

**EAST GREENBUSH CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2026  
Red Mill Elementary Cafeteria**

**1. A. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:** Ms. Turner- 6:41 P.M.

**B. ATTENDANCE**

	Present	Absent	Arrival
Mr. Buono	X		
Ms. Herron	X		
Mr. Marchiony	X		
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. RED MILL TOUR**

Fifth grade students Nora Jansen and Owen Schultz led the Board and administrators on a tour of Red Mill.

**4. EX OFFICIO STUDENT COUNCIL COMMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

A. Student Council Representatives: Natalie Krisanda~President; Matthew Pallone~Vice President  
Student Council was unable to attend.

**5. MINUTES**

A. Approval of Draft Minutes dated February 11, 2026

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING OF FEBRUARY 11, 2026

Motion by Ms. Van Orden, 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 February 11, 2026

Vote: Ayes- 6, Nays- 0, Abstentions- 1 (Turner)

Motion carried

**6. BOARD FORUM #1**

The Board members all thanked Owen & Nora for the tour and said they enjoy seeing the schools and all the things that the students treasure.

Ms. Herron mentioned the upcoming *Pippin* show by the Columbia Players, and said she was looking forward to attending.

**7. PUBLIC FORUM #1**

Dan Wagner, parent, teacher and EGTA president, addressed the Board, acknowledging their dedication to the community. He stated that over the past five years, decisions to remain at or below the tax cap have resulted in the loss of teachers, assistants, and psychologists, primarily through attrition, and said the EGTA believes that staff reductions gradually erode the level of support for students, noting that students feel the impact through increased class sizes and reduced individual attention. Mr. Wagner noted that reductions made for short-term savings can create new costs later, citing the need to hire an outside contractor for the CTAEP program after a school psychologist position was eliminated. He praised the community for their support in exceeding the tax cap last year, and stated that the EGTA is requesting that the Board prioritize stability and maintenance in the upcoming budget season, to protect essential people and programs.

## 8. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

### A. 2026-2027 Preliminary Tax Cap Calculation

Ms. Mulligan explained how the tax cap is calculated and reported the District's preliminary tax levy cap for the 2026-27 school year is calculated at 3.04%, which would result in a potential levy increase of approximately \$1.88 million.

Dr. Kotes presented the idea of including a \$100,000 capital outlay project in next year's budget to maximize state aid. He explained that unlike larger long-term projects that take decades to pay off, these smaller projects allow us to get fully reimbursed by the State in just one year. The Superintendent said that by repurposing funds the District is already spending on routine maintenance or using budget lines that are no longer active, they can tackle necessary repairs without adding new costs. He said it's a 'win-win' because it addresses the building needs while significantly increasing our tax cap exclusions for the coming year.

Mr. Buono asked when the Board would need to decide if they wanted to go forward with this.

Dr. Kotes explained that the Board needs to decide on this before the budget is adopted, as it requires specific preparation, including a SEQR and disclosure in the school newsletter. He emphasized using a broad concept description of the project, rather than a specific repair, to maintain flexibility.

Mr. Marchiony asked if it needs to be one project or an aggregate of projects.

Ms. Mulligan explained that it is not a lot of money and the financial strategy relies on staying strictly at or below the \$100,000 threshold. She said exceeding this amount would disqualify the District from immediate reimbursement, forcing them to wait 15 years for aid instead of just one. Ms. Mulligan said while this adds a \$100,000 line item to the tax levy calculation now, the state aid arriving the following year will eventually create a neutral budgetary effect.

Moving on to fund balance, Ms. Mulligan explained that the District anticipates a \$3.71 million deficit for the current fiscal year, though she clarified that only about \$1.17 million of that is tied to daily operations, with the remainder driven by one-time capital reserve spending. She explained that to cover this gap, the District will draw from various funds, including a \$1.9 million reduction in the unassigned fund balance to remain within the 4% legal limit, as well as planned drawdowns from the employee and teacher retirement reserves (ERS/TRS). She said while the overall fund balance will decrease, she noted that recent Board action to increase the tax certiorari reserve provides some offsetting flexibility for future financial decisions.

Mr. Panasci asked if it was a normal process for the Board to agree in advance to draw from specific reserves to balance the books and cover planned costs.

Ms. Mulligan explained that while the District used to have extra money left over each year, it is now entering a period where it spends more than it brings in. She explained that this creates a gap between the District's expenses and its actual income.

Mr. Marchiony asked for clarification on whether the District uses the ERS and TRS reserves to pay for retirement incentives, and asked if the money to cover those extra costs comes directly out of those dedicated reserve funds.

Ms. Mulligan clarified that the District has several different savings accounts, each with its own set of rules. She explained that the main retirement funds for teachers and employees are not actually used for retirement bonuses or incentives. Instead, those funds act as a safety net to protect the District if pension costs suddenly spike because of a weak stock market. She said the money for retirement incentives actually comes from a different account called the employee benefit reserve, EBLAR. Ms. Mulligan explained that this is currently the largest reserve account the District holds.

Mr. Marchiony asked about the legal restrictions on how and when funds can be reclassified if they aren't being used for their original purpose.

Ms. Mulligan explained that the rules for moving or spending savings depend entirely on the specific laws governing each fund. While some accounts are very strict, others offer more room for the District to adjust its strategy. She explained that the District is struggling with a budget imbalance because its expenses are growing much faster than the revenues. Ms. Mulligan said while income increased by 2.33 million, the cost of employee benefits alone jumped by 3.8 million, forcing the District to bridge the gap using its savings. To manage this, the District is strategically drawing from different jars: the teachers' retirement and employees' retirement reserves are being used for yearly pension contributions, but at the current rate of spending 1.5 million annually, the teachers' fund will likely be depleted in less than two years. Meanwhile, the employee benefit reserve, the largest at over 5.3 million, remains more stable because investment interest is helping to offset the 300,000 being taken out for retirement incentives. She explained that overall, total reserves are projected to drop from 18.2 million to 16.5 million by June 2026.

Beyond these specific reserves, the District also has 4.3 million in appropriated fund balance that voters already approved to help balance the budget, though the final amount actually spent will depend on how many outstanding orders, or encumbrances, are left at the end of the year.

Mr. Temple said he is optimistic about the District's trajectory, noting that while a gap still exists, the rate of spending appears to be slowing down.

Ms. Mulligan agreed with the observation about spending trends but pointed out the reality regarding the District's income. She noted that while expenses are increasing by 3.8 million, the District is only bringing in 1.8 million in new revenue. She explained that this creates an immediate gap of 2 million before even accounting for the previous year's deficit. Ms. Mulligan explained that the District started with \$29.1 million in total savings, which is expected to drop to \$25.4 million by the end of the year. While she noted that \$25.4 million is still a healthy amount of money to have on hand, she warned the Board to watch how quickly they are spending it.

She also noted the District's bond rating, which is currently a strong rating. She explained that Moody's, the agency that grades the district's financial health, looks at how much cash is available compared to the total budget. She stated that right now, the District is in the safe zone, but she cautioned that losing another \$6 million in savings could trigger a downgrade to a lower tier.

Ms. Mulligan explained that they are approaching a limit where further spending from savings could hurt their credit score and make future building projects more expensive.

Mr. Buono encouraged the newer Board members to review the District's financial history and past budget documents to see how spending has been managed. He pointed out that last year, the District did a very good job of controlling costs through the business office.

#### B. Assemblymember John T. McDonald III

Assemblymember McDonald gave an overview of the Governor's proposed budget for education, highlighting that the District is expected to receive a 4.1% increase over last year's aid. He also discussed the Governor's proposal to increase the UPK reimbursement level of up to \$10,000 per student which represents a \$4600 variance benefit to the District. Lastly, Assemblymember McDonald discussed FAPE22, the legislative push to extend funding coverage for students with disabilities through age 21 until they turn 22 years of age.

Mr. Temple thanked Assemblymember McDonald for attending and referenced a conversation from two years ago regarding the need to brace for potential financial tightening. He noted the Assemblyman's earlier suggestion that funding would likely remain flat or improve and asked for a clearer outlook on the long-term economic tone. Mr. Temple asked for guidance on how the District should approach this year's budget in light of what the fiscal landscape might look like for future years.

Assemblymember McDonald expressed serious concern about the long-term financial future, noting that while State funding has been stable, a shrinking student population nationwide will put a financial burden on many districts. He explained that the State closely monitors enrollment cohorts and warned that half-empty buildings are not sustainable, especially as New York already leads the nation in per-pupil spending. He stated that large state grants are available to those districts that merge, and said combining operations has already been a highly effective way to cut costs and balance their budgets. Ultimately, Assemblymember McDonald urged the Board to be mindful of these demographic shifts and to prioritize long-term sustainability in their future planning.

Dr. Kotes thanked the legislature for acknowledging the FAPE 22 issue. He noted a growing financial gap between federal reimbursement and state mandates for special education services. He said since costs for these services can rise quickly based on student needs, legislative support is critical for the District to keep up with these rising expenses.

#### C. UPK Presentation ~ Lisa Mahar

Ms. Mahar reviewed the overall UPK process and enrollment, showing how the program has grown from the initial 36 students to the current enrollment of 165 students. She stated that all students on the original waitlist have been given the opportunity to be placed in a classroom, and explained that some families decline because they were not offered their preferred location, cannot work out the timing, decide to stay in the child's current placement, or just decide not to send their child at this time. Ms. Mahar reviewed the curriculums of all the programs and discussed the use of Renaissance Star and how the District is monitoring the progress of the students to ensure educational consistency across all sites. She said despite Governor Hochul's proposed increase in State aid, the District recommends maintaining the current providers and enrollment levels for the 2026-2027 school year.

Mr. Temple asked if there has been an opportunity to evaluate the long-term impact of the UPK program now that the first cohort has reached fourth grade. He discussed the need to track student progress over the next few years to ensure the program provides a consistent foundation, especially since the current enrollment of 165 students represents more than half of a typical grade-level cohort.

Ms. Mahar confirmed that the District is tracking these students and noted that while they currently have clear data for about half of that original group, the results have been very positive. She expressed excitement about presenting a more detailed analysis in the future that reflects the fourth-grade cohort's success and illustrates their long-term academic growth since Pre-K. Ms. Herron asked how the governor's proposal will impact the community based partners who are now accepting \$5400 per student.

Dr. Kotes explained there are provisions for increases in billing in the current contracts. He said since the governor's budget is not finalized, the District would prefer to keep the current contracts and go out with an RFP sometime in the early fall to see if any other community partners would be interested.

#### D. Team Room Presentation, Equitable Access ~ Ryan Jones

Mr. Jones responded to the concerns raised by Columbia High School students regarding equal access to athletic facilities, specifically the specialized team room located in the high school basement. He explained this space is equipped with larger lockers, film review monitors, and whiteboards for game preparation, and is available for reservation by any coach through the athletic office. He stated that while the main locker rooms serve as the primary changing area for daily physical education and after-school sports, the District utilizes a wide variety of additional spaces, including the weight room, cafeteria, and classrooms, to ensure all teams have adequate meeting and prep locations. Mr. Jones said going forward, to further improve transparency and address student concerns, the athletic department is implementing a formalized master team room schedule, managed via shared Google Sheets, to ensure every sports program has a clear and fair opportunity to reserve high-demand facilities.

Mr. Harkin noted that the District has expanded its technology significantly, moving from having only one Smartboard in the building in 2018, to having them in every classroom. He explained that coaches now prefer using classrooms, libraries, and cafeterias for team meetings because these wide-open spaces allow student-athletes to sit comfortably and take notes while watching film, rather than being crowded on a bench. Essentially, the athletic program has outgrown the single team room, as modern coaching now mirrors classroom instruction.

Mr. Temple acknowledged that while the District is intentionally working to provide for students, the primary challenge is addressing the perception of inequity. He suggested that the District's goal should be to clearly communicate how the system is designed so that all students truly feel they have the same opportunities.

Ms. Van Orden questioned whether room assignments might be sports-specific and asked for more data on actual usage. She inquired about the frequency of use for these spaces, essentially wanting to know which teams are getting the most access to the preferred rooms.

Mr. Harkin stated that many teams actually avoid the current team room due to its inconvenient location; for example, soccer players often prefer changing in bathrooms or near the fields to save time. He noted that even long-term staff were unaware the room existed, suggesting that the perception of inequity is not driven by intentional exclusion but by the logistical reality that the

space is not ideal for most sports. He explained that to address the students' feelings of unfairness, he plans to work with the senior class to identify better locations, such as creating a new team area in the South Tower for easier field access. Mr. Harkin said these improvements, including clearing out storage to create larger meeting spaces, are slated to begin this summer. Mr. Panasci said his initial reaction to the students' concerns was one of frustration on their behalf, feeling that the situation seemed unfair. After investigating the facilities personally, he concluded that the issue is entirely one of perception due to the poor quality of the existing space rather than any intentional bias. He thanked the administration for their efforts to resolve the matter and stated his full support for the proposed plan.

Mr. Jones said the team room is largely unused in the winter, often serving as storage for expensive track equipment like pole vault and high jump mats to protect them from damage. He pointed out that even teams like basketball rarely use the room because its inconvenient location makes it impractical for halftime meetings, leading coaches to prefer setting up chairs in the hallway instead.

Ms. Van Orden pointed out that the issue may be rooted in how storage defines the space; specifically, once football gear is kept there, it effectively becomes a "football room" in the eyes of students. She noted that even if the room is technically available for others to reserve, it isn't functional for a group like girls' soccer if football players are constantly cycling through to access their equipment.

Mr. Harkin was optimistic about solving the storage and access issues this summer by cleaning out a massive, underutilized vault currently filled with decades-old items. He said by relocating equipment like mats and archery sets into this cleared space, the District could reclaim rooms for student use, such as making a dedicated area accessible for female athletes. He also suggested physical renovations, such as walling off certain sections or removing specific plumbing fixtures, to make the current team room truly gender-neutral. However, he reiterated that the ultimate struggle remains the building's layout, as many teams prefer to stay near the turf fields rather than trek back to the building unless absolutely necessary.

Ms. Van Orden emphasized that the lack of requests for the room shouldn't be mistaken for a lack of interest. She argued that teams have simply adjusted and formed new habits because they have grown used to the space being unavailable or assuming it is strictly for the football and lacrosse teams. She stressed that while the administration may see it as a perception issue, it is a significant problem because it directly affects how the female student-athletes feel about their place in the District's athletic programs.

Mr. Harkin explained that while students want equal access, they also want facilities that are more conveniently located near their practice fields. He said to address this, the District plans to explore creating new team spaces on the ground floor and within existing locker rooms by clearing out storage areas this summer. He said these improvements would include removing some lockers to install whiteboards and create wider meeting areas, providing both boys' and girls' teams with better locations to gather and communicate than the current narrow locker room layouts allow. Mr. Harkin said he will also speak with the students and get their thoughts.

Dr. Kotes thanked the team for their time and effort in listening to the students' concerns. He expressed full support for the proposed physical changes to the building and athletic wing, and said he was looking forward to working together on those improvements.

## **9. REGULAR BUSINESS**

### **A. 2026-2027 School Calendar**

Ms. Mahar presented the newest version of the 2026-2027 calendar with some updates of color and symbols to make it easier to understand. She said the schedule accounts for four emergency closing days and navigates several holiday overlaps; notably, since Juneteenth falls on a Saturday, the District will observe it on Friday per contract requirements. While the team successfully included several religious holidays, there is an ongoing commitment to coordinate with Questar III BOCES to better align future professional development days with holidays like Eid al-Fitr to avoid scheduling conflicts. Ms. Mahar also talked about scheduling of professional development days. In an effort to increase staff engagement and minimize absences, some PD days were moved to the middle of the week rather than being tethered to weekends.

Mr. Panasci asked if the impact on families was considered when moving professional development to other days, as some parents might find Friday closures easier to manage for childcare.

Ms. Van Orden agreed and stated that she finds half-days particularly disruptive to the workday and would prefer full day closures.

Dr. Kotes explained that while full-day PD sessions are often more productive for staff growth than half-day releases, they have to keep in mind 180 day requirement.

### **RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE 2026-2027 SCHOOL CALENDAR**

Motion by Mr. Buono, Second by Mr. Temple

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the 2026-2027 School Calendar.

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

## **10. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **A. Jennifer Mulligan, Director of Business and Finance ~ Tax Cap Calculation & Fund Balance Projections**

No further discussion needed

### **B. Lisa Mahar, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction ~ Universal Pre-K**

No further discussion needed

### **C. Dr. Kurtis Kotes, Superintendent ~ Fund Balance Projections & LED Lighting Work Update**

Dr. Kotes explained that the upgrade for its five elementary schools through a National Grid incentive program that will cost the district nothing, saving over \$4 million compared to a full fixture replacement. He said by replacing the internal components of existing fixtures rather than the entire units, the District will not only reduce electricity consumption to help offset future costs like electric buses and air conditioning but will also simplify maintenance since only bulbs will need replacing upon failure. The Superintendent reported that work is scheduled to begin in March, and must be completed by October 31, 2026, to qualify for the full reimbursement.

## 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-0059, 0060, V038, V057

### B. Instructional/Instructional Support Personnel Memo

#### A. DISCONTINUANCE

##### 1. Resignation

- a. Dole, Elizabeth - Teaching Assistant, Columbia High School, effective 6/27/26.  
Date of Hire: 9/15/22 Reason: personal

#### B. APPOINTMENTS

##### 1. Probationary Appointment - Teaching Assistant

- a. Belanger, Kayla - Teaching Assistant, Donald P. Sutherland Elementary School  
(New position)  
Tenure Area: Teaching Assistant  
Probationary Period: 2/26/26-2/25/30  
Certification Status: NYS Teaching Assistant, Initial TA  
Step Placement: Step 1 = \$23.35 per hour  
Hours per day: 6.5

##### 2. Per Diem Substitute Teacher

Name	Certification Area	Degree	Status	Effective Date
Adadjo, David	Graphic & Media Design	B.A.		2/26/26
Burek, Ryan	History	B.A.		2/26/26
Ring, Kaiden	Criminal Justice	B.S.		2/26/26

#### C. MISCELLANEOUS

##### 1. Athletic Coaching Positions - 2025-2026 Spring Sports Season

- a. Audra DiBacco  
Unified Integrated Basketball  
Certified Social Worker - Columbia  
Experience: Basketball Unified Integrated Basketball - Columbia - 2014-2025  
G. Varsity Basketball - Catholic Central - 2010-2015/2017-2021  
G. Varsity Assist. Basketball - Columbia - 2016  
G. Varsity Assist. Basketball - Catholic Central - 2007-2009  
G. Varsity Basketball - Bishop Gibbons - 2001-2006  
Soccer G. Varsity Soccer - Columbia - 2017-2019  
G. J.V. Soccer - Columbia - 2011-2015  
Base Salary: \$2,700.00  
Start Date: March 30, 2026
- b. Shannen Barrett  
Girls' Modified Lacrosse  
Non-certified teacher - Temporary Coaching License  
Experience: Lacrosse No prior coaching experience  
Base Salary: \$3,162.00  
Start Date: March 23, 2026

##### 2. Unified Sports Program/Youth Activation Committee (YAC) Facilitator

Name	Stipend
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a. Goodbred, Chelsea \$1,100.00

3. Unpaid Coaches 2025-2026 Spring Sports Season

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

Name	Sport
a. Bollam, Jeremy	Boys' Tennis
b. DiGiovanni, Robert	Boys' Lacrosse
c. Glaser, Lukas	Boys' Lacrosse
d. Jones, Ryan	All Sports
e. Keller, John	Boys' Lacrosse
f. Kennedy, Siobhan	Flag Football
g. Mocerine, Scott	Baseball
h. Nassivera, Anna	Flag Football
i. Rose, Jeffrey	Baseball

C. Non-Instructional Support Personnel Memo

Discontinuance as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Reason
O'Leary, Edward	School Bus Driver-Transportation	2/13/26	rescinded appointment
Yuzynko, Helen	Typist-Transportation	3/7/26	resignation
Appointment as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Salary
Heeg, Caitlin	School Registered Nurse-Genet Probation: 2/26/26-10/25/26	2/26/26	Step 8=\$39.27 per hour 7.5 hours/10 months
Substitute employees as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Salary
Adadjo, David	Aide	2/26/26	Step 1 (BA) = \$22.48 per hour
Burek, Ryan	Aide	2/26/26	Step 1 (BA) = \$22.48 per hour
Earing, Lisa	Food Service Helper	2/26/26	Step 1 = \$18.10 per hour
John, Rachna	Aide	2/26/26	Step 1 (HS) = \$18.15 per hour
Kilburn, Gracelyn	Aide	2/26/26	Step 1 (HS) = \$18.15 per hour
O'Leary, Edward	School Bus Driver	2/26/26	Step 1 = \$23.66 per hour
Ring, Kaiden	Aide	2/26/26	Step 1 (BS) = \$22.48 per hour
Smith, Jeffrey	Senior Bus Driver	2/26/26	Step 3 = \$29.76 per hour

D. Approval of Programs for Resident Children with Disabilities

E. Disposal of District Property - Assets

F. Resolution to Approve EGTA Memorandum of Agreement - Sick Leave

G. 2025-2026 Non-Resident Tuition Rates

H. Approval of Consent Agenda

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED

Motion by Mr. Panasci, 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 asked if the lighting in the Columbia High School Gym would be addressed.

Dr. Kotes stated there is a proposal from the architect and the District is looking to finance the project through the current year's budget.

Ms. Herron thanked everyone for looking into all the opportunities to save the District money. She noted that by looking closer at the numbers, the administration found several financial opportunities that the District had not used in the past. She said these efforts are seen as a great way to find hidden savings that can be used to invest more into the students and their programs.

#### **17. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

A. Executive Session - To Discuss Terms of a Vendor Contract

Motion by Mr. Panasci, Second by Ms. Van Orden to enter Executive Session to Discuss the Terms of a Vendor Contract

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

Time: 9:39 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Pangburn  
District Clerk

Motion by Ms. Van Orden, Second by Mr. Panasci to exit Executive Session

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

Time: 10:01 P.M.

#### **18. ADJOURNMENT**

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

Vote: Ayes- 7, Nays- 0

Motion carried

Time: 10:01 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Buono  
Assistant District Clerk