

# **PARK RIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

## **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

*Date:* May 4, 2026

*Public Started:* 7:00 P.M.

*Public Ended:* 7:47 P.M.

*HS Little Theater*

### **I. Roll Call**

|           |           |          |          |           |            |
|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|------------|
| A. Wagner | R. Malloy | N. Agoos | M. Rozzi | R. Browne | D. Bradler |
| X         | x         | X        | X        | X         | X          |

Also Present:

R. Gamper R. Wright S. Eveland

### **II. Pledge of Allegiance** *was led by Board President, David Bradler.*

### **III. Open Public Meetings Statement** *was read by Board President, David Bradler*

This is to advise the general public and to instruct that it be recorded in the minutes that in compliance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975, entitled the "Open Public Meetings Act," the Park Ridge Board of Education on April 8, 2026, caused to be posted at the Office of the Board of Education located at 85 Pascack Road, Park Ridge, New Jersey and on April 8, 2026, sent to The Record, 1 Garret Mountain Plaza, P.O. Box 471, Woodland Park, NJ 07424-0471 and The Ridgewood News, 41 Oak Street, Ridgewood, NJ 07450-3805 and on April 8, 2026, delivered to the Office of the Municipal Clerk of Park Ridge and the Park Ridge Public Library a meeting notice setting forth the time, date and location of this meeting.

### **IV. 2026/2027 Budget Presentation**

*Dr. Gamper and Mr. Wright gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2026/27 Budget. Dr. Gamper reviewed the district mission statements. He then commented that the budget being presented maintains all present programs and services for students, continues to focus on smaller class sizes, has capital money for building improvements and provides for the needs of all students.*

*Mr. Wright then gave a financial review of the Budget. He indicated that there was a change from prior years in terms of budgetary spending. Due to a large increase in Health Benefits of 31%, there was a lower percentage that was spent in other areas of the budget. Mr. Wright then reviewed the main areas where the budget has increased/decreased over the prior year. The first area discussed was Special Services. Mr. Wright indicated that this was artificially lowered due to utilizing Grant funds to offset increases. Next, Mr. Wright spoke about salaries. He indicated that the increases were a result of contractual obligations and only represented 1.85%. Next Mr.*

Wright reviewed Benefits. He pointed out that costs had risen by 31%. He pointed out that this equated to a \$2.4 million dollar increase. He then spoke about Capital Projects stating that the increase in Capital Projects are funded through Capital Reserves and do not impact taxes. Mr. Wright then reviewed ways in which the district controls costs. He credited the lower salary increases due to frugal hiring practices, pointing out that last year, salaries increased by 3.19%. He indicated that school supplies lines are kept low thanks to the principals working hard to do more with less. He pointed out that the cost of supplies increases much more than the 2% the State seems to think is realistic. Next, he discussed how the district saves money in Special Education. He stated that the district brought an expensive transportation route in-house and used Grant funds to keep the budget down. He explained that this is a difficult area to control as out of district tuition rates continue to rise. He spoke briefly about building operations stating that the increase there was only 1.63%. This, he pointed out, was entirely due to insurance premium increases. He also pointed out that the district utilizes shared services for areas such as transportation, purchasing and special education. He also pointed to the use of State Co-ops as a way to save money. All employees contribute to their benefits and the district offers "opt-out" plans for those with other health benefit options. The district also offers in-house special education programs to help save on out of district placement costs.

Mr. Wright then went into more detail about the increase in Health Benefits. He stated that districts were informed about the increase in late Fall. He attributed the large increase to the State of NJ playing politics over the last several years and ignoring the warnings from their consultants. After receiving the information, the district tried to find an alternate service provider. Unfortunately, due to a high loss ratio, no one was willing to provide a competitive quote. Mr. Wright then explained that whenever the State has increases greater than 2%, they provide an option for districts to use a waiver and increase the allowable CAP. The district opted to use the full amount of this waiver to avoid programming cuts and staff layoffs.

Mr. Wright then explained the Capital expenditures that were planned for 2026/27. They included Little Theater renovations and classroom repairs. Once again, he explained that these costs come out of existing funds and do not impact taxes.

Mr. Wright then spoke about the Revenues and how the budget is funded. He stated that the main source of funding is local taxes. He then pointed out that the Board uses \$1,158,798 of its Fund Balance to help offset tax increases. He then added that when the Board received an additional \$102K in State aid, they immediately used it to reduce the tax levy.

Mr. Wright then discussed the tax levy and the CAP. He explained that there was some confusion in the public as to what the tax increase was and the impact to the average homeowner. He then detailed how the computation is done. He indicated that all his numbers were obtained from the Borough's Tax Assessor. He indicated that another thing that complicates things is that the district raises taxes over a fiscal year whereas the tax rate for the town is based on a calendar year. Mr. Wright then walked through the computation to arrive at the tax increase for 2026-27. On a home Assessed at \$475,000, the average homeowner will see an increase of \$597 or 5.77%. In contrast to this, the School Budget Levy was increasing 8.14%. Mr. Wright then discussed the district's Debt Service. Debt Service is money raised as a result of referendums. He reported that the district receives a 34% State Aid payment to help offset the cost. He then reported that the district recently paid off one of its debt issues which resulted in a decrease of the tax bill so that the increase will go from \$597 to \$573. average homeowner will see an increase of \$573.

*Mr. Wright then discussed the types of waivers which would allow the Board to increase the budget beyond 2% and still be considered under CAP. He then pointed out that the district had chosen to take two of those waivers, the Health Benefits waiver and Banked CAP. He explained that the need to do this was being driven largely by inflation and a 31% hike in benefit costs. In recapping the 2026/27 budget, Mr. Wright summarized that the budget was considered at State CAP, the General Fund Tax Levy was increasing by 8.14% and the Board had allocated \$2 million for Capital Projects.*

*Dr. Gamper then reviewed areas that are supported by the 2025/26 budget including Full Day Kindergarten, Elementary Spanish and French for K-6, Interscholastic sports for grades 7-12 and appropriate support for the special needs' population. Dr. Gamper also highlighted the 1:1 Laptop program indicating that there was a recent refresh for the 2025/26 school year with students and staff getting new machines. He also highlighted the Senior Internship program with Pascack Valley and the OWL House transition program. Dr. Gamper concluded by speaking about upcoming Capital projects.*

*Mr. Bradler thanked Dr. Gamper and Mr. Wright for their presentation*

## **V. Hearing of Citizens**

*Hearing of Citizens will be restricted to three minutes per person for a total of thirty minutes for comments on non-agenda items only. The Board bears no responsibility, nor will it be liable for any comments made by the public. Please be advised that all comments are maintained as a matter of public record.*

*Ms. Dow commented on the Insurance costs saying that staff are complaining that they are paying more into the program but getting less out of it. She asked who she could speak to about it. Mr. Wright replied that the NJEA was largely responsible for developing the program guidelines. She may want to speak to her Union representatives.*

*Mr. Witmar commented on the Theater renovations. He wondered what was being done to fund funding sources for these projects. He asked if the district had any Grant writers. He felt that it would be a good option for the Board to look into.*

*Several questions about Theater Renovations were asked by Board members about what happens if there is a cost overrun. Mr. Wright responded by giving the Board options on what they could do, which include postponing the project or looking for funds in other areas.*

## **VI. Consent Agenda**

Be it resolved, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools in conjunction with the Business Administrator/Board Secretary that the following actions be taken:

F1. The Park Ridge Board of Education approves the following budget:

WHEREAS, The Park Ridge Board of Education adopted a Tentative budget on March 16, 2026, and submitted it to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools for approval, and

WHEREAS, the tentative budget was approved by the Executive County Superintendent of Schools on April 24, 2026, and

WHEREAS, the final budget was presented to the public during a hearing held in the Little Theater of the Park Ridge High School located at 2 Park Avenue, Park Ridge, NJ on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Park Ridge Board of Education, County of Bergen, approves the 2026/27 school year budget as follows:

| 2026/27                   | <u>GENERAL FUND</u> | <u>SPECIAL<br/>REVENUE</u> | <u>DEBT SERVICE</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Total Expenditures        | 43,154,272          | \$ 480,926                 | \$ 535,936          | \$44,171,134 |
| Less Anticipated Revenues | \$ 5,310,905        | \$ 480,926                 | \$ 182,219          | \$ 5,974,050 |
| Taxes to be Raised        | \$37,843,367        | - 0 -                      | \$ 353,717          | \$38,197,084 |

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Park Ridge Board of Education includes in the final budget the adjustment for increased costs of health benefits in the amount of \$1,990,946.00. The additional funds will be used to pay for the additional increases in health benefit premiums.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Park Ridge Board of Education includes in the final budget the adjustment for Banked CAP in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-10(b). The district has fully exhausted all eligible statutory spending authority and must increase the base budget in the amount of \$157,778 for the purpose of paying for goods and services needed in the 2026-27 budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that included in the general fund appropriations, budget line 620 is a withdrawal from Capital Reserve – Other Capital Projects in the amount of \$2,000,000 for other capital project costs. The total cost of these projects are \$2,000,000 which represents expenditures for construction elements or projects that are in addition to the facilities efficiency standards determined by the Commissioner as necessary to achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

M: RM S: AW

AW RM NA MR RB DB

Y Y Y Y Y Y

## ***VII. Adjournment – 7:47 pm***

M: AW S: RB

AW RM NA MR RB DB

Y Y Y Y Y Y

---

Robert Wright  
Business Administrator/Board Secretary