

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
 MINUTES
 SPECIAL MEETING/REVISED PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING
 THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 2024**

DISTRICT GOALS - 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

- *Continue our initiative to enhance the District Math program in order to provide students with the skills necessary to prepare for future success, as measured by the planning and implementation of a rigorous, standards-based curriculum, supported by the allocation of resources, use of formative assessments, and continued professional development.*
- *Stabilize District finances in light of the challenges of S2 reduction in State aid and declining enrollment, as measured by the identification of cost-effective solutions, and potential means of revenue generation.*
- *Continue to foster a culture that supports the mental and physical well-being of our students and staff, as measured by the identification and implementation of appropriate resources, professional development, and communication about available supports.*
- *Increase a sense of unity across all schools in the District as measured by the implementation of revised communication and branding strategies, and appropriate consistency of program implementation.*

Mrs. Claire Lockwood, Board President, called to order the Special Meeting/Revised Preliminary Budget Hearing of the Board of Education at 7:02 p.m., in the Macopin School Auditorium. She asked for a moment of silence, led the flag salute, read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement, and reminded everyone in attendance to silence or turn off their cell phones, and note the locations of the emergency exits.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT

In accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, a public notice of this meeting has been sent to Board Members, all district schools, the Herald News, the Suburban Trends, the Record, the Messenger, West Milford Town Hall, the County Superintendent's Office, the Board Attorney, Cablevision of Warwick and West Milford TV77; and posted in the Administration Building. Copies of the Board Meeting Calendar Resolution were provided to all local media, Town Hall, Township Library, and all district schools.

MR. WILLIAM SCHOLTS, BOARD SECRETARY, CALLED THE ROLL:

TRUSTEE	ATTENDANCE	TRUSTEE	ATTENDANCE	TRUSTEE	ATTENDANCE
Mr. Cytowicz	Absent/Arr. 7:06 p.m.	Mrs. Dwyer	Present	Mrs. Marquard	Absent
Mrs. Jurgensen	Absent	Mrs. Lockwood	Present	Mr. Lippe	Present
Mrs. Racano	Absent	Mrs. Van Dyk	Present	Mrs. Romeo	Present

Minutes for the Special Meeting/Revised Preliminary Budget Hearing of June 27, 2024

MR. WILLIAM SCHOLTS, BOARD SECRETARY, CALLED THE ROLL:

ADMINISTRATION	POSITION	ATTENDANCE
Dr. Lydia Furnari	Interim Superintendent of Schools	Present
Mr. William Scholts	Board Secretary/Business Administrator	Present
Mr. Daniel Novak	Director of Education	Present
Dr. Derek Ressa	Director of Special Services	Present
Andrew Brown, Esq.	Board of Education Attorney	Present

There were approximately 2 members of the public in attendance.

VI. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - Dr. Lydia Furnari

- Dr. Furnari addressed the Board and the community and stated that Mr. Scholts will be providing a presentation on the 2024-2025 Revised Preliminary Budget. She explained changes to opportunities for school districts with State funding, and the presentation will explain and share information for the Board's consideration in the utilization of some of that opportunity for additional funding.
- Mr. Scholts presented the Board with a Revised Budget Presentation. He spoke about legal updates impacting the 2024-2025 budget, and explained that on May 14, 2024, two (2) new bills were signed into law, P.L. 2024, c.12 and P.L. 21024, c.13. He spoke about each bill, our District's eligibility, and the impact of both on our District. He also explained the tax levy adjustment, and how it is a one-time allowable adjustment for 2024-25. He then presented on the impact of S2 cuts and State aid received from the 2017-2018 school year to the 2024-2025 school year. He continued with the proposed increases/adjustments for the revised 2024-2025 budget, with a total adjustment of \$1,177,708. He also outlined each budgetary item, the amount to be allocated, and information regarding each item. Mr. Scholts then presented a budget comparison - the adopted 2024-2025 budget, versus the proposed revised 2024-2025 budget, providing expenditure categories, 2024-2025 approved amounts, 2024-2025 revised amounts, the amount of the change, as well as the percentage of the change. He continued with grant funding and discussed the current grant funding for the 2023-2024 school year, verses grant funding for the 2024-2025 school year, providing the funding source, 2023-2024 current funding, 2024-2025 anticipated funding, the amount of the change, and the percentage of the change. He noted that ARP grants would be unavailable for 2024-2025 as they are expiring, and that our Title I allocation for the District was reduced dramatically. He also provided information on the fund balance utilization to support the budget for each year, from the 2017-2018 school year, to the 2024-2025 school year. The presentation continued with an updated proportion of expenditures; the tax levy impact, the general fund tax levy trend over twelve (12) years; and the revised budget calendar.
- Mrs. Dwyer is very concerned about this. She read a statement to the Board and the community. Mr. Lippe inquired about an item under the budget comparison. Mr. Scholts responded to his inquiry and provided additional information.

Board members continued to have questions for Mr. Scholts. He responded to their inquiries, as well as Dr. Ressa. The Board continued to discuss the revised budget.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT REGULATIONS

At all regular meetings, two opportunities are provided for citizens to make comments. The public comment period will be scheduled after the President's Report. The second comment period will be scheduled after New Business.

During the first opportunity for public comment, citizens are invited to comment on subjects on the agenda items only. During the second opportunity for public comment, citizens may comment on all other general topics. At the discretion of the presiding officer, public comments may be permitted at other times.

Please remember this is a public meeting. Anything you say will be a public record. As a result, pursuant to law, the Board of Education cannot respond to you publicly concerning certain matters, such as those regarding an individual student or personnel. If there is a matter that you wish to remain private concerning personnel or students, please contact the Superintendent's Office. Public comment periods shall also be governed by the following rules:

1. Persons wishing to speak must, upon being recognized, rise, sign in, and state their names and addresses.
2. Each speaker shall be limited to five minutes. The Board Secretary will note the time. A speaker who has not finished in the allotted time will be directed by the presiding officer to summarize quickly and relinquish the floor within 30 seconds (Bylaw 0167).
3. Comments shall be limited to issues. If personal remarks or discourteous statements are made, the presiding officer shall require the speaker to stop.
4. All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer. No participant may address or question Board members individually.
5. Questions requiring investigation shall be referred by the Board to the Superintendent's Office for consideration and later response. A participant may be asked to submit such questions in written format.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA ITEMS (PLEASE SIGN IN)

All speakers will have five (5) minutes to speak until a period of thirty (30) minutes transpires. Before speaking, please state your name, group affiliation and address for the record. Members of the public who have requested to speak prior to the meeting will be recognized by the chair first. After speaking, all speakers are asked to sign the register provided and give their full name, group affiliation, and their address.

All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer. No participant may address or question Board members individually.

All speakers are expected to have read the statement within the agenda regarding the regulations concerning public comments.

Members of the public are reminded that they are legally responsible and liable for their comments.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA ITEMS - Continued

Caitlyn Babcock, 13 Post Place, Newfoundland. She thanked everyone for all of the hard work they put in and she really enjoyed the presentation. She feels what is really important is that as Board members, they are also part of this community and pay the same taxes that the community pays. There are also administrators that live in West Milford who also pay taxes, and she feels that is important to note as well. She was surprised that not a lot of people were at the meeting this evening. However, if it was similar as in the past when the Board talked about the budget and spoke of cutting sports or activities, it might have been different. She feels that doing something like this may prevent that in the future. She also spoke about discussion on the students and programs, and how parents will come and speak about the programs that effect two very different ends of the spectrum. She spoke about some of the programs. She feels as a taxpayer in town, we pay taxes to do a lot of things, and she does not think we will ever regret paying for education.

Motion by Mr. Cytowicz, seconded by Mrs. Dwyer, to close Public Comment.

VOICE VOTE: All in Favor. MOTION PASSED.

IX. MOTION BY MR. CYTOWICZ, SECONDED BY MR. LIPPE, TO ADOPT THE AGENDA, AS PRESENTED.

VOICE VOTE: All in Favor. MOTION PASSED.

SPECIAL ACTION

X. PERSONNEL/STUDENT AFFAIRS - Mrs. Lynda Van Dyk, Chairperson

NOTE: All appointees recommended for employment will meet the New Jersey state law requirements for the criminal history review prior to their start date.

Motion by Mrs. Van Dyk, seconded by Mr. Cytowicz, to approve the following agenda item #1:

1. The recommendation of the Interim Superintendent to approve an employment contract for **WILLIAM SCHOLTS**, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, at the annual salary of \$164,800.00, with health benefits, for the 2024-2025 school year, effective July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, per the terms and conditions of the contract. Accounts: 11-000-230-104-10-10-110; 11-000-251-104-10-10-000

ROLL CALL FOR ITEM #1:

TRUSTEE	VOTE	TRUSTEE	VOTE	TRUSTEE	VOTE
Mrs. Van Dyk	Yes	Mrs. Racano	Absent	Mrs. Dwyer	Yes
Mr. Cytowicz	Yes	Mrs. Romeo	Yes	Mrs. Marquard	Absent
Mrs. Jurgensen	Absent	Mr. Lippe	Yes	Mrs. Lockwood	Yes

The **MOTION PASSED.**

REVISED PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING ON THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL BUDGET

SPECIAL ACTION

XI. OPERATIONS & FINANCE - Mr. Peter Lippe, Chairperson

Motion by Mr. Lippe, seconded by Mrs. Van Dyk, to approve the following agenda item #1:

1. The recommendation of the Interim Superintendent to approve the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, the tentative budget was adopted at the Public Meeting of the West Milford Township Board of Education on March 12, 2024, and advertised in accordance with statute for a public hearing to be held on April 30, 2024; and

WHEREAS, P.L.2024, c.13: Stabilized School Budget Aid Grant program and Increased Tax Levy Cap for certain Districts; and

WHEREAS, under the Stabilized School Budget Aid Grant program, a school district subject to a State school aid reduction in the 2024-2025 school year is eligible for an aid grant equal to 45% of the amount of the school district's State school aid reduction; and

WHEREAS, Districts were provided notice of the amounts eligible on or about May 15, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Districts must appropriate these funds no later than July 5, 2024; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the West Milford Board of Education appropriates the additional funds received in the amount of \$36,692, in the following budgetary line items:

<u>Budget Line</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Description</u>
3100 (11-190-100-640)	\$36,692	Textbooks

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the West Milford Township Board of Education, County of Passaic, that the **REVISED 2024-2025 DISTRICT PRELIMINARY BUDGET** be approved as follows:

General Fund	\$76,168,098
Special Revenue	\$ 1,186,286
Debt Service	\$ 616,000
TOTAL BUDGET	\$77,970,384

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the following **REVISED GENERAL FUND AND DEBT SERVICE TAX LEVIES** be approved to support the Revised 2024-2025 Preliminary Budget:

General Fund	\$65,335,198
Debt Service	\$ 406,560
TOTAL	\$65,741,758

XI. OPERATIONS & FINANCE - Mr. Lippe, Chairperson - Continued

1. (Continued)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that included in the budget line 100, Local Tax Levy, is the utilization of 2024-2025 additional tax levy cap flexibility use in the amount of \$1,141,016 in accordance with P.L.2024, c.13, in the following budgetary line items:

<u>Budget Line</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Description</u>
2140 (11-140-100-101)	\$ 25,050	Grades 9-12 Salaries
3100 (11-190-100-640)	\$213,308	Textbooks
11000 (11-230-100-101)	\$268,539	Salaries of Teachers
41500 (11-000-218-104)	\$ 31,312	Salaries of Other Prof. Staff
45080 (11-000-230-334)	\$ 75,000	Architectural/Engineering Svc
49120 (11-000-262-490)	\$100,000	Other Purch. Property Svcs
50000 (11-000-263-100)	\$ 59,075	Salaries
71020 (11-000-291-220)	\$ 19,542	Social Security Contributions
71180 (11-000-291-270)	\$ 99,190	Health Benefits
72200 (10-606)	\$ 50,000	Increase in Maint. Reserve
76360 (10-604)	\$200,000	Increase in Capital Reserve

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that included in the budget line 100, Local Tax Levy, is the utilization of an adjustment for increased costs of health benefits in the amount of \$562,769. The additional funds will be used to pay for increases in health benefit premiums.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that included in budget line 620, Budgeted Withdrawal from Capital Reserve for Other Capital Projects is \$450,000, to be used towards the Upper Greenwood Lake School window and front door replacement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that included in budget line 630, Budgeted Withdrawal from Maintenance Reserve for Budgeted Required Maintenance is \$150,000.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that included in general fund appropriations line 72200, Increase in Maintenance Reserve, is \$50,000 for deposit into the Board of Education's approved Maintenance Reserve Account for the future funding of District Required Maintenance expenditures.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that included in the general fund appropriations line 76360, Increase in Capital Reserve, is \$200,000 for deposit into the Board of Education's approved Capital Reserve Account for the future funding of District capital projects. This deposit is for future capital projects and represents expenditures for construction elements or projects that are in addition to the facilities efficiency standards necessary to achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Board of Education approved "revised tentative" budget is being presented for advertising after Executive County Superintendent approval. The budget will be approved by the Executive County Superintendent prior to the public hearing.

XI. OPERATIONS & FINANCE - Mr. Lippe, Chairperson - Continued

1. (Continued)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the budget is in conformity with regulations promulgated by the Department of Education and the Board of Education has submitted supporting documents to the state for maximum professional services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board authorizes the Business Administrator to make any adjustments to the budget submission to bring it in conformity with state regulations. Adjustments will be reviewed and approved by the Board at the Public Budget Hearing.

ROLL CALL FOR ITEM #1:

TRUSTEE	VOTE	TRUSTEE	VOTE	TRUSTEE	VOTE
Mr. Lippe	Yes	Mrs. Marquard	Absent	Mrs. Dwyer	No
Mrs. Jurgensen	Absent	Mrs. Romeo	Yes	Mr. Cytowicz	Yes
Mrs. Racano	Absent	Mrs. Van Dyk	Yes	Mrs. Lockwood	Yes

The **MOTION PASSED**.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA OR NON-AGENDA ITEMS (PLEASE SIGN IN)

All speakers will have five (5) minutes to speak until a period of thirty (30) minutes transpires. Before speaking, please state your name, group affiliation and address for the record. Members of the public who have requested to speak prior to the meeting will be recognized by the chair first. After speaking, all speakers are asked to sign the register provided and give their full name, group affiliation, and their address.

All statements shall be directed to the presiding officer. No participant may address or question Board members individually.

All speakers are expected to have read the statement within the agenda regarding the regulations concerning public comments.

Members of the public are reminded that they are legally responsible and liable for their comments.

Kate Romeo, 1 Crest Hill Drive, Oak Ridge. Mrs. Romeo spoke about a newspaper article, mostly interviewing Sussex County administrators, on the discussion of student debt and walking at graduation, and student debt and receiving their diploma. As a parent of a West Milford student this year, her own child was threatened with not walking because of an issue with his lunch account. She has multiple emails that came from the school principal that feels in a threatening manner. As a community member, she does not want to receive an email from a principal or any school administrator stating if your school lunches are not paid or if you have another type of debt, you cannot attend the dance, or you cannot walk at promotion or graduation. As a parent, she is very upset about this. She continued to discuss the newspaper article, and what those administrators do in this manner. She asked the Board to look into this and speak with administration regarding this matter. She thanked the Board for listening.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA OR NON-AGENDA ITEMS - Continued

Motion by Mr. Lippe, seconded by Mr. Cytowicz, to close Public Comment.

VOICE VOTE: All in Favor. MOTION PASSED.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION

The Board determined that there was no need for Executive Session.

DISCUSSION: Mrs. Lockwood took the time to thank Dr. Furnari, as this is her last Board meeting in West Milford. She thanked her for everything she has done this past year. She came into a situation that was in some flux, and she is leaving this District in a stronger place than where it was when she arrived. She stated that Dr. Furnari brought back cabinet meetings with her administrators, and that she was very visible in the community and supportive of the Board. She wished her well in her future endeavors.

Mrs. Van Dyk also thanked her for stepping in and for all of her work in West Milford. She also feels that our District is in a much better place than it was when she got here. Mrs. Van Dyk stated is looking forward to working with Dr. Kitchin and she is very optimistic for the future. She thanked Dr. Furnari for giving her time and compassion to our District.

Mr. Lippe thanked Dr. Furnari for her patience and guidance to the Board.

Dr. Kitchin thanked Dr. Furnari personally for her help in making the transition for him to West Milford.

Mrs. Lockwood thanked Dr. Kitchin for giving a lot of his time in the transition process as well.

Board members continued to thank Dr. Furnari for her time in West Milford.

Dr. Furnari thanked the Board so much for her opportunity to work together in West Milford. She asked that the Board continue strive to come together as that is what helps our students and our community. She thanked the administrative team in the District and praised this team as one of the most stellar teams she has ever worked with. She thanked Mr. Novak, Mr. Scholts, and Dr. Ressa for all of their hard work, and she truly appreciates the collaboration and the ability to work with administrators and staff to make this school district the best it can be.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Cytowicz, seconded by Mrs. Dwyer, to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: All in Favor. MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

**William Scholts
Board Secretary**