

MINUTES OF THE BUDGET RETREAT MEETING  
OF THE TENAFLY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WEDNESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 12, 2020  
HELD AT THE HEGELEIN BUILDING, 500 TENAFLY RD., TENAFLY, NJ

DATE 3/9/20

APPROVED [Signature]

**(All Public Board Meetings are Recorded and Posted on the District's Website)**

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The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. by Board President Janet Horan who read the following statement:

"The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Law was enacted to insure the right to the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon."

In accordance with provisions of this act, the Tenafly Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting to be publicized by having the date, time and place thereof posted at the Borough office, Tenafly Public Library, administrative building, in the local press and on the district's web site.

On roll call, the following Board members answered present:

Mark Aronson	Paula Newman
Natalie Barbanel	Edward J. Salaski
Inbal Israeli Miller	Jocelyn Schwarz
Jane Juhng	Janet I. Horan

The following Board member was absent:

Patricia Flynn

The following staff members were present:

Ms. Shauna DeMarco, Superintendent  
Dr. Evelyn Mamman, Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction  
Mr. Yas Usami, Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Ms. Horan opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Mr. Aronson gave the administrators praise for putting together outstanding budget retreat information for 2020/21. He expressed how he wanted to take the opportunity tonight to give a brief explanation of the budget history 2 years ago. He stated that the preliminary budget amount was well over the 2% cap and this information was emailed to the community that led to what was perceived as a "budget crisis." He spoke about how budgets are first developed and the required procedures involved listing the needs, wants and wishes of the district to arrive at a starting budget amount. From that point, the budget is then fine-tuned resulting months later with a final and realistic budget total.

Ms. Horan also praised the administration for the comprehensive and helpful budget information for a better understanding of the needs of the school administrators and how the budget is developed. Mr. Usami expressed that the budget process is hard work, consists of a lot of give and take, and is a complete team effort by all of the district's administrators as they reprioritize and examine what they are asking for and what can be done in later years.

Dr. Mamman discussed the level of creativity needed to establish the priorities of the district, modifications to make, and that it is an overall learning process.

Ms. DeMarco talked about the commitment, approach and open-mindedness in preparing the budget, and the framework that is being created for future years to help better manage the budget process towards achieving the vision and goals of the district; and the way we allocate our money should demonstrate the work that we are doing in a quantitative way.

Ms. DeMarco referred to the budget binder and discussed the components of the following sections (*a budget presentation will be prepared for the community*):

- Section I: The Budget Process
- Section II: Enrollment Projections
- Section III: A Quantitative Description of the Preliminary Budget
- Section IV: A Qualitative Description of the Preliminary Budget
- Section V: SY20-21 Preliminary Budget

Mr. Usami gave an overview of the budget calendar and the plans ahead for adopting and advertising the 2020-21 budget in April. He talked about the budget process starting with administrators receiving their budget/summary sheets at the end of August and the many meetings that take place between the principals, supervisors and teachers to get their input on the budget for their needs for the following year. Central Office administrators had similar meetings with their department staff to identify the needs and directions being taken. Mr. Usami said it was helpful this year to have more weekly meetings with the principals to discuss their budgets.

The Board and administrators discussed the strategies of the 2020/21 budget as it is presently laid out, and relates to future proposals and planning. Dr. Mamman talked about the many new state curriculum mandates in the works and how helpful it will be with our new budget process to have a budgetary framework in place to use as a basis before additions are made.

Ms. DeMarco asked the Board what they would like to hear more about to help navigate through the budget proposal. The following topics were addressed:

#### High School Guidance

Mr. Aronson asked about the plan for the guidance department. Ms. DeMarco replied that when the community expressed a concern in this area it was carefully examined and reported that things are presently stable, the staff has made tremendous progress and is providing excellent service for our students. Exploration is ongoing for next steps.

#### Permanent Substitute Teachers

In lieu of not approving the employment of permanent substitutes for this budget, Ms. Israeli Miller asked what the plan is for the meantime. Ms. DeMarco replied that improvements have been made and we have a lot more feedback in order to base our decisions. She said that substitute teachers statewide are at a deficit, and one of the advantages of using an outside service is that they can offer benefits to substitute teachers.

## Security Upgrades

Ms. Israeli Miller asked if security upgrades were being planned (adding man traps and Remo security doors). Ms. DeMarco replied that security assessments will be looked at in March and information needs to be gathered before plans are decided. She pointed out that the work calendar activity runs from August until March for the 2020/2021 school year. Once the budget is approved, the purchasing and planning becomes part of the routines. The other part of the work is exploring everything so that when August comes again, we are ready for the next year's ideas and planning.

The Board and administration discussed some of the following factors of why the Remo Doors were put on hold for now: the A/C project became a priority issue; the financial scope of the Remo Door project was uncertain and was turned over to the Finance Committee; the LRFP is where these types of capital projects get built-in and secured and our architect of record will be reviewing the plan to examine existing projects and give new estimates, if needed; and there was a transition period in December with naming a new architect of record for the district.

Ms. DeMarco encouraged the Board to remember to bring forward ideas they wish to focus on when money may become available to utilize.

## Reduction of First Grade Sections

Ms. Newman referred to 1<sup>st</sup> grade sections being reduced and asked what the plan is for the spaces. Ms. DeMarco stated they are looking at the best usage for the specific needs of the buildings, as well as examine the recent projections made by the demographer.

## Reduction of Kindergarten Sections

Ms. Schwarz asked if there's a possibility of the district having 2 sections of Kindergarten classrooms in some of the schools (as opposed to the 3 currently). Ms. DeMarco said the enrollment number will be the driving factor, but she is hesitant right now to reduce the number of Kindergarten sections unless there were justified reasons and in the students best interest. Also, the policy for the cap number of students will still be maintained regardless of any modifications. Ms. DeMarco emphasized that the staff will not be reduced.

## High School Teacher Leaders

Ms. Israeli Miller asked for clarification of the number of High School teacher leaders listed in one of the binder sections. Mr. Usami clarified that 7 teacher leaders are included in the summary of the Preliminary Budget at the end of the binder. Ms. DeMarco and Dr. Mamman spoke about the importance and benefits of having teacher leaders in the schools and the tremendous curriculum work they are doing.

## Salary and Supervisor Instruction

Mr. Aronson asked if there was an additional position added to the draft budget. Mr. Usami responded "No" to the question and explained how salaries are split, and this changed many things.

## Supervisor and Student Services

It was noted that there was a position in last year's budget (in the High School) that is not in the 2020/21 budget.

## Business Department

Ms. Schwarz asked if this topic was discussed. Dr. Mamman said it is being discussed and we need to explore and expand to find out the interest level before students enter the High School. Dr. Mamman talked about the importance of sustainability of programs. Ms. Barbanel pointed out that although we do not have a business program, students have the option to take business class electives.

## Technology

Ms. Juhng asked for clarification of the technology plan. Mr. Usami talked about Chromebooks that are expiring, and we are looking at leases instead of purchasing. One half will be in the 2020/21 year, and the other half will be in 2021/22. We are still using Chromebooks for the virtual desktop infrastructure in place. The 5-year lease is up and we are going for renewal. The price will be brought down, as the hardware we have is still good. We will be purchasing more interactive displays and laptops this year that will reduce purchases in the 2020/21 year. Mr. Usami talked about Core Switch for data that needs to be replaced and will be purchased this year, as it is vital for routing data.

Ms. Schwarz asked about the usage of Smartboards. Mr. Usami said we are not replacing Smartboards as they are still good and functioning. Smartboards will be replaced with interactive displays, as Smartboards become non-functioning.

Ms. Juhng later asked about the part-time position for a 20-hour technician. Ms. DeMarco said a full time position would be ideal to have a web master who would do maintenance, monitoring, communication and managing the website. The hope is to eventually make this a full time position.

## High School Library Equipment

Ms. Newman asked for clarification of library equipment. Mr. Usami said this is for media equipment (Ms. DeMarco had a list that included studio lighting, coding processors, black-out shades, shelving, TV monitors, etc.). Dr. Mamman talked about the Media Center being such a hub of activity for the students, and how the center is state-of-the-art quality. Mr. DiGregorio was praised for being very resourceful in obtaining donations of equipment for the center.

## Library Books

Ms. Israeli Miller asked for clarification of the budget for library books. Dr. Mamman said there was an audit done to see what the schools actually need, and it was noted there are increases for each school. She described the different types of books and the importance of equity across the board.

### Classroom Supply List

Ms. Israeli Miller referred to the classroom supply list parents receive at the beginning of the school year and if there will be a discussion at some point. Ms. DeMarco noted that a closer look was taken to identify specific supplies that are absorbed by the district, such as wipes/tissues/ Purell and similar items that the district needs to be in control of for safety purposes (but the list does not include notebooks/folders/pens, etc.). However, the Sustainability Committee will plan to look at how we are optimizing the notebooks/folders, binders, etc. that we do have, and what we actually need and what can be reduced.

### Busses and Driver

Ms. Horan asked Ms. DeMarco what the plan is for the busses and driver. Ms. DeMarco gave several examples of the desire to have students come together in groups for programs and activities, taking trips outside the school, and the logistics of how to achieve this. We still need to secure a driver.

### Elementary Foreign Language

Ms. Schwarz inquired about the high salary increase in this area at one school and asked if there is an additional hire. She said we have one full time position per building. Mr. Usami said he will check into this.

### Budget Projections

Mr. Salaski referred to the approximately \$1.66 million budget projection pushed forward to the 2021/22 year and asked if the same process will be used as this year with the 2% cap, or a greater need to use banked cap. Ms. DeMarco replied as time goes by decisions will be made regarding items that will be pushed out, and when to possibly consider using alternate revenues or banked cap. Everything is in a preliminary stage right now.

### Section III: A Quantitative Description of the Preliminary Budget

Mr. Usami discussed the following topics and gave some of the main points, as listed below:

- State Aid: we may get a small increase from last year
- Enrollment Projections: there is no enrollment adjustment for the 2020/21 budget.
- Anticipated Revenues: the fund balance has been cut by almost \$200,000 from the current year. Mr. Usami discussed capital reserve withdrawal estimates, maintenance reserve withdrawal at a higher number, tax levy, and Alpine tuition projections. Other revenues come from a shared service agreement with the Borough for IT support; use of facilities; summer school; demand response (energy); E-rate (internet service); maintenance agreement with Alpine; facility reimbursement from SACC; and the SEMI initiative.
- Capital Projects: there are 3 for the time being -- Geissinger Field bleachers and coaches' box renovation; air conditioning window units and electrical upgrades at all the elementary schools and Middle School; and the circle parking area at Mackay School. The present LRFP was included in the binder section and will be updated as soon as needed information is obtained.

- Budgeted Health Care Costs: there are no adjustments, and our budgeted health insurance costs are much lower than last year's budgeted amount. The increase projected is 10% for 2021. The actual rates are determined sometime in August.
- Tax Levy Increment: Mr. Usami explained what the dollar amount equates for the 2% tax levy.
- 2020 Tax Impact: this page reflects property tax impact
- Exemptions: Mr. Usami discussed banked cap and general rules of usage

Ms. DeMarco asked what the increased state aid would allow. Mr. Usami said it will allow us to lower the 2% cap, or to bring back some of the items removed from the budget without going over the 2% cap.

Mr. Usami pointed out that Section V includes the SY20-21 Preliminary Budget Summary listing the history from 2015-16 to present.

Mr. Aronson suggested the Board discuss the usage of additional state aid. He said he would like the additional aid to go towards property tax relief.

The topic of banked cap was raised and a discussion took place of the Board's views and factors of when to use it or not.

A poll was taken to reflect the Board's sense if they are in favor of using banked cap in the 2020/21 school year, and the trustees gave the following vote and rationale:

Yes - 6	Mark Aronson (if state aid is cut, he is in favor or using banked cap to meet the budget)	No - 2	Natalie Barbanel Edward J. Salaski
	Inbal Israeli Miller (she is in favor of using some of the banked cap for the A/C project up to the amount it expires)	Abstain - 0	
	Jane Juhng (suggested using some of the banked cap for the A/C project)		
	Paula Newman (if state aid is cut, she is in favor of using banked cap)	Absent - 1	Patricia Flynn
	Jocelyn Schwarz (If state aid comes in higher, she would like the technology position to go to full time)		
	Janet I. Horan (She said this is a great budget to be proud of. If state aid is cut, she is in favor of using banked cap. She is not in favor of using banked cap for the A/C project.		

The Board praised the administration for doing a great job with the budget. A lot of time and thought went into its' preparation.

A motion was made by Ms. Israeli Miller and seconded by Mr. Salaski that the Board convenes in closed session according to the following:

WHEREAS, the Tenafly Board of Education has been formed pursuant to applicable New Jersey Statutes, and

WHEREAS, the Board is charged with the responsibility of performing all acts and doing all things, consistent with law and the rules of the State Board of Education, necessary for the lawful and proper conduct, equipment and maintenance of the public schools and public school property of the Tenafly Public School District, and

WHEREAS, Section 7 of the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10-4-12) permits the exclusion of the public ("Closed Session") from a meeting of the Board in certain circumstances, and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that circumstances exist for such a Closed Session,

WHEREAS, the Board has found the action described below to be necessary and proper,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board on the date indicated above that:

- 1.) The public shall be excluded from discussion of and action on the Closed Session herein set forth.
- 2.) The confidential subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
  - Personnel Matters
  - HIB
  - Special Education
  - Legal Opinion of Policy

No formal action will be taken.

The motion was approved by those present. Ms. Flynn was absent from the meeting.

The meeting recessed to closed session at 9:03 p.m.

A motion was made by Ms. Juhng and seconded by Mr. Aronson to adjourn the meeting.

The motion was approved by those present. Ms. Flynn was absent from the meeting.



The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Yas Usami,  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary