

MINUTES OF BABYLON SCHOOL BOARD WORK/STUDY MEETING

DATE OF MEETING: April 10, 2023
PLACE: Babylon Junior-Senior High School, 50 Railroad Avenue, Babylon, NY 11702

Members Present

Mrs. Carol Ann Dell’Erba, President
Mrs. Linda Jurs, Vice President
Mr. Ari McKenzie
Mr. Dominick Montalto
Mrs. Donna Noesi
Mrs. Theresa Patiri
Mr. David Sonkin



Interim Superintendent

Mr. Brian L. Conboy

Central Office Administration

Ms. Deirdre Lunetta, Assistant Superintendent for Business
Ms. Carisa Manza, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

District Clerk

Linda McGarvey

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by C. Dell’Erba, President. A motion to enter executive session by D. Noesi and seconded by T. Patiri, for the purpose of discussing the employment history of particular individuals and advice from counsel was made. (7-0) Public session resumed at 7:30 p.m. at which time C. Dell’Erba, President, led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

OMNIBUS MOTION

On motion by D. Noesi, seconded by D. Montalto, a motion to omnibus resolution 1 was approved (7-0).
On motion by L. Jurs, seconded by D. Sonkin, resolution 1 was approved (7-0).

New Business

- 1. COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COMMITTEE ON PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION: RESOLVED**, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the recommendations from the Committee on Special Education and the Committee on Preschool Special Education for cases dated February 17, 2023 through March 27, 2023.

WORK/STUDY PRESENTATION

Mr. Conboy reported the following regarding the Budget Presentation: I thank you for allowing us to change this meeting. This was going to be our budget adoption meeting here tonight, but this has been a very interesting budget season with a lot of things to be considered. We are seeking some additional time to plan our budget so it is now our intention to have another meeting a week from tonight on April 17th where our budget will be adopted. What we are going to do tonight is go through all the things that have been a challenge with regards to this budget season. The first thing is that the State budget is not finalized yet. Within the State Legislature, there is an April 1st deadline to finish the budget and they didn’t do it. There were holidays last week and Passover ends about mid-week this week. But that budget is not finalized. We have our State aid numbers, they are preliminary numbers, but that could change. If we are lucky, maybe we can get some extra than we thought we would get, but there is also the chance that some of those budget lines could be cut. Let’s begin there because, if you look comparatively at the State aid that we got here for the Babylon School District for the next school year, it was comparatively low compared to the Babylon Cluster, which is all the school districts in our area. We have the lowest percentage increase of State aid of any of those districts. There are districts across that State and across Long Island that received many, many more millions of dollars in State aid, so that is the issue. What leads to that; the school district is small, our district is considered a low needs district, it is a district that has a history of success, and it is extremely robust, both curricular and extracurricular. That’s a lot to be proud of, but it costs money to keep that going. And because you are not getting the State aid that other communities are getting, where else do you get it from? The taxpayers, you get it from the residents. The residents here in Babylon Village have shown confidence in the district by passing budgets at pretty

comfortable margins for the last many years. So, keeping up that tradition is something that I hope will continue. We have some pressure points this year that we are going share with you on some slides that Ms. Lunetta prepared and that she and I went over. We are going to talk about what some of those pressure points are. A couple of things that are also interesting: Ten years ago, in the 2013-2014 school year, the total enrollment of the Babylon School District was 1,655 students. We are projecting for the 2023-2024 school year that enrollment will be just above 1,500 so, for whatever reason, the student population is decreasing and from what I can see, that would be the lowest number of students in the district for the last couple of decades. When you have less students, you need to cinch up your belt. It is nice to have small class sizes, if you can afford it, but that is a low number of students for almost any district on Long Island. That is another thing that we are going to have to look at next year. Last year, the school district was in a situation where a bond issue was retired and another bond was not bridged so that fell off the tax rolls and that impacted your ability to raise taxes last year, which was at this time last year and the Board passed a zero percent tax levy budget. There were very few districts in all of New York State that had a zero percent tax levy. In rethinking that, which we cannot do, if you had tried to override the cap at 2% last year, which was legal for everyone else, and failed, it would have gone back to zero. If it passed, we would have had a nice 2% to build upon this year, which we didn't have. So that is one of the other pressure points. I will also say that I know the District went through a very difficult situation last year. Of course, I was not Superintendent at the time, but I can understand that with all that went on, and with the fatigue related to that, and the stress related to that, that if the community saw a zero percent tax levy increase, maybe it would give them a little bit of a breather and hopefully get through that in that way. The issue is that it wasn't a zero percent budget. When I came here, we had some new staff that was put into the budget that, quite frankly, just wasn't budgeted. So that is one of the things that we are taking a look at now, and the challenge to that is the changes in leadership here. I wasn't here last year; I was in Massapequa last year. Ms. Manza was not here last year, Ms. Lunetta is in her second year, the director of facilities, Mr. Lorefice, is in his second year, Mr. Haubrich is brand new to the Grade School, and Mr. Keogh is brand new to the Elementary School. So that kind of change in a tiny district is unprecedented. But these are all great people, and I've said it a hundred times since I've been here, the future of this district is bright. But the finances in this District right now need a little structure. What we are going to try to do is to identify what the pressure points are by showing some visuals with what is related to that. I mentioned the zero percent tax levy cap which was brought to the voters last year. The inflation rate last year at budget time was at 6%, so if inflation is at 6% and you have a zero, you are 6% in the hole already. And the tax cap allows 2% or inflation, whichever is lower, so with our exception, our allowable tax cap this year is 2.84%. But inflation this year is between 7% and 8%. So, 6% last year, and between 7% and 8% this year, we are at about 14% and we can only raise the tax within the cap. Also, in examining the budget history here, there has always been an annual use of fund balance. There has also always been an annual use of reserves. And if you continually do that year after year, it is like spending down your savings account, and if you are not in a position when you have to do that, that is an important thing. Building up the reserves and keeping them healthy is what auditors like to see. That is a good indication of a healthy school district.

Ms. Lunetta went on to show the slides of the Budget Presentation and speak about each of them, which was followed by a discussion between Board members, Mr. Conboy and Ms. Lunetta.

**PUBLIC COMMENT/
QUESTIONS**

As there were no questions or comments from the audience, the meeting moved on to the next item on the agenda.


**FUTURE BOARD
MEETINGS**

The Board of Education will hold a Regular Business Meeting and Budget Adoption on Monday, April 17, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. and a Work/Study Meeting and BOCES Budget & Election Vote on Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at 7:30 p.m., both in the library of the Babylon Junior-Senior High School.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by L. Jurs, seconded by A. McKenzie, the Board adjourned the executive session at 8:17 p.m. Approved (7-0)

**RESPECTFULLY
SUBMITTED,**


**LINDA MCGARVEY
DISTRICT CLERK**