

EAST GREENBUSH CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2025
Central Administration Boardroom

1. A. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Ms. Turner- 7:00 P.M.

B. ATTENDANCE

	Present	Absent	Arrival
Mr. Buono	X		
Ms. Herron	X		
Mr. Marchiony			
Mr. Panasci		X	
Ms. Phillips	X		
Mr. Shane	X		
Mr. Temple		X	
Ms. Turner	X		
Ms. Van Orden	X		

Ex-Officio Student Member

Ms. Holly Thorpe	X
Mr. William Bollam	X

**Student Council
Representatives**

Natalie Krisanda	X
Matthew Pallone	X

Also Attending

Dr. Kurtis Kotes	X
Ms.. Lisa Mahar	X
Mr. Martin Mahar	X
Ms. Jennifer Mulligan	X

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. EX OFFICIO STUDENT COUNCIL COMMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

A. Student Council Representatives: Natalie Krisanda~President; Matthew Pallone~Vice President

Natalie Krisanda and Matthew Pallone reported that the Student Council recently hosted a successful "Pie Mr. Harkin" event where they collected a significant number of cans for donation to the school's backpack program. They also worked to produce a gratitude video, featuring students and teachers sharing what they were thankful for, which can be viewed on the District website. Looking ahead, the Student Council is focused on holiday traditions: they will be shopping for their adopted family this Sunday, and they plan to decorate the school's main hallways with different themes during their meeting next Wednesday. Finally, they announced the school's Winter Spirit Week, which will feature themes such as Cozy Ski Lodge Day and Ugly Sweater Day, and they are planning to host an expanded, mall-inspired Photos with Santa event the week before break.

4. MINUTES

A. Approval of Draft Minutes dated November 12, 2025

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

Motion by Ms. Phillips, Second by Ms. Herron

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 November 12, 2025.

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

5. BOARD FORUM #1

Dr. Kotes gave a special presentation honoring the retiring administrative leaders, Mrs. Helen Squillace with 21 years of service, Mr. Dan Garab with 34 years of service, and Mr. Peter Goodwin with 20 years of service. He thanked them for their dedication and for all they have done for the District, and presented them with tokens of appreciation to recognize their long careers.

6. PUBLIC FORUM #1

None at this time.

7. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

A. 2024-25 Independent Audit Report - Jen Menard, Mengel, Metzger, Barr & Co. LLP

Jennifer Menard, from MMB, the District's new auditor, reported that the audit resulted in an unmodified opinion for the main financial statements, which is the highest level of assurance, although it was noted that the unassigned fund balance exceeded the 4% limit. She reported that the audit of the extra classroom activity funds received a qualified opinion, which the auditor explained is standard due to the cash-basis nature of the funds, stressing that the ECAF program is otherwise excellent. Additionally, Ms. Menard explained that the single audit, which addresses federal compliance, was delayed until mid-January and is expected to receive an unmodified opinion on compliance for major programs, with one minor, fixable finding related to verifying vendor eligibility for federal dollar payments.

B. Holly Thorpe Presentation ~ Student Survey Analysis

Ms. Thorpe, an Ex Officio Board member, presented high school survey data on the Distraction-free Learning initiative, which involves a cell phone ban and the use of Yondr pouches. The survey revealed a trend of decreasing Yondr pouch usage as students age, with freshmen using them the most. Regarding increased focus, 44% of freshmen reported being more focused, but only 22.6% of sophomores, 29.5% of juniors, and 40.3% of seniors felt the same, with the majority of upperclassmen reporting no change or decreased focus. Recurring student feedback included safety concerns during emergencies, a desire for readily available pouch openers in classrooms, and the expectation that staff should adhere to the same phone rules. Upperclassmen specifically requested phone access during free periods and expressed frustration when unlock magnets were removed too quickly after school, impacting athletes' ability to retrieve their phones.

Ms. Van Orden asked if the higher Yondr pouch usage among freshmen and sophomores was related to them having previously experienced a cell phone ban in middle school. She suggested that a follow-up survey next year could help track if this trend persists as these students move into higher grades.

Mr. Buono asked if students realize the bell to bell ban is a New York State requirement, not a punitive measure dictated by the district administration. He said they are not trying to punish students; they are simply fulfilling state policy and requirements.

Ms. Van Orden wondered if students realize that the state's bell to bell requirement is what mandates the full-day restriction, preventing use even during free periods or lunch. She said those specific limits are state-driven, not local rules invented by the district. Ms. Van Orden asked Will Bollam to follow up with a survey next year adding in all this information. She wondered if compliance would increase as students who have had the ban in middle school move into and up in the high school.

Ms. Phillips asked what is happening with the students who are not using the pouches, since she hasn't heard of an increase in violations.

Mr. Harkin explained that most students just keep the phones in their bags. He said the ban has really made a difference. The students are more engaged in the classrooms and incidents of vaping and bullying are down.

Ms. Phillips discussed the student concerns about safety and wondered if the students realized cell phone usage during an emergency can hinder the emergency personnel.

Mr. Harkin said the students just recently attended CRASE training and that was explained. He also explained that magnets are readily available to open the pouches quickly, if needed.

Dr. Kotes asked Ms. Thorpe if she thought the results might show increased compliance now that the students have settled in and are half way through the school year.

Ms. Thorpe said she didn't think the results would change, but wondered if educating the students on the state mandates and the risks of using phones during an emergency would change the results.

Mr. Shane commented about student concerns about medical emergencies and wondered if it would be better for students go to the nurse first because the nurse would then coordinate with the parents.

Mr. Harkin stated there are 151 land lines in the high school. One in every classroom and multiple in the offices. He also said if the students needed, they can also go to the nurse's office.

Dr. Kotes said there is a difference between a medical want than a need, and it seems the items the students brought up were health & hygiene issues that they have more of a comfort level with a parent, but the nurses are definitely attending to emergencies for regular things.

Ms. Thorpe said it would be great if the students felt they could go to the nurse for more mundane things.

Ms. Herron praised Ms. Thorpe on her survey and said she did a very good job and gave the Board a really good picture of what's going on and how the students feel.

C. Red Mill Sanitary Sewer - 2024 Capital Project

Pasquale Marchese, from LaBella Architects, discussed the ongoing sanitary sewer issue at Red Mill Elementary School, where the original 1953 line has degraded from the inside out due to scaling, causing recent backups into lower-level classrooms and posing a health and safety risk. He explained that the line was previously assessed as satisfactory in a building condition survey because the internal degradation was not visible. He said to mitigate the immediate risk, a temporary measure involved replacing 60 feet of collapsing line and implementing check valves. However, a permanent solution is required. Mr. Marchese said the recommendation from the design team (Turner and Labella) is to replace and upsize the entire sanitary line from six inches to eight inches. He noted that

this scope of work is deemed directly related to the existing 2024 Capital Project because the project included plumbing fixture upgrades, which cannot safely proceed without fixing the undersized, failing line. He explained the financial magnitude of the work is estimated at \$425,000, which can be covered by the existing surplus of over \$1 million from the closing Phase 1A of the Capital Project. He said this approach meets all four criteria set by Bond Counsel, including compliance with the original environmental resolution (SEQR). Mr. Marchese stated that if the Board approves the resolution, the project will move rapidly. Bids for the work are currently being collected and are due December 18th, with the goal of having a contract executed and construction starting in mid-February.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Board Direction for Budget Development

Ms. Phillips asked for the budget to prioritizing immediate needs with more intentional investment in mental health and counseling resources. She emphasized developing workforce opportunities and career pathways for students beyond traditional four-year college tracks and stressed the need for significant professional development and workforce investment (including mentorship) to prepare for potential staff turnover. Finally, she requested the administration address ongoing transportation challenges, particularly the driver shortage and EV transition, and asked administration to provide the Board with a view of the strategic plan sorted by deadline.

Ms. VanOrden focused on facilities and specialized studies, strongly supporting professional development as the most effective way to impact the largest number of students, especially training related to new career pathways. She expressed concern over deferred maintenance and facility operations (citing the Red Mill issue) and advocated for funding a necessary transportation center study to inform the future transition to electric vehicles.

Mr. Buono stressed fiscal responsibility and maximizing existing resources. He highlighted that staffing drives approximately 85% of the budget and that controlling rising fixed costs (like benefits) is critical to affording other goals. He recommended the district stay within the tax cap calculation and maximize BOCES aid. He directed administrators to be innovative, not ask for more this year, and continue reviewing class size guidelines for affordability to ensure resources are used efficiently.

Ms. Herron echoed concerns about addressing clinical staffing needs and specifically requested data and feedback on the success and impact of the UPK program to make informed budget decisions, noting that the program's cost currently outweighs state funding.

Dr. Kotes confirmed a new budgeting procedure where administrators will meet in grade level bands to encourage collaborative staffing solutions. He confirmed that the Board's collective direction aligns with the Strategic Plan and Board Goals. He said the administration will begin the process by constructing a budget based on the current program, factoring in new contractual agreements and anticipated increases in staff benefits. He acknowledged that due to structural issues, the district will use a hybrid budget model this year while working toward a true zero-based budgeting approach in the future.

9. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Driver Education Program - Spring 2026

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE DRIVER EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR THE SPRING OF 2026

Motion by Ms. Van Orden, Second by Mr. Marchiony

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Driver Education Program for the Spring of 2026

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

B. Audit Report and Financial Statements - 2024-2025

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT THE AUDIT REPORTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025, AS PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY MENGEL, METZGER, BARR & CO., LLP, INDEPENDENT AUDITORS, AND APPROVES THE CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS AS PREPARED BY DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

Motion by Mr. Buono, Second by Ms. Herron

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District accepts the audit reports for the year ended June 30, 2025, as prepared and presented by Mengel, Metzger, Barr & Co., LLP, independent auditors, and approves the corrective action plans as prepared by District Management

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

C. Resolution Authorizing Return of the Warrant of Unpaid Taxes to Rensselaer County Treasurer- Resolution Approving Tax Collector's Report for Fall 2025

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT THE AUDIT REPORTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025, AS PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY MENGEL, METZGER, BARR & CO., LLP, INDEPENDENT AUDITORS, AND APPROVES THE CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS AS PREPARED BY DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

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

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District accepts the audit reports for the year ended June 30, 2025, as prepared and presented by Mengel, Metzger, Barr & Co., LLP, independent auditors, and approves the corrective action plans as prepared by District Management

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

D. Financial Advisory Services Agreement - Capital Markets Advisors LLC

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL ADVISORY SERVICES AGREEMENT

Motion by Mr. Marchiony, Second by Ms. Phillips

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Financial Advisory Services Agreement.

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

E. Resolution Acknowledging and Accepting Letter from Design/Construction Professionals on Red Mill Sanitary Sewer
RESOLUTION ACKNOWLEDGING AND ACCEPTING LETTER FROM DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION PROFESSIONALS ON RED MILL SANITARY SEWER

Motion by Mr. Shane, Second by Ms. Herron

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby Acknowledges and Accepts Letter from Design/Construction Professionals on Red Mill Sanitary Sewer

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

F. Memorandum of Agreement with EGTA

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE AGREEMENT WITH EGTA- SOCIAL WORKER

Motion by Mr. Buono, Second by Mr. Marchiony

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Agreement with EGTA- Social Worker

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS - 8:10

A. Jennifer Mulligan, Director of Business and Finance- 11-17-25 Health Insurance Review Committee Meeting Minutes

Ms. Mulligan reported that the Health Insurance Review Committee met to review critical financial updates concerning District insurance plans. The Medicare Advantage Plan renewal rates showed increases just under 10% for Highmark In-Area and Out-of-Area plans, while the CDPHP plan faced a higher increase of approximately 16.48%. The committee noted that despite the increases, these rates remain lower than commercial Medicare options. The major concern addressed was the projected Pharmacy costs, which have significantly outpaced revenues, leading to a diminished reserve balance. Total Rx expenses grew by 23.4% in the 2023-24 fiscal year to \$8.88 million, with a 20% premium increase projected for the 2026-2027 fiscal year to cover current utilization trends and gradually build the reserve to the required four-month level. Ms. Mulligan said the committee also discussed the status of CDPHP contract negotiations with St. Peter's Health Partners (set to expire December 31st, 2025), a matter noted as typical for this time of year, and said her office has received positive feedback on the new, more predictable employee benefit/deduction schedules and hopes all employees will adopt these schedules as well

B. Dr. Kurtis Kotes, Superintendent ~ Advocacy Committee & Code of Conduct Committee

Dr. Kotes reported that the Code of Conduct Review Committee meeting included initial high-level recommendations on language regarding Chromebook responsibilities and the long-term implications of the distraction-free learning policy. On the Athletic Code of Conduct review, Dr. Kotes stated that the meeting focused on academic eligibility, where the current policy has little accountability. He stated that discussions aimed to implement elements of restorative practice while holding underperforming students accountable, with initial revisions to be presented for a first read at the December 17th meeting.

Dr. Kotes reported that the Advocacy Committee meeting focused on defining its scope and reviewing priorities such as school aid funding, UPK, and the zero-emission bus mandate. The Superintendent reported on legislative priorities for 2025, which include the retiree earnings exemption, schools' ability to offer child care, civil service reform, and a potential tax cap set-aside for School Resource Officers. He stated they are also advocating to raise the capital outlay project limit eligible for 80% reimbursement to \$250,000. Additionally, the Superintendent said legislators discussed the financial challenges related to providing mandated special education services for students turning 21 during the school year. Dr. Kotes said a legislative breakfast is planned in January to showcase the District's work to elected officials, primarily to expose them to the District's schools and showcase the positive work happening within the buildings. Dr. Kotes noted that upon a recommendation from Mr. Wagner, the committee is working to arrange this event to coincide with the seniors' presentations in January. He stated the Board will be notified once the details are finalized, and members will be invited to attend.

11. TABLED MOTIONS

None at this time.

12. OLD BUSINESS

None at this time.

13. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Financial Reports

Claim Auditor Reports for Warrants- 0037, 0039, 0040, V010, V020, V023, V034

B. Instructional/Instructional Support Personnel Memo

A. DISCONTINUANCE

1. Resignation for the Purpose of Retirement

- a. Garab, Daniel - Principal, Green Meadow Elementary School, effective 7/1/26.
Date of Hire: 7/1/13 Principal, 9/7/93 Teacher
- b. Goodwin, Peter - Director of Technology, Districtwide, effective 7/1/26.
Date of Hire: 7/31/17, Teacher 9/1/04-6/30/15
- c. Squillace, Helen - Principal, Red Mill Elementary School, effective 7/1/26.
Date of Hire: 7/1/19 Principal, 8/22/05 Director of PPS

B. APPOINTMENTS

1. Probationary Appointment

- a. Dempsey, Rachel - ESOL, Genet Elementary School
(Replacing Kelly Aldinger, resignation)
Tenure Area: ESOL
Probationary Period: 12/4/25-12/3/29
Certification Status: NYS Initial ESOL
Step Placement: 1B = \$47,075.00 (prorated)
Prior: 9/25-present TA Guilderland CSD; 9/24-12/24
Student Teacher Genet Elementary
Degrees: B.A. SUNY, Cortland
- b. LaBarge, Heather - Special Education, Bell Top Elementary School
(Replacing Ashleigh Anson, resignation, Allison McArdle transfer)
Tenure Area: Special Education
Probationary Period: 12/18/25-12/19/28 (pending verification of tenure)
Certification Status: NYS Permanent Special Education
NYS Permanent PreK-6
Step Placement: 20M = \$97,493.00 (prorated)
Prior: 10/14-present Albany CSD; 4/02-10/14 Center for
Disability Services
Degrees: B.S. College of St. Rose
M.S. College of St. Rose

2. Term Substitute Appointment

- a. Phillips, Jamie - Gr. 2, Donald P. Sutherland Elementary School
(Replacing Jenna VanRoy leave of absence)
Effective: 10/20/25-1/30/26
Certification Status: NYS Professional Childhood Ed. 1-6
NYS Professional Students w/Disabilities 1-6
NYS Professional Literacy B-6
Step Placement: 12M = \$76,379.00 (prorated)
Prior: 9/24-11/24 TS EGCSD; 12/23-present Per Diem Sub EGCSD;
9/07-5/19 Marie Curie Institute; 8/06-5/07 Richie Elementary
School, FL
Degrees: B.S. College of Saint Rose
M.S. College of Saint Rose

3. Probationary Appointment - Teaching Assistant

- a. Roehr, Savanna - Teaching Assistant, Bell Top Elementary School
(Replacing Roxanne Dancer, resignation, Edwards transfer)
Tenure Area: Teaching Assistant
Probationary Period: 12/4/25 - 12/3/29
Certification Status: NYS Initial Childhood Ed. 1-6
Step Placement: Step 1 = \$23.35 per hour
Hours per day: 6.5

4. Per Diem Substitute Teacher

Name	Certification Area	Degree Status	Effective Date
Frey, Bridget	School Counselor	B.S.	12/4/25
Louis, Ethan	Earth Science	B.S	12/4/25

C. OTHER

1. Voluntary Transfer of Assignment

- a. McArdle Avery, Allison - Special Education Teacher, transfer effective 12/15/25.
From : Bell Top Elementary
To: D.P. Sutherland Elementary

D. MISCELLANEOUS

1. Intramurals for the 2025-2026 School Year

The following will be supervising intramural programs for the 2025-2026 school year.

- a. Gibson, Dan

- 2. Board of Education Resolution hereby approves the instructional substitute teacher list for 2025-2026 school year:
Mathis, Sophie

C. Non-Instructional Support Personnel Memo

Discontinuance as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Reason
Betz, Christopher	Custodial Worker-Red Mill	11/13/2025	rescind appointment
Tafilowski, Meggan	Substitute: Aide, Monitor, RN	11/24/25	per employee's request
Appointment as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Salary
Elliott, William	School Bus Driver-Transportation Probation: 12/4/25-6/3/26	12/4/25	Step 3 = \$28.61 per hour 6.25 hours/10 months
Geisser, Meredith	School Bus Driver-Transportation Probation: 12/4/25-6/3/26	12/4/25	Step 3 = \$28.61 per hour 6.5 hours/10 months
Hasson, Nasreen	Cook-Goff Probation: 12/4/25-6/3/26	12/4/25	Step 1 = \$18.69 per hour 6.5 hours/10 months
Talabah, Muad	School Bus Driver-Transportation Probation: 12/4/25-6/3/26	12/4/25	Step 3 = \$28.61 per hour 5.25 hours/10 months
Substitute employees as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Salary
Lucero-Wehner, Kristina	Bus Aide	12/4/25	Step 1 (HS) = \$18.15 per hour
Unser, Shannon	Aide	12/4/25	Step 1 (BA) = \$22.48 per hour
	Monitor		Step 1 = \$ 16.90 per hour
	Sr. Monitor		Step 1 = \$17.72 per hour

Appointment adjustment:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Salary
Barmen, Brooke	Substitute Aide	12/4/2025	Step 1 (BA) = \$22.48 per hour Received Official Transcript
Board of Education Resolution hereby approves the non-instructional substitute list for 2025-2026 school year:			
Alvey, Julia	Aide, Monitor		
Kendrick, Mikayla	Aide, Monitor		
Mathis, Sophie	Aide		
Raczkowksi, Randee	Aide		

D. Approval of Programs for Resident Children with Disabilities

E. Independent Evaluation Services Agreement with Children's Neuropsychological Services, PLLC

F. Acceptance of Gifts and Authorization to Increase the 2025-2026 Budget

G. 2025-2026 Instructional Contract - North Greenbush Common School District

H. Library Materials Recommended for Weeding-Columbia High School Library

I. Resolution for School Counselor Tenure

J. Disposal of District Property - Assets

K. Approval of Consent Agenda

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED

Motion by Ms. Van Orden, Second by Mr. Marchiony

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

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

14. NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

15. PUBLIC FORUM #2

None at this time.

16. BOARD FORUM #2

Mr. Buono extended his congratulations to the administrative retirees. He thanked Ms. Squillace for her tremendous expertise in Special Education, which ensured a smooth transition to the elementary level and her significant positive impact at Red Mill Elementary. He recognized Mr. Garab for his dedicated service as a teacher, assistant principal at Goff and principal at Green Meadow, specifically lauded for maintaining the strong traditions and spirit of Green Meadow. Additionally, he thanked Peter for returning to the District and bringing his expertise to the Technology Department, successfully smoothing out past issues, building a great team, and leading the District through the monumental transition to the one-to-one chromebook program, particularly during the challenges of the pandemic.

17. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Ms. Van Orden, Second by Ms. Phillips to enter Executive Session to discuss the Employment History of a Particular Individual

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

Time: 9:02 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Pangburn
District Clerk

Motion by Mr. Marchiony, Second by Ms. Van Orden to Exit Executive Session

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

Time: 10:05 P.M.

18. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Buono, Second by Mr. Shane to Adjourn the Meeting

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

Time: 10:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Buono
Assistant District Clerk