



## PLYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CENTRAL OFFICE

27 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE  
TERRYVILLE, CONNECTICUT 06786

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of Plymouth Public Schools is to challenge, inspire, and prepare all students for success in an ever-changing and complex world.

### PLYMOUTH BOARD OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS AND CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF ONLY  
TERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA  
33 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE  
TERRYVILLE, CT 06786

VIRTUAL MEETING – AUDIO ONLY  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2021

6 P.M.

### MINUTES

PLYMOUTH, CT  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
2021 FEB - 3 PM 12: 26  
Erica Colunga  
TOWN CLERK

Present: Mr. Seaman, Mrs. Kulesa, Mrs. Lucian, Mr. Showers, Mrs. Johnson,  
Mr. Foote, Mr. Elsaghir, and Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani

Absent: Mrs. Kremmel

Also Present: Mrs. Turner, Interim Superintendent, Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of  
Curriculum & Instruction, Ms. Aronheim, Director of Pupil Personnel &  
Special Education Services and Mr. Trudeau, Director of Technology

Absent: Mr. Tencza, Business Manager

Also Present Via Zoom: Mrs. Loveland, Principal Harry S. Fisher Elementary School;  
Mrs. Holleran, Interim Principal Plymouth Center School;  
Ms. Suffridge, Principal Eli Terry Jr. Middle School and  
Mr. Hulst, Principal Terryville High School

#### 1. Call to Order and Pledge to the Flag

Mr. Seaman call the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. The group joined in the Pledge to the Flag.

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*Plymouth Board of Education is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider.*

2. Adoption of the Agenda

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion Mr. Foote, second Michelle Lucian, any discussion, all in favor, any abstentions, motion passes.

3. Budget Workshop #2 for 2021 - 2022 Budget

Comments from Mr. Seaman, Board Chair

Mr. Seaman indicated that it was been brought to his attention that some members attended a meeting the other evening and some concerns were brought forward. He would like to address those concerns tonight.

- \* The Board of Education has worked really hard over this past year, every single individual, along with the staff and schools.
- \* Regionalization is not out of future plans but currently there is nothing concrete. Something like this does not occur overnight. There are many steps and conversations that need to take place before this can occur.
- \* The Budget which is being addressed is more than responsible not only to the school system but also to the taxpayers.
- \* Our mission in the Town of Plymouth for the public schools is to challenge, inspire and prepare all students for success in an ever-changing and complex world.
- \* What do the numbers in the budget represent? What do they mean? We are going to treat this as a business. Here is what the budget represents:

1. For Preschoolers getting off the bus on their 1<sup>st</sup> day of school to teachers greeting them. This first experience can set the tone for their entire academic career.
2. The elementary school student who will receive the fundamentals of reading, writing and mathematics to the teachers who will provide the guidance. Coaches and tutors who help those students that are struggling or lost. We are fortunate in this day and age to have these services for our students. Some of us were not so fortunate growing up.
3. The middle school students who are only trying to find themselves academically but socially as well. Along with a staff that helps to guide them.
4. The high school student who is getting prepared to enter adulthood, choosing a career path whether it be advanced schooling, vocational trade or take the oath to serve their country.
5. The staff that represents our special needs students who require extra help so they are able to meet the expectations of life.
6. Our paraprofessionals. Our custodial staff worked hard so that we would be able to open remotely or hybrid.
7. Our Nurses from PreK – high school taking care of a skinned knee to COVID- 19.

Upsetting to him, is comments on social services. This town recently suffered a tragedy. All it took was a single phone call to the Superintendent for her to spring into action and assemble her team. He witnessed families coming into the school crying, uncertain what to do and by the time they left their questions were answered, thanks to the districts social services. Again, he is sure that when some of the board members attended school and if there was a tragedy, they would have welcomed if someone to reached out to them. This service the district needs to maintain.

Moving forward, the 1<sup>st</sup> Budget Workshop proposed a 2.53% increase which represented contractual obligations of 2.33%. These numbers also represent the taxpayer, the individuals who supply the money so we can do what we can for our children every day.

He ran some quick numbers which he received from the town tax collector.

- \* 19,078 tax bills have gone out in the Town of Plymouth
- \* The 2.53% represents a \$627,000 increase to the budget ÷ by those tax bills what that number actually means is an increase of \$32.86 per tax bill. This, however, does not include the business tax that the town receives.

Also, during the 1<sup>st</sup> Budget Workshop, the Board spoke about Vocational Training and requested some numbers which we have received. Those figures came back at a \$787,000 increase to get this program going. So, the budget would go from 2.53% to 3.14% increase. So divided by the number of tax bills that figure comes out to \$41.25 per tax bill. However, there are individuals who pay 3 tax bills, i.e. business, automobile as well as property. He explained the reason he uses tax bills is because of the variety of variables, house taxes are larger and go by the assessed value.

To put things in perspective, one always has a habit, black and white, bottom line and numbers and numbers do not lie. This is an insight as to what these numbers represent and why the Board is here along with the individuals who compiled this budget

So, the Board has a decision along with some discussion it needs to make tonight. Do they move forward with the 2.53% or with the 3.14% or do they prefer to do something different to approve in the February meeting?

#### Mr. Seaman Opened Up the Floor for Discussion

Mrs. Johnson – First, I would like to know when our decision has to be made. What is the time line with respect to our February meeting?

Mrs. Turner – We present to the Board of Finance on March 11<sup>th</sup>. I'm not sure when that final approved number needs to get to them.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – With that increase, what class, what program and what school was that for?

Mr. Seaman – I believe we are looking at a STEM sort of program.

Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction – So, that was for the Tech Ed STEM Program at the middle school. We did begin the process of pricing out and reinstating the Family & Consumer Science Program at the middle school. It is going to be significantly more expensive due to the age of the classroom and the condition of the equipment. No final prices yet because we need to have contractors come out to look at the room and prepare some quotes, i.e. cabinet, countertops, etc. This one is a bit more nebulous. However, for Technology Education, we have more of the information at this point in time. It looks like it is going to come in between \$150,000 to \$170,000 to reinstate it and it does include teacher salary, benefits, etc.

The foods program, I am guessing, is going to come in between \$250,000 to \$300,000 because of the facility renovation involved. But, we will not really know that until we have the quotes from the contractors about replacing some of the cabinetry, the countertops, etc.

Mr. Seaman – So, the foods program really, I would not think, will be a go for this budget season. I am not sure, if the STEM Program is going to be approved through the Board of Finance and the Town Council, because it is an increase. So, obviously, we know STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. That would reach every student. That is the advantage of that class. It will not just focus on a select few. That would give the school system more bang for its bucks in preparing our students and reaching the most students.

Mrs. Mozak-Pezza – We are designing it to be a hybrid of both the more traditional kind of construction piece with more of the engineering piece. So, that part of the cost is going to be to purchase computers that are capable of running CAD programs and 3-D printers so the students can begin the process of learning the design process, thus making their designs on the 3-D printer but we would also have some of the traditional woodworking stuff involved also so they can see both sides.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – And that was \$120,000 or

Mr. Seaman - \$787,000 total increase in the budget. So, we would go from an increase of \$627,000.00 to \$787,000.00.

Mrs. Mozak-Pezza – For just the Technology Education STEM piece, it would be about \$160,000.00 - \$170,000.00 to do all the stuff which includes teacher salary and benefits in addition to the equipment and the room improvement that would have to have happen in order to install all of this.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – How much would it be to continue for a year?

Mrs. Mozak-Pezza – then it would just be a teacher's salary and benefits and supply costs. We went back and found out what the year to year supply range was for the program in the past. It was running about \$6,500.00 in supplies. So, it would be the cost of the teacher and then the supplies.

Mrs. Johnson – I know in the past we have actually received donations from Home Depot and surrounding lumber yards. So in the past that has happened but that teacher did all that work.

Mrs. Kulesa – It sounds like a bargain to me to add some variety to our curriculum. Yes, I agree, we need to focus on the middle school.

Mr. Seaman – This is where this is designed to go. To the middle school program.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – What would it be? A quarter elective, a half year elective?

Mrs. Mozak-Pezza – So, that would be something we would have to work out with Angie. Whether it happens every single year, whether it happens for grades 6, 7, 8, or whether it happens for grades 7 & 8 and based on that, how long it would happen for.

Mrs. Lucian – Say, we bring this to the budget meeting with the STEM Class and they come back to say cut it, where are the cuts coming from?

Mr. Seaman – So, if I understand your question Michelle correctly, you're saying, if we went with the \$787,000.00 increase and the Board of Finance said you need to do something else, I think that this would have to be a discussion and maybe the STEM Program does not go. Maybe we just plant the seed and move forward. We have to also remember too that our children this year have gone through a lot. This upcoming school year is going to be catching up, rebuilding. Our children are going to be behind, no doubt. So, this is not the year to have to cut staff. We have a good working relationship with the Board of Finance. I am looking forward to working with them. I am also looking forward to the Town Council's input. But, my feeling, and I cannot say for sure, if they say we have to cut, I don't think the STEM Program will be going forward this year. However, we have planted the seed. By planning, negotiating and talking about it next year allows us to do some better planning. But, I am hoping this is not the case. I am hoping it goes, but being realistic, individuals are taking advantage of the extension to pay their taxes in March. We need to remember this is workshop #2. We are very early in the budget process, even town-wise. I don't think they have even put together numbers yet. We are early, but hopefully, the worst they can say is "No", right?

Mrs. Lucian – So, would this be an elective or a class course, they would have to take?

Mrs. Mozak-Pezza – It would be a Unified Arts Class just like music and art.

Mrs. Lucian – Just concerned that some students may be turned off by this class.

Mrs. Johnson – That is just like another elective. Not everyone is .... Also, just remember when we go there we are just one-line item. They just cannot tell us where to cut.



Mrs. Kulesa – Personally, I say we put it in there because our job is to do what is best for kids and if that's what we believe is best for kids, if we have to work with the numbers later than we work with the numbers later. We should not try to please anyone else.

Mr. Seaman – It's not about that at all.

Mrs. Lucian – Do we have someone certified now that can teach this class as an additional class?

Mr. Seaman – Did we find out if that college has a group of graduates that would be coming out to fill this?

Mrs. Mozak-Pezza – So, I haven't had a chance to speak to Central yet but I did check the pool for certification. There are a decent number of people in the state who are certified in this area who are currently under contract. So, there is a pool out there. We would advertise and see what we could get.

The Family & Consumer Science one will be a little bit harder to fill. That one the pool is much, much smaller and when we did the estimate for Family & Consumer Science, we put the teacher's salary at the higher end of the salary range because it's going to be difficult to find someone.

Mrs. Lucian – I agree, as long as we don't cut any staff, paras, etc. Keep the staff as is.

Mr. Seaman – Even at 2.53% Michelle, there is no guarantee that this will pass. And, that budget is very responsible and very conservative. If the 2.53% is not approved, that means staff reduction. Speaking with the Board of Finance Chairperson, we are very early on in the process. Hoping individuals will look at this budget not from a dollar perspective but from an educational perspective. It would come down to dollars and what the town can do. I don't think anyone would be against the concept of vocational.

Mr. Foote: I've said all along, it's not our job to cut this. We have to present the best we believe to be true and as conservative as we can be. But, it's not our job to cut, really.

Mr. Showers – I would look at leasing as opposed to buying outright to get the 3-D printers. It may be cheaper. You never know.

Mr. Seaman – Gregg, so what is your opinion – Option 1 at 2.53% or do we go with the 3.14%?

Mr. Showers – Indicated the possibly of waiting perhaps until 2023 -2024 before pursuing the STEM class as the district will be doing a reorganization of the 2 elementary schools this school year in 2021-2022 and is catching up from the COVID. However, he indicated laying the ground work and getting all the prices now.

Mr. Seaman – Indicated he did not disagree with Mr. Showers and understood his viewpoint. But he feels by including the vocational training in the budget this will plant a seed for the Mayor and the Town Council which is feels is important.

Mr. Elsaghir – In summary, he will not be able to support either options of the budget. With the town and student population dropping and the budget increases, he feels the Board cannot continue adding and does not think the people can afford an increase. Therefore, he would not feel right not continuing to do what he has done in the past 3 years and vote No on both options. He will continue his opposition respectfully knowing that a lot of hard work went into this budget.

Mr. Seaman – Commended Mr. Elsaghir for standing by his decision.

When called upon, Mr. Foote recalled when he was on the Board of Assessors and individuals registering vehicles outside of the town and also commented on the number of antique cars that were registered in town and the amount of personal property taxes that were paid. He believes there is money out there and is tired of hearing excuses.

Mr. Seaman asked the Board Members if they were prepared to decide on what budget option they are prepared to move forward to the February meeting for approval.

Mr. Showers indicated the difficulty in approving a 2.53% budget, but is prepared to move this figure forward.

Mrs. Johnson – 3.14%

Mr. Foote – 2.53%

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – 3.14%

Mrs. Lucian – 3.14% and would like to see parents and students come out in support of this budget. Mr. Seaman indicated the disadvantage of this is Zoom, no in person, however, he did indicate there was public comment on the agenda.

Mrs. Kulesa – 3.14%

Conclusion – The majority of the Board Members indicated support for Option 2 – 3.14% which is an increase of \$187,000.00 to the budget, which includes the STEM Program. A vote will take place at the February Board of Education Meeting.

#### 4. Public Comment (3-minute limit per speaker)

Mr. Jim Kilduff – Chair, Plymouth Board of Finance  
31 Prospect Street Extension, Terryville

Summary – Thanked everyone for all of their hard work during a challenging year. He addressed Mrs. Johnson's earlier question as follows:

The Town Budget is due January 31<sup>st</sup> (this is the due date for the town side of the budget. These estimates shall, on or before February 10<sup>th</sup>, be filed with the board of finance.

Quote from the Town Charter: "The board of education shall on or before February 15<sup>th</sup>, file with the board of finance a detailed estimate of the expenditures to be made by the board, and the revenue to be collected thereby in the ensuing fiscal year and such other information as may be required by the board of finance."

In March the Board of Education will make its presentation to the Board of Finance.

Conclusion: Mr. Kilduff indicated everyone on the Board of Finance will listen and give the Board of Education every fair consideration. He thanked the Board for all of their hard work.


Mrs. Johnson thanked Mr. Kilduff for providing the answer to her earlier question.

Mr. Seaman also thanked Mr. Kilduff and indicated he is looking forward to working with him and the Board of Finance.

5. Adjournment

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adjourn at 6:39 p.m. Motion Mr. Foote, second Mr. Showers, any discussion, all in favor, any abstentions, motion passes.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Patricia Piskorski  
Recording Secretary  
Plymouth Board of Education