

**EAST GREENBUSH CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025
Central Administration Boardroom**

1. A. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Mr. Temple- 7:00 P.M.

B. ATTENDANCE

	Present	Absent	Arrival
Mr. Buono	X		
Mr. Mann	X		
Ms. O'Brien	X		
Ms. Phillips	X		
Ms. Skumurski	X		
Ms. Steinbach	X		
Mr. Temple	X		
Ms. Turner	X		
Mr. Van Orden	X		

Also Attending

Mr. Simons	X
Mr. Mahar	X
Mr. Mulligan	X
Mr. Stiles	X

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. EX OFFICIO STUDENT COUNCIL COMMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

A. Student Council Representatives: Kole Hardy~President; Natalie Krisanda~Vice President

Kole Hardy reported that some Student Council members attended a leadership conference at Niskayuna High School focused on school climate and student engagement. He also announced an upcoming spring blood drive and discussed plans for an inclusive end-of-year pep rally

4. MINUTES

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING OF MARCH 12, 2025

Motion by Ms. O'Brien, Second by Mr. Buono

Resolved, upon the recommendation of the District Clerk, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Minutes of the Board of Education Meeting of March 12, 2025

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

5. BOARD FORUM #1

Mr. Buono informed everyone that the Board has completed initial interviews with six superintendent candidates. He said they have selected three finalists who will proceed to final interviews on March 31st and April 1st, 2025.

6. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

A. 2025-2026 Budget Workshop Presentation Workshop #2

Mr. Simons and Ms. Mulligan reported that the District is struggling with a significant \$6.5 million budget gap, primarily driven by rising employee benefit costs, particularly health insurance and prescription drugs. They said to address this, the administration has proposed a \$2.7 million reduction in expenditures, primarily through staff position eliminations that have been vacated through retirements, aiming to minimize program cuts. The Superintendent reported they are also considering various tax levy scenarios, including exceeding the state tax cap, to maintain current services. He said the District plans to utilize fund balance and reserves to bridge the gap, but there are concerns about long-term depletion. To balance fiscal responsibility with student needs, four budget scenarios were presented, each combining varying levels of expenditure. The Superintendent also discussed plans for purchasing new buses, both traditional and

electric, using the dedicated bus purchase reserve fund and exploring state incentives. He stated that these options are preliminary and that further budget sessions are scheduled, with a focus on balancing cost-cutting measures with the preservation of educational programs and services, while carefully managing the District's reserve funds.

Mr. Buono raised concerns regarding the accessibility of the District's reserves, pointing out that some are subject to restrictions where you cannot retrieve funds once they've been allocated. He asked about the flexibility of the tax certiorari reserve.

Ms. Mulligan responded that the tax certiorari reserve is adjusted annually to reflect potential financial exposure from tax assessment challenges. She explained that settlement amounts vary, and while the reserve is a potential source of funds, she will need to review its specific rules, as there may be limitations similar to the EBALR reserve. Ms. Mulligan noted that using these funds carries risk, as they're intended to prevent budget disruptions from successful challenges. She also referred to the Town of East Greenbush's recent reassessment, which introduces uncertainty regarding future tax challenges. Ms. Mulligan explained that the tax certiorari reserve is designed to protect the District from losses due to lowered assessments, and while she will explore its potential use, they must carefully consider the associated risks.

Mr. Buono expressed his concerns about exceeding the tax cap, and noted the necessity for a back up plan, since they would need to secure a 60% supermajority for approval.

Mr. Simons explained that the school board has two opportunities to pass the budget. He said if a budget exceeding the tax cap fails to achieve the required 60% supermajority, the Board can revise it to meet or fall below the cap by adjusting expenses, cuts, or reserve usage. He then outlined a potential strategy of presenting a strong case to the community, highlighting the district's historically low tax levy increases and the value of its programs. The Superintendent acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding the town's reassessment and its potential impact on tax bills, but suggested that a compelling argument could secure the necessary 60% approval. He also acknowledged that some people will vote no regardless of the districts approach. He reiterated that if the first vote fails, the Board has a second chance to pass a revised budget within the tax cap.

Ms. O'Brien agreed with Mr. Buono about having a back up plan, stating they have to acknowledge that after a period of very low increases, this one could be a significant shock to taxpayers. She thought they might either understand the necessity, or they might be very resistant to the change.

Mr. Temple acknowledged the challenge of presenting budget proposals involving tax increases or cuts. He stated that there are risks of relying solely on rollover budgets and stressed the importance of long-term financial planning. He said that a moderate tax increase would still maintain the district's low average tax levy, providing recurring revenue to address the budget gap. He said he thought the compounding effect of a tax levy increase will help the District to align the average tax increases with those of similar districts. Mr. Temple reiterated the importance for the public to understand that the budget gap is due to insufficient revenue, not excessive spending. Specifically, the rising employee benefit costs, which are beyond the District's control.

Mr. Simons emphasized the district's consistent efforts to control spending, but clarified that state aid would not resolve their financial shortfall because the District is an average wealth district and is expected to offset costs with tax increases. He also supported the point that a compounding effect from a tax increase would help align the district's spending with comparable districts, noting their current spending per pupil is already in line, and sometimes lower, than those districts.

Mr. Temple said he supports a tax increase this year to prevent future financial instability. He stated that even though an increase might be hard to take, he feels it's necessary to ensure the District's future and it still maintains the District's history of low average tax rates.

Ms. Skumurski stated her concerns about recurring issues and said she feels they need a longer-term budget plan. She said while the 5.19% tax levy is good for this year, she thinks the District needs to plan further ahead and be honest with the public about the challenges.

Mr. Simons agreed to develop a long-term budget framework, acknowledging its uncertainty due to fluctuating expenses like health insurance. He asked Ms. Mulligan if she could model potential tax levy increases, expenditure adjustments, and reserve usage over several years, stating that while not perfectly accurate, it would provide a useful planning tool.

Ms. Mulligan said that since she already projected out to 2027-2028, and doesn't have new information to change those assumptions, extending that projection to 2028-2029 should be relatively straightforward.

Mr. Simons explained that there is a resolution on the agenda for a plan that will help control rising prescription drug costs. He said this plan, agreed to by all districts in the CASHIC health insurance group, will require pre-approval for certain expensive medications and encourage shopping around for better prices. He said a small number of employees using these drugs has driven up costs significantly. The Superintendent said that while this will help slow down future increases, the District is also looking at other ways to save money on health plans.

Ms. Skumurski asked excluding retirements, how many currently employed individuals will be directly affected by these position eliminations.

Mr. Simons said the actual number of layoffs is expected to be very low, likely only two or three. He said the District is also hoping to move people into open positions as they become available due to retirements, which are still being announced. He said the District is trying their best to avoid layoffs, but can't guarantee.

Ms. Skumurski also said she was concerned by the large class size projections in Kindergarten

Mr. Stiles explained that the projection assumes all families who received registration packets will enroll, which historically hasn't been the case. He said the final kindergarten enrollment count is typically solidified by the end of the school year, though some students do register over the summer.

Mr. Simons explained that the District also has the flexibility to manage class sizes by adjusting attendance zones, effectively shifting students between schools if necessary, with exceptions made for siblings. Additionally, he stated that special education students who are integrated into regular kindergarten classes for only parts of the day are not included in the average class size count, leading to a potentially larger perceived classroom size than the official numbers indicate.

Ms. Van Orden acknowledged the difficulty of proposing a tax levy increase above the cap, but recognized its necessity to avoid deeper cuts or further depletion of reserves. She said she is supportive of the proposed scenario that includes significant staff cuts, but emphasized the continued need for future cost reduction.

Van Orden also expressed concern about the projected \$8 million draw from the fund balance, which is unsustainable, and requested a preliminary look at potential future cuts to better understand the District's long-term financial trajectory.

Mr. Temple explained that there are risks in long-term projections due to calculation uncertainties and external factors, but stated that it is crucial to consider how current decisions will impact the District's future financial position. Mr. Temple asked the Board to help direct Mr. Simons on how to refine the budget proposal for upcoming meetings. He said Mr. Simons needs to understand the Board's preferred approach to tailor his revisions.

Mr. Simons said he feels scenario two, that proposes a 5.19% tax levy and a \$115.8 million budget, but faces an \$8 million deficit due to \$107.7 million in revenue. To balance this, reserves and fund balance would be utilized. He explained that this plan also incorporates \$2.7 million or more in cuts, recognizing that the exact reductions may change.

Ms. Steinbach expressed her concerns about cutting Pre-K in scenario two, even though it's just a shift to community-based programs. She noted that there is a waitlist, meaning more families want it than the District can offer. She acknowledged that the District loses money running Pre-K in the schools, likely due to salary costs. Ms. Steinbach noted the bill that might increase Pre-K funding, and said if that passes, it would lower the cost difference between keeping it in the schools versus moving it to the community.

Mr. Simons said the District will calculate how much would be saved if Pre-K funding increases to \$8,000 per student. He said it would save the District money, but they would still need to evaluate if it makes up the cost of moving two classes to community providers. The Superintendent said they would have to weigh the savings against keeping the programs in the schools.

Ms. Steinbach explained she is concerned about the potential impact on the 185 Pre-K students that have signed up for the lottery. She asked if the District would be laying off those pre-k teachers, if they move the classes out of the schools.

Mr. Simons explained the in school pre-k programs are staffed by Questar III teachers, and said he doesn't know the status of their employee situation and didn't know if those teachers could be used elsewhere. He explained he had not spoken with Questar III in regards to this change.

Ms. Phillips noted that the Pre-K lottery is supposed to occur next week and stated that parents might need time to withdraw their children if the District makes the change to more community based providers.

Mr. Simons said he and Mr. Stiles have discussed delaying the Pre-K lottery until the sites are confirmed. He said Mr. Stiles has recommended postponing it until after the next board meeting, and said that even with delays, there would still have enough time, and would prevent parents from withdrawing unnecessarily.

Ms. Phillips stated that everyone agrees that even though it's a revenue problem, the District can control spending. She said she was curious about specific spending increases in the past and future budgets. Additionally, Ms. Phillips said that since the public is facing a tough time, every cost should be reviewed. She said the District should be very strict with budgeting and look for ways to be more efficient, especially with shared positions like clerical roles, to see if anything can be consolidated.

Mr. Simons explained the District is exploring consolidating clerical positions at the high school and potentially the middle school to save money, as they have more staff in those roles compared to elementary schools. He said they are also considering how to handle teacher vacancies, possibly reassigning staff to other roles.

The Superintendent said they are actively seeking cost-saving measures across various operational areas. He said this includes consolidating Alternative Learning Programs to reduce redundancies while maintaining essential services, and streamlining clerical positions by eliminating vacancies and redistributing responsibilities. He said they are also scrutinizing overtime costs, particularly within custodial services, and considering adjustments to substitute pay. He said to manage safety supervisor hours more effectively, the District is reviewing scheduling and event support. Additionally, Mr. Simons stated they are reevaluating the fees charged to community groups for facility usage, especially on weekends, to ensure they cover the district's expenses. Finally, they are exploring adjustments to custodial shift schedules to optimize staffing and reduce potential overlaps. Mr. Simons said these efforts reflect a comprehensive approach to budget management, balancing fiscal responsibility with the continued provision of essential services.

Mr. Mann asked for the deadline for submitting retirements.

Mr. Mahar stated that the timing depends on the bargaining unit and if individuals choose to decline the incentive. He explained the contract specify the window for these decisions, which helps with budget planning.

Mr. Simons stated that potential retirements were included in the budget, even for teachers who don't qualify for the incentive. He said there are discussions about possible adjustments to the incentive with the teachers' union, similar to a few years ago, to see if it encourages more retirements.

Ms. Steinbach recapped that the Board is generally leaning towards scenario two, but realizes they need to develop a multi-year projection and a contingency plan. Specifically, the need to understand the implications of implementing the 5.19% tax levy increase

Ms. Skumurski stated that she hoped the District was still exploring options to narrow the gap down further. She asked them to continue to investigate, even if they were not optimistic about finding more.

Mr. Simons agreed to keep searching for more savings by examining enrollment and position reductions. He also reported that they will work to update the spending and income estimates, and will show the Board different scenarios.

7. PUBLIC FORUM

Kayla Smith, district resident and parent, expressed a preference for smaller, incremental tax increases over the past four years, instead of a larger jump in one year. She also questioned the cost difference between in-district and outsourced UPK programs, suggesting a community based provider being in district classrooms in place of the more expensive Questar programs. Ms. Smith also raised concerns about where the elementary school teacher cuts would be, stating that cuts across the school might not be equitable to class sizes.

Tiana Pettinger, district parent and also speaking on behalf of the East Greenbush Friends of Music, discussed the impact of potential staff reductions in the music department due to retirements, emphasizing the importance of maintaining equitable staffing across all educational areas, not just in departments where retirements take place.

Justin Moroni, also a Friends of Music trustee, suggested improvements to budget presentation clarity, perhaps by simplifying the financial information for the community to better understand, and also suggested the Board members speak into their microphones, to improve audibility.

Mr. Simons responded by stating that Administration has been discussing potential reductions in elementary school teaching positions, emphasizing the need to avoid disproportionate impacts on individual schools. The Superintendent said regarding the music department, the Board planned to gather more student data to inform decisions on staff reductions, aiming to maintain high-quality instruction. He acknowledged the significant impact of the upcoming retirements of two experienced music teachers and the need to consider the impact across students and educators in the program.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Current and 5 Year Staffing Overview Report

Mr. Simons explained that current and 5 year staffing was reviewed in the budget presentation.

9. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Approval of Programs for Resident Children with Disabilities

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PROGRAMS FOR RESIDENT CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Motion by Ms. Van Orden, Second by Ms. Turner

Resolved, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Programs for Resident Children with Disabilities.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

B. Resignation of Board Member, Mark Mann

Mr. Temple acknowledged Mr. Mann's 17 year tenure on the Board and said his dedication to public service, both as a board member and SRO, is truly admirable. He said he looks up to Mr. Mann's example and how he balances perspectives in his role.

Ms. Steinbach mentioned that the countless hours spent away from home, attending meetings every night, demonstrates his deep commitment.

Mr. Mann stated that he has enjoyed his time on the board, despite a few challenges along the way. He explained his personal life is changing, and he wants to ensure someone who can consistently attend meetings fills his seat. Mr. Mann said he will miss being a part of the Board, but will still be involved with Questar's board and advocate for East Greenbush. Additionally, Mr. Mann stated that he is proud of the District's achievements and the excellent opportunities that are provided to the students. He said East Greenbush is a top-performing District, that he believes will continue to improve, even with the current budget challenges. He noted that they have overcome obstacles before, and will do so again. Mr. Mann said he is grateful for everyone's support and will remain on the board until June 30th

Ms. O'Brien said that Mr. Mann is a true example of public service. She said it is so hard in this climate to encourage people to get into public service for various reasons, so she hopes others will see Mr. Mann as an example, and choose to get involved.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE RESIGNATION OF BOARD MEMBER, MARK MANN, EFFECTIVE JUNE 30, 2025.

Motion by Mr. Buono, Second by Ms. Skumurski

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Resignation of Board Member, Mark Mann, effective June 30, 2025

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

B. Notice of Public Hearing

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Motion by Ms. Steinbach, Second by Ms. Skumurski

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Notice of Public Hearing, Registration of Voters and Voting on 2025-2026 School Budget, School Buses, School Bus Purchase Reserve and Election of Board Members.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

C. Free Market Health Memorandums of Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE FREE MARKET HEALTH MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH:

Civil Service Employees' Association
East Greenbush Administrators' Association
East Greenbush Operation and Technical Supervisory Association
East Greenbush Teachers' Association
School Related Personnel

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE FREE MARKET HEALTH MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH:

Confidential Employees

Motion by Mr. Buono, Second by Ms. Phillips

Resolved, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Free Market Health Memorandum of Agreements and the Memorandum of Understanding.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

D. 2024-2025 Student Award and Scholarships

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE STUDENT AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR.

Motion by Ms. Turner, Second by Ms. Van Orden

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Student Awards and Scholarships for the 2024-2025 School Year.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

10. TABLED MOTIONS

None at this time.

11. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Buono reported that the Ex Officio Student Board Member committee recently met to discuss the process of bringing a student member to the Board. He expressed his gratitude to Mr. Harkin for developing a comprehensive process to inform the students about the opportunity. Mr. Buono said the committee will use student feedback to finalize a transparent application and selection procedure, aiming to appoint a primary and an alternate student member.

Ms. Steinbach asked to revisit the ad hoc committees and receive updates on their progress, specifically regarding the finished products they're developing. She also asked for an update on the engagement survey's status.

Mr. Simons said that he will coordinate with the members of the new board member orientation committee and the board operating procedures committee to schedule Google Meets. Additionally, he said he plans to follow up with Dr. Kevin McGowan regarding the information he promised at the March conference.

Ms. Skumurski reiterated the Board's desire for the District to publicly acknowledge graduates pursuing military or career readiness paths.

Mr. Simons stated he has discussed this with Mr. Harkin and requested him to put together a ceremony similar to the athletic signing day, rather than just an award during the general ceremony.

Ms. Phillips recalled the Board's previous discussion about scheduling a meeting at the Transportation Department, and suggested scheduling it before Mr. Mann's departure.

12. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Financial Reports

Claim Auditor Reports for Warrants-0079, 0080,0081, 00820083, V0078, V080, V081

Treasurer's Report for the Month of January, 2025

Revenue Status Report for the Month of January, 2025

Budget Status Report for the Month of January, 2025

Budget Transfers for the Month of January, 2025

Extraclassroom Treasurer's Reports for the Month of January, 2025

B. Instructional/Instructional Support Personnel Memo

A. DISCONTINUANCE

1. Leave of Absence

- a. Culberson, Katelyn - Special Education, Goff Middle School, requesting an unpaid child-rearing leave of absence from 3/19/25-6/12/25. Planned return 6/13/25.

B. APPOINTMENTS

1. EGAA Mentoring of Newly Hired Administrators 2024-2025 School Year

Administrator Stipend

Farnan, Patricia \$3,800

Garab, Daniel \$3,800

Grignon, Wayne \$3,800

Squillace, Helen \$3,800

2. School Administrator Mentor Program Developer, Effective 3/27/25

- a. Alvey, Jack Stipend: \$5000 (initial year including summer work)

3. Appendix "D" Appointment - 2024-2025 School Year

Name	Activity	Compensation
Goff		
Fowler, Seth	Science Olympiad Technology Coach	\$1,967.00

4. Per Diem Substitute Teacher

Name	Certification Area	Degree	Status	Effective Date
Beck, Hayden	Degree in Music	B.M.		3/27/25
Dunn, Catherine	Special Education	M.Ed.		3/27/25
Cumming, Declan	Degree in History	B.A.		3/27/25

5. Student Teacher/Intern 2024-2025 School Year

Building	Student	Content Area	Cooperating Teacher	College/Term
D.P.S.	Emily Sedor	Nursing	Sarah Tacy	Siena/Spring 2

C. MISCELLANEOUS

1. Unpaid Coach 2024-2025 Spring Sports Season

The following will volunteer for our spring athletic programs. He holds current certification in AED/CPR, First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens, DASA, Concussion Management, SAVE and Child Abuse.

Name	Sport
a. Mocerine, Scott	Baseball

C. Non-Instructional Support Personnel Memo

Discontinuance as listed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Benedict, Chad	Bus Aide-Transportation	03/08/25	resignation
Perry, Jacqueline	Bus Aide-Transportation	03/31/25	retirement

Substitute employees as listed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Salary</u>
Beck, Hayden	Aide	03/27/25	Step 1 (BS) = \$21.83 per hour
Bradley, Margaret	Monitor	03/27/25	Step 4 = \$17.69 per hour
Cumming, Declan	Aide	03/27/25	Step 1 (BA) = \$21.83 per hour
Hallenbeck, Joan	Custodial Worker	03/27/25	Substitute rate = \$17.59 per hour
Kivitz, Tammy	Sr Monitor	03/07/25	Step 6 = \$18.91 per hour

D. Acceptance of Gifts and Authorization to Increase the 2024-2025 Budget

E. Disposal of District Property - Assets

F. Library Materials Recommended to be Weeded- Goff Middle School

G. Girls' Outdoor Track Overnight Trip-Penn Relays, April 24 - April 26, 2025

H. Howard L. Goff Middle School Science Olympiad State Competition - East Syracuse, NY

I. Approval of Consent Agenda

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED

Motion by Ms. Skumurski, Second by Ms. Turner

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Consent Agenda.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

13. NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

14. PUBLIC FORUM #2

None at this time.

15. BOARD FORUM #2

Mr. Buono thanked all the administrators for their work, recognizing the difficulty of integrating budget workshops into the regular board meetings. He said it is important for the Board to thoroughly review the budget holistically, refine some plans, and plan for the future. Additionally, Mr. Buono said they must be mindful of both the financial burden on taxpayers and the impact on our students and families.

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Not needed

17. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Turner, Second by Ms. O'Brien to Adjourn the Meeting

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

Time: 9:26 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Pangburn
District Clerk