

BOE Questions and Answers

October 24, 2023

Dr. Michael-Joseph Mercanti-Anthony

Item 1: Do we have a sense of the breakdown of the "district placeholder" number of 2 million?

Yes, via the RFP process, with assistance from the First Selectman's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities, we contracted with Silver Petrucelli & Associates for a district-wide assessment. We are getting an updated ADA study, which has been completed on all of our buildings except Old Greenwich, New Lebanon, and Central Middle School since they are already being planned as part of a previous project. SPA had previously been contracted to do a study of just Western Middle School, which shows approximately \$8,000,000 in ADA compliance work. Preliminary reports show all other schools between \$750K-\$5M. GPS will be sharing the report information with the BOE once it is ready, expected in November.

A [review of Western MS](#) for conformity with the current requirements of the American Disabilities Act, including current conditions, conforming and non-conforming, of the facility is [posted on the GPS website](#).

Item 10: How many pieces of furniture are we expecting to get in the \$300,000

The quote to complete the classrooms at Greenwich High School was just under \$1,000,000. The furniture replacement started in 2018-2019, and we have not been able to get the rest funded. This year, we broke it up into \$300,000 each year and we will get updated quotes in the spring once we know if we have funding. It is likely that the cost has gone up so we will purchase as much as we can. A [quote for this furniture](#) is available online.

Item 16: What is the extent of the cafeteria work we're doing at JC? My assumption is this is not changing the footprint but interior work?

The cafeteria at Julian Curtiss is the smallest of all GPS elementary schools and it does need to be expanded and updated to better accommodate the lunch schedules to maximize classroom time. The Building Committee is still working through the best design, but this is not an expansion. There were early discussions about utilizing the current cafe space for small classrooms (Special Education, EL) and utilizing a larger space in the building for the cafeteria. Or, flip the media center with the cafe.

School Building	Dining (sq ft)	Kitchen (sq ft)
Cos Cob	3,310	348
Glenville	2,660	515
Hamilton Avenue	2,620	266
I.S. at Dundee	2,380	343
Julian Curtiss	1,065	285
New Lebanon	1,952	475
North Mianus	1,730	305
North Street	3,100	730
Old Greenwich	2,110	980
Parkway	1,910	835
Riverside	1,720	153

Item 21: The statement of needs says the primary FY24 driver is ISD, but the cost breakdown lists JC and Riverside. Can we clarify?

Can you reference a specific project? We need clarification because all of the sheets look accurate for International School at Dundee.

Item 22: Given we seem to average a plumbing emergency every couple of years, how confident are we that we have a sense of all our plumbing challenges? Do we feel the Drainage analysis in item 5 will adequately identify our needs for preventative maintenance?

We do have some old pipes under the ground, and until we finish our scope project we will not know for sure the status. We do believe the analysis of the drain lines will assist greatly in preventative maintenance as well as to identify any drain lines, or associated components, that require replacement.

Item 30: The description speaks of the FY25 request for Cos Cob, Ham Ave, etc, but I believe you mean FY24

No, this is the FY25 Capital request.

Would it be possible to get a breakdown of our magnet enrollment at JC, HA, and NL over time? The report lists the overall elementary number and points out how ISD was the biggest. Seeing the enrollment trend in the other schools might be helpful for the racial imbalance conversation.

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Julian Curtiss	71	65	64	64
New Lebanon	24	34	45	51
Hamilton Ave	33	27	28	20

*Keep in mind that Hamilton Avenue had very few seats available due to the low class sizes in K-1 initially set at 16 instead of 21.

Enrollment

1. I have to say I am rather surprised to see that our enrollment has gone down by 40 students since September 1st. This is rather unusual as those numbers tend to increase or decrease by a few students. Do we have any ideas as to why we have had such a drastic change in enrollment in six weeks?

This happens each year as students move away and families forget to withdraw, or parents enroll early in public school while they concurrently wait to see if they are admitted to private schools. If the student moves to another public school, those schools by law, must request their records. If the student moves to a private school, the school may accept documents straight from the parents.

2. I was particularly surprised to see that there has been a reduction of 11 students at Hamilton Avenue and 11 at CMS as well as a reduction of 7 kindergarteners and 10 students in 11th grades since the start of the school year, do we know where these students have gone?

See above.

3. Our OOD has gone down by 10 from last year - is that due to students aging out/graduating, moving out of district or moving back into GPS?

It is a combination of everything, but we are intentionally working to bring students back in partnership with our families.

4. The number of students needing special education has increased this year, especially in 2nd grade. Do we think this might be due to improvements made in early identification tools and training or have we simply gotten more referrals?

Absolutely! Our MTSS process is becoming more robust across K-12 and more students are being referred and found eligible for services. From October of 2022 through October of 2023 we added an additional 65 students.

5. While it is not listed here, do we know how many students are enrolled in AIT? our technical high school program?

AITE: 3 students

Wright Tech: 4 students

Tech Report:

1. On page 8 of the report, there is a chart showing the number of support tickets per category, can you show us this data in percentages - as in # of support tickets in each category in comparison to the number of those devices and what the general age of those devices might be? I am wondering if we think that the chromebooks and ipads have more need for repairs (or have issues) due to age or another factor.

All of the devices in grades 6-12 are relatively new because we upgraded during COVID needing better devices. You can see the replacement cycles are 3 and 4 years. Chromebooks in the lower grades (Grades 3, 4, and 5) were new this year.

Top 5 Support Ticket Categories (2022-23)

1. Chromebook Support 1,595 Tickets (27%) (6,000 student chromebooks)
2. iPad Support 1,591 Tickets (29%) (5,500 student iPads)
3. Printer Support 1,228 Tickets (48%) (550 Printers)
4. Smartboard Support 1,203 Tickets (50%) (600 Classroom Smartboards)
5. Desktop Computer 1,027 Tickets (41%) (2,500 Computers)

2. Disaster recovery - know this was a need that we discussed last year as well and the thought that the request for funding was deferred, did we receive any funding for this? If not, I would think that with the ceiling collapse and flooding issue at Havemeyer - this is now a critical need for GPS. has the system degraded at all since last year and if so, by how much?

The Disaster Recovery Capital Project was approved last year and the Greenwich Board of Education received the funding on July 1, 2023. Although this is a multi-year project (estimated two years), all of the funding was made available in year 1 in the total amount of \$1.3 million.

3. I see that there is a request to add cyber security to Policy 6141.321, I have looked at CAGE's sample policies and they do not have any policies re: cybersecurity. I have also done some research to see what other districts might have but did not find any others that had cyber security policies. While we do have a policy entitled "Acceptable Computer Network Use", Policy 4118.5-4218.5, it does not really fully cover the topic either. I would be happy to sit with Mr Ting to see what he feels a policy should address and reach out to CAGE to see what they might have or be working on.

GPS can update the regulation for use to add cybersecurity to match the training that staff are required to do on an annual basis. It is also recommended that we add language for basic cybersecurity requirements such as multi-factor authentication for critical systems (ie: student information system), password complexity requirements, and encryption for all remote access connections.

SESS Interim Funding request:

1. I know that the number of students with needs has increased this year and that we needed to hire extra teachers and will need an additional psychologist as well, can you let me know where we needed to add these 2 extra teachers? pre-school, elem., middle, GHS or elsewhere?

ISD and Riverside need an additional .5 teacher and we need an additional psychologist for evaluations.

2. SPED Transportation - \$732.87 seems to be rather more than what one would consider to be a reasonable and customary daily expense for transportation for a single student. Did GPS try to work with this student's parents to pay them a stipend to drive their student as I know we have done this in the past.

This is the cost for a bus and monitor, whether it is a large bus or a small bus. Some parents are able to drive, and some are not. It really depends on the student's disability and the need to have a monitor in their car as well.

3. We know that the way we handle budgeting/town budget process negatively impacts our ability to properly plan for SESS services and that we are consistently running over budget for SESS - I think it is high time for us to

discuss this with other town bodies and see what can be done to increase the budget in this area ahead of time and possibly readjust the number prior to being voted on by BET and RTM. Have we ever had this discussion to see if we can revise and update our SESS costs prior to the budget being approved at the BET and then at the RTM?

We have discussed this in the past, but it is such a moving target depending on what happens over the summer months in regards to in and out migration of students. We do set the budget on everything which is known at the time of presenting the budget, but it is just so early. We could adjust in April or May based on known changes, and that could be helpful in regards to interim requests.

4. If we are already under budgeted for SESS by \$2.5M this early in the year, should this interim get us through to the end of the school year assuming we do not have any additional students enter the program or is it reasonable to assume we may need more funding later this school year.

We simply do not know. This interim accounts for a new student who will be arriving, and everything that we know as of October 2023.

5. Can we discuss a date to have an executive session to go over SESS costs sooner rather than later as I think it is important that our soon to be new colleagues have a better understanding of the costs in this area.

It is on the Board Retreat agenda for Thursday, February 8 at Havemeyer.

Parkway interim:

1. On page 2 of the proposal, the architects note that certain items are NOT included in the base fee of the estimate, if these items are not included in the base fee - will we still need to some of the items listed and if so, would we need to pay for them outside of the noted costs and if so, what are they?

We will not know the answer until we have a design.

2. This request for an interim appropriation is noted as being for Parkway Water Filters, yet the overview notes that a new pump and filter house for both Parkway

and GEMS is needed. I assume this is the cost for the new pump and filter house - not just filters? If so, is the cost being shared with the Town as this station also supports GEMS?

This is an emergency interim request and the BOE is making the request. There are only approximately three people who work at the GEMS building. We are collaborating.

3. As there is already a pump house there - why do we need to construct a new pump house instead of using the existing pump house as the current pump seems to have failed? Is the current pump house not large enough to house a new pump?

Yes, it is too small for what needs to be installed.

School Calendar:

1. We received quite a bit of negative feedback this year regarding having the first day of school be on the friday prior to a long labor day weekend. I know we made some mid-year revisions last year as we revised this to add PLD and extra day of conferences, but I think we really need to consider how to NOT have the first day be on the 30th. What are some other options to have a different start date.

It is a challenging calendar to move the start date, as we would need to move two days (Orientation and first day). Our last snow day is already June 23, so that would push students to June 25. GPS could move February break to the same week as President's Day, which would gain one day. However, the community would probably not be happy with that option either. We are one of the few school districts who still have a full February and April break. We also struggle to back up the teachers to start earlier as Summer School runs through August 16, which only gives one week for our facilities staff to get those buildings ready for staff to return the following Monday. We also need every summer day that we can get for facilities given the amount of work we are doing. We will take a good look again and see if there are any other options.

2. I see that we are once again slated to be open on Juneteenth and wanted to see what in school education was given to students last Juneteenth as I know that the decision to close public schools on Juneteenth Independence Day can be made by each local school district, however that, by law, if we remain open on a legal

state holiday, we must hold a suitable educational program in observance of the holiday.

Absolutely! We did a terrific job last year of educating our entire school community.

3. Also, I see that the following note was added to the calendar again this year "Note: There shall be no athletic games or activity competitions, projects, homework or major assignments the evening before or on recognized and religious holidays, and no instructional assignments required to be worked on during Thanksgiving, Holiday, Winter and Spring recesses."

I will again say that this note is not entirely clear and that we NEED a regulation stating that no athletic, arts or academic competitions/practices and no homework should be taken place or be given at these times. I also wanted to note that for many of the advanced/honors and AP courses, assignments and work is given during breaks and think this is something to discuss.

Yes, we can add a regulation.

I also think we need to review the homework regulation (6154R) and it states "Homework assigned over the vacation will be assigned the week before vacation and due a week after the return to school. Two weekends at the minimum will be included in this time. No tests will be given the first day back after a vacation. Vacations are defined as the December, February and Spring breaks". to ensure that this is what is actually happening in the schools.

Yes, we do remind staff right before the breaks.

It also notes under GHS: "Greenwich High School adopts the following guidelines (specific to a student's course schedule) regarding homework expected for a particular class each night and over the course of an eight-day cycle." but does not really cover AP course requirements as they are very different.**

We do remind staff about AP courses as well.

I also reviewed the Interscholastic/Intramural Athletics Policy (6145.2) High School Athletics Regulation (6145.2R) and did not see anything there related to when athletic competitions or practices can or can not be held and think it might

be best to add that to the regulation. I did not find any regulations for Middle school athletics. Can we also assume that this regulation is not just for athletic competitions but also art/music/theatre, academic, and other scholastic competitions/events? As in, there should not be any scheduled practice or performances for plays/concerts or academic teams (quiz bowl, etc...) on recognized holidays?

Yes, we can add a regulation.