



**Barker Central School District
Board of Education Meeting
Auditorium
Monday, March 8, 2021 - 7:00 PM**

PRESENT R. Atwater, C. Gancasz, M. Clemens-Harris, H. Ecker, E. Gow, J. Sweeney, V. Voss

EXCUSED None

**ALSO
PRESENT** J. Reimer, M. Eadie, M. Carter, C. Heiligenthaler, M. Kramer
Public: 5

**CALL TO
ORDER** President Atwater welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge to the Flag was given.

**APPROVE
AGENDA** The agenda was reviewed. With no additions or changes, a motion was made by Mr. Sweeney, seconded by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to approve the agenda as presented.
Yes: 7, No: 0
Motion carried.

**ACCEPT
MINUTES** The Board reviewed the Board minutes, and a motion was made by Mr. Sweeney, seconded by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, to accept the minutes as presented from the Regular Board Meeting dated of February 8, 2021.
Yes: 7, No: 0
Motion carried.

**PUBLIC
FORUM** Mr. Witkop addressed the Board regarding plans for next year's school year, what it would look like given the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic, or if it was too early to determine if the students would be back full-time, remotely, etc. Mr. Reimer noted that right now, it is the District's intent to return to full-time, in-person learning if possible with the caveat that this was pending any federal and/or state requirements and guidance that would not allow for it.



PRESENTATIONS

Principal's Update - M. Carter

Mr. Carter reported provided an update relating to Pre-K – 12. He noted the bad news of the necessity to cancel the 8th Grade Washington DC trip as well as the Senior's trip to New York City as there were still too many requirements and obstacles to overcome. Deposits will be issued back to families. Any fundraising that was done will carry-forward with that class. Mr. Carter continues to have discussions with the Senior Class with regard to the Prom, Honors & Awards, and other events. Honors & Awards will not be able to be done as it traditionally has been in the past. The Seniors suggested the idea of holding the event within the school day. The events and different options continue to be evaluated and he will keep the Board up to date. Mr. Carter noted some good news as there will be two band concerts by the students in the gym, invite only due to guidance, which will also be live streamed for the families. The Jr. High band will perform on March 18th and the Sr. High band will perform on March 25th.

Mr. Carter noted that work to fill the Instruction Support Specialist position has begun and he anticipates completing the interview process early to mid-April.

Scheduling and course counts for next year continue to be worked on. There is a recommendation before the Board this evening to add a tech course through SUNY Oswego for Juniors and Seniors which would be taught by Mr. Mallon and provide a new opportunity for the students for earn college credits.

Regarding retention of students as discussed last month, Mr. Carter noted that he and Mrs. Thibault are evaluating the elementary recommendations which primarily are the result of lack of attendance and inability to determine skill level as a result. He provided his views on retention, statistics, and estimated that there might be less than five students that might be held back unless the parents request it.

Curriculum Update - M. Kramer

Dr. Kramer discussed the receipt today of the results of the Special Ed parent survey. The survey is required to be done every six years by the State Education Department. If the minimum responses are not received, a district must perform the test again the following year. There are two components to the results: (a.) responses received for which the District was rated at 100%; and (b.) breakout of the responses. In the second area, the District received a 95% rating for responses of "agree and better", and "frequent or better". The information gathered from the survey will now be analyzed by Special Ed to look at areas it could improve upon.

Financial Update - C. Heiligenthaler

Ms. Heiligenthaler reported that projected expenditures for the 2020-2021 school year are just under \$16.8 million which is less than projected last month.

The District has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the external auditing services. It was sent directly to five firms and advertised in the Lockport Union Sun & Journal. The closing date is March 26, 2021 and is available for review on the District's website. Currently, a recommendation is planned for the April Board meeting.

2021-2022 Budget Review - C. Heiligenthaler & J. Reimer

Ms. Heiligenthaler reviewed the Instruction portion of the proposed 2021-2022 budget and noted that majority of the increases were contractual in nature and/or BOCES related items. Curriculum Development & Supervision increased 2.38% and were contractual changes only. Supervision – Regular School increased 3.98% and was also contractual. Salaries of Community Ed Director reflected no change. In-service Training-Instruction had a small reduction due to changes with BOCES In-service training. Teaching – Regular School reductions were inclusive of retirements. Ms. Heiligenthaler noted that BOCES Teaching increased and reflects five slots for the Niagara Academy, as well as home and hospital teaching for students in the District. Programs for Students with Disabilities increased 1.61% and were due to contracts. Occupational Education increased 3.73% based on a three-year rolling average for the amount of students attending the career tech programs at BOCES. 61 students are projected to be in attendance next year. Summer School is up 14.52% due to increases in BOCES costs. The BOCES Teaching Special Schools within that category increased and reflects the GED program which is also adjusted back to the actual usage each year. Library and Audio-vision decreased 6.22%, again related to BOCES. Computer Assisted Instruction increased 18.59% as programs were purchased by the District during the COVID pandemic. It also includes some monies for technology and mifis, as well as the Senior Engineer which was added last year as a replacement for an employee that left. Guidance saw a reduction of 11.35% due to one retirement and a replacement hired at a lesser salary. Health Services increased 15.18% which primarily was on the BOCES line for the part-time behavior specialist hired that was not in last year's budget. Psychological Services increased slightly by 0.49%. Co-curricular Activities increased 1.60% due to the club advisor line for grades 7-12. Interscholastic Athletics decreased 4.23% primarily due to expenses related to officials. Overall, Total Instruction for 2021-2022 increased 0.89% from the current year.

The total proposed Undistributed decreased 2.85% reflecting the receipt of the Health Insurance increase percentage of only 2%, and the receipt of TRS information which was therefore able to be reduced from the projected figure last month.

Overall, the proposed 2021-2022 budget reflects a 0% increase when voters vote on the budget expenditures in May. There is an approximate \$636,000 factored into the budget for contingencies. The remaining uncertainty is with revenues as the District does not yet have the legislative final budget from New York State that is due by April 1, 2021. Ms. Heiligenthaler commented that this is a very responsible expenditure budget to put before the voters in May which maintains the programs for our students.

Ms. Heiligenthaler noted that the 4% tax levy increase will reflect \$4,767,964.

SUPERINTENDENT'S INFORMATION

Mr. Reimer noted that the proposed 2021-2022 budget represents the most the District expects to spend. Additional changes might potentially be seen due to staffing changes as Administration continues to work through the moving pieces and will know more pending a better understanding of class counts and filling of vacant positions. The projected figures on the Instructional portion of the budget are the highest it will be with an approximate \$60,000 contingency related to salaries. This proposed budget reflects the same



programming for the students. The revenue side of the budget is pending receipt of information due in April from the state.

Mr. Reimer reviewed the District's master budget plan with the Board based on the current information and reflective of the changes made over the last year. Where the District was projected in 2024-2025 has substantially changed as a result of the salary and staffing changes made resulting in a significant savings from a negative fund balance to almost \$3 million balance. This reserve balance is currently projected to the best the District is able to do with what information is currently available. He thanked the Board for their input, support and ability to look ahead with regard to this process.

The current proposed 2021-2022 budget of \$16.8 million results in the use of approximately \$600,000 in fund balance based on the anticipated receipt of the Energy Cession Program funds. Mr. Reimer noted that the District is using a lower estimated amount to be received until more is known resulting in the current projected shortfall at 2024-2025. This could require the need to pull monies from the Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve (EBLAR) to offset the deficit currently projected at \$3.07 million. This reserve is used to pay accrued benefits due to employees upon termination of service for vacation, sick, leave, personal leave, etc., and as noted last month, the fund was created through a resolution of the Board. He continues to look at the utilization of these funds with attorneys as to what might need to be done if it becomes necessary to use them. Whether or not a community vote is necessary is yet to be determined. He noted that the community usually only votes on the expenditures and the levy, and not budgeted revenues, thus revenues are able to be changed. He also noted if the funds need to be taken out, they may be placed into another fund such as a reserve for tax proceedings. As the Board will need to vote during the April meeting on the expenditure portion of the budget to present to the community for vote, Mr. Reimer stated he would keep the Board apprised as more information is received. He also noted that the tax levy will not be set at that time, rather in August. He commented that the proposed 2021-2022 budget is a good budget and remained flat. It took a lot of time and effort by all and resulted in the District being in a better spot down the road.

Mr. Atwater thanked everyone for the work on the budget and commented that hopefully the state will provide the District with some good news.

Mr. Reimer discussed the virtual conference through NYSCOSS in Albany which he is attending today and tomorrow. New York State Senator, Shelley B. Mayer, Chair of Committee on Education, provided a pre-recorded message to the attendees. Since the initial budget discussed by the Governor, the receipt of projected revenues has increased as the federal support has increased. Although there was optimism that would increase the projected level of financial aid, Mr. Reimer noted that generally, these increases do not result in an increase to the District and is not sure if it will. He noted that based off the original budget the foundation aid from the state was higher than anticipated which helped offset the budget gap, so either way, additional funds are good.

He stated that there is a lot of discussion as to how schools will operate and align moving forward. He commented that his opinion was the distancing guidance will not change even though last week Dr. Howard A. Zucker, Commissioner of Health for New York State,



commented that the six feet distance rule was being reviewed to decrease to three feet if there are some precautionary measures in place. However, based on information Mr. Reimer heard today, it leads him to believe this may not happen. He commented that the goal of the District continues to be to bring all students back but it was unlikely to happen this year. He also commented that if it becomes possible this year based on guidelines, the District will make it happen.

With regard to the return of the students, Mr. Reimer stated that the District is working to bring the Special Education students back four days a week. He noted that the potential to bring the Kindergarten classes back is being reviewed but that there are some limitations with regard to doing so. Mr. Reimer asked the Board their views on bringing students back as the District would not be able to proceed with consistency for grades Pre-K – 12. This change may help some District families but not everyone, and could cause additional strains with regard to going back to work, child supervision, etc. He commented that Kindergarten is important to set a foundation for the students. For Kindergarten, the plan would be four days onsite and Wednesday's remote if social distancing and other parameters are able to be met. Mr. Sweeney inquired as to what would be entailed to make this possible and socially distance, and if input from the teachers and parents were received. Mr. Reimer noted that one room, Mrs. Weller's, may need to move to accommodate the students and distancing, but more information is needed and the room measurements will need to be calculated again. Mr. Reimer noted that the teachers input was received and they are supportive if the District can make it work. Parents have not been reached out to at this point in time given it is being reviewed still, but the opinion of most parents has been they would want their children back and not hybrid. Transportation and lunch set-up with regard to this would not be issues. Mr. Reimer discussed the problems relating to teaching students full-time while also needing to teach remote students.

Mrs. Voss noted that her support to bring all students back if the District is able to, and ideally for all to be back to be consistent but understood the parameters that need to be addressed. She inquired as to what other schools were doing and how close the District might be for other grades to return. Mr. Reimer noted that the District has limited capabilities due to the configuration and size of rooms necessary for distancing. He noted that other schools have taken a liberal approach to interpreting the guidance. The Board discussed the High School and issues with bringing back and having some teach the students live while some are in another room watching via virtual still, COVID fatigue, addressing needs while staying with guidance, and how the situation continually changes based on information received from local, state and federal agencies. After discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to move forward and bring Kindergarten students back if possible, even if not consistent for all grade levels.

Mr. Reimer then discussed information from the Department of Health with regard to large gatherings and requirements based on size, if indoor or outdoor, if a catered event, testing and noted that Administration is reviewing different options for events such as graduation and making different plans to address possible scenarios as guidance changes.

Mr. Reimer discussed year-end exams for which a blanket waiver from the federal government has not been received to date with regard to regents and state assessments.



Waivers would need to be submitted by a state on an individual basis. Mr. Reimer noted that there may not be an attendance requirement, as well as possibly no accountability as it relates to APPR, grades, etc. The federal government intends to use the information from exams to determine where the students are at in their grade at this point in time as a result of the pandemic as a data point.

Dr. Kramer noted that ENL-services based on NYSESLAT (NYS English as a Second Language Achievement Test) want to run to get the appropriate services for students as some students are receiving services currently that they do not need while others are not receiving services needed.

Mr. Reimer provided an update on the EPCs. The District is now looking at screening options around the solar site due to the higher than anticipated cost to build a berm. Approval for this project is anticipated within the next few weeks. A meeting has been scheduled for this Friday to complete the last pieces of the HVAC project in order to submit to the state for review/approval. The feedback from the lighting put in four locations last month has been positive and provided valuable information for determining the best options for the District.

Reopening plans for next year have begun already. Ms. Martell is working with Administration and several people to prepare. They will be reviewing how instruction will look, noting it will be different than years past, may include a remote piece, but all options are being looked at even though it is hard to plan well until more is known.

Mr. Reimer commented that on December 23, 2020, Governor Cuomo signed into law a requirement that school districts, BOCES, charter schools and non-public schools designate all single occupancy restrooms as gender neutral, this includes staff restrooms, those inside classrooms such as restrooms the District has in elementary, etc. Restrooms with multiple stalls are not impacted by this. The signs purchased by the District meet the ADA requirements, have braille on them and will be in place by the March 23, 2021 compliance deadline. He noted that if at a later date the school is required to add "single occupancy" as additional information about the restroom, it has the ability to purchase those and add to the bottom of the signs.

Mr. Carter, Ms. Heiligenthaler, and Dr. Kramer were excused from the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

**POLICIES/
PLANS**

Mr. Atwater presented the 2021-2022 Pandemic Plan - Public Employer Health Emergency Plan for Barker Central School District for approval. After review, it was moved by Mr. Sweeney, seconded by Mrs. Voss to approve as presented.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

EDUCATION

Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the following books be declared excess property and that the Superintendent, or his designee, be authorized to dispose of said items as presented:



Title	Identification	Copies
Scott Foresman Science	Copyright 2000, Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, Inc., ISBN-0-673-59308-8	51

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the addition of Engineering Graphics and Technical Illustration College Course to the District's programming through SUNY Oswego.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

PERSONNEL ITEMS

Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the appointment of Election Inspectors for the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 and Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at a rate of \$40.00/shift with two shifts on Tuesday, May 18th for election day and if necessary, one shift on Wednesday, May 19th for counting votes.

Election Inspectors

- 1.) Marcia Frost
- 2.) Grace Bodine
- 3.) Fran Costello
- 4.) Janet Kerth
- 5.) Karen DeMorest

Election Chairman

- 1.) Sue Benoit

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the creation of a Full-time School Psychologist Position.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the appointment of Andrew Poss as a Substitute Teacher for Grades 7 -12 on a per diem basis effective March 9, 2021.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to approve the appointment of Lyndsay Pajek as a Substitute Teacher at a per diem rate, and Teaching Assistant and Teacher Aide at a rate of \$12.50 per hour for Grades Pre-K - 12 on a per diem basis effective March 9, 2021.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL ITEMS

Motion by Mrs. Ecker, seconded by Mrs. Gancasz, to accept the Treasurer's Report dated February 28, 2021.



Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Motion by Mrs. Ecker, seconded by Mrs. Gancasz, to accept the Extraclassroom Report dated February 2021.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Motion by Mrs. Ecker, seconded by Mrs. Gancasz, to accept the Warrant Report dated March 8, 2021.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Motion by Mrs. Ecker, seconded by Mrs. Gancasz, to approve the Inter-Municipal Agreement between Niagara County and the Barker Central School District.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

END OF PUBLIC

SESSION

Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mr. Sweeney, to end the Public Session and enter into Executive Session at 7:59 p.m. for the purpose of discussing a legal matter, and matters of tenure and negotiations.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE

SESSION

Motion by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, seconded by Mrs. Voss, to approve the adjournment of the Executive Session at 8:55 p.m. and return to Public Session.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

PUBLIC SESSION/ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Sweeney, seconded by Mrs. Clemens-Harris, that the Board approve the adjournment of the Public Session and adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m.

Yes: 7, No: 0

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary H. Eadie
District Clerk