

**Transcript of Board of Education Meeting  
April 14, 2021**

Mr. Buono:

I want to call the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M. Present tonight in-person, myself, Mr. Dunn, Ms. Muth, Mr. Yeboah, Ms. Curtin. Ms. Taylor might be a little late and will probably join us virtually. And virtually, we have Ms. Skumurski, Mr. Mann and Ms., Massey. So eight Board members here tonight, this evening.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you. Welcome to our April 14th board meeting. We'll have a budget presentation as well as our regular business. With that, please rise and join for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Group:

We 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:

To kick off the start of our meeting, we have our student council reps here from Columbia. I see Ryan. Hi, Ryan. And Katie. You're a little tiny picture at the bottom corner of my screen, but I can see you. Who would like to start?

Katie Asenbauer:

I will start tonight.

Mr. Buono:

All right.

Katie Asenbauer:

Since we just got back from break, we are moving into quarter four. We're just in the planning stage for a couple of our events. We had a meeting after school today to talk over those. Right now, we're considering having a Mother's Day flower sale in the beginning of May, along with our food drive for the backpack program. Hopefully, we're trying to figure out some sort of fun outdoor activity for our members to do since it's starting to warm up now. I will give it up to Ryan for the rest.

Ryan Seely:

Hello. We're also starting to prepare for student council elections, which will happen towards the end of the year. We're also starting to plan the Columbia awards ceremony and are beginning to consult with the administration to figure out what our options are and whether we can do it in person or if it will be virtual.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Thanks, Katie and Ryan. Any other comments. Did you guys have a good break?

Katie Asenbauer:

Definitely.

Mr. Buono:

Awesome. In the home stretch, right? Yeah. Any questions for Katie or Ryan? Well, thanks. You're welcome to stay at the meeting if you'd like. If you need to do homework, go ahead. Take care. Thank you.

Katie Asenbauer:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

All right. We'll now move to the public forum. As we have with virtual meetings, we have an email set up for the public community to email comments to. 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 President or Superintendent will contact the individual in the near 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. While the Board does not wish to infringe upon free speech protections, it must be stressed that the "Visitors' 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 may be considered defamatory or stigmatizing are prohibited and will be declared out of order.

Mr. Buono:

With that, like I said, we have email. We do have two presentations coming up, and we do have an opportunity for the public to comment later in the meeting. But I will now turn to Linda to see if there's any email .

Ms. Wager:

There are no public comments.

Mr. Buono:

No public comments at this time? Okay. I know there is a long awaited conversation that happened around re-opening. The guidance came out from the State Department of Health just Friday when we were on break. I will turn over to our superintendent to give a report on the guidance. Then the second portion will be a budget presentation. Then we'll welcome the board comments. I'll turn it over to Mr. Simons.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. We want to make sure that the public is aware of the changes in the New York State Department of Health interim guidance for K-12 schools. We recall that over the course of the last couple of meetings, we have been talking about the constraints of the current, the prior guidance, which indicated that our students needed to be socially distanced in classroom and other areas of the school, six feet apart. Through our advocacy work, both within in our advocacy committee and also with

Questar BOCES, we contacted state officials. Once the CDC had issued new guidance, we encouraged the state to adopt and incorporate the CDC guidance which permits school districts under certain circumstances and with certain considerations to move from six feet of social distancing to three.

Mr. Simons:

We were hoping that that guidance would come prior to the spring break so that logistically over the spring break some of the preparations and planning could occur, but we didn't wait until that guidance came. We did a lot of work in planning and logistics prior to the spring break, including having some faculty and staff meetings to make the faculty and the staff within our district aware that if these changes were to occur and if the state were to issue this guidance, we would be moving in the direction of bringing more children in for five days of in-person learning and implement where we could, the three feet social distancing requirement.

Mr. Simons:

As Mr. Buono had indicated, the guidance came from the State on Friday, the last real day of our break. On that evening, and throughout the weekend, myself and others began to review the guidance. When we got back to school on Monday and Tuesday respectively, we began to revisit our plan. I'm very encouraged by some of the opportunities that we will be able to implement under the new guidance. There are still some issues that remain unresolved. We are targeting the implementation date for bringing all of our children back to be April 26th, which is a week from Monday. At this point, there is a high level of confidence - I have a high level of confidence - that we will be able to at least bring all of our kindergarten and fifth grade children, whose families would like them to participate five days a week, in by that day.

Mr. Simons:

We're still working on middle school and high school, one of our obligations under the new regulations is to meet with parents, community members and staff and all of our stakeholders. As we make these changes, I've also scheduled for Monday evening a community meeting that Mr. Adam will probably be putting out tonight during the Board meeting, so that we'll have a community meeting on Monday. Any parents and any other community members that want to participate, that will be at 6:30. We will have an additional faculty and staff meeting, now that we know what the regulations say and we have a pretty good idea of how we would implement. We'll have those on Tuesday. We have a Board meeting on Tuesday, and I hope to be able to have a written revised re-opening plan to present to the Board on Tuesday evening and answer any questions of the Board. Hopefully the Board would approve those revisions in time for us to do what we need to do between Tuesday and the following Monday to implement.

Mr. Simons:

One of the requirements is difficult to implement at the middle school and the high school level, particularly at this time of year. We are into the fourth quarter, as Katie had indicated. Our student schedules that were developed in the fall provided students with an opportunity to take elective courses, AP courses, honors level courses and college credit courses at the high school. At the middle school, we have not only our core courses, English language arts, math, science and social studies, but we have technology and art and music. Some of those musics are optional, such as chorus and band. Then we have PE. As was reported on CBS6 news this morning, particularly for larger districts, there was an interview with Shenendehowa and Ballston Spa. It's difficult to change a master schedule at a middle

school and high school without being more disruptive of children and programs than what we're currently able to maintain in the hybrid. We're still looking at options.

Mr. Simons:

The difficulty is that the regulations require that if the community transmission rate is at a certain level within your county, middle school and high school students are required to be cohorted. Cohorted is something that has been included within the regulations since September as a recommendation in some cases, as a best practice so to speak, to mitigate the results of spread of COVID-19. Those risk factors have to be weighed against the educational considerations regarding how you go about structuring your programs. We made a conscious decision that we would offer a full complement of courses. That was a good decision to make, because we have kids that are on track for certain pathways to go to college and to study certain career fields. Without those courses, particularly as you move into your junior and your senior year, that would have been very difficult.

Mr. Simons:

Cohorting is required now under the regulations based on the community transmission rate in our county. Virtually in every county in New York State with two exceptions right now, and almost every area across the country, the transmission rate metric that is used by the CDC, which has been incorporated into the state plan, is more restrictive than what our state currently uses. It involves calculating the number of positive infection cases that occurred over a seven day period over the 100,000 people. If that infection number is high, according to the guidelines, you are placed in a certain zone. Our county is currently, under CDC guidelines, in a high risk zone, which means that we have more than 100 cases per 100,000 residents. Much different and somewhat contradictory to where we see our state using state metrics, Rensselaer County is only at 1.6% infection rate, which is a measure of the number of positive cases over the number of tests, not over 100,000 residents over a seven day period.

Mr. Simons:

We tried to discuss this issue with our County today with a better indication of how these metrics line up, whether or not there was any ability of the State to implement its own measures, which would be more permissible for our district to not have to cohort our students at this point in the year. We really did not get a firm answer. The County indicated that they would be looking at it and discussing it through their statewide organization. Back to our county meeting today, we had a webinar from New York State Department of Health that presented the plan. That webinar, I participated in it, Marissa Cannon, our Director of Human Resources participated in it. Many districts in Rensselaer County, including Craig Hanson from Questar, participated in it.

Mr. Simons:

At the end of the presentation, there were questions and the answers that had been previously submitted. One of the questions was what is your definition of cohorting? The definition of cohorting was defined as the assignment of students to fixed groups and that those fixed groups of students do not intermingle with other cohorts, other groups of students. What that means in a practical matter is every student who was taking a course scheduled at, let's say, our middle school or our high school would have to be in all of his/her classes with the same identical group of students. That is very difficult to do at the middle school and high school level. Think about kids who, for example, right now have already taken technology, and they're in music, the way that we do in the middle school. They would have to repeat a course. You think about situations where kids may not be able to be in an honors class

because the honors classes are based on students that meet a certain criteria that we believe that they would perform well in an honors class, AP courses.

Mr. Simons:

To break up that mix assignment of students right now when kids are almost ready to complete the school year is virtually impossible under the rules as established by the New York State Department of Health. However, I indicated earlier that we would be able to do K5. There are some options that we discussed today with our middle school administrators that are still being fine-tuned that may permit us to bring all of our sixth graders in.

Mr. Simons:

One of the contradictions within the regulations - and I did send an email into the New York State Department of Health, email that was established - if we have sixth graders in the middle school that seem to be treated differently under these regulations than a district that might have their sixth graders in an elementary setting in the districts who have K6 setting, the regulations say cohorting is required based on transmission rates at the middle school and the high school level. The basis of that is that the infection spread among older children is more prevalent than it is in younger children, but the grade level is not defined. So, we'll have a situation where a neighboring district might have sixth grade in elementary school. They won't be required to cohort their students and completely disrupt their schedules because their sixth graders are identified as elementary students. Ours are in the middle school, and so I've asked for clarification regarding that from the state.

Mr. Simons:

We have a level of confidence that the K5 will be successful on the 26th. We are obligated to continue to have discussions with our employment groups regarding that. We have a discussion planned for tomorrow the teachers union. We are still working on an option that would not require cohorting at the sixth grade level but would also require us to maintain the six foot social distancing. We think we can do that. It comes with some constraints and some things that I need to flesh out a little bit, have some further discussions that relate to employment groups. We'll continue to look at middle school and high school and see what we can do to offer more days of in-person learning to our middle school and high school kids in the hope that perhaps we're able to get, either from our County or our State, the different translation of the regulations that are currently binding school districts in the area of middle school and high school.

Mr. Simons:

The other thing that I'd want to say is that logistically, based on the work that our administrative team has done, our principals - We had a meeting this morning - we're ready to go. The only holdup logistically is we have some furniture on order. I'll explain that in just a bit. That furniture is expected to arrive later this week and next week in time for the deadline. We need some furniture because the cafeteria need to be set up in ways that maintain six feet social distancing. We cannot permit students under either the new regulations to eat lunch within three feet of one another. It has to be six feet or more. We have to maintain individual seating for students or spread students out over large tables. We can't have a group seating like we typically would in the cafeteria.

Mr. Simons:

When we began the year, we moved out of our classrooms, which are individual desks for example, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade. Desks went into the cafeteria to set up the individual seating. We need to maintain that in place right now, but we need individual desks for the intermediate grades, the three, four and five. So, we're doing a number of things. We borrowed from each other in our schools. The high school has been very generous with one arm bandit chairs. If we have kids in some elementary schools, not ideal, who will be eating lunch in a one armed bandit, but we're selling it as, "You're like a big college kid. You get to sit in the types of chairs that the college kids sit in."

Mr. Simons:

We're going to have to utilize portions of our gyms in some schools, the middle school in particular and the high school, who are extra seating for lunch. Part of the good news about this is the timing is right because it's spring, and physical education can be offered outside. Those spaces are available for alternative uses. Additional in some schools, because of the number of students in a particular grade level and the timing of lunch periods, there is a need for outdoor dining. Some of our students at DPS will enjoy the pleasure of some outdoor dining under a tent. I think that's the second grade. In some cases, PE will be outside. In inclement days at Goff, under a tent. That's what the need for the tent was. That's what the needs for the tent are.

Mr. Simons:

Logistically, equipment-wise, we are set to go in the areas of middle school and high school, the only challenge we foresee right now is the cohort requirement. We're going to discuss all these issues with our employees. We've already started some of those discussions. We'll present this information on how we're actually setting up the schools, to implement the three feet social distancing requirements to our parents and our community and to the board next week. I'm really pleased with all of the efforts that our principals have made to make these plans in a short period of time. In many cases, staff is being consulted with at the building level and providing us with some very good input on how to implement this new revised guidance.

Mr. Simons:

The other thing I would just like point out is transportation and busing. The guidance isn't much different than what has been in place since the beginning of the year. We were very conservative in our approach in September, having one child per seat and siblings sitting together. We aren't going to be able to do that with bringing every child whose parents want them to be in every day. We surveyed other districts that are of like size to us. They are doing the best that they can to maintain a level of ridership on their buses that is as safe as possible.

Mr. Simons:

We have, through Mark Noeth's efforts, looked at each bus route and what the numbers would be on each of the buses. It will be over the 22 per bus on a 66 passenger bus. In some cases, we may have to encourage families to bring their children to school, but in some cases that doesn't really help us because, for example, in Red Mill, there are a large number of parents dropping their children off to school already. We've been fortunate not to have too many problems with traffic being all the way backed up through Hampton Manor, but we are getting complaints. All of these things are tradeoffs, but with the windows open on the buses and the hatches open, the level of ventilation and fresh air is increased. We can do that now because it's spring.

Mr. Simons:

Everyone is still required to wear a mask. Everyone is required to wear a mask in the school. We're having discussions about whether or not mask breaks are even permitted now under the new regulations in settings where students are three feet. According to the state today, we are not, only for eating, if the students are sitting six feet or more apart, so we're having those discussions. It's a work in progress, but we feel pretty confident that April 26th we will be able to meet, at least with K5 coming in five days per week. It may wind up being K6, with further work on grades 7 through 12th..

Mr. Buono:

Thanks for the summary, Mr. Simons and the work of the administrator and the team of teachers and everyone's support. Because prior to this we were anticipating this guidance would come out. We did make those adjustments and changes and plans in preparation for guidance. Not going into what it would actually say, but I think all the work done and done quickly to get things in place. I'm really glad to hear you've been able to do that for our students, especially the middle school. If we can do that with the middle school. I have a high schooler. I think they've adjusted to the hybrid and would probably remain there. I think the middle school is really important that we try to address as best we can there. Any questions or comments for Mr. Simons, Board members? None here. Any up there virtually? No?

Ms. Skumurski:

So, Jeff, I wanted to thank you and everybody. It's amazing that we will be getting those elementary school kids back to be full-time. It's very exciting. The middle schools and high schools, are we still considering bringing them back in on Wednesdays every other?

Mr. Simons:

We haven't had that specific discussion yet.

Ms. Skumurski:

Could we consider that. Is that one of the options ?

Mr. Simons:

Yeah, we have some options at the sixth grade that would be better than that in terms of in-person learning. We'll be having some discussions about the virtual Wednesday with our teachers association later this week. It is still under consideration, but there might be some things we could do differently than just that every other week option. It's under discussion.

Ms. Skumurski:

It's tough because I really feel pretty bad for the seniors. I don't know if we can do something to get them to come in a little bit. Again, I understand we can't with the cohorting as much as we wanted to unless that changes. Those guys are really impacted. They were last year as well. I wish we could do something to let them see each other again for a little bit.

Mr. Simons:

We're working on every option we can think of. I'll give an example today. I emailed Jill Barker after I got off of the New York State Department of Health webinar, and I learned how they defined cohort. I was hoping we could more broadly interpret that definition, and we really can't. Marissa, do you agree?

Ms. Cannon:

I agree with that, Mr. Simons.

Mr. Simons:

I asked Marissa to listen attentively to see if there was any room there. There really isn't.

Mr. Simons:

I emailed Mrs. Barker, the principal of the middle school. I said, "Can you please work on an option for cohorting at least at sixth grade, see if that's feasible at the sixth grade." Within minutes she contacted Stephanie and said, "Can you meet with our administrative team?" I needed half an hour to finish my cohort report so I don't get in trouble with Governor Cuomo. Then I jumped on a meeting with Jill, Mike and Sarah. They already had a couple of things that they had done prior to the break. With some fine tuning and sharing that with the teachers union, for the sixth grade, I was encouraged that with that option, and I just wanted to discuss the particulars with the teachers about it first.

Mr. Simons:

The idea is we're trying to pursue everything we can within the rules that we have for all grade levels.

Ms. Skumurski:

I have to ask. I definitely want to appreciate all of the teachers involved, all the schools, all the administrators for helping to do whatever they can. We know that you're doing the best you can. It's really tough with that cohort at this point.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Anyone else? John?

Mr. Dunn:

Just a comment. Throughout all these conversations that we have, we do get some feedback from the public that they have the perception that we want to keep the kids out of school. I think that we need to periodically state as a group that we recognize how important it is to get the kids into school. Unfortunately, we also recognize that we are a government body that's governed by rules and statutes. Just reminding everyone that we're operating within the statute and within the rules that we as a local board cannot control because if we did have the control, we would take a more decisive action and not constantly waiting for decisions. I just wanted to make that comment that the planning and preparation that goes into this is immense and well thought out and I appreciate it on behalf of the community and the students, the effort that the administrators and all of the staff at the district make, but keeping in mind that we are governed by statute. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

One of the things that's frustrating you mentioned, Mr. Simons, and I listened to the webinar as well, is the metrics that they use and the indicators, like you said. Because there's really two indicators. There's the [inaudible 00:29:14] 100,000 but also the locality's for positivity rate. What they told us on the



webinar was you got to go with the higher of the two. You can go with the lower. Even though we had this very low percentage in the county when you look at it from cases per 100,000 persons, it jumps to a whole different level, and you have to use that. They're telling us you have to use that and not the one they give us every day that's on the New York State website. It's unfortunate, and maybe that will shift with some communication. Anyone else? Comments? All right.

Ms. Massey:

I did have a question.

Mr. Buono:

Yes, go ahead.

Ms. Massey:

I may have missed this, and I apologize, Mr. Simons, if you said it. You had mentioned that there would be the purchasing of furniture, additional furniture. When is that anticipated to be delivered?

Mr. Simons:

We've already purchased it. We have some now, and we have some coming on the 20th. Linda knows the details. I'm going to defer to Linda Wager on that.

Ms. Massey:

Okay.

Mr. Simons:

Linda has been great about getting stuff that was necessary, but also forcing people to dig out from their storage rooms and from their pods anything that we could use.

Ms. Massey:

Great.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you, Mr. Simons. We did order some additional thermal scanners for the high school and the middle school. They'll be in by the end of this week. As Mr. Simons said, we ordered tents. There are two at DPS and one large one at Goff. Those have been delivered this week. They'll be set up later in the week. We ordered 112 elementary school desks. Those are going to be in next Tuesday, the 20th. And we ordered 56 desks at the middle school level. Those will be in by next Friday. We ordered 260 three foot by three foot tables, 100 at the high school and 160 for Goff. Those will be in by this Friday. I think that covers everything.

Ms. Massey:

Thank you. Thank you very much. I too just want to thank everybody. As frustrating as it is, we'd all love to see the kids back at school, we do know we have to follow the guidance we're being given, and it's changing on a daily basis. I appreciate all the hard work and look forward to the kids, as many as we possibly can, back in school and working towards getting hopefully the remainder back as soon as possible.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Jennifer.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Jennifer. I just want to note too that Ms. Taylor has joined the meeting. Hi, JoAnn. Thank you. Any questions or comments? Joined late. Good. Okay.

Mr. Buono:

All right, if there's no other comments or questions for Mr. Simons, we'll move to the second report, which is the '21- '22 proposal budget presentation.

Speaker 9:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. Mr. Goodwin, where would you like me to stand?

Mr. Buono:

We need a microphone here.

Speaker 9:

Okay, but I [inaudible 00:32:27].

Mr. Buono:

I may have an elementary voice, [inaudible 00:32:32].

Mr. Simons:

While Mr. Goodwin is pulling up the formal presentation, I just want to begin by really showing a sense of appreciation for the New York State Legislature and the governor really. It's a unique circumstance for me as a superintendent, who is often working with a Board of Education here on advocating or in some cases complaining about the fact that we have been ignored in terms of the level of resource that we need from the state. This is a different kind of presentation tonight because our state legislature and our governor have really put schools in a much better position than we ever would have imagined back in August and September. We really were... Our worries were really twofold regarding students as we began this school year. The educational impact of COVID-19 on our district's abilities to provide services in the best manner possible for the kids. We've worked through that this year, and I think we have been successful under the hybrid.

Mr. Simons:

The second worry/concern was that we were going to be doubly hit, doubly punished, by very serious economic issues that could lead to a result in reduction of state aid this year, by 20% or more which is a lot of money, and even deeper cuts next year. Fortunately, the New York State economy, in terms of the revenue that the state was able to take in we bounced back. Through some of the reopening, in combination with federal support at the federal level for schools, our district is in a very good position to bring a budget to the community that we hope the community will support that maintains programs that in some cases adds services that we know will be needed to provide the academic support for the children as they come back and transition to full-time learning in class, hopefully in fall. And that we have also received some federal monies that put us in a position to look very carefully at what we can do

strategically over the next few years to make sure that we continue to advance learning and growth for our students but also make sure that we have money set aside for any potential future issues or emergencies.

Mr. Simons:

So, I want to thank the state for what it did on behalf of public schools. They put us in this position which is a much brighter situation than what we ever could have imagined back in August and September. During the presentation this evening, I want to highlight some of the accomplishments of our district, because the budget plan that we put together to report the community on May 18th not only reflects the expenses and the revenues that we have to ask the community to support in order to provide for our students, but it's also a reflection of values. What are the values of East Greenbush Central School District? We value collaboration. We value academic achievement. We value partnerships. We value the success of our students, our families and our staff.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, we want to highlight changes that we've made to the budget since May 10th. Mrs. Wager has done an exceptional job putting together the budget this year. Taking the feedback that's been provided, both from me and our administrative team, but also from the board and really taking a close look at what could be done on the expenditure side of the budget to make sure that as we are receiving this extra money we're also mindful of how we spend it. I really appreciate the job that Linda has done.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, we have revised our revenue projections now that we have the final state budget. That includes the expense driven aids as well as the foundation aid. We have updated our projected state and federal aid. We have looked at and want to present to the community some trends on our budget versus our tax levy versus the aid. There's a remarkable graphic that we want to show you, what a different position we're in this year than what we have been even just last year and the year before and important dates to be mindful in terms of the budget vote and the board election.

Mr. Simons:

So, we know that the board supports professional development of our staff. That has been an important priority. I will have to say quite honestly since Mr. McHugh has absorbed the professional development responsibilities among a number of other responsibilities in the scope of his job as the assistant superintendent for instruction, the level of participation in our professional development and the level of engagement of our staff in those opportunities has increased remarkably. We thank Mr. McHugh for his leadership.

Mr. Simons:

We've got a new initiative this year, which is going remarkably well in partnership with University of Albany's literacy department, which is world renown. The University of Albany's education program is world renowned in the area of literacy. We have consultants from the U of Albany working with our teachers on best practices to enhance early literacy instruction. They're particularly focused on struggling readers. That's something that we are able to do through resources that are provided to the district, both down to federal and state resources. I think we're using some federal resources to fund that program.

Mr. Simons:

In terms of accomplishments, I'm going to brag a little bit about our kids if that's okay. We want to highlight the fact that we have four, not just one but four, National Merit finalists within our district. Sophia Culver, Simon O'Connor, Joseph Vitali and Clara Xin are finalists for the National Merit finalists in that scholarship. That is not something that comes very lightly. That's something that is not easy to do, but it is a remarkable accomplishment. We are proud of those students for achieving that. Additionally, during the course of this year, we have honored our special education department on what a great job they did last spring. Our special education teachers, our service providers, our counselors, our social workers, our occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists. Remarkable job they have done. School psychologists. Supporting our students. Particularly it's hard to deliver special education services virtually and remotely. Our teachers have done a professional and remarkable job.

Mr. Simons:

We boast about our sports teams. We have again under difficult circumstances this year, we've had our boys and girls bowling teams go undefeated and winners of the Suburban Council Championships. Congratulations to our bowling teams as well. Our food services department, what a wonderful job they've done since March. We have an interesting situation right now. We are serving meals when the kids are in school, and we have to serve meals when the kids are not in our schools and make sure that we have access to breakfast and lunch for our kids that might need it. Over the course of this year, the federal government and the state approved free lunch programs for all students in all districts, regardless of all eligibility requirements that have typically been in place. The net effect of that is more kids are getting lunch, and it's more service required of our department under Phyllis Sanford- Krug, and they do a remarkably good job.

Mr. Simons:

Moving to dollars and cents. Our budget is a balance of revenues and expenditures. We gave you some projections on March 24th. We were projecting on the revenue side of the budget that we were planning about \$96.2 million in revenue. We would appropriate about the level of appropriated final balance that we have appropriated in the last few years, 6.8 million. Additional state aid has come in at almost 1.2 million. That includes the foundation aid combined with our net effect of our expense driven aid such as BOCES aid and transportation aid. We're happy to say, and I'll probably say it three or four times during this presentation, we recognize that COVID-19 has had an impact on the finances and the economics of the region. We are happy to say that the proposed tax levy increase of 1.28%, which is at the cap, has been eliminated under the budget. We are adjusting the revenue that we would gain from the tax levy down 752,029. Basically, we are not going to raise... We're not proposing that the tax levy be increased next year. We're proposing a 0% tax levy. That's a subtraction of the \$752,029 that we otherwise would have yielded through the 1.28% tax cap.

Mr. Simons:

That brings our revenues to an estimated \$103.5 million. On the expense side, since our last meeting, we have made some adjustments. We think that we should be able to provide our parents the ability to register their children for school online for a couple of reasons. One, our pupil personnel services general handles that responsibility, and people have to come to the high school. They have to check in. They have to walk to the PPS office, and they have to register their children. We think it's more convenient for them to be able to do this online. We will still offer in person registration. Additionally, that department has been through transition. There have been changes in the clerical assignments

within that. We think we want that department to focus more on special education services to kids. This will not eliminate that responsibility from that office, but it will reduce it by giving our parents the ability to register their children for school online. That's an enhancement of our existing system, how our school information system.

Mr. Simons:

We made some additional salary adjustments since the last meeting. We've adjusted some of the salaries associated with the superintendent's office, which is my salary and my secretary's. Both budgeted items were not as in line with the actual salaries and costs. We looked at our insurance coverages, and we were able to adjust the estimate of what those insurance coverages would cost of about \$134,000. So, we've continued to look at the expenses side of the budget and to adjust it, to rebalance the revenues that we're receiving.

Mr. Simons:

Here is a summary slide of the revenues that we just reviewed. Again, I would highlight that the negative 752,000 is a reduction of the 1.28% tax that we increased down to zero. Since March 10th - March 10th we presented the budget for the first time - we were proposing a budget of 103,994,286. The board is aware that summer learning and addressing the learning app is a program that we are going to have in place to make sure that our students who are coming back to school in September are as best prepared as possible. We budgeted within the general fund budget \$200,000. We may not spend that. We are still looking at how those federal resources can be spent. That may be money that is saved within the general fund budget to either adjust next year's budget. Right now, we've kept it in the general fund budget.

Mr. Simons:

On April 14th, we are recommending, which is today, we're recommending the additional online registration program. On the addition side of this, we've added 242,722 of items which includes the summer school and the online registration. We've also reduced since March 10th budgeted monies for professional development at 45,000. We've made adjustments to our salary line based on individuals who are retiring at a higher salary and replacement cost with somebody who would be coming into the district with a lower end of the salary scale. We pulled monies for equipment, about \$118,000 of the budget. We've adjusted the salaries of the superintendent's office. And, we have renewed our liability and disability insurance. On reductions, we've reduced about 701,000. Around \$450,000 to \$460,000 met expense reduction when you take those additions and reductions to the budget.

Mr. Simons:

Our proposed budget is 103.5 million , which is about up 458,000 459,000 dollars less than what we were proposing on March 10th. This is a summary of our state aid. I'll just point out a couple of highlights. We've been talking about foundation aid since I arrived and long before I ever came. I know that there were big concerns prior to me coming about foundation aid and gap elimination adjustment. This is the first time, I think, that we can say that we're on the right track. We've got 6% increase in our overall foundation aid. According to State Aid planning, there are some districts that legislature and governor have indicated have that underfunded. East Greenbush is one of those. There's an effort right now to bring us up to the level of funding under foundation aid that is required by law over the next three years. This is perceived as the first step in that process. Whether or not that will be maintained is a

question. We hope that it will. But, it's something that we've been asking to be done for many years, and our efforts are paying off.

Mr. Simons:

We talked about the fact that the governor had proposed at his executive budget, the consolidation of all of our expense-driven aids into the services aid. Well, that has been eliminated. We zeroed that out, but those monies are really represented by the BOCES aid, the excess high cost aid, private access cost aid, hardware and technology. All of the categories of expense-driven aid, transportation that we're used to seeing. That's important because what we spend this year, we get aid in that particular formulas next year, and we want those aid levels to reflect our actual expenses. Services aid proposal was really a cut and not just a consolidation. Our building aid is scheduled to decrease slightly. I know we're in the middle of a capital project, and we submit our capital project final cost reports to the state, and we yield back approximately 72% in building aid. For every dollar that we spend, it's 72 cents of state money that comes back to help us to continue to fix and repair our needed issues with our facilities.

Mr. Simons:

First time that I'm aware of that districts that were not considered to be high needs districts were provided with pre-K allocation. We have to talk about that hopefully in a future meeting. Pre-K monies of 583,200 have been provided to the district. It does not necessarily have to be spent by September. We're going to work within our administrative team to bring some ideas for pre-K to the board for consideration. We have talked about applying for other grants in the past. We were unsuccessful because we didn't meet the needs criteria. Now universal pre-K seems to be truly universal in that districts are actually going to get the money that may not necessarily be target districts because of the social economic indicators. We are projected higher access cost aid flowing into the district because of the services that we are getting through Questar BOCES to file for state monies that we are eligible for certain types of services, particularly for our students with specification needs. Speech therapy, physical therapy, other types of services that kids receive are eligible for reimbursement from the state.

Mr. Simons:

Outside of our general fund budget that we're proposing tonight, we are also receiving federal revenues. We are still reviewing with other districts with Questar and with the state how these monies are permitted to spend and the best way to make sure that we use these resources in ways that put our students in the best position possible to be successful, but don't put our district in a position that when these monies are gone we have a lot of recurring expenses. The worst thing we could do as a district is to rush into spending these monies. We want to be careful about it. We don't want to incur a lot of long-term obligation. How can we best get our bang for our buck? This is \$7 million of federal dollars that we're getting through the CARES Act, which was approved in December and New American Rescue Plan funds.

Mr. Simons:

We've started conversations about how we might be able to work regionally on some of the issues, that I know are concerned with, such as mental health. I had a very good meeting today with Commissioner Kat Coons of Rensselaer County Mental Health, Dr. Cruz and some of our neighboring districts about how we might pool resources to be able to... That was initiated by Mr. Buono. Mr. Buono sent me an article from another area of the state and said, "Maybe we ought to talk about working with the county

on some of these mental health services because of sustainability concerns." I did have that meeting, and it went really well today and have some ideas that we're putting together.

Mr. Simons:

These are federal funds. These monies cannot be used to plug into the district's budget and reduce taxes. They have to be used for the specific purposes that are outline within the legislation. Those purposes in general are address learning gaps in students that have been caused by COVID-19, COVID related expenses that will enable the district to remain fully open and offer in-person learning K12, summer programs, mental health. All the things that we're worried about, we can get federal resources, but we want to do it cautiously. There are also some ways that we could use some resources strategically to offset future expenses that may evolve and maybe setting aside some monies that would help us down the road. We're just starting to have a conversation, so we really don't have any specific plans at this point.

Mr. Simons:

In terms of trends, we've shared this graph before, but we added an additional line. The budget changes that occurred over the last five years are reflected by the blue line. We monitor how much is our overall budget increasing. We saw last year, for example, that our budget increased 4%. This year, with some of the expenditure reductions that we've made and some of the adjustments we've made, we've been more conservative and reduced our budget increase from this year to next year to projected 3.77%. The red line represents the tax levy changes. We have been very conscious of living within the tax cap. For example, last year you see that our tax cap was a little bit over 1.5%. We raised tax levy 1.5%. This year because of the resources and we cut expenditure, we're proposing 0% tax increase. The green line has been added to show what has happened with foundation aid.

Mr. Simons:

The story that we've been complaining about or talking about over the last few years is look at how the green line is going down, going down, going down. In fact, two years ago we were in the lowest tier of districts in terms of the amount of state aid we received. This year, we did not get an increase over last year. We're frozen at last year's level. Now it's gone up 6.12%. So, we use those resources to be able to offer the community the 0% tax increase in combination with our expense reductions.

Mr. Simons:

So, key votes, we are voting on the budget, which is 103.5 million. There is a separate proposition to use monies that have been legally set aside by the board if approved by the community for the replacement of our bus fleet. We have four open board of education seats, and we're hoping that we will have four candidates for four seats. The budget vote occurs on May 18th. If the budget passes, we'll move into planning for next year. We'll also have the option to rework the budget and to submit the budget for a second vote or to adopt a contingency budget. We're hoping that the community will come out to vote this year. We had a really great turnout last year through the voting of the written ballots, mail-in voting. This year will be in person unless someone requests an absentee ballot through an application process. The state has added to the criteria, which would make a registered voter eligible for an absentee ballot for COVID related concerns. People can vote in person and people, under certain criteria, can vote through the absentee ballot.

Mr. Simons:

Two days from now, April 19th, is the last day for board candidates to turn in packets for running for the board. On April 20th, we will draw for ballot positions. That is done by the clerk. The order in which names actually appear on the ballot, we'll have a public hearing virtually from the Columbia High School on May 5th. If we have more candidates than slots, then we will have a meet the candidates night. Our budget will be presented on the 18th. We also have several meetings that are scheduled for the board to receive that schedule to meet with parents and all of our schools, community members, and we do have a schedule presentation to the East Greenbush town board.

Mr. Simons:

With that, that concludes our presentation. We hope that the community come out and support the budget. We feel that the budget for our district is in good shape for next year. I'll take any questions or concerns at this time that the board may have. Again, I want to thank Ms. Wager for all her work.

Mr. Buono:

We'll just wait for the presentation to come down so the board members can see and ask any questions. While we're waiting for that, any questions or comments from the board members here in the room this evening?

Mr. Dunn:

Just a quick comment. I wanted to thank Linda for putting together a budget that is easy to read and really comprehensive at the same time. I wanted to note that when I was reading and going over the material, the fact that we're still looking at reductions is a really good thing, and I appreciate the diligence for that. I think it's really important the community to understand that. Even though we're getting these aids that we still have to be mindful of the money that we're spending and the way we're spending it and trying to be as efficient as possible while providing service.

Mr. Dunn:

The second comment I have is when we're talking about COVID related expenses from the federal government, I like the way that you framed that, because I think it's important for us to sit back and take a hard look, look at our data, and really try to fill in the gaps with this money. There's going to be some substantial education gaps for our kids. I think that when we move forward to develop the programming, hopefully it won't be a long term that we can provide the resources necessary for all students. I think that when we move forward with this, targeting things that really have a broad reaching effect for everyone, because looking at the way this thing is shaking out, it's not just kids with certain needs. It's all kids are going to have a deficit in regards to this. I think when we spend that money, we try to be as broad with it in the application as we can, being very specific at the same time. Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, John. Kathleen?

Ms. Curtin:

I want to say thank you for the budget. I don't think I've ever smiled that much during a budget presentation. I'm very happy to see the advocacy has paid off and the state has stepped up and really helped us when we need it and so with the federal government. I agree with John that we have a lot of work still to be done, and thank you for putting so much effort into finding the places right now that we



really need the money and putting the resources where they're needed. It's a great, great budget, I'm very happy.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Kathy. Mark or JoAnn? Jen? Comments? Thumbs up? Ok, we'll move on.

Mr. Buono:

Appreciate the work that the administration did with the budget. I think it shows that the board and district has been very strategic over the years to make sure that the conservative, to help the district to plan over time and utilize reserves that we put aside over time, strategically like you said, and also to continue to make sure that we have the funding long-term. That's really the critical reason that we'd love to see this sustain. As you can see from the graph, about three points there. Foundation, how the state really tried to shift a lot to the lowly tax player from previous support we had, which is very difficult over time and resulted in a lot of tough decisions for districts.

Mr. Mann:

I think as we continue to look through what our needs are over the course of the next two to five years, we can then plan out and make sure that we are meeting the needs, as John said, and that we can continue to provide the programming for our students that the parents expect to make this and continue to make this a very attractive district to move into, continue the growth that we've seen when all of the districts are flat or declining, and maintain the programs that improve the programs that we've provided to our students and opportunities for our staff to teach it and learn through professional development. Very pleased about the budget. It is obviously a large budget. We're a large district, but we provide a lot of services and opportunities for children and our families, and I think the community will. I hope they do come out and support the budget.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Mark. All right. If there's no final comments, we'll move to the next part of our agenda. Discussion items. I don't have anything. Board members, do you have anything? Moving onto committee reports. We'll start with Marissa.

Ms. Cannon:

Our Appendix D committee met on Tuesday, March 23rd. We had our meeting with looking at the differences between Science Olympiad, head coach, assistant coach and tech coach advisor. Alison Hosier provided a great background and comprehensive overview for the committee to review, and we now have a better understanding how each of those responsibilities are delegated within the team. We provided an overview of the AV director position at Goff with the help of Mrs. Barker. Then Mr. McHugh, Mrs. Taylor and myself worked to complete a draft spreadsheet with the remainder of the club's tiers. We presented to our EGTA committee members for their review and feedback. We were looking to seek Scott Halliday's advice on the music stipends. It is at this committee meeting that we would invite him to a future committee meeting held in April to ask a little bit about what the advisors are responsible for and what those outside applications look like.

Ms. Cannon:

We had a long discussion regarding Ski Club and some of the responsibilities as it pertains to that club advisor's responsibilities on the bus and also on the mountain and Drew had agreed to reach out to the

advisor to get the committee a little bit more information about that specific club. We scheduled four additional meeting dates. We have dates that we're going to be meeting weekly through April 2021. We actually had a meeting today, and we are about 95% done with the tiers, so we have made a lot of good progress. We only have three club stipends right now that we are looking further into. Hopefully we will have consensus at our next meeting on April 20th. We will be looking to assign compensation to those tiers. So, we have tiers one through five. Once we have assigned the compensation, we will ensure that within the budget parameters, and we will have something to present to Mr. Simons.

Mr. Buono:

I want to thank the committee, Marissa and Jim, for your leadership and working with the community. Thank you. Good to hear the progress that you made. Any questions for Marissa? None? Very good.

Mr. Buono:

Moving onto Linda.

Ms. Wager:

I have no committee at this time.

Mr. Buono:

No committee. You've been doing yeoman's work trying to get the budget going, so I appreciate that. I should say yeowoman's work. Mr. McHugh? Jim?

Mr. McHugh:

Just a brief update with regards to the New York State testing program. It grades three through eight ELA testing. It will take place next week on Monday April 19th, our 8A students in grades three through eight will take the ELA assessment. In Tuesday April 20th, 8B students will take the ELA assessment. Communication went home to all of our remote families, inviting them in and giving them the opportunity for their child to be tested. It is required that students take that assessment in person. We have right now 44 remote students that are coming in on Wednesday, April 21st, to take the ELA assessment. A good response. The principals have done a great job preparing. We're ready to go next week.

Mr. Buono:

I think that's important to know, because I think that the date that we gathered from the information from those assessments is so critical for us as we plan and design our instruction for the future in meeting where those gaps might be, especially this year and in future years. So, thank you for that. Any questions for Jim? No? Okay. Jeff?

Mr. Simons:

We had a safety committee meeting on March 29th. We had several topics that we discussed. This year we've established a practice at meetings of just getting some feedback from various schools and employees regarding how the health and safety protocols are going regarding COVID-19, such as the temperature checks and the screening for symptoms and return to school protocols. By all reports, those safety measures are going very, very well and very smoothly. We've had a report from both Sergeant Condo and Deputy Sheriff Russo regarding the activities of our school resource offices, who

continue to engage in educational and intervention activities to help our students and our families. Our nurse coordinator, Tammy Cosgrove, gave a report on some of the activities that are occurring with our nurses.

Mr. Simons:

We shared the results of the school climate survey that was done earlier this year that looks at indicators of positive school climate. We have a sub-committee of that committee to look at those survey results. I plan to present that information to the board in May formally, so the community can see that. Overall, our parents, our employees and our students, fifth grade through 12th grade level, really feel strongly that and agree with the fact that our school offers a very accepting, welcoming and safe environment for everyone. We have prioritized some areas that we feel for the growth could occur, areas such as intervention of mental health at the middle school level particularly jumped out at us as still positive but an area that needs some improvement. Bullying is a growing concern, not only in East Greenbush but in all districts, even online activities. While overall the stakeholders indicated that they didn't think it was an excessive problem, they thought there was more work that we could do to focus on bullying and certainly a resource officers and others have stepped up to. It would be to address those issues.

Mr. Simons:

We want to do a better job of making sure that all of our staff that may not be as active in some of our district committees, recognize how the district goes about evaluating success of programs or the programs that may need to be changed. Those are the three areas that jumped out at us [inaudible 01:09:34] more on the overall, particularly as we implement this climate survey during the COVID-19. I was very pleased with the response of our staff, our parents and our students.

Mr. Simons:

Additional, Mr. Mann, our board vice president, Mark is out there. If he wants to add anything more. He participated in a meeting with law enforcement as well as representatives from companies that provide the bus stop cameras. We know that there's a concern about people violating the law and passing our school buses. There was a meeting held about how the program worked. Then there are further efforts that are being made to bring this forward to county representatives because the county law would be required in order to really implement it. I'll ask Mr. Mann if he, I know he's out there, if he wants to add anything. I was not at that meeting, but Mr. Mann was, and he facilitated the discussion at the safety committee.

Mr. Buono:

Mark, do you have anything to add? Feel free.

Mr. Mann:

Thanks, Jeff. No, nothing at this point. I'm waiting for the county to get back to me on dates, so that the bus company can make their presentation to the county officials. I just talked to one yesterday, and the three that are actually pushing behind it are trying to all coordinate when they can get together today. I don't know if anybody has seen the news, but Albany County Legislature passed their county law yesterday. So, once the Rensselaer County folks see that, they'll, "Look, okay, we've got to get moving as well." So, it's moving. Hopefully we'll be able to set up another meeting with the bus patrol company here in the next week or so.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Mark. One other item we talked about wasn't formally on our agenda, but we asked Sam Beardsley to give a report. Sam is with Questar health and safety risk management. Questar is conducting our lead testing, which is required by New York State law. We're almost finished with that process. Where we have found higher levels of lead within the water, there was an actionable level of 15 parts per billion. That doesn't mean that if one time somebody drank water out of that faucet it was a problem. We didn't really find any water fountains that were used that tested high, but we did find six in some of the school bathrooms and some of the kitchen areas where testing indicated that remedial action was required. When that happens, we put signs on the faucet locations that it's not drinkable water. We test, we flush, we retest. In some cases we have to replace fixtures, faucets. In some cases going back into the piping.

Mr. Simons:

A lot of the work was done already through the capital project to do the more expensive stuff was part of this. We are required by law that within a certain period of time, I think it's 10 days of the results, to put that out in the public. We've put it out in the public, and we've only received one question/concern from one parent right now, and we responded to it. We are in compliance, and we are following the regulation regarding that testing of water.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you. Any additional questions for Mr. Simons? I want to thank Mark. I think it was a couple of years ago when the school board, we installed the camera in the buses, bringing that idea full circle and working with our local community law enforcement and safety folks to get that to fruition and see those things happen so we could make that happen. Appreciate your work on that, Mark. Moving to the next part of the agenda is the minutes. All members were present except for Mr. Dunn. Any provisions to the minutes? Seeing none, any motion to approve the minutes? Kathleen? Second? Deanna. All those in favor? All those abstaining? One. Perfect.

Mr. Buono:

Moving onto regular business. Is the adoption of the proposed budget. We've had conversations about the budget. So, a motion to move the budget forward? JoAnn. Second? John. All those in favor. We'll move it forward. Thank you, everyone.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you to the board.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Jeff and Linda. Resident students with disabilities. Any questions or comments? Need a motion to approve that. Deanna. Second? Frank. All those in favor. Approved. Approval on the East Greenbush Central District public health emergency continuation of operations plan. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr. Simons:

This is a requirement of the state that came into place this year that school districts are required to have public emergency plans for public health issues such as COVID-19. We worked with Questar on a

template that they provided for us, and we revised it based on our own needs. Marissa Cannon, Jeff Tooker, Sam Beardsley, myself took a look at it. We were required by the regulation to share it with our priority units. We did. We did not receive any feedback from any groups with the exception of SRP. No real specific concerns about the plan, but just wanted to make sure that as we implement any such plan that no provisions would be in conflict with the contract. That was the only general concern. We assured them that that wouldn't be the case.

Mr. Simons:

It's really a document that's required by law that can be fine-tuned to specific situations that we may encounter. I did miss the April 1st deadline. I apologize for that. Posted it on our website. It should've been on the agenda for March 24th. That was on me. I'll ask the board to approve it this evening.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Any questions or comments for what's known as the COOP Plan for a public emergency? Seeing none. Motion to approve that? Mark. Second, Jennifer. All those in favor? Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Moving onto spring higher risk sports. It looks like boys Lacrosse is the only one designated as such.

Mr. Simons:

That is correct.

Mr. Buono:

I see. Mr. Leonard is present. Any comments, Mike?

Mr. Leonard:

No, but very excited to get spring sports going.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. You're working hard. Thank you. Your team of coaches. Any questions or comments on spring sports, Lacrosse? Seeing none, need a motion to approve that. Kathleen. Second? Frank. All those in favor? Approved.

Mr. Leonard:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

You're welcome, Mike. Good luck to the Lacrosse team. I have a question. Why is girls Lacrosse not a high risk sport, but boys Lacrosse is?

Mr. Leonard:

Because boys Lacrosse is a little bit more high contact sport. Girls have more of a safety zone around them. So, girls shouldn't be coming in as close contact as the boys.

Mr. Buono:

Right, Mike?

Mr. Leonard:

Yeah.

Mr. Buono:

All right, thanks for the clarification. Reports and presentations of the superintendent? Change of policy first reading.

Mr. Simons:

This policy was spoken about at the last board meeting. It's a report out of our policy committee. It is a requirement of federal and state law to have a revised policy on school district officers and employee code of ethics. This applies to ensuring that there are no conflicts of interest related to an administrator or member related to awarding the federal grant. That was the only change that we did. The change has been recommended by the School Boards Association policy committee and discussed this and indicated no concerns.

Mr. Buono:

Perfect. Any questions or comments on the policy revision? I need a motion for the second reading. Wait until the second reading?

Mr. Simons:

Yeah, I think so.

Mr. Buono:

If you do have any comments for Mr. Simons and the policy committee, let them know. Then if there's any changes to that, it is a recommended policy by school boards.

Mr. Buono:

Tabled motions? None at this time. Old business. I don't have anything. Board members? Anything? No? Okay. Moving onto our consent agenda. We have items A through L. Any comments or questions on the consent agenda?

Mr. Taylor:

Mike, I'd like to pull item B for a separate vote please. My husband is listed as one of the coaches.

Mr. Buono:

Item B. Anyone else? Questions? Comments? Seeing none, I just want to make one comment. I want to thank Stewarts again for their support of gifts to our district. Very substantial financial support. I want to thank the Stewarts foundation. Very much appreciated. With that, we need a motion to approve by consent items A through L with the exception of item B. Kathleen. Second? JoAnn. All those in favor? Approved. Moving onto item B, we need a motion to approve item B. John? Second Michelle. All those in favor? All those abstaining? JoAnn, one. Very good. Perfect.

Mr. Buono:

New business, board members? Anything? Public forum number two. As we have gone through quite a bit of information with our reopening guidance information and the budget, Linda, do we have any comments from the public?

Ms. Wager:

We do have one comment, one question. This is from Ann Marie Bailey. Mrs. Bailey says, "Hello. I have two children, kindergarten and first grade currently attending Bell Top. First, I would like to thank Mr. Simons and the board for your continued efforts to get the children back to school full-time. Regarding the new regulations, do you anticipate that they will carry through to the 2021-22 school year? For example, kindergarten through at least fifth in school full-time?"

Mr. Simons:

I believe, unless the COVID-19 situation gets bad and it's not likely to because of the vaccinations, and we're seeing an opening up in a number of different areas. If I were a gambler or predictor, I don't believe that that will happen. The regulations at they stand right now, the document that I talked about earlier, I think what's happening is districts don't know whether the Department of Health or whether the Department of Education will issue anything different between now and September. So, we're planning on utilizing these regulations to plan scenarios for September. We are in a situation right now where we have made the adjustments, at least at the K5 level to have the kids attend in person five days a week. Kindergartners were brought in several weeks ago. First grade and now second grade is in as of Tuesday. Three, four and five will be in on the 26th.

Mr. Simons:

I don't anticipate that changing. I do think that we may still need to offer full remote options to those families that need it. I don't see at the K5 level us moving backwards, so to speak. I do hope that the regulations will be reviewed and that they will enable us to simply open up K12 with the three feet social distancing requirement without any caveats. That's what I would hope for and advocate for. I don't mean to [inaudible 01:23:21]. I don't believe that the cohort requirement in and of itself without the other mitigation and layered strategies that are required by the requirement is really going to do anything more than what is already being done by everything else that we're doing. Students are not cohorting when they're outside of school. They're running in the neighborhood. They're going together in social activities. They're not cohorting. They are wearing masks in some circumstances, being socially distanced in some circumstances when they can and supervised.

Mr. Simons:

So, I don't see the cohorting requirement as necessary, to be honest about it, in middle school and high school level. I think other things that we're doing in combination with the vaccinations now being available for 16 and 17-year-olds and any adult who wants it along with the hand washing and hand sanitizer and masks and good sanitation and disinfecting procedures on buses and schools and all those things are working well. We haven't cohorted in those schools, in high schools, since September. We've had not one, not one case of infection spread among our middle school and high school students in school. That is why I don't think the cohorting is really a necessary constraint on our district right now. I don't anticipate the K5 level changing. If anything, we might be in a situation where some of the modifications that we've had to make to how instruction is delivered would be loosened a little bit. For example, using two rooms for one grade level.

Mr. Buono:

Anything else, Linda?

Ms. Wager:

Thank you, Mr. Simons. There are no other public comments.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Thank you. Moving onto the second work form. I'll start in the room here on my left. I'll start with John. Anything? Deanna? Frank? Kathleen? On the screen. Jennifer, you're good? Michelle? Mark? Good, thumbs up. JoAnn?

Mr. Taylor:

Just one quick announcement. I apologize for my lateness today. I wanted to remind everyone that the East Greenbush Education Foundation is holding its virtual gala this Friday night at seven o'clock. We will be inducting Brigadier General Kim Colloton from the class of '87, Jesse Pavlick from the class of 2007 and Roberta Reno from the class of '68. Also, we will be giving a community member award to Mr. Wayne Pratt, who has put many, many hours of volunteerism into the district, primarily with the BRAC Committee, but always helping us with the budget. It is on the district website, the link. It's on the education foundation website and Facebook page. So, it's seven o'clock on a YouTube link. We encourage you to join us.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, JoAnn. I just have two quick ones. I want to thank the administrators. We have the [inaudible 01:27:08], and we approved it tonight, so I want to thank the work that was done on the contract. I'd like to hear maybe next meeting graduation, preliminary ideas around that. I see a lot of smiles. I'd love... Things did come out recently about graduation and large events, proms, things like that. We need to take advantage of the space that we have and really, I know you guys are working hard on putting what that graduation is going to look like. It has to be very, very special for our seniors this year. I'd love to see something awesome. All right.

Mr. Simons:

We did send the new regulations to Mr. Harkin, the administrators at the high school and the senior class advisors. I know they're working on some ideas and some options for venues.

Mr. Buono:

Excellent. All right. We'll hear more about that. With that, there is a need for executive session regarding personnel matters? We do not have any business transacting after the executive session. With that, I need a motion to approve a move to executive session. Kathleen. Second? Jennifer. All in favor. So approved, so moved. Peter needs five minutes to set the link up to the board members.