

**GLASTONBURY BOARD OF FINANCE  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024**

The Glastonbury Board of Finance, along with Finance Director, Keri Rowley, and Town Manager, Jonathan Luiz, held a special meeting at 9:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall at 2155 Main Street with an option for Zoom video conferencing. The video was broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

**Roll Call**

***Members***

Mr. Constantine “Gus” Constantine, Chairman  
Mr. Jared Soper, Vice Chairman  
Mr. James Zeller  
Mr. Robert Lynn {participated via Zoom video conferencing}  
Ms. Susan Karp  
Mr. Kevin Graff

**1. Public Comment Session: Comments pertaining to the call**

***Sarah Dzialo of 363 Main Street***, stated that the BOE cannot keep indiscriminately raising their budget and placing the load on middle class property taxpayers, who are already struggling in an incredibly inflationary environment. They must find a way to decrease their budget.

**2. Budget Reviews:**

Education Operating Budget

Doug Foyle, BOE Chairman, stated that the BOE unanimously approved the budget. He believes that any further reductions will lead directly to reductions in the quality of education in Glastonbury. Last year, he said that they had space for cuts in the health insurance reserve fund. This year, that is not a possibility, so the cuts will come out of programming in three buckets: personnel, instructional materials, and equipment and supplies. These reductions will be felt by some, but not, all students.

Alan Bookman, Superintendent of Schools, stated that Glastonbury’s budget comes first in the state, so everyone looks to what they are doing. Other superintendents are presenting budget increases in the 7-8% this year. He noted that the Superintendent’s budget came in at a 4.81% increase, which is higher than it has been in a long time. The BOE brought it down to 3.89%. He noted that there has been a major increase in interpreter services, but schools are required by law to provide this. Additionally, there has been a backlog in equipment, as well as professional development. In response to the mental health crisis, support staff for students has grown and their services are used constantly. Last year, they added 9 professional staff members, which was required by law, and 16 full-time paraprofessionals, all for special education.

Ms. Karp noted that special education is a concern for every school system and mental health concerns are an issue nationwide. She asked about the effect of this shortage of teachers, paraprofessionals, and substitute teachers. Dr. Bookman stated that, while Glastonbury is fortunate to have not suffered a shortage thus far, that will change in the coming years because the number of new teachers are decreasing. Ms. Karp asked if the psychologist positions in program 2700 are for the student support center. Dr. Bookman replied no, that is in addition to the student support center. Wherever the needs are, they move around. Mr. Soper asked at which level a psychologist is hired. Dr. Bookman stated that they usually are at the maximum salary, which is \$105,000 a year plus benefits.

Ms. Karp noted that two new elementary teachers were added based on needs, not on enrollment, and enrollment is predicted to go up in future years by a very significant number. Dr. Bookman stated that kindergarten is the year they focus on the most. Those numbers are calculated using a mathematical formula, consisting of the birth rate (using three years of numbers) and a multiplying factor for students moving into town. The question is whether they will have the same multiplying factor for students moving in. He noted that this formula is the same one that the New England Association of Schools and Colleges uses. Dr. Foyle stated that the BOE is in the middle of its ten-year plan for enrollment, so this is being discussed. Dr. Bookman added that the previous Town Manager had conducted a study on why people move into Glastonbury, and found that 100% of people with children said that their reason was for the schools.

Ms. Karp asked about the program 2100 request for two custodians and one maintainer. Dr. Bookman explained that they discourage janitors' sick days in the summer. The maintainer would assist with plumbing and HVAC maintenance. Mr. Zeller would like to know how many mini ductless air conditioner units there are, how many have failed, and when the warranty runs out. Dr. Booman will report back on that.

Mr. Zeller stated that the early learning center (ELC) is not a student activity, so he questions why the money is going there. Dr. Foyle clarified that the money that comes in and out from the ELC is a line item in the student activities budget for accounting purposes. This was done because of a time-crunch. Mr. Zeller does not like that this precludes moving any surplus back into the operating budget, unlike food services which can be moved. Dr. Foyle clarified that they can only put money into food service; they cannot take it out. Mr. Zeller suggested changing how the ELC money is handled so that they can repurpose surpluses. Dr. Foyle does not oppose that.

Mr. Zeller asked about the term "legacy students." Dr. Bookman explained that when they first started the ELC, it was for GPS staff only. Then, it was opened up to the community. Legacy students refers to non-employees who have a child already enrolled in Glastonbury, and their sibling could be added to the daycare. Mr. Zeller asked if anything is built into the fee structure to account for utilities and HVAC expenses. Dr. Bookman replied no.

Mr. Zeller asked if they have to lease modulars and, if so, how much that would cost. Dr. Foyle stated that the BOE unanimously decided to not lease modulars at this time, and to continue using the ELC as it is currently operating. He believes that the value of the ELC for somebody on a teacher schedule is much better than the private sector, and has helped keep a high quality teacher in front of every student in Glastonbury. Dr. Bookman added that many of the teachers

who have children in the ELC are in shortage areas. Mr. Zeller thinks that it seems like submission creep here. His concern is that the ELC is not revenue neutral, and they should not be subsidizing the program. Dr. Foyle clarified that the staffing of it is revenue neutral, and the BOE believes that it is a valuable investment on behalf of GPS students.

Mr. Graff stated that the BOE has projected to add 200 elementary students in FY 27-28. If those projections hold, he asked what will be required for additional staffing. Dr. Bookman explained that, generally, it is one staff member per 20 elementary students; so, in this case, they would require 10 additional staff members. Ms. Karp asked about magnet school enrollment. Dr. Bookman stated that their numbers have gone down. Ms. Karp asked about the \$100,000 change in Eastbury School for the LINKS program. Dr. Foyle explained that the agreement was to set aside tuition from out-of-town students for maintenance costs to replace the roof and the boiler. Currently, \$1.3 million is set aside, and the BOE planned to add \$300,000. The cost for a new roof and boiler would be \$2.2 million total. Estimates vary on when one of those expenses might happen. The BOE decided to drop that rate down from \$300,000 to \$100,000, to start realizing savings for taxpayers today.

Mr. Zeller asked about meal prices in food services. Dr. Bookman stated that the state has been paying for breakfast and reduced lunches, but that is all scheduled to end in the next budget year. Mr. Zeller asked how well they capture those students who might be in need for free and reduced lunches. Dr. Bookman explained that there is a state system for this, but he is confident that many people who qualify will not apply. Mr. Soper noted that a loss of \$700,000 in one year is unsustainable. Dr. Bookman does not know whether the State will offer any reimbursements next year, let alone, in the coming fiscal years. If they do not allocate any money to towns, then the BOE will look to raise lunch prices the year after next. Dr. Foyle added that there is a federal law which may require GPS to raise prices.

For healthcare (program 3400), Mr. Zeller stated that the Superintendent explained why they needed a 10% premium funding increase in each of the next two years, but the BOE cut that. The situation arose because it was under-funded in the past. He asked why the BOE ignored what the Superintendent relayed from the consultants. Dr. Foyle explained that there is a \$1.5 million structural deficit from the expected outflow and inflow of the reserve. In the pandemic years, people did not access healthcare, so the reserve grew to over \$10 million. The BOE decided to structurally underfund the contribution. Dr. Bookman proposed having a \$750,000 hole in FY25 and closing it out in FY26. He noted that, last year, the BOE decided to draw down the reserve to \$9.8 million, so this year, it will be \$8.3 million. At the end of FY25, it should be \$6.8 million. Next year, they will make a decision on where to level it out.

For program 0400, Mr. Zeller noted that the current budget was revised to add an administrator, but this was added in the fall. He feels uncomfortable that a lot of changes seem to happen in the fall as opposed to now. Karen Bonfiglio clarified that it was not added; that was an error. Dr. Bookman explained that only one administrator was added, which was a special education supervisor. Mr. Zeller's grievance is that when changes are made in the fall, the BOF and the Council do not get any opportunity to weigh in. Dr. Foyle explained that, in program 2700, they actually added staff but cut the program. This is because by adding staff in the schools, they were able to save money on students being outplaced. Mr. Zeller noted that this is not the only area

where this happened, nor does it account for longer-term costs, such as benefits. Dr. Bookman countered that these are legal obligations that they must meet.

Mr. Soper pointed out that some of these hirings happened mid-year, so the full effect will not be felt until this budget cycle. They are looking at about \$240,000 in additional spending, so this program is increasing. Dr. Bookman agreed that there is a difference in the pay, but this is due to needs that had to be met, not to any decision that they made. Mr. Zeller asked how many families need interpreters this year as opposed to FY21-22. Dr. Bookman will report back on the numbers. He also noted that there has been a change in law, where 22 year olds can now continue finishing the school year. This new mandate is costing the Town money, as well.

Mr. Soper asked about the new sprinkler system. Ms. Bonfiglio stated that some of this is due to upgrades. Mr. Soper asked why there is a big variance in that this year compared to prior years. Ms. Bonfiglio will go back and check. Mr. Soper argued that inflation has always been a budget driver, so to see it presented now for the first time as a budget driver is interesting. Mr. Zeller appreciates that Dr. Bookman has now agreed that the DRGs do not exist. The towns they had included for comparison showed that Glastonbury was spending \$385 more per student than their peers.

#### Education Capital Projects

Mr. Zeller had asked questions about the Naubuc School roof which he would like answered. Dr. Bookman stated that it was concluded that the site was not appropriate for solar panels. Al Costa added that replacing the 18,000 square feet versus the entire 59,000 square feet is not a good idea because the entire structure is leaking. Mr. Soper asked about the timeline. Dr. Bookman stated the Gideon Welles roof has already been designed. As soon as they receive the approval, they will start the process, which will take around six months. He asserted that the GHS roof is definite for the following year, but the replacement will not include the whole roof, as it excludes the gym and the A wing portions. Mr. Soper asked if the BOE is opposed to a recommendation to bond these two priority roofs. Dr. Foyle stated no. Dr. Bookman noted that both roofs would be (partially) reimbursable. Mr. Soper believes that they will have to bond these items.

Mr. Zeller noted that program 2700 came up at a BOE meeting, where one member wanted to move an item from one line item into another, but the Chairman ruled that it was out of order. He asked what the procedure is for this. Dr. Foyle stated that the BOE has legal authority to put money into programs. Once it is in programs, the Superintendent has the authority to move money around line items. What they were voting on was programs, not line items. Mr. Zeller countered that CAGE does not say that. Dr. Foyle stated that what the BOE member needed to have done was propose a reduction in the program by x dollars and then propose an increase to the program. Instead, they proposed a dual motion, which he ruled as being out of order.

Dr. Bookman asked about the BOF's timeline. Ms. Karp stated that they are scheduled to make their recommendation to the Council on February 21. Ms. Bonfiglio will provide Ms. Rowley with answers to the questions raised tonight, who will then disseminate those to the entire BOF.

Questions and Discussion regarding Education Operations and Budget Proposal ***Discussed above***

Questions and Discussion regarding other items concerning FY 2024-2025 Town Manager Proposed Budget ***None***

### 3. Adjournment

***Motion by:*** Ms. Karp

***Seconded by:*** Mr. Zeller

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Glastonbury Board of Finance hereby adjourns at 11:06 a.m.

***Result:*** Motion passed unanimously {6-0-0}.

**Respectfully submitted,**

*Lilly Torosyan*

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Recording Clerk

*For anyone seeking more information about this meeting, a video on demand is available at [www.glastonbury-ct.gov/video](http://www.glastonbury-ct.gov/video). Click link to access the 'Town's Video OnDemand platform.'*