals and the excellent instruction and support provided in each of our buildings by our teachers and our support staff. We are higher than the state average in all categories. And we monitor areas in which we expect to see further growth under the ESSA, which is the federal law that requires us to continually make improvements.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, last year, we were very proud to recognize at our board meeting, our Columbia High School English teacher, Chelsea Dyer, who was named a finalist for New York State Teacher of the Year. That is not something is accomplished lightly. There is a lot of work in the application that is submitted by Chelsea and the District to nominate her. And she has been recognized as one of the best teachers in New York State. So we congratulate Chelsea.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, the New York State School Boards Association publication, Onboard, features Kelly Giagni as one prime example of how our district is delivering instruction through a virtual format. She is a Genet elementary teacher, and she has been recognized for her contributions to our current hybrid plan. So congratulations to Chelsea and to Kelly, who are among all of our teachers and all of our staff do an extraordinarily good job. Who we could not be doing what we're doing right now without their talent and their commitment to our students.

Mr. Simons:

We also reached out, more so than in past, this past year to make sure that our families who are in need of food and other services that have that need met by our school district. Mike Leonard, Audra Di Bacco and many others, Columbia High School operated a community food pantry, which provided for the needs of our families and really anybody in the community and our backpack programs that are operating in some of our schools continue to provide breakfast and lunch for the families that those schools serve. In addition, we've had a number of community organizations, businesses, and individuals contribute donations to our board to considerably fund these backpack programs that are serving such an important aid in the community and building positive relationships with our families.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, we have an opportunity for our students that we provide in our high school, for students not only to receive college credit courses through college agreements, but also AP credits. And we have a couple of unique partnerships, one with Siena College, which will enable high school students to start a track to be at a Master's in Business Administration, after graduating from high school and going to Siena. And after four years, they can get their MBA as opposed to the traditional five year or more track. Additionally, last year we announced a similar partnership with Russell Sage College, where our kids who may want to go into education can begin to start to take college credit coursework here at Columbia, move into a pathway at Russell Sage and get their Master's degree, which is the requirement of New York State, within five years.

Mr. Simons:

Among other partnerships, UAlbany was mentioned tonight, Hudson Valley Community College, a large percentage of our graduating seniors go to Hudson Valley. We have a number of unique arrangements with Hudson Valley for college courses, and we'll be announcing with Questar a brand new opportunity in our region for Columbia and other districts, students to participate in through an early college high school program and the P-TECH program in just a couple of weeks. Questar 3 BOCES, we are active participants and partners in the Questar 3, which provides instructional programs and career technical education including Tech Valley High School. We anticipate about nine students will be at Tech Valley High School next year, which is a program that teaches kids project-based learning so that they can move into various STEM fields.

Mr. Simons:

And we serve in leadership roles on the Rensselaer County Chamber of Commerce, which has provided a lot of information to our teachers to provide kids with information regarding what is happening in the workforce, including opportunities for mentors, from the business fields to provide video support and other activities to help our kids better understand careers that are available to them. What they might consider pursuing as they move into high school and graduate.

Mr. Simons:

We offer progressive, innovative and safe learning environments for our students. We have made changes this year to the way that we deliver, for example, instrumental music, but we are offering strings instruction, band instruction, and vocal choral instruction to all of our kids at the middle school and the high school. And we're hoping to see some further changes in that. So some schools have been constrained by the regulations to a point that we're not able to do this. We have been able to do it. We set up our classrooms in a way that are socially distanced, that are safe. And we started as part of our emphasis on acceptance, inclusion and diversity, a No Place for Hate program kickoff at the middle school and one at the high school, which focuses on what can the kids do, what can the staff do, what can the community do to make sure that every child is respected, feels safe, welcome and supported in a learning environment within the school.

Mr. Simons:

We are transitioning into sharing a little bit about our fiscal plan. Our guidelines for next year, we believe are aligned with the board's expectations. We want to provide resources within our budget to support a full school reopening. And while we don't have the regulations and we don't exactly know what's going to happen in September of next year, we know that we're going to have to build in the resources in order to be able to fully open. Additionally, we know that due to the experiences of our

students, that there will be learning gaps and there may be more children than typical who need such services as academic intervention and potentially, summer programming. And we're working on addressing that. On March 24th, I expect that Mr. McHugh will be presenting a summer school model for the board to consider as part of the budget for next year. Additionally, the board expects us to deliver services as efficiently and effectively as possible. And as we've been discussing where we might-

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [01:10:04]

Mr. Simons:

... as possible. And as we've been discussing where we might be for next year, we are monitoring what is happening with staff retirements. We're evaluating positions. The budget, at this point, doesn't include reductions in positions. It doesn't include consequent programs, but we are looking at ways to do things as efficiently and effectively as we can.

Mr. Simons:

And as you've heard this evening, we are using resources that have been set aside by the board and the district, in the current budget. And we are monitoring how much money will be unspent at the end of this year, that could potentially be allocated to offset program cuts, or potential increases to the tax budget. So the board has been fiscally responsible in setting aside resources for a point where we are considered by the New York State comptroller, the fiscally stable district.

Mr. Simons:

We want to maintain that fiscal stability by making sure that we balance educational needs, staffing clause with not only the short term revenues that we anticipate for next year, but preserving the districts' fiscal condition so that when we have to borrow money, or when we come to a situation where we are in a true emergency, we have the money to be able to address that, without hurting the kids.

Mr. Simons:

Historically, we track the New York State tax cap. Last year the tax cap was 1.68%. You can see that in various years, including going back about seven years, the tax cap was up as high as 4.15. For next year, we are projecting that that cap, excuse me, that the tax cap was that high tax on that year was only about point three two. So every year and each year, as we've monitored, our tax cap formula, the board has kept the tax levy increase under what was allowable by New York State law.

Mr. Simons:

And we intend to do the same thing for next year. Last year, it was 1.68%. So we're starting to keep our budget under the tax cap, in terms of the tax levy. The tax base of East Greenbush is relatively stable. You've heard the report on the Budget Review Advisory Committee, where realtors have indicated that the property values within East Greenbush are stable. This year going into next year one of the factors that is used to calculate the tax cap is called the tax base growth factor.

Mr. Simons:

It's remaining relatively stable. It's not going up very much. It's not going down. We expect that the property values will remain relatively stable, which is a factor calculated to the cap. Additionally, New York State law says that districts can raise taxes either up to 2%, or at the rate of inflation, which is

considered to be Consumer Price Index. Each and every year over the course of the last seven or eight years, the tax... excuse me, the CPI has been less than a 2%.

Mr. Simons:

So when we call it a 2% tax cap, it really isn't. In many cases, that districts are required to be under that 2% because of the CPI Consumer Price Index. This is where I'm going to turn the tax cap calculations over to Ms. Wager so, she can explain how this works, and then I'll come back and talk a little bit about the budget itself. Linda?

Ms. Wager:

Thank you, Mr. Simons. The tax cap calculation is a multi-step calculation in order to arrive at the maximum percentage increase in dollar amount, increase of the tax levy, with what is called a simple majority vote of 50% plus one. We start with the current year's tax levy. Our current year tax levy is 58,374,546. And then we apply the tax based growth factor, which Mr. Simons has explained is provided to us by the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance.

Ms. Wager:

And that accounts for the growth in the full value of textbook property, within the district. So, that is 1.34%. Then we add in the current years, PILOT agreements. PILOT stands for payments in lieu of taxes. These are agreements that are made with businesses, to entice businesses into our district, and they are made between the business and the Rensselaer County IDA, Industrial Development Agency.

Ms. Wager:

And essentially it allows them to come into... it entices them into the district, and it's basically at a discounted tax rate than they would otherwise pay. So, we're going to add that back in, and we're going to subtract out our capital levy from last year. The capital levy is the difference between our debt service payments, on our capital projects, and the building aid that is coming in against those projects. So then to that, we apply an allowable levy growth factor.

Ms. Wager:

And this is where Mr. Simons explained, we hear the 2% tax cap, and it is really the lesser of at this step, 2% or the Consumer Price Index, which for this calculation is 1.23% is the CPI. We apply that to it, and then we take out what we expect our PILOT payments will be for next year.

Ms. Wager:

Our PILOT payments next year are projected to be 6,640,755, which is a substantial increase from the current year. The reason for that is all of them go up a little bit, but there is one PILOT with Regeneration, on Tempel Lane that is going from a payment received this year \$427,000 to over 1.9 million next year. So that's accounts for the significant increase there.

Ms. Wager:

Then we come to a total tax levy limit before exclusions, and then we apply the capital levy that exclusion for next year. And that will be the difference between our debt service payments and the aid that is coming in. Both our building aid and the aid on the purchase of buses. So we come down to a tax levy limit plus exclusions of \$59,126,575, which is 1.28% over the current year.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you Linda. So the information that we're going to present, including some of the expenditures that we've included in the budget, keep our budget, right at 1.28%. We will be striving between now and when the final budget is adopted by the board and have that be consistent with the pattern that we've shown over the last seven years, then that will be on there the tax gap, and be as low as we can make it. The 1.28% tax levy, however, yields approximately... correct me if I'm wrong, \$790,000 of revenue?

Ms. Wager:

A little over 752,000.

Mr. Simons:

752,000. Well, it is a percentage, but spread over the levy itself, it does yield probably significant value. So back in January, the board was provided an opportunity to review the requests of our principals and our administrators. We categorize those requests into priority A priority B priority C. And as we did last year, we started the process by including some of those items, at the end of the process, some of these items may rebate in the budget. So I may not. It's all part of our assessment.

Mr. Simons:

We mentioned early on that we anticipate that students will be coming back from the experience of the last full year... the current school year, and really last spring with margins than in our district. So, prior to COVID, academic intervention services was an area that we were working on, trying to make sure that we had sufficient AIS reading and math staff, in our elementary schools to provide for those kids who qualify for that service.

Mr. Simons:

We think we're going to have... based on our current assessment of the students, Mr. McHugh is monitoring the need for more academic intervention services staff. So at the elementary level, it would be total cost of the buildings, of about two and a half teachers, that's total cost all of them. So it's about point five per building, and it might vary with some of the larger buildings.

Mr. Simons:

We also have a growing population of children who are required by federal and state law to receive English as a new language services. The requirements have changed a couple of years ago, and the way that we have to deliver that service with students that qualify, they need direct services, or more time, the board has made adjustments in this area, over the course of the last couple of years, as new requirements have come in. And the number of families moving into East Greenbush was shown require these services has increased. I'll put Mr. McHugh on the spot right now, how many ENL teachers do we currently employ?

Mr. McHugh:

We currently have five ENL teachers in our district. Three, primarily at Genet Elementary School, one at Goff Middle School and one at Columbia High School.

Mr. Simons:

So about 15 years ago, it's my understanding based on some of the reviews we've done, that we had one ENL teacher for the entire district. And that is because of the growth in the number of children that require that service. Gulf Middle School, again, we anticipate the needs for academic intervention growing. There is a need for both reading and math support. A 1.0 FTE for reading, and a point six for math.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, the board will hear later on in the meeting, about a new course for sixth graders that will involve computer skills, we're going to be able to provide this course without this additional requests. So we put it in as a point zero five CTE because we have a technology teacher currently, who is a retiree, working for the district. And under New York State regulations, we can meet the CTE requirements at the middle school level with either business certified teacher, a family consumer science certified teacher, or a technology teacher.

Mr. Simons:

The technology teacher will be leaving. And we will be replacing that technology teacher with either a teacher in either one of those areas. Who's qualified under New York State to teach a computer skills course. Computer skills course would evolve sixth grade and count for about point zero five FTE, which is really marginal because the technology teacher is leaving.

Mr. Simons:

And we have a program called Apex that provides for students in the summer or during the year that need to be... credit recovery, recover credits that they are on track to pass their courses. This Apex program would be in addition to an in-person summer school program that we're going to be proposing at the next meeting. Additionally, we have a need for an item that was put into the long range fiscal plan a couple years ago, our K-8 math resource textbook, but also as an instructional technology resource to support math instruction, is in the budget at this point and is funded through textbook aid.

Mr. Simons:

So the district receives what's called categorical aid that can only be used on textbooks and software. So we have to put it in as expenditure, but that expenditure to some degree is offset by the categorical aid that can only be spent in that area. Additionally, we are working on professional development with our teachers that has been provided by Questar.

Mr. Simons:

And there's some additional work that was included in the budget, in prior years for staff development. In the area of technology, we have upgraded our phone, our public address, our security systems, our smoke and fire alarm systems. Those systems have maintenance agreements that need to be renewed. Those aren't included in the contractual services, portion of the budget. And Peter would like some [inaudible 01:24:14] development for his tech staff to continue to advance their skills.

Mr. Simons:

And I'm going to do my match to try to explain the first item. Peter has described to me as essential to make all of our instructional and our other student information system, financial information system play well together. Is that right Peter?

Peter:

That's perfect.

Mr. Simons:

So basically it is expiring, it's the... Peter do you want to explain it?

Peter:

The physical server behind all of the program softwares.

Mr. Simons:

So, that's what's meant by the VMware system. It's necessary to make sure our programs are operating collectively. We learn in the fall with the success of our varsity girls golf program. We expect that the number of girls that are golfing, it's going to increase. It will get back to somewhat normal in the fall.

Mr. Simons:

Right now, we follow a model where our boys coach also coaches the girls. This is a limited expense. We think it would enhance the girls program. And we've heard from some of our parents that we should move in this direction. The maintenance department has a schedule similar to the transportation department, regarding the replacement of vehicles. We would pose to place a Ford F-150 truck that is used for plowing. It is 1990...

Ms. Wager:

It's a 2009 with 120,000 miles on it.

Mr. Simons:

120,000 miles, 2009. I guess I'm showing my age when I go back to something that old I go back to the 90s, It was identified last year. We didn't put it in last year. The grounds department will tell you that it's always a hairy situation when they wake up on a snowy day, whether or not the trucks are going to be able to remove the snow.

Mr. Simons:

We may be able to, as Linda said earlier, when we adjust the fund balance in May. We may be able to buy that truck this year out of fund balance and move it for the budget reductions here. There is a heating system that needs to be updated in the transportation department. It currently is not operating well. And the Building Condition Survey, which is the required report that we have to file for the state that our architect does that helps us to plan future capital projects is a \$50,000 expense, that comes out of the state schedule for next year.

Mr. Simons:

And we've had some problems with our software that is used to plan and track our busing routes. And we would like to include an update in the transponder system, which is the name of the software that we use. We have had some issues, the power went out, but that system wasn't working. The new system that we have to protect us against power outages.

Mr. Simons:

So turning to our revenues, we have already discussed a 1.28% tax levy increase. We project that next year, tax levy would yield for the district's budget, approximately \$59.1 million. We've talked about the payment of taxes agreements increasing the revenue in the category of PILOTS from 4.8 million to 6.6. That's a 3.63% increase in monies that are coming through PILOT agreements with the you mentioned that the Rensselaer County Industrial Development Agency. We are projecting the state aid and the federal revenue a little bit differently than we have in years past.

Mr. Simons:

Because as you recall an earlier meeting, Linda did a nice job breaking down the governors state aid run. The state aid that we're expecting to receive is purely state money. Foundation aid and expense-driven aid is approximately \$23.7 million, which is in terms of the state objective to be a negative 8.9% change. Is that correct Linda?

Ms. Wager:

That's correct. When the state indicates to us our state aid numbers, they include the federal aid in there. And so they always project it as an increase in state aid. So I wanted to break it out so that you could see state aid versus federal aid. So, that really the state aid is a decrease of 8.9%. And the reason that it nets and increases because of the federal aid.

Mr. Simons:

Then you see the next category is the federal revenue, which is an increase of 102.5%. Assuming approximately \$3.9 million next year. That includes money that are already approved and included within the governor's budget. So CARES monies Approved last year that we assume everybody to receive the second round of additional federal monies.

Mr. Simons:

This projection does not include recently passed... I think it passed today, a \$1.9 trillion federal package. So we would expect that the federal monies may increase even further. We don't know whether those federal monies will flow from the state and the state will decide how to distribute that to schools.

Mr. Simons:

We don't know how that would be distributed. We would anticipate that we will get some money because the state is giving approximately \$12.6 billion in federal help for state and local governments. It's important to know, however that our projections are already included in the governor's projections already included six billion of that. Is that correct?

Mr. Simons:

So the situation regarding federal aid and the state is looking better right now and then it had an October, but we don't know those numbers yet. This is based on the governor's abstinence and not any new money that's recently been approved in Washington. Intertwined transfers or typical adjustments that are made to our revenues. So the total revenues are projected, including the appropriation of \$6.8 million to fund the budget, which has been 6.8 that we have appropriated last year, and then the year prior.

Mr. Simons:

It brings our total revenue projection to 102,437,768. That's the revenue side of the budget. As we look at expenditures, it's important for everyone to understand that approximately 70 to 75% of a school district budget is in staff benefits and salaries, the benefits which include health insurance and retirement payments to New York State. So when we look at the budget for salaries, it's important that those are a reflection of the current number of employees that we have, instructional and non-instructional across the board.

Mr. Simons:

So we're projecting that the salaries will go up to 52.5 million next year. And we have identified those salaries that are associated with temporary staff that had been hired to support the requirements under COVID, of the state, which include the Full Remote Option teachers that are teaching in that Full Remote Option right now.

Mr. Simons:

And the teaching assistants that are supporting that Full Remote Option by supervising classes, and also the accommodations of staff that are working remotely. So we don't know whether or not the \$859,977,000 will reflect costs that we will incur in September, but we put it into the budget, but we wanted to separate it out. We don't know whether that will be a requirement. So there is the potential to save some of that money and pull it out of the budget at some point.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, we look at equipment, contractual expenses, our budget for supplies, software, remaining relatively flat, tuition are programs for which we pay for certain special education students, to attend out-of-district special education programs. We do provide full complement on those programs. However, there are some specialized needs that our kids can't be served through the district.

Mr. Simons:

We also collect money in terms of tuition, on the revenue side of the budget, because we offer more special education programs, than some other smaller districts. We do textbooks, BOCES services, which you did receive a copy of the BOCES budget at a prior meeting. BOCES will be coming to our meeting, when will it be?

Ms. Pangburn:

May 26th.

Mr. Simons:

May 26th to talk about Questar's programs, and then our benefits and our debt service. You see that our debt service payments are increasing. It's important to also emphasize that those debt service payments are offset by building aid, that flows into the district on the revenue side.

Mr. Simons:

So you see an increase there, it's important we know, we get revenue back on our prior capital projects. And again, this is a work in progress. Our budget is projected to be 103 million, point nine next year, with approximately 1,029,000 of those expenses, unknowns, because those are associated with current

hybrid and the core requirements. Peter's asking me to go back, because I'm not on camera. The future considerations, we have yet to finalize our state and federal aid.

Mr. Simons:

Typically the budget of state passed on April 1st, usually it's past weekend, right before April 1st. So we'll know that information in a few weeks. We also don't have guidance on how some of those federal monies will have to be spent, or how the state will distribute those plans. We have not yet finalized our health insurance rates. So our rates per prescription, as well as our health insurance plans are projected right now, we need to finalize those as well as other insurances that the district carries, we may anticipate increases in number of students may go for special education programs, policies, pay tuition for those programs.

Mr. Simons:

And we have yet to finalize our enrollment. So this is our starting point. We will continue to discuss the budget with our board. This is our first budget review session you will have update March 24th. We also want to remind members of the public that including our comments, that are board candidate petitions are available, or maybe some modifications regarding the petition requirements considered by the state.

Mr. Simons:

We don't know exactly that may affect the number of signatures that people need to obtain. We do anticipate or adoption of the proposed plan that will go out to the community, on April 14th and a deadline for the board candidates to submit the petitions is April 19th, unless the state changes the calendar and well, we'll come back to the third Tuesday of May, and the board election on May 18th.

Mr. Simons:

So that's our preliminary budget, sorry for the length of the presentation, but we should get all the information out here on for discussions. I'll take any questions, concerns, or ideas for the board at this time.

Mr. Buono:

We'll give Mr. Simons a chance to get back to this table. Is there any questions, clarification you need that we can provide board members suggestions on what's been proposed the priority items, things like that. So anyone right now? Mark.

Mr. Mann:

Or first of all, Jeff, thank you for the presentation. I just want to make sure that we're mindful of the circumstances that our country's still in. Prices are continuing to go up on the outside. I've seen a lot of high dollar items on our budgets. I heard words like increases in revenue, decreases in state aid. Just because we're getting some increases in revenue, I don't think that we want to just automatically go up and to spend it.

Mr. Mann:

It really wants to take a look at some of these high dollar items. They can decide whether that they're really going to be fiscally responsible for us to implement. It's going to take a couple of years for our

country to get back to some type of normalcy. Businesses aren't getting raises. People are still out of work.

Mr. Mann:

We need to be mindful of that. And I want to make sure that we're mindful of that before we start implementing a lot of these high dollar items. And we as a board spoke a couple of years ago at the Red Mill School about taking a look at a five-year plan and set the future boards up for success. Probably not this board, we're at that hundred million dollar budget that we discussed a couple of years back.

Mr. Mann:

And I think that's something that would really need to focus on. I know, preliminary number for right, I know what we're getting. I just really want us to take a strong look at, some high-dollar items that we're proposing here to see if that fact there's other ways, we can work out something else.

Mr. Simons:

I appreciate the comments, Mark. We are looking at the expenditure side of the budget, more closely. One of the factors that contributed us putting those, for example, those A items in there is we know that the need for the AIS is going to be there. And it may be a case where if we looked at some of the federal information that is available, some of those monies are... say that monies need to be spent on academic learning gaps and some of those other areas.

Mr. Simons:

So if we get those monies, there may be some of those federal towers that may not necessarily... I don't know this yet, flow into the general fund budget, maybe separate like our title 1 is. And so, maybe some of those programs, those extra staff that we're talking about, shift out of the budget and lower the budget number. Budget to Budget, that you talked about.

Mr. Simons:

The other thing is we are looking closely at years past audits and fund balance projection report, for example, that you've received this evening, and we'll have a better indication of available reserves, and monies that they give us a level of confidence to have a little tighter budget than what we've had in the past and we just don't have all that information.

Mr. Simons:

I talked a couple of times about trying to get that tax levy increase as close to zero as possible this year, because of the unique circumstances, we don't know whether it get there yet, but we're working on it.

Peter:

I appreciate it.

Mr. Mann:

As long as to be mindful. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

I beg your pardon, John?

Mr. Dunn:

Just a couple of comments, it was a good presentation. And Linda, I want to specifically thank you for crunching the numbers, this was a lot of work for you to this meeting, but it does give the community a really good snapshot of at least what we're thinking, and where we're trying to go in a realistic sense instead of an inflated number. And then we played the wrangling game at the end. I made a couple of notes so bear with me. My biggest concern as we move forward is what the impact of COVID is going to be to our students.

Mr. Dunn:

And how do we provide service and how do we pay for it? So I guess, do you think in this federal monies that could... has there been any conversation around summer schools to be targeted for aid able monies? Because it's, self-evident that the demand for service for our students is going to be probably double and triple what it has been, in the same period of a normal year. Do you think-

Mr. Simons:

The legislation itself does mention summer school, summer learning programs and other programs of that nature. So the program that Jim is going to share or talk about something similar to what was done in the past here in East Greenbush, but not as full scale as that.

Mr. Simons:

It could cost probably to \$150,000 to staff elementary, middle and high school, summer school programs. Some of those spendable dollars could be used for that. And we're hoping at that would be an add to this budget.

Mr. Dunn:

And the other factor that I was thinking about and knowing that we are going to have academic impact for all students to some degree, and when we go back to school, there's going to be an impact to the system, even on the social end of it, as far as our school psychologist, our social workers, and our counselors, because the re-entry burned for a lot of these kids, is probably going to be pretty severe, I would assume.

Mr. Dunn:

So in all the tracking that we're doing, if we could Jim, in the next couple of presentations, try to do a projection of some of those additional services that are going to be required to support the academic component of it because from where I'm looking at this, there are kids now, who never had the need for the social service interventions that are having them now. And it's not tied to academics because of the deprivation of social conductivity amongst our students. So I think we want to make sure of that... and part of our budgeting that we look at least start looking at that part of it.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:45:04]

Mr. Dunn:

At least start looking at that part of it, because then there's no surprise in the fall when those numbers go through the roof. It's easy to look at the grades and say, "Okay, we need this, this, and this," but I

think maybe if we pull our team of soft underbelly people to try to figure out what they're thinking in projection of what the mood of the future could be. So thank you for that.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, John. We'll stay in here. First, Frank or Deanna, any questions? No questions at this point. Okay. Very good. I think Michelle, I saw you.

Ms. Skumurski:

So, I do want to echo what John and Mark said. This is an excellent presentation at an unbelievably tough time. So thank you for all the work that you guys have done to put this together. I agree with John, I'd like to see, or at least investigate putting some earmark money in the high priority categories for future impacts related to COVID into our students, into regents. Those state tasks that we're going to experience and trying to get our kids back up for that in '21, '22.

Ms. Skumurski:

And then the second question I had was related to the FEMA money? And I think we said that we put it in for 2020... God, I'm sorry, 2021. Or do we put it into this budget, because chances are we're not going to get FEMA money quickly.

Ms. Wager:

We submitted an application for \$311,000 in December to FEMA. We have not received feedback on it. I did follow up with them and I received an email today. Telling us that basically the review may take a couple of months, and then they may come back with some questions. And then there is a 90 day period in which to answer those questions and submit it.

Ms. Wager:

So I have accounted for revenue in this year. As I said, the application was for \$311,000 and that was for expenses through September 14th, so we're currently working on our second FEMA application. So, in the fund balance projection, I included \$250,000 of FEMA money this year. And I do expect to at least if I don't have the cash by the end of this year, record it as a receivable, because it has to do with the expenses that we've received this year. That also is in with the COVID expenses.

Ms. Skumurski:

I do worry that we're not going to get easily reimbursable for that. FEMA's very, very tough on being reimbursed. So, I don't want to count it too much and then have it not happen so, just keep that in mind.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. I will. As I said, I tried to be conservative on that.

Ms. Skumurski:

Yep. Perfect. Thank you. And again, excellent job. I appreciate it. It really allows the community to start looking at what they're seeing, not from a financial impact only, but also what the kids are going to be able to experience when hopefully we call back full time in the fall.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks Michelle. JoAnn or Kathleen, anything? Kathleen?

Ms. Curtin:

Yeah. Again, excellent job, Jeff. I am a little concerned about the drop in the state aid, I know it's being made up this year, but I do think that's something we definitely need to keep an eye on because we're not going to always be able to count on federal money and that's something that they're definitely going to have to watch in the future. Because nearly 9% decrease in state aid would be detrimental in future years.

Mr. Simons:

I think Linda's hearing through as well was the business officials associates, and we're hearing through others that the governor may use some of those federal monies to project out next year and the subsequent year. Reserve some of those monies to deal with that very issue. Now, whether or not he would reserve those monies and tell us that we have a two year plan, which he has done in the past. He has done two years to eight projections in the past, or whether he would just hold that money in the state coffers and let us know later. We don't know about... We're here in his thinking is that not take all that federal money and lay it out to schools and other municipalities this year. Reserve some of that for future years, which would be called fiscal planning. You've heard that, right?

Ms. Wager:

I did hear that. And the other thing is it would be an amount that would be very hard to spend actually in a year and stay within our fund balance restrictions. So what I'm hearing is that this federal aid may apply to multi years, not just next year.

Ms. Curtin:

That's actually really good to hear because as several people put it, it's going to take time and it would be nice to have a little bit. You don't know that there's something coming for future budgets also.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Kathleen. Very good.

Mr. Buono:

Jennifer, do you have anything?

Ms. Massey:

I was just going to say, excellent presentation. Thank you to everyone who worked on it. Linda, you're doing a fantastic job of getting us set up with some of that additional detail and information. I echo a lot of what has already been said. In the NYSSBA alert that just came out about what was passed today. There is some information or preliminary information, right, that they will focus in on education loss. Part of that funding, but what that looks like and what that really means and how long it takes for them to get that out to all of us for the budget cycle, will be interesting but certainly something I guess that

we all need to keep an eye on as far as what that might mean for us. In your state in particular, and certainly here right on our local level, because we want to make sure.

Ms. Massey:

But I do agree that I think we need to look at some of the additional support services to students who are transitioning back into the classroom and what those needs are going to be. Not only for the students, but also the families. And making sure that we do keep that in mind and perhaps try to build in some additional resources where we can, because we know it will be a tough and challenging time for many.

Ms. Massey:

And just want to make sure that people have access and accessibility to those resources and services if we can at all build that in. Or even amongst some additional ways to support families. It's been a challenging year all around, but then again, we're asking people to once again transition, and it's a lot. It's a lot for the staff. It's a lot for the students. It's a lot for the families.

Ms. Massey:

So again, thank you very much. It was an amazing presentation tonight, again, during a very, very difficult time when we're also trying to work on all these other challenges. So thank you.

Mr. Dunn:

Thank you, Jennifer.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you Jennifer. JoAnn, anything?

Ms. Taylor:

Thank you for the presentation. We got a lot of detail tonight that we need, the community, very much appreciated. Just a quick question. Have we got any guidance regarding in-person voting?

Mr. Buono:

Question. Was in-person voting anything?

Mr. Simons:

We haven't received anything in writing. It was my understanding from my last conversation with the state school superintendents is that they expected that the normal way of voting in person will resume. It'll be on Tuesday, May 18th, and the school boards association and superintendents council have proposed that carbon related concerns be added as a permissible reason to request an absentee ballot that likely would occur. And you go back to a situation where people have to fill out an application for an absentee ballot. Receive the absentee ballot and then turn it in. But most people would vote in person. Linda, I'll ask you if you've heard anything different from ASBO?

Ms. Wager:

That's exactly what I've heard. And the other thing that I've heard in regards to we talked about the candidates and the signatures required, is that being that last year there was such a voter turnout. It

would've required something like 144 signatures this year. And so they're going back to the May 2019 vote. So that would have been for the following year. For the 19/20 budget vote. So I went back and looked at that and so we're going to require 34 signatures this year.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Linda. Just a couple of comments, I think as more information comes out, I'll be looking forward to the March 24th meeting. Everyone made some excellent points. I do want to also emphasize that John and Jennifer said about the social emotional needs of our students.

Mr. Buono:

Perhaps partnering with our county who was also received significant federal aid and direct payments to local governments, that we could work with them if there's monies available, for that process that we do now with our county social worker or mental health person, to do that. And also just continue to provide us with the data that's necessary to support the Academic Information Services. We did retain our AIS teachers this year for that purpose to help address those gaps, and if we're going to add on top of those existing positions, we just have to know what's the data support, the ongoing needs. We know the ongoing needs are going to be there. Just to make sure we have the data to support and target those [inaudible 01:55:42].

Mr. Buono:

I do worry that we have some populations of students too that have not been in a classroom since March of last year, and that's a significant number of our students went remote and have stayed remote. And that adjustment is going to be very, very significant for them. Any final thoughts?

Mr. Simons:

I was just saying board members if you have time and you can take a closer look at the budget proposal and you have questions, just email me or Linda, and we'll be happy to get the answers to help us prepare for the next meeting. We'll also typically hand out the line by line budget. We didn't do that because we were still waiting for some other information, but we expect that that would happen on March 24th. You'll get a chance to look at every category of budget line by line.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. And then now for those of you who have been here before, John or Mark mentioned it. We were used to separate budget workshops that show us some unbelievable numbers and we appreciate the sharpening of the pencil on the first go round. So thanks for that.

Mr. Simons:

Our projected costs are more closer to actual at this point. We're not actually where they might land, but they're closer to actual than what they typically are at this time of year. Is that accurate to say?

Ms. Wager:

It is.

Mr. Simons:

I always make sure. I always ask afterwards if what I'm saying is correct. Just confirming if [Inaudible 01:57:16] fine that's all.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks a lot for the presentation. Much appreciated. I'm looking forward to the next one.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Any other reports or presentations?

Mr. Simons:

I don't think we have any more at this time.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. Very good. Table motions, I don't have anything. Old business Board members, anything? Moving to our consent agenda. We have items A through J, any questions? Comments regarding the consent items? I don't see anyone. If there's none, I would ask for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Michele, second. Kathleen, all those in favor? Approved. New business, we've been patiently waiting. Jim, when the team at Goff, are they helping you out with this presentation?

Mr. McHugh:

Yeah.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you for your patience, and we'll move to new business, beyond or course proposal for Howard L. Goff, Jim and team. Thanks.

Mr. McHugh:

So in the spring of 2020, we asked the Goff Middle School administrative team to take a deeper look at the New York State Education Department middle school requirements, and see if there were some opportunities. Some areas where we may be able to enhance our course offerings to our middle school students. And the purpose was twofold.

Mr. McHugh:

We were looking for opportunities, but we also had a very challenging time over the last several years to secure certified teachers in particular areas. So, it was a scramble every spring to try to find certified teachers for some of our core subjects, and we wanted to put the district in a better position to be able to offer a wide variety of courses that are meaningful to our students and be able to have certified teachers to teach those classes.

Mr. McHugh:

So our administrative team went to work on it. This has been a topic that they presented to our education committee. They made a presentation to our committee for curriculum study, and they're going to present tonight. After tonight if there's any questions, we'd be happy to answer those questions, but it'll be on future board meeting looking for board approval so that we can move forward in that planning. So, at this time I turn it over to Jill Barker, Sarah Hoffman and Michael Neumann.

Ms. Barker:

Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the work that we've done to look at our course offerings. I have a short presentation on that. I'll take you through the steps in from the research that we've done and at the end we'll have our proposal.

Ms. Barker:

I'll present my screen. Okay. So as Mr. McHugh said, we were tasked with taking a look at our current book of course offerings and CTE, and the effectiveness of those courses. And in that review we followed up, three steps really. We worked with staff certifications and the curriculum options to talk with them about what other school districts might be doing in line with other school districts and if there was any opportunity that existed. We looked at our course offerings by grade level and then conducting a review with other neighboring school districts.

Ms. Barker:

When we did this, we obviously took a look at what we're offering and made sure that we were aligned with the State Education Department. We're certainly aligned our business-backed technology. We are actually offering an extra unit of art in our building.

Ms. Barker:

So what we did was we took at other area school districts to see what is their delivery model in CTE. And while each school district had a different delivery model, obviously each middle school's following the New York State guidelines. What we did see some opportunity for them to look at how are we moving differently. Then one of the things that we did find out when we dug a little bit deeper in the courses that are being offered in our neighboring districts is that there was an opportunity for us to offer some additional instruction in digital literacy and technology.

Ms. Barker:

This is just really a comparison to help us really get a feel for are we offering the right courses, the right grade level? Are we offering frequency? Should we look at maybe doing differently. What we found is that what we're currently doing and how offering our class makes sense for us at the middle school here. What we did see is that opportunity to expand our instruction to digital literacy, develop kids technological skills in the following areas. And these are just a few areas that we have an opportunity to really expand instruction.

Ms. Barker:

One of them is using the Google Suite applications. While our students are in Google Classroom. They do not get any specific instruction on how to use Slides, Docs or Sheets. So that was certainly an opportunity for us to really grow kids in that area, so that they would be able to utilize school skills as they become tasked with having to present and do presentation.

Ms. Barker:

Web page design, how to write an email properly. Many kids, they text. Keyboarding skills are still an area of opportunity for our kids they do a lot of finger typing on [inaudible 02:03:24]. Like talking to kids [about screen time and balancing that and you know if anybody's a student, they can get a lot of time on their computers or their phone. [inaudible 02:03:38] impactful from a physical wellbeing, but also social emotional wellbeing. we like to talk to kids about safety. Stephanie Russo has done some work on internet safety and

Ms. Barker:

Privacy and security and active things with kids, understand that when they put something out social media, it's there forever. And they would go along. What do we mean in terms of the law for them and for the parent. And there's a digital footprint out there and what that means. And also a lot about social media in middle school, as you know it's a time when kids are trying to figure out who they are and develop relationships and they have a lot of [inaudible 02:04:26] more about that.

Ms. Barker:

And then from a more educational standpoint, looking at news sources. Much of what they read. Sometimes they believe everything they read and talking about credible versus non-credible sources and being careful about believing everything that you read and what is a credible source versus a non-credible. And then in addition to that, continuing along with the pulley and robotics concept that we already have in our technology curriculum.

Ms. Barker:

So what we're proposing to do after seeing this opportunity to exist in our middle school is to offer a 10 week course providing 6th graders with foundational knowledge become academically [inaudible 02:05:12] pro-literate. [inaudible 02:05:15] performance and all the middle school discipline. What the course would do is emphasize 20% related ELA , Math science, and technology standards, but again, maintain the work that's already been done. There's been a lot of work done in technology, CTE curriculum development that we want to make sure that we hold on to, and then we make still hearing students technology 2 by keeping the coding and robotics the curriculum, but adding some additional items for kids to develop their digital.

Ms. Barker:

So this also, another thing this course does, is allows us to continue to support the [inaudible 02:06:03]. It supports the restructuring and the technology and engineering courses at Columbia high school by implementing digital computer field with middle school and also helps to restructure some of the high school courses. In speaking to Donna Shepardson in the business department at the high school, they tend to have to teach a lot of the skills that we can actually start teaching down in the middle school to allow them to focus on other areas and develop their courses there. Some of the fundamental skills, taking care of it at our level.

Ms. Barker:

The course is also be aligned with careers, most careers are asking for some computer accuracy. And then at the end of the day, we have a stronger knowledge base as they enter into high school by the offering of this course. What it also does is allows us to standard certification requirement. Right now we find it extremely difficult to find teachers that have a technology certification. And so this course will

allow us to look at three different certification areas. It allows us to look at technology, FACS or business. So that would expand our pool of applicants. And so that would open up the opportunity to acquire higher talent. And then it also address the issues we'd had in the past with technology.

Ms. Barker:

So what we proposing to do, we have a 20 week course offering in sixth grade, technology. We have Technology One and Technology Two. What we would like to do is take Technology 1 and keep coding and robotics, but also look at restructuring the curriculum and looking at some of that, developing the skills and the curriculum set around on competencies and digital literacy.

Ms. Barker:

So in summary, what we'll do is we will offer them fundamental skills that I discussed earlier. Allows us to expand our certification areas and it prepares kids better to enter into the high school. Sarah, Mike, is there anything that you would like to add that I may have not mentioned? Does anybody have any questions?

Mr. McHugh:

Just two quick comments. One, just recognizing the fact that strategically we revamped the middle school tech curriculum. That was done over a three-year period. It was done in a strategic manner. When we revamped that curriculum. We made sure that our teachers had the resources that they needed. There's a coding element in that middle school technology curriculum. We're not losing any of that.

Mr. McHugh:

So this is really supplanting, a little bit of computer literacy skills. It was really well received by faculty. Even our high school teachers assume that those skills are almost a prerequisite, that those skills have been taught and the students have mastered them by the time they enter Columbia High School and they're not. But when you go back and you look at our curriculum, they're never officially taught anywhere. So this would address that concern as well. Any questions from any of our board members for our middle school administrators?

Mr. Buono:

I think it's the right direction to go. And I just wanted to ask the question, do we have any input from either our parents or students and the transition from fifth to sixth, that these are the skills that, what is the focus going to be in terms of the skills? They going through a lot of obviously remote learning process, hybrid model, things like that students have picked up skills. I don't know what those skills are. Sometimes that's done it's hunt and peck, or using the mouse. Ms. Barker said they know Google Classroom where they moved to the applications within the Google Suite and how to really utilize them effectively for their learning and for their assignments. Do you have a sense of kind of where kids are? I mean, what their interest level is in something like this or parents? Just a question. It's something we can look into if you don't have information now, but just a guidance, a little more. It's definitely the right direction in my mind.

Ms. Barker:

go ahead.

Ms. Skumurski:

I just had one other question, Jill. It's like, so we're not eliminating anything that we're teaching them now. Right. But then how are we filling it in? Or what are we streamlining in our teaching that's going to give us room to put this in?

Ms. Barker:

John Cirincone who has done a lot of the curriculum work in CTE and has really developed the program in robotics is going to be working closely with Donna Shepardson at the high school and together they will put in a proposal into Mr. McHugh. And together, obviously with Administration being involved they are going to look at where they can streamline on what can be moved into tech 2 potentially and tighten up the curriculum. There is work to be done; it's a great question because where does that come from. They have already had a lot of conversations, proposals that they are submitting and are taking a look at the must haves and what they need to include in tech 2.

Ms. Barker:

To answer your question, Mr. Buono, we have not asked fifth grade students or parents about what they might like to see. What I really done is have a long conversation with Donna Shepherdson in the business department of high school. We've had numerous conversations about skills that are lacking when kids come into the high school. And so they spend a lot of time really teaching them some very fundamental skills and it could be [inaudible 02:12:00]. Whereas if they came into the high school with those skills already place, they could teach them other things..

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Right. Any other questions, board members?

Ms. Massey:

I don't even have a question. I just have a comment. Thank you for that clarification, Jill, for jumping into the next, I know we had that conversation at our committee meeting. I can't believe is that that last year already? Career having the dialogue and the discussion. I think this is a great option and a great plan for kind of putting some of these fundamental pieces at a younger age so that they can then have those foundation or foundational skills to be able to then build upon. And get them ready for that either career transition or college readiness that seems to be lacking.

Ms. Massey:

And the feedback that we've talked about at the education committee. So thank you for continuing to do the work and push these initiatives forward. To you and your team, I know there's been a lot of people involved in a lot of discussion and working with our consultant and Mr. McHugh. So thank you to all of you. Thanks. Thanks Mr. McHugh as well.

Mr. Buono:

All right, Jim, next steps.

Mr. McHugh:

I believe it will go on a consent agenda. Is that how that works? Mr. Simons.

Mr. Buono:

Yes, March 24th. Okay.

Mr. Simons:

And everything is on the budget.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Of course, Mark.

Mr. Mann:

That would be my question is there a budgetary increase in this?

Mr. McHugh:

There is not. So currently you're probably remember how many times we posted for a certified technology teacher. We've had no luck. And I know we've been in panic mode each spring. I know Mr. Newman was definitely in panic mode last spring. We actually have a certified tech teacher that came out of retirement that we had to file a waiver for.

Mr. McHugh:

So this sets us up better. We have to replace that current part-time technology teacher that we filed the way before and post again. But what it does allow us to do is we don't necessarily just have to hire a certified tech teacher. We could hire anyone that's certified in CTE to fill that part time. Just by embedding the 10 week digital literacy component into the grade six technology.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you very much. We appreciate the presentation and look forward the follow-up. The next item is our new business is the tax location or Alexis Diner. Any clarification on that?

Ms. Wager:

Now this has to do with a task litigation filed this year regarding the Mikyle corporation, which we all know as Alexis Diner. In the town North Greenbush. So they filed a litigation to request a reduction in assessment that would have resulted in a refund this year, approximately \$8,135 for this 2020 tax year. And under this proposed settlement, they've agreed to discontinue that along with pending in exchange for a reduction in assessment from 260,000 to \$240,000 for the 2021 school year.

Ms. Wager:

That will result in a refund of approximately \$2,180 and then a further reduction and assessment moving forward, starting next year to \$210,000. So calculating using the same rate as this year, the reduction and assessment \$210,000 would be approximately \$3,250 reduction for them. That would then be spread over the remainder of the tax levy.

Mr. Buono:

Any questions on the proposed tax litigation settlement?

Ms. Taylor:

I don't have a question, but I just want to point out that although this is a tax reduction litigation, that business is very supportive of our school district.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, JoAnn. Duly noted. So any other questions? Need a motion to approve the tax litigation settlement. Kathleen, second. John, all those in favor? All those opposed? Approved. Thank you very much. Let them know that's been approved by the Board. The next part of our agenda is to move to the public forum. Number two.

Ms. Wager:

There are no public comments.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Thank you. If there are any input, obviously we have our board email published and available for the public to weigh in on.

Mr. Buono:

Moving to our second Board forum. I'll start with our Board members that are virtual. JoAnn, we'll start with you. Anything, thumbs up. Good. Kathleen. Michele. You're good? Jennifer, I don't see you on the Board. Are you still there? She's left the meeting. Okay, then we'll start with Frank. Do you have anything?

Mr. Yeboah:

Nope.

Mr. Buono:

Nothing. Deanna? Mark is good. And John anything? Good. All right. And I am as well. Very, very productive meeting. Thank you everyone. A lot of information shared with our community regarding the school reopening, advocacy, budget, all tied it together.

Mr. Buono:

So we hope you found it productive for you as well. With that, we do need an executive session for purposes of discussion of personnel issues. We'll do a separate email invite to the Board members to attend that Google Meet. And we don't have this meeting with business after the Board. So everyone have a great night. Thank you for your participation and look forward to a more budget information in the coming weeks and information to share about reopening. So let's we get good news from the state as we move forward. So thank you very much. Have a great night. Thank you everybody.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [02:19:22]