



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Monday, May 15, 2023

6:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting

In person at East Greenwich Town Hall - Town Council Chambers
125 Main Street, East Greenwich, RI

Minutes

Those in attendance

School Committee: Ms. Alyson Powell, Chair; Ms. Nicole Bucka, Vice-Chair; Ms. Clare Cecil-Karb; Mr. Tim Munoz; Dr. Eugene Quinn, Mr. Kevin Murphy

Absent: Mr. William Hangan

Town Council: Mark Schwager, President; Michael Donegan, Vice President; Caryn Corenthal, Renu Englehart and Michael Zarrella

Town Administration: Andrew Nota, Town Manager; Andrew Teitz, Town Solicitor; Peter Skwirz, Assistant Town Solicitor; Leigh Carney, Town Clerk/Executive Assistant to Town Manager; Timothy Wheeler, IT Director; Patricia Sunderland, Finance Director

Additional Attendees: Dr. Brian G. Ricca, Superintendent; Mr. Michael Podraza, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Maggie Baker, Director of Administration; Ms. Melissa Ferreira, Confidential Administrative Assistant; Attorney Aubrey Lombardo

Agenda

Any item on the agenda may be subject to a vote

6:00 pm Open Session

I. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

President Schwager called the town council to order at 6:02pm and introductions of other members and staff.

Chairwoman Alyson Powell called the school committee to order at 6:04pm and introductions were given.

II. Joint School Committee - Town Council Meeting

In April the School Committee approved FY24 fiscal budget April, May 8th public hearing on budget.

Update by Andrew Nota

Residents can go to get all information on timelines, what's been published on town website. Front page public engagement information of website w/ narrative. Mr. Nota's narrative of timeline, previous steps already passed and upcoming.

Supporting documents from when process started in December. Ways to communicate with town available. Discussion platform, post questions and Andrew will post the question and answer, may take a bit of time.

Mr. Nota stated - Mr Schwager comments no change since 5/1/2023. Budget meetings to council & community under deliberation 5/4/2023 & 5/8/2023 meetings. 5/8/2023 meeting each department presented individual budget with Q&A.

- A. Presentations from Superintendent and Town Manager and discussion by School Committee and Town Council on the proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.

A1. Proposed FY 2023-2024 Town Budget Program Summary

Andrew Nota

Opening remarks from President Schwager and overview of the budget process.

Budget in its entirety including timelines, documents and departments is available

Proposed Tax Levy Impact - 3.49% increase of \$2,087, 783

Proposed Tax Rates:

Residential \$22.05 (2.95% increase)

Commercial \$24.93 (3.18% increase)

Personal Property Tax \$32.78 (3.19% increase)

Tax Levy Funded Programs: \$60,698,310

School Dept.: proposed transfer \$39,723,435 a \$953,859 inc or 2.46%

General Fund: \$17,039,495, 6.51% increase

Debt Service: \$3,378,735, 3.59% increase

Library: \$556,645: \$10,000 increase of 1.83%

Philosophies & processes used to do this budget. Build out and advance town depts. & services for community.

Summary of Major Budget impacts page:

- 1) Significant compromises but doesn't mean we can't reach goals.
- 2) Even following covid there is opportunity for consolidating, alt funding,
- 3) Provide programs... being used by residents

- 4) Manage budget active & thorough process, rarely get through the year with the budget in tact. Always trying to reallocate funding, stay a step ahead. Managing to the end.

Find public engagement site 5/4/23 and 5/8/23 meetings, general expenditures Shows where the numbers were generated from. Disappointed in result from meeting with state officials about getting state aid. Was told no guarantees.

Property tax impact

Assessed values still in works

5/27/23 next council session after today's - 5/15/23.

6:23pm meeting turned over to Ms. Powell.

A2. Dr. Brian Ricca overview of School Committee's FY24 Budget

April 18, 2023 School Committee approved Superintendent's budget after many reviews.

Struggling with budget cap w/ 3% budgeting cap, thankful to Mr. Nota & School Committee. Budget approved doesn't meet all of our needs. Good for town is good for schools & vice versa.

Highlevel

7 positions on table after 25 original presented. 4% -state 3% bargaining unit cap 500k reduction asked by town. We are working on it, but any further reduction has further consequences on school.

An opportunity to work together, bargaining units

FY24 Budget Adoption

Report prepared by Brian Ricca, Maggie Baker, Cheryl Augaitis

Requested Reduction \$500,000

Revenue: increase 2 CTE seats \$30,000

Expenses:

- General supplies (reduce 10%) \$25,000

- Classroom Furniture \$26,000

- Copier Leases \$14,000

- Building Improvements \$75,000

- 3.4 FTE Unfilled Vacancies \$ 330,000 (benefits included)

Total Reduction in Purchase Service \$140,000

Total Reduction in Salaries and Benefits \$330,000

FY24 Considerations: New Personnel Request

2 elementary teachers

Special Ed Administrator (.40 FTE)

Unbudgeted Positions:

Self Contained Teacher at HS

Trainer - Athletics

.50 OT at MBF

Floater Custodian

1 SRO

Increase Cole SLP to 1.0

ESS Program

Total Unbudgeted Personnel Request \$427,107

Total Unbudgeted Purchases Services \$315,000

Questions - Ms. Caryn Corenthal

Most of our funds goes towards the schools, responsibility for the town. Emailed questions previously. Answers were incomplete and raised more questions.

Inquiries regarding substitute teacher salaries, tutoring, stipends. Further clarification requested regarding, tuition payments to out of district schools, private placements, charter schools, grounds keeping, purchased educational services - outside consultants, personal care attendants. Questions about general supply lines, materials and subscriptions/periodicals.

Discussion regarding nationwide staffing shortages, mandates and effects on budgets.

Mr. Podraza comments - Mr. Marcaccio looks at hospitalizations returning, home school returns, maintained in house

Stipends are part of negotiations for the teacher's union.

Professional - other purchased professional services. Transitional services for students with IEP.

Ms. Bucka explained what transitional services are.

Why increase costs - response to student needs is why increase. Bob Houtaling - adverse to Covid, nursing for students.

Ms. Powell - all these questions have already been asked & answered. Don't want to be argumentative, but best use of time, appreciate questions, however going over budget line by line, has already been done, doesn't think this may be the best forum to do this. Ms. Corenthal doesn't agree, said this was her only opportunity. Better I understand the budget, if I ask the questions, public has right to know what some of the costs are.

Dr. Ricca - open budget workshops, happy to answer questions now, but look to better time to do this as this process was already done

Currently failing to meet the needs of our students w/ our current budget. Staffing crisis in East Greenwich, it is a problem that is going to continue to snowball. Need more staff to keep students in district.

Only 2 got into the budget for next year out of 5 needed. If we staff all positions that are open, the out of district costs line will not go away, but in 3-5 years, that tuition line would go down. Chip away at needs that exist. Not immediate, but in 3-5.

Cost of teacher / year - 110K w/ salary & benefits

Ms. Bucka- adoption committee , disproportionality pay now or pay later. If we do not produce what we need up front, we will pay later. Teacher salary go up to fill vacancies, shortage of teachers - Mr. Zarrella, concerned w/ this trend.

Ms. Lombardo - RIDE mandating curriculum updates.

Mr. Podraza - 130K in math curriculum each year

Science added in 2025

Copy paper cost up 100%

Ms.Cecil-Karb - first time in process, shouldn't we be talking about what the need is, or are we looking at where to save money?

Town's position legally is to make appropriations. School decides where the funds go.

Even if appropriations are cut, the school will then put the funds where they need to. Statement of intention & goals. School is not bound to spend it as allocated. Can change it.

Ms. Lombardo - restrained by federal law, we don't have much wiggle room. When we haven't invested in the populations in our district, buildings, then we have to go out of district and the number will keep growing.

Mr. Donovan - what we want v need
Is any district meeting the aspirational

Ms. Lombardo - if something is going up , then that means that we're not meeting the need for it.

Athletic trainer line - now outside contract. RI interscholastic league., no longer able to fulfill that. Rescind the contract, estimates from nurses what the cost would be for them to be on site.

We don't have the people applying for our positions, this was occurring prior to Dr. Ricca coming.

Example - Custodial floater review - struggling to fill. If we can't keep our current schools maintained/cleaned, the view may be why give you X to building new schools. Where are you running on your surplus- whatever is left will be put back into fund balance .

Applied 5 grants this past year. Another 1 today applied. Ms. Bucka & Mr. Marcaccio working on an additional one.

Ms. Powell - advocated larger non profit role lobbying. General assembly functions very difficult for school committee to lobby. Have to do it on an independent. capacity. Being an organized lobbying force is difficult to make happen. Reach out to other similar communities to organize. Statutory limitations

Our actions for our district only have impact when we do it as a group. Suggested to delegate one to the assembly and Alyson said we have done that and it didn't work.

Mr. Munoz - questions being asked, natural function of trying to understand UCOA. Had to do it when I first started. Offered Ms. Corenthal a couple of hours to tell her. School committee undertake a lot of work to run subcommittees.

Ms. Powell showed a bill that we should be fighting for. A concerted effort between North Kingstown, East Greenwich, and other communities as well. Tried to have a legislative forum previously. To get support, public involvement.

Looking at revenue for 24-25 now, not next year, it would be too late. Mr. Munoz spoke of an annual meeting to review long term trends and projections - annual meeting for 5 year trend. President Schwager supported the idea.

Similarities between presentations - staffing, budgeting issues.

ESS (Effective School Solutions - Reinventing K-12 Mental Health Care Program Dr. Ricca shared details of the program.

Dr. Ricca - ESS ramifications - water on pavement. Would only enhance what work we do now. Work with adults as well as with students. Not seeing the number of educational leaders coming to our district due to could get more money somewhere else. Want students and adults to be able to say, I'm struggling with mental health. Not Special ed. Program, geared toward mental health. President Schwager requested additional information from Dr. Ricca on the program.

Next steps :

Town Manager & Superintendent collaborate. Begin looking at next year and the following year. Our table is set at 3%, the state is 4%. Same concerns about filling positions.

III. Adjournment

No Questions or comments.

Motion to adjourn the School Committee, moved by Ms. Bucks, seconded by Mr. Munoz.

Motion carried 6-0. School Committee adjourned at 7:42pm.

Town Council will continue.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Ferreira

Confidential Administrative Assistant

Approved 6-20-23