

**EAST GREENBUSH CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2026
Green Meadow Elementary School**

1. A. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Ms. Turner- 7:05 P.M.

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

Holly Thorpe	X
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

B. Pledge of Allegiance

C. Public Forum

Ms. Jill Bonesteel, resident and District employee, expressed her concerns about the elimination of the Assistant Transportation Supervisor position. She said she feels that eliminating this position would overwhelm the department and jeopardize safety. She noted that without enough oversight, bus maintenance has historically failed, leaving vehicles unserviced for months. Ultimately, she believes the workload is simply too much for one person to handle.

2. BOARD FORUM #1

Mr. Panasci acknowledged that the Board has received a significant number of emails regarding the proposed elimination of the floating nurse position. He assured the public that every email is being reviewed, read, and analyzed before final decisions are made.

Mr. Shane expressed his gratitude to the staff and students of Green Meadow for a wonderful school tour. He then highlighted two school events, the German American Partnership Program (GAPP) and the high school's multicultural fair. He praised these programs for offering students invaluable opportunities to engage with world languages and synthesize their learning across various academic disciplines. Closing with a note of pride in the District, he commended the teachers and families for fostering such an inclusive environment.

3. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

A. Volunteer Recognition: Green Meadow Elementary School Hosting~Principal Daniel Garab

Dr. Kotes expressed his and the Board's gratitude to all the individuals who step up and give their time to provide programs, extra activities and give support to the staff and students. He said the District would not be as strong without the volunteers.

All the Building Administrators, and the Director of Athletics introduced their choices for Volunteer of the Year and explained how each volunteer has repeatedly stepped up to help, whether in the classrooms, library, or assisting with a school activity.

B. Administrative Reports

- College in the High School

Ms. Wendy McAlonie explained that the new course, Intro to Economics, provides students the opportunity to engage in authentic, college-level coursework and earn transferable credits while still in high school. She explained that this new partnership with Hudson Valley Community College was born out of a five-year program review to address the limitations of the current AP Economics model. Ms. McAlonie stated because AP Economics is condensed into a single semester but the exam isn't until May, students often face scheduling conflicts or a long gap in learning. She said by shifting to this CHS model, we are ensuring a high-quality, cost-effective, and accessible experience that meets post-secondary standards. She said this course is designed to foster the "Portrait of a Graduate" competencies, specifically building confident learners and encouraging collaboration.

Ms. Mahar explained that Hudson Valley was chosen after researching several partners, including SUNY Albany and Syracuse, because of their stellar reputation among our peer schools and their rigorous approval process. She said the District is very fortunate that Mr. Romanowski has the specific graduate-level credentials required by the college to lead this course. Ms. Mahar said she feels that the AP courses still have a vital place in the curriculum, but this specific change for Economics makes the most sense for the students' schedules and their long-term academic success, allowing them to build a college transcript before they even graduate. As the primary Economics teacher in the District, Mr. Romanowski said he is optimistic about transitioning from AP to the Intro to Microeconomics course through Hudson Valley. He said his background in economics and management, combined with dual certification in Social Studies and Business, has shown him that the current AP model creates unnecessary pressure. He stated while the students consistently beat national averages, this new format allows the classes to go deeper into the curriculum, specifically exploring how microeconomic concepts parallel the process of writing a real-world business plan. He also mentioned the AP stigma, which intimidates many capable students, even though most can thrive in a rigorous environment. Mr. Romanowski said by offering this class as a College in the High School course it will provide greater flexibility, value and accessibility to many families who are trying to mitigate the rising costs of higher education.

Ms. Van Orden asked if it would be possible for a student to take the test independently without being enrolled in a formal AP course. Ms. McAloney said while this is technically possible under College Board rules, the District will not order AP exams for courses that are not officially part of the curriculum, but theoretically a student could take an exam if offered in a different district.

Mr. Buono expressed his strong support for the new course, highlighting that it is a positive outcome of the District's ongoing program review process. He noted that while Mr. Romanowski made the certification process sound easy, it is a significant professional hurdle that ensures the program meets high academic standards. Mr. Buono emphasized that this course allows students to satisfy a common requirement while still in high school, saving both time and tuition costs. He also praised the high degree of transferability of Hudson Valley Community College credits. Finally, he lauded the decision to offer the course in both the fall and spring semesters, providing families and students with much-needed scheduling flexibility.

- School Health Services Presentation

Mrs. Mahar and Mrs. Harris presented a detailed overview of the school health services department, emphasizing that their nursing staff manages a student population of over 4,000 individuals with more than 1,300 medical alerts and several cases requiring complex care. They explained that while the District-wide floating nurse position was originally established to manage the intense demands of the pandemic and provide essential elementary coverage, they are now recommending its reduction based on current needs. To maintain safety and service levels, they outlined a strategy to revamp the substitute nursing list and establish new internal coordination processes for routine screenings and absences. They also clarified the District's financial and legal obligations regarding nursing services for non-public schools and committed to monitoring the impact of these staffing changes over the coming year to ensure that both student health outcomes and staff workloads remain manageable and effective.

Mr. Temple thanked staff for the information and asked about minimum staffing ratios for the District. He said using the information in the presentation he would estimate seven to eight.

Mr. Buono thanked the administration for the presentation and acknowledged that any decisions involving staff and students naturally cause concern. He stressed that if the Board approves the budget, there must be a formal follow-up during the next school year to evaluate the plan's success. Specifically, he wants to monitor the impact on student well-being and staff workload, ensuring that any unforeseen issues or concerns are addressed immediately rather than waiting for the next budget cycle.

Ms. Phillips questioned the effectiveness of using substitute nurses to fill gaps. While she acknowledged that substitutes work well for planned events like screenings, she expressed concern about their reliability for unexpected absences, such as when a staff member calls in sick. She asked the administration to clarify whether the process of finding coverage on short notice has traditionally been successful and consistent.

Ms. Harris explained that the current practice is to prioritize internal coverage for nursing absences before turning to the substitute list, primarily because substitute availability has been historically low. She emphasized that assessing the viability of the sub list is a critical next step to ensure reliable coverage. She noted that the administration had already begun the process of reaching out to individuals on that list to determine their actual availability.

Mr. Temple inquired about the flexibility of the nursing coverage plan, specifically asking if the District intended to pull staff from Columbia High School or Goff Middle School, where staffing levels are higher to cover gaps elsewhere.

Ms. Harris said the primary strategy is to first secure a reliable substitute list. She noted that pulling staff from their assigned buildings would be a less desirable last resort, as it would disrupt the essential day-to-day healthcare functions in those larger schools.

Ms. Phillips said she was struggling with the decision, citing the Board's previous choice regarding school psychologists as a cautionary example. She noted that the consequences of that decision created difficulties mid-year, leading to her hesitation regarding the current nursing proposal. She also asked for a monitoring plan to ensure that the reductions do not result in similar unforeseen challenges for the District. Ms. Phillips also asked about health services that we pay for resident students who attend private schools out of district.

Ms. Mulligan clarified the reciprocal nature of state-mandated nursing services, explaining that while East Greenbush bills other districts, for students attending private schools within East Greenbush boundaries, the reverse is also true. She said this billing process ensures that districts are reimbursed for health services provided to non-resident students.

- AI Learning Update

Mr. Goodwin gave an overview of recent AI committee meeting and highlighted how the team is exploring how to responsibly bring artificial intelligence into the classroom. He said the group has met to discuss how AI fits into educational standards and to ensure it aligns with the District goals for critical thinking. He said they are using a spectrum of student agency to show that while AI can help with brainstorming or organizing thoughts, it should not be used to complete entire assignments. Ultimately, the committee's goal is to have students use AI as a helpful tool while making sure they still engage in the hard work necessary to truly learn. Mr. Goodwin explained that using AI can actually improve critical thinking by removing mundane barriers and allowing students to focus on deeper analysis. He emphasized the importance of keeping the productive struggle in learning, where students grow by working through challenges rather than having technology do the work for them. He said the committee is now focused on drafting a formal board policy and regulations, noting that while other districts have guidelines, very few have official board policies yet. Moving forward, the goal is to develop specific coursework for middle and high school students on the ethics of AI and to provide faculty with the training needed to use these tools effectively in their classrooms.

Mr. Panasci expressed concern that three meetings may not be enough to fully address such a new and complex topic. He suggested that additional meetings might be necessary next year to ensure the board policy is thoroughly developed and handled correctly.

Dr. Kotes emphasized that because artificial intelligence is so dynamic and rapidly changing, any Board policy must be a living and breathing document reviewed annually. He noted that while some policies remain unchanged for a decade, the speed of AI development requires constant reflection and updated guardrails to protect both students and staff. While acknowledging that creating this policy will take time, the Superintendent stressed the importance of establishing a solid starting point now to provide necessary guidance and safety for the District.

Mr. Temple suggested that the Board policy should focus on high-level goals and safety guardrails rather than rigid rules. He explained that by setting broad objectives like student opportunity and operational efficiency, the Board creates a framework that empowers the administration to be flexible. This approach would allow the Board to define the big picture while leaving the specific details to administrative regulations that can adapt more easily to the changing technology.

Dr. Kotes clarified that beyond high level Board discussions, the primary goal of the policy is to support the faculty who are in the classroom. He emphasized that the District must provide a framework that makes teachers feel both safe and empowered to explore AI at their own pace. By establishing this structure, the Board provides a necessary starting line that gives staff the resources and confidence to handle the challenges and opportunities of this new technology.

Ms. Herron asked if the focus would remain on the middle and high school level or if there is a plan to include the elementary level in the AI discussions. She suggested that starting at the elementary level would be beneficial, as teaching students about AI safety and ethical use early on helps normalize these practices. She said she thought that building this foundation at a younger age would make it easier for students to navigate the technology responsibly as they get older.

Mr. Goodwin explained that while there is a place for the elementary level, the committee decided to start at the secondary level to better understand where students are heading. He noted that even if younger students are not using District accounts, artificial intelligence is already a part of their daily lives, making it an important consideration for the future.

Mr. Shane suggested a two-pronged approach for the District where a formal Board policy would establish non-negotiable red lines and core values, while more flexible guidelines could be updated every semester or year. He noted that although the technology is new, the expectations for student character and digital conduct should align closely with the District's existing analog values and Portrait of a Graduate.

Dr. Kotes agreed that a well-crafted policy should include embedded regulations to give the administration flexibility to make regular updates without constantly returning to the policy committee. He supported the idea of the board defining red lines within the policy while leaving the specific instructional details to educators. The Superintendent said this approach ensures teachers have the autonomy to explore AI in the classroom while feeling fully supported by a clear District framework.

Mr. Buono highlighted how much he learned during the meetings from faculty and students regarding their approach to AI in lesson planning. He recommended that the learning committee continue in some form to support staff training and student engagement as the District adopts these new tools. Additionally, he suggested that the policy committee form an ad hoc subgroup to tackle the complexity of the topic, ensuring that issues like internet safety and screen time are carefully addressed with proper representation.

C. 2026-2027 Proposed Budget~Workshop #4

Dr. Kotes gave an overview of the proposed \$118,872,000 budget. He reminded the Board that a budget amount must be adopted at this meeting, even if they are still working on the terms.

Ms. Phillips expressed concerns about the elimination of the floating nurse position and asked if that can be reconsidered until there is a better plan.

Mr. Panasci voiced his opposition to any further reductions in instructional staff, noting that several such positions were already left unfilled last year. He pointed out that while nursing positions remained untouched during the previous budget cycle, instructional roles were cut, and he stated that any necessary budget changes should not come at the expense of more teaching staff.

Mr. Temple expressed concern regarding the proposed elimination of the Jump Start and MAP programs. He questioned what metrics the District plans to track, such as grades, attendance, and behavior, to ensure that students previously served by these programs do not struggle in a typical classroom setting.

Dr. Kotes explained that the proposed cuts are largely due to very low enrollment and overall success in the MAP and Jump Start programs rather than the performance of the faculty. He clarified that the issue is one of program design and that the District plans to rebalance guidance counselor caseloads to better target the specific needs of these students. To ensure student success, he committed to providing the Board with regular data updates on attendance, behavior, and academic performance, offering to follow whatever reporting interval the Board deems necessary to monitor the transition.

Mr. Buono emphasized that while adopting the current budget is necessary to close the deficit and protect long-term reserves, it is not a final plan. He acknowledged the difficulty of the cuts but said that being proactive now prevents a greater fiscal crisis in three to five years. He expressed hope that if the state budget or local circumstances improve, the Board could eventually reconsider and restore programs or positions, but he maintained that the District must move forward with the current recommendations to remain financially responsible during these challenging times.

Dr. Kotes explained that the District is reaching a critical point where the budget is being spent in its entirety, leaving a diminishing ability to generate fund balance or rely on reserves. The Superintendent noted that while he and Mrs. Mulligan reviewed non-instructional lines, there are very few major expenses left to cut that would significantly close the gap. Dr. Kotes emphasized that the District must maintain some breathing room to handle unexpected costs, such as emergency special education placements or urgent building repairs, and warned that failing to make these forced reductions now would lead to even more severe cuts in the future.

Ms. Van Orden expressed her concern about the District's long-term financial health. She argued that controlling expenses is one of the few ways the District can control its financial future, especially since unexpected costs—such as new students requiring advanced medical care or special education placements—can arise at any time. While she admitted to being nervous about the difficult decisions ahead, she voiced her confidence in adopting the proposed budget. She emphasized that she is not in a position to micromanage specific department functions; instead, she leans on the administration's expertise to monitor class sizes and student needs while making data-driven decisions as they reach future fiscal benchmarks.

Mr. Temple shared that in his recent interactions with the community, concerns regarding the tax burden were a persistent theme. He acknowledged the value of the nursing position, but noted that the administration had presented a compelling, data-driven argument regarding current needs and recommendations. He emphasized that the Board must be strategic and proactive, stating that empowering the administration now is essential to ensuring the District is in the strongest possible position to face future financial challenges.

Dr. Kotes said anticipating Board concerns regarding the floating nurse position, he had consulted with Mr. Mahar and Mrs. Mulligan. He explained that to keep the nurse in the budget, the District would need to reduce approximately three teaching assistant positions to offset the cost. While the goal would be to achieve these reductions through attrition, he noted that they would need to review the retirement list further to determine if any staff members would be excessed or if the savings could be met solely through vacancies.

Ms. Phillips expressed that while she is comfortable passing the budget, she remains hesitant regarding the nursing position. She noted that while the Board received clear data to justify the elimination of the Jump Start and MAP programs, she does not feel the same level of confidence regarding the decision to cut the nurse. She also voiced frustration over being presented with a Plan B, stating that it was unfair to be put in that position since that specific trade-off had not been part of their previous conversations.

Dr. Kotes requested clarification from the Board regarding exactly what information they need moving forward. The Superintendent expressed a willingness to provide the necessary transparency but asked for specific guidance on what data points or metrics the Board would like to see prepared for future discussions to ensure they feel fully informed when making these decisions. He reminded the Board that the entire budget planning process was grounded in their initial directive to avoid instructional reductions whenever possible. He explained that this specific focus is why non-instructional roles, such as the database specialist, transportation supervisor, and nurse, were identified for cuts instead. The Superintendent emphasized that while no reduction is easy, the data clearly shows significant fiscal challenges both now and in the coming years. Warning that this is likely not the end of such difficult conversations, he noted that without substantive changes to expenses, the District will face similar deficits in future cycles. Dr. Kotes concluded by asking for clear direction and specific requests for data so the administration can better support the Board's decision-making moving forward.

Mr. Temple said he is supportive of the budget as it is currently laid out, and stated that he looks forward to receiving the additional information and data points discussed for future planning.

Ms. Turner acknowledged the seriousness of the current situation, noting that the District is facing a significant deficit that is largely being covered by dipping into reserves. She said once the reserves are exhausted, the District will be forced to bridge the entire budget gap through even deeper reductions. She stated her support for the budget and the proposed cuts as they currently stand.

Dr. Kotes cautioned that any pivot toward cutting instructional staff would be difficult, as elementary class sizes currently offer no room for reductions. He noted that enrollment remains extremely fluid, with cohort sizes changing since the last presentation, necessitating constant monitoring through the start of the school year. He said immediate instructional cuts would likely have to target the secondary level. Dr. Kotes concluded by confirming that the administration would move forward with the current budget proposal while providing follow-up data, but reminded the Board that if the community approves the budget, these reductions will become final for the new fiscal year.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

None at this time.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Adoption of Proposed Budget 2026-2027

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2026-2027

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

Resolved, that the Board of Education Adopts and Approves the 2026-2027 Budget as Recommended by the Superintendent in the amount of \$118,872,000 and Authorizes Proposition #1 for presentation to District residents on the annual budget vote date of May 19, 2026 as follows: Resolved, that the operating budget in the amount of \$118,872,000, as proposed by the Board of Education, be adopted for the school fiscal year 2026-2027 and the levy of taxes be assessed therefore in accordance with law.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays-

Motion carried

B. 2026-2027 Property Tax Report Card

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PROPERTY TAX REPORT CARD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Motion by Ms. Herron, Second by Mr. Panasci

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Questar III BOCES Administrative Tentative Budget in the Amount of \$7,687,882.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

C. Adoption of Questar III Administrative Tentative Budget for 2026-2027

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE QUESTAR III BOCES ADMINISTRATIVE TENTATIVE BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$7,687,882.

Motion by Mr. Shane, Second by Mr. Marchiony

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Questar III BOCES Administrative Tentative Budget in the Amount of \$7,687,882.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

D. Election of Members of the Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene Counties Board of Cooperative Educational Services

RESOLUTION TO ELECT FOUR MEMBERS OF THE RENSSELAER-COLUMBIA-GREENE COUNTIES BOARD OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES.

Motion by Mr. Panasci, Second by Mr. Marchiony

Resolved, the Board of Education of the East Greenbush Central School District hereby approves the Election of four Board Members of the Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene Counties Board of Cooperative Educational Services.

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

6. TABLED MOTIONS

None at this time.

7. OLD BUSINESS

None at this time.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Financial Reports

Claim Auditor Reports for Warrants- 0075

B. Instructional/Instructional Support Personnel Memo

A. DISCONTINUANCE

1. Resignation for the Purpose of Retirement

a. McNamara, Michael - Special Education, Howard L. Goff Middle School, effective 6/30/26.

Date of Hire: 9/4/01

2. Resignation

a. Gunther, Ashley - Special Education, Red Mill Elementary School, effective 6/30/26.

Date of Hire: 8/29/17 Reason: personal

C. Non-Instructional Support Personnel Memo

Discontinuance as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Reason
Lindemann, Maryanne	Cook-Green Meadow	7/1/26	retirement
Talabah, Muad	School Bus Driver-Transportation	4/13/26	resignation
Appointment as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Salary

Emery, John	Custodial Worker-Goff Probation period: 4/22/26-10/21/26	4/22/26	Step 1 = \$19.79 per hour 8 hours/12 months
Substitute employees as listed:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Salary
Witherell, Todd	Database Specialist	7/1/26	Step 11 = \$51.92 per hour
Appointment adjustment:			
Name	Position	Effective Date	Reason
Clark, Paul	Head Custodian-Green Meadow	4/22/26	change from provisional to permanent appointment per Rensselaer County Civil Service NY HELPS
Fowler, Seth	Network Technician-Admin Center	4/22/26	change from provisional to permanent appointment per Rensselaer County Civil Service NY HELPS
Hinsdale, Kathryn	Senior Typist-PPS	4/22/26	change from provisional to permanent appointment per Rensselaer County Civil Service NY HELPS
Padua, Heriberto	Head Custodian-Red Mill	4/22/26	change from provisional to permanent appointment per Rensselaer County Civil Service NY HELPS

D. Approval of Programs for Resident Children with Disabilities

E. Appointment of Additional Election Workers for District Vote

F. Health and Welfare Services Contract- North Colonie Central School District

G. Approval of Consent Agenda

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PRESENTED

Motion by Mr. Panasci, Second by Ms. Herron

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

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

9. NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

10. END OF BUSINESS MEETING

A. Public Forum

None at this time.

B. Board Roundtable

Ms. Phillips thanked the Administration for all the work on the budget

Mr. Buono thanked the volunteers that were recognized and also all the others who give their time to enrich the schools and community.

Mr. Bollam mentioned the recent Multicultural Fair and said it was fun to learn about different cultures, and he thanked everyone for making it possible.

Ms. Thorpe invited everyone to attend Cabaret night at Goff on April 24, 2026.

Ms. Van Orden highlighted the upcoming Strings Festival and said if anyone had not ever attended, they should try to catch a performance, as it is amazing to see the student growth from 5th to 12th grade.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Not needed at this time.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Phillips, Second by Mr. Buono to Adjourn the meeting

Vote: Ayes- 9, Nays- 0

Motion carried

Time: 9:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Pangburn
District Clerk