



Georgetown School Committee Budget Hearing Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Meeting Minutes

51 North Street
Georgetown, MA 01833
(978) 352-5777

Approved 3-14-2024

Michael Hinchliffe, Chairman
Cheryl Lachendro, Vice Chair
Lauren King, Clerk
John Cancellara
Stacy McMaster

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Attendance:

Cheryl Lachendro

Dr. Margaret Ferrick

Stacy McMaster

Mike Cassidy

Michael Hinchliffe

Absent: Lauren King, John Cancellara
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The FY25 Budget Hearing was called to order at 6:01PM. Michael Hinchliffe explained that there is time for questions and answers. Michael explained that anyone wishing to speak should sign in after for the record. He explained that there will be questions and answers but this will not be a debate.

Mike Cassidy, Business Director/HR Director explained the budget process (3% and Level Service Budget) and the first meeting with FINCOM. Mike Cassidy provided an amended budget this week. The amended budget is broken down by school. Mike Cassidy explained the line items and discussed salary & wages. Mike Cassidy discussed the removal of a BCBA in the budget. He discussed reductions in revolving accounts and an extra Special Ed Teacher position at the Perley. An adjustment was made for retirees. Mike Cassidy explained that this was a lower salary amount for retirees. The budget shows a reduction in legal fees. He spoke about the transportation bid and the increase of \$39K (which will be voted on at the 3-14-2024 School Committee Meeting). Mike Cassidy spoke about consultant lines being reduced and a custodial equipment services decrease. This new budget is a 6% increase from last year.

Michael Hinchliffe discussed the budget changing from year to year. He spoke about special education costs increasing. He discussed line item transfers and the purpose.

At this time, Michael Hinchliffe opened the podium up to anyone wanting to speak.

Michael Murphy, teacher for GPS. Michael Murphy thanked the public for paying taxes. He thanked everyone for their involvement in the budget. He stated that his fear was that the high school might not exist in the future. He compared teachers to the Red Sox. He spoke about dwindling class sizes at the high school. He spoke about a consistent stream of revenue. He came to advocate for colleagues. He stated that “why would anyone want to return being treated like this”? He asked that all parties make long term compromise.

Joe Pittella, Union Representative (Grade 6 Teacher) - brought a signed petition from over 100 teachers in the Georgetown district. He read that larger class sizes are not in the best interest of the students, spoke of technology not being in the best interest of students, and spoke about adding administrators are not in the best interest of students. He spoke about teachers being the best for students. He spoke about MCAS scores and students going off to colleges. He stated the GEA will not support any budget that cuts teachers.

Mike Donahue, parent, town resident - Mike Donahue spoke about critical thinking. He spoke about Dr. Ferrick resolving issues since she started. He spoke about Dr. Ferrick taking care of teacher license issues, and realizing the district was not modern. He spoke about Dr. Ferrick identifying raises made by the prior superintendent without School Committee approval. He spoke about the teacher union members being on Facebook. He spoke about Dr. Ferrick moving the district forward. He stated the Dr. Ferrick will bring this district forward to the district it once was.

Spencer McPherson, Student - Spencer stated that he has been in the Georgetown district his whole life. Spencer spoke about the dip in moral. He said it was of no fault to the teachers. He said this was disappointing to hear as a student and does not feel cared for. He feels less cared for compared to the finances. Spencer spoke of his teachers as professors. He spoke about electives being cut. He said that those are some of the reasons he comes to school every day.

Meg Johnson, Teacher & resident - Meg asked the following questions.

“Does the revised budget provide less staff cuts?” Margo Ferrick answered NO.

“What course offerings are being eliminated?” Margo Ferrick stated there has been no discussion at this point.

“The budget request is now more than level service?” Mike cassidy answered YES.

“How is my kid getting level services if the program is cut?” Margo Ferrick explained that that program is being revised.

Brittany Lee (Parent) - stated that increased class sizes concerned her. She asked if there was any consideration around AI? "Where can you save by not using a human?" "Can admin be more productive?" Margo Ferrick stated that she finds AI intriguing and would love to have a conversation. She suggested scheduling with Tracy.

Michael Hinchliffe addressed the class size. He explained that he looked at the history over the last few years. 24 was the highest at Penn Brook in the past. Although it feels like a lot of change, it really isn't.

David Twiss - FINCOM & Parent - David spoke about his daughter who attended in the past and his son who attends now. David mentioned his meeting with Margo Ferrick in October regarding bullying. He stated that the prior administration never reported bullying. David spoke about his FOIA request to uncover many (over 200) bullying incidents. David talked about the neglect of the prior administration. He spoke about MCAS scores, and how they are not good. When he moved here, Georgetown was in the top 25 of the state. He spoke about critical mistakes made in the past. David spoke about "people" stating that Georgetown has the lowest paid teachers. He said that is not true. Over 80 teachers in the district make over \$90K. David asked that patience be given to the superintendent as this budget is worked through.

Jim Mealey - Works in a nearby district. He concurs with David Twiss. He does not have any children in the district but does support the district. Jim fully supports this budget this year and said that it keeps us competitive with other districts. Jim spoke about research and parental involvement. He suggested that there is a longer timeline to get these things done (3-5 years). Margo Ferrick asked that he be on the Strategic Planning Team.

Lauren Kaminski - Asked what numbers were looked at to make these decisions.

Michelle Breeze - (Parent/K Teacher in other district) - Michelle stated that 23 kids in kindergarten was not OK. She begged that the administration does not increase class size for elementary. She said it's too hard with that many kids to get them ready for recess, lunch, etc. Every extra child is extra work. Michelle spoke about the morale in the school. She said it's important to be respectful of teachers. She said that parents look for smaller class size. Michelle talked about students escaping, throwing chairs, etc., from her experience.

Erin Wormell - Kindergarten Teacher other district & Parent - Also former teacher at Penn Brook. Erin stated that she has seen both sides. She learned to be a teacher at Penn Brook. She has a 6th grader going on to the middle school next year. Erin spoke about a teacher with no paraprofessional in the class, and if the student has an accident then the teacher must handle it and then teaching time is lost. She said things can happen and you turn your back and the district

wants to add more students to the classes. Erin said that administrators should be in the classrooms before making these decisions. Erin stated that some teachers are at the top of the salary scale, but others are not, and she does not feel that Georgetown is competitive.

Steven Nickerson (Parent) - Educator in another district. Steven spoke about support services at Penn Brook being cut and about best practices.

Nicole Carleo - (Parent) - Nicole said that her children receive services at the schools. She asked about the affects of the cuts. Dr. Ferrick explained the plan for smaller learning communities. Dr. Ferrick spoke about the shift in class sizes and the need for less teachers. Dr. Ferrick explained that it's a wraparound process and explained the supports of the Assistant Principal, a Reading Specialist, Behavior Coach and Paraprofessionals. Nicole asked about the Assistant Principal at the middle school level helping students with their identity. Dr. Ferrick explained this is not individual identity. It is the identity of the middle school. This position would work closely with the students. Nicole asked about other paraprofessional cuts. Dr. Ferrick explained that these positions are a shift off the LEA budget and are now funded through the Esser Grant. Dr. Ferrick explained that no paraprofessionals are being cut. Nicole Carleo referred to Line 82. Mike Cassidy explained that there was a change on the AMENDED budget. Mike Cassidy explained that the Perley model is not changing. Nicole spoke about her knowledge of budgeting. Nicole will send an email with the rest of her questions to Tracy Parker.

Kelly Durant (Parent #1) Spoke about the WIN Block. Dr. Ferrick explained that this is more building based and would be happy to discuss further. Dr. Ferrick explained that it's about grouping. Kelly stated that she was concerned about math intervention. Stephanie Zimmerman (Parent #2) asked about MCAS scores. Stephanie is concerned about losing intervention and if the MCAS scores are so low, she is concerned about losing that (the intervention). Michael Hinchliffe discussed proficiency with the MCAS scores. Michael provided the data. Dr. Ferrick explained there will be alot more support for teachers. Parent #1 (Kelly Durant) said professional development will not support her child in Math. Kelly begged for administration and School Committee to not move forward with it.

Alissa Kostopoulos - Works in public schools. Moved out of Topsfield. She is a BCBA. She spoke about using a behavior support for other things. Dr. Ferrick explained that there are no cuts for special education. Dr. Ferrick explained that at this time the district is doing a district wide special education audit. The parent expressed that 2 BCBA's are not enough even in a small district. Dr. Ferrick and the parent spoke about CPI training.

David Cellucci - Parent/Middle School Teacher in other district.

David expressed that his pushback is that the data is before covid. He asked if anyone can remember their favorite teacher or student support person.

Kerry McNulty, Teacher - Kerry stated that she became a teacher because of the teachers she had. She said you can have the greatest curriculum but you need the greatest teachers to teach it. Kerry said the people matter not the books.

Marianne McGee - PB teacher. Mariannr said that she became a teacher and at age 30 went back to get her Masters. She asked Cheryl Lachendro to remember what it was like to work with people she knows that care about people. Marianne worked with Cheryl as a student teacher when Cheryl was an educator. Marianne asked Cheryl not to agree to take away 10 teachers. She said there are 10 teachers that are going to lose their jobs. She asked Dr. Ferrick "if the budget doesn't get approved will Penn Brook lose the internet?"

Courtney Cyr (Teacher) -

Courtney spoke about a math program without a math teacher. She spoke about students who can't add having to take Algebra 1. Courtney spoke about the new curriculum that she has helped pick.

Chris DiFranco - Teacher - Chris spoke about teacher cuts and others getting bumped. He spoke about student retention. He said that program cuts will make students go elsewhere for special programs.

Brian Masys, Physed, GMHS - Brian has been a teacher in Georgetown for the last 22 years. He has always been proud to work here. Brian wanted to come tonight so they (Administration & School Committee) could see the face of a person being cut. He spoke about his extra involvement in the district. He spoke about his commitment to Georgetown. He has moved his own children to the district. He asked that the School Committee look beyond the numbers.

Spencer McPherson, Student - Asked the question - "What do the School Committee members think the identity of the GMHS students is?" "What options will there be as far as electives and courses are cut?"

Michael Hinchliffe adjourned the Budget Hearing at 7:23PM.

Respectfully Submitted By,

Tracy Parker
School Committee Secretary