

**AUBURN SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
MARCH 21, 2024 AT 6:00 P.M.
AUBURN VILLAGE SCHOOL CAFETERIA**

These minutes have been approved.

William (Bill) Rearick called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Those in attendance were members Alan Villeneuve, Janice Baker, Derek Berger and Adrian Newton. Also in attendance was Principal Lori Collins, Interim Director of Student Services Christine Osborne, and Interim Business Administrator (BA) Karen Lessard.

Bill Rearick said the first order of business is for Board Reorganization.

Motion by Janice Baker, seconded by Derek Berger, to nominate Alan Villeneuve as Board Chair, and the motion carried unanimously.

Alan then presided over the meeting.

Motion by Adrian Newton, seconded by Derek Berger, to nominate Janice Baker as Vice Chair, and the motion carried unanimously.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Dave Jenkins led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROOF OF POSTING

Bill Rearick provided proof of posting.

Alan Villeneuve opened the meeting and explained that the school district has a budget problem. Alan stated that no money is missing. It is an over expenditure. It was due to mismanagement in two different, very important positions, in addition to an unexpected influx for intense special education services. The district needs to budget for students ages 3-22. Budgets were created 18 months ago. There have been a number of new, unknown students and the intensity of needed services in the special education department. Alan said there are fewer and fewer out of district placements and therapists are scarcer. All districts are competing for available services and costs are increasing. Alan said until recently, the special education department hadn't been tracked properly as it had in the past.

The Board provided a presentation outlining the 2023-2024 budget and the amount the budget was over - and provided information on special education enrollment. Alan summarized the presentation, and said it was a work in progress. It addressed items causing the over expenditures, which included how they happened, the impact, the solution, and how to go about preventing them in the future.

The impact on next year is still unknown and hard decisions will have to be made. There is an interim Business Administrator and Director of Student Services and controls will be tightened. Policies and procedures will be reviewed.

The slideshow pages are attached to these minutes.

Alan Villeneuve asked the Board if they had any questions about the overall plan presented in the slideshow.

Janice Baker said she had no questions, but that there has been a good group working on it. They have reviewed all avenues of funding.

Derek Berger asked if they need Board action to over expend. Bill Rearick explained the process to over expending regular education funds, but that special education over expenditures do not need approval.

Asked by Adrian Newton if the plan included the potential cost of students who are currently in the referral process, to which Lori Collins stated that all students that currently receive, or have been referred for, special education services will continue receiving services. Derek Berger asked who would backfill the special education administrative assistant's position, to which Lori Collins stated that the front office people would do so. They will contract with Hooksett for additional needs.

Janice Baker said the community is already starting to organize around making spring sports happen even without District funding. Derek Berger asked if there are any options to work with Hooksett or Candia regarding high school busing. Bill Rearick said if all high school buses were cut there would be a savings of \$30,000. .

Adrian Newton asked how the school supply inventory is. Lori Collins said they are in good shape, but if there are any needs, she will reach out to the PTA.

PUBLIC INPUT

Jen Raspuzzi-Maple Farm-Surprised but not shocked. Not a coincidence there is an interim BA and Special of Special Education. Need more transparency on what is going on. Feels for 8th graders losing out on spring sports. Make cuts not directly affecting students. Impropriety is going on.

William Socha-Londonderry Tnpk-Where is Tracy Griffenhagen. Have had a year and a half of incompetence. Who is being held accountable? Alan Villeneuve said we are here to be transparent. There has been an over expenditure of the budget. The amount of special education services has been tremendous. The amount of new students were not budgeted for. Transportation and programming for special education costs are incredibly high due to the number of services required by Individual Education Plans (IEPs). We are in a consent state. These are our students. We are here to solve a problem. Board knew the problem was coming, but the extent was more than expected.

Christine Molan-Fox Drive-What are you doing about next year. How was this not forecasted. Need to put buffer in place. Very disappointed. They failed the community.

Aaron Beaudry-Spruce Ln.-Auburn received \$584,378 in COVID funds. Where is that. Why cut line items in the budget such as sports and field trips that were already accounted for. Use funds not mandated to pay.

Alan Villeneuve stated that the school can't use the portion that went to the town. Instead, school districts received ESSR funds which were very restrictive in how they could be used. There is \$18,000 remaining.

Tanya Pellerin-Bus Driver-Had years of not being able to cover bus runs, now trying to cut hours. Drivers deal with parents lashing out and feel they have no support. How are kids going to get to school.

Alan Villeneuve said they are very limited as to where to find money. Everyone is feeling this. They are all difficult choices.

Heidi Rose Mader-Saddle Hill-This is helpful information. The board said they were blindsided nine days ago, but board member Janice Baker mentioned overages at a board meeting in December 2023. Where has the oversight been since then.

Bill Rearick said that he was working with the previous special ed director and business administrator to try to get that information. He said there had been a number of meetings and, with the information given at the time, the trust fund anticipated revenue would have addressed the issue. Shortly afterward we became aware that the projected revenues were inaccurate. In addition, the interim special ed director found that expenses had not been provided to the business office. We had faith our staff was providing valid information.

Rachel Alling-Pond View-Appreciates AVS. Are we looking at a full picture of catastrophic (CAT) aid. Are we maximizing all available funds. Hire consultant who can make sure we're maximizing funding.

Bill Rearick stated that we just found out that the CAT aid paperwork hadn't been filed properly since July. This has since been rectified.

Ronja Stavrou-Chester Rd-How many students were budgeted for and how many do we have.

Alan Villeneuve said we budgeted for 8 pre-schoolers and have 19. K-8 remained the same. High school is 1. Out of district placements have doubled. Total budgeted 110, actual 120.

Brittany Farugio-Wildwood-Concerned with IEPs being done correctly. Concerned with interim overseeing two districts. Make staff follow IEPs appropriately.

Alan Villeneuve stated that the reassignment of paraprofessionals were not special ed paras.

Emily Dunn-Buttonwood-Town has a ginormous issue without having their own preschool program here. There are a lot of out of district placements and preschoolers that can't be serviced here. Should have a self-contained program or a preschool program.

Alan Villeneuve stated that a preschool program is in the works. The board has talked about logistics, but tonight's discussion is about the 2023/2024 budget.

Christine Molan-Have you talked to the town for funding.

Alan Villeneuve said town and school budgets are totally separate. The only way to get funding is to have a town election day and the state sets the parameters for those. There is no avenue of collecting funds and it can't be done before June 30.

Cullen Bohak-Wilsons Crossing-Disappointed in no spring sports. If they knew, they could have had a fundraiser. Alan Villeneuve said spring sports weren't cancelled, they are just no longer being funded. There are a group of people dedicated to spring sports.

Rachel O'Boyle-Berry Patch-This is unsettling. Accountability and responsibility are important. Parents will help with supplies and finding supports. Maybe administration and superintendent can give up some of their salary.

Alan Villeneuve stated that the Superintendent is an SAU employee and not one of the Auburn School District.

Emily Socha-Londonderry Tnpk-Is a contracted physical therapist. Has had concerns with the special ed department many times over the past year due to how it was being run. Spoke to Lori Collins and Tracy Griffenhagen about deep concerns. The school board was aware two years ago. So many concerns. So little oversight. Many complaints.

Amy Johannel-Lovers Lane-Relies on high school busing, and sports are important.

Dan Connelly-Juniper Circle-Went through this in Virginia. It is likely possible that cuts this year will continue into future years. Who can the public write to at the state level to allow for an election. Help us help you.

Patrick Kelly-Westford Dr.-Is the shortfall all special ed. Is the salary for the special ed director still on the books. Does the SAU have the BA on their books.

Alan Villeneuve said what pushed it over was special ed students, special ed services and special ed transportation. If the job had been done correctly, the district would have hundreds of thousands more dollars.

He said part of the special ed director salary is left but because the BA is an SAU position, there is no money there.

Mr. Kelly asked why is no money coming from the Superintendent. Hold the SAU accountable for screwing up. Give the BA's cut to Auburn.

Donna Tousignant-Cole Road-Can you budget in anticipation of students moving in. You must plan ahead. What is the process of reviewing IEP's and purchase orders. How long does the board take on putting together a budget.

Alan Villeneuve said the district can't ask the taxpayers for a budget that includes number 'just in case'. He added that the purchase order policy and procedures will be reviewed. He said the expenditure report shows bottom line. Because we are level-funded, mechanisms were in place. We didn't know the depth of the problem until recently. He said the board meets about the budget over two meetings, and then with the budget committee once or twice. He said expenditure reports are online monthly.

Jessica Kukey-Cambridge-There is a level of unacceptable process negligence. The community has a right to know the remediation plan. What's next, who owns this, who is accountable, what will the success measures be. There must be appropriate processes in place. What are next steps.

Amy Magnan-Cricket-Is a bank loan an option. The teachers and staff do the best they can.

Bill Rearick said they can get a bank loan, but Alan Villeneuve said that is not an option the board has discussed.

Kara Terrill-Wilsons Crossing-If four contracted paras are being dismissed, what is the plan to train their replacements. Will students still have a para.

Lori Collins said that if the need for a para is in an IEP, the student will get that service. She said the paras that are being replaced are not the one(s) specially training for behavioral students. The para with the higher level of training will stay on.

Winnie Sankovitch-Eaton Hill-Where is the money going to come for spring sports.

Alan Villeneuve said Danika and Heather will rely on private funding from the community.

Anthony Lockwood-Pond View-The issue was not addressed properly. Parents found out about spring sports from the kids. The staff didn't know how to handle it with the kids.

Todd Royce-Seavey Drive-Think about the stress this will add to current teachers. Sounds like cutting jobs causing bigger class sizes. Teachers will go elsewhere. Don't want to lose a good teachers.

Alan Villeneuve-Teachers must be notified by April 15 of their renewal, and there is no proposal to cut any teaching position. Tonight's discussion is on the 2023/2024 budget only.

John ? -Juniper Circle-Would be nice if staff had help addressing the students. Why is it so much higher than the state average.

Alan Villeneuve said you budget for known special education needs.

James Declemente-Spruce Lane-How did this sneak up on us. Special ed jumped significantly. Grossly underestimated the changes that would have come after COVID. The community will make up for the lack of oversight on the board and administration's part. No one feels comfortable with the superintendent. He's passing the buck. A non-finance person shouldn't be running the district. Hope next year finds a new set of board members.

Anna Tanguay-Pond View-We are taking funds from next year. What happened to the fund balance. Why cut sports. Coaches don't do it for the money, they do it because they love it.

Alan Villeneuve stated that school fund balances are returned to the town annually.

Aaron Beaudry-When do they go through the budget process. Can we revisit it and reallocate money.

Alan Villeneuve stated that the time to change budgets is in December and at the time there was enough money in the trust funds to cover the known overages.

Tanya Voisine-Londonderry Tnpk-Removing four paras will be traumatic. There will be regression. Board needs to realize this is not fair to the kids.

Jason Morin-Steam Mill-Knew in September there were 19 kids instead of 8. We knew we had more kids before the budget was presented and voted on. Taking away from next year.

Janice Baker asked the Superintendent what is the timing to secure an advance from next year's school budget.

Bill Rearick responded that it must be by June 30. We need to know where the revenue is coming from. Janice asked for the Candia option on busing, and Bill Rearick said if we use the unassigned Candia bus, it would save \$13,500 and all high school students would continue to have transportation.

Motion by Janice Baker, seconded by Derek Berger, to move forward with using excess revenue, using state catastrophic aid, liquidating Special Education Trust Fund by the amount of 161,239 and leverage the Capital Trust Fund by 192,169 (as presented on the PowerPoint slide #6), and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Derek Berger, seconded by Janice Baker to reduce school spending to \$138,275, and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Janice Baker to table securing an advance against next year's school budget (as presented on the PowerPoint slide #6), and the motion carried unanimously.

Christine Molan-We need a remediation plan success criteria. Glad not taking from next year. We must right this ship.

Anthony Lockwood-How many students are affected by high school busing versus those playing spring sports. Buses aren't being maximized. Nearly empty. Rethink having buses versus cutting sports.

Alan Villeneuve stated that 75-90 use buses and 48 are involved in spring sports. Looked to find the least impact on students.

Alyssa Stanton-Squirrel Drive-Is there any way to get funds for the IEP's from the beginning of the year that have now been corrected. Have we budgeted the same way for next year. We will have double the problem.

Bill Rearick stated that you cannot recoup the funds lost on those IEPs that were not filed correctly, but that the district will receive funds from the point forward.

Alan Villeneuve stated that we budgeted more the next year in anticipation, but know that transportation will be over. We haven't focused on next year's budget as we have been working on the current issue.

Tim Betke-Winchester-There are closer to 80-100 spring sport participants

Gabrielle Bedard-How many attend AVS. Why reduce items that affect kids. This affects the entire school.

Reducing from those who actually need it. The board only cares about money. Should have pride in the community, in education and have trust. Important to keep kids in mind.

Aaron Beaudry-If there will be a deficit next year, when will it all be balanced. Do you think there will be positions cut at the school, and will Alan Villeneuve recuse himself from voting on cuts to teachers.

Alan Villeneuve stated that they haven't determined next year's impact. Next year's budget will be built on known expectations. He said budget questions will be answered within the next ten days.

Donna Tousignant-Were spring coaches under contract.

Alan Villeneuve said they have been approved. Bill Rearick said that if the sport has not already started, the contracts did not have to be paid out.

Tanya Voisine-Had a signed contract which was retracted. Because of the community, spring sports will happen. Not ok with that.

Aaron Beaudry-Board should stop using the PTO as a piggy bank. Should budget properly.

John ? –Juniper-By having retracted sports contracts says the board had already made their decision. Make sure to budget with a margin of error next year.

Amy Johannel-There has been a call to action but can't promise it will cover all spring sports. The Auburn Braves Athletic Booster Club is working to cover costs.

Alan Villeneuve thanked everyone for coming and said that AVS has a great staff and that no decisions or choices are simple.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Derek Berger, seconded by Adrian Newton, to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m., and the motion carried unanimously.

The Auburn School Board's next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Auburn Village School Media Center.

Respectfully submitted.

Rebecca SJ McCarthy
School Board Recording Secretary

Slideshow attached.



Auburn School District Budget Update

March 21, 2024

Overview

- What is the budget problem?
- How did it happen?
- What is the impact and how do we solve it?
- How do we prevent this from happening again?

Budget Problem

- The 2023-2024 school year budget is **\$17M**.
 - Supports education for students ages 3 - 22
- As of 3/18, we are over budget by **\$776K**.
- We need to close the gap in order to pay our bills through the fiscal year that ends 6/30/2024.

How did this happen?

- The number of students identified for special education services this year is higher than the number we estimated in Fall 2022 when this year's budget was developed.
- Some special education students are receiving more intensive services than estimated.
- The number of special education students being identified in our area is increasing, resulting in fewer, more expensive contracted service providers to choose from.
- Reimbursement from the State was not maximized for some special education expenses.
- Special education spending wasn't sufficiently tracked against the budget this year.

How do we solve the problem?

- Several ways

1

Secure DOE approval to use excess revenue

4

Reduce School Spending

3

Liquidate our Trust Funds

2

Use State Catastrophic Aid

5

Secure advance against next year's budget

Current Plan

#	Item	Amount	Details
1	Use excess revenue	\$ 66,278	Requires DOE approval.
2	Use state catastrophic aid	\$ 28,506	
3a	Liquidate Special Education Trust Fund	\$ 161,240	Requires Trustee approval.
3b	Leverage Capital Trust Fund	\$ 192,170	Requires Trustee approval.
4	Reduce school spending	\$ 154,775	
5	Secure advance against next year's school budget	\$ 173,163	Requires Town of Auburn approval.
TOTAL		\$ 776,132	

Additionally, we are assessing how to best serve the needs of our special education students in the most cost-effective way.

Reducing School Spending - \$155K

#	Item	# Students Impacted	Details
1	Reassign paraprofessionals	100	Dismiss 4 contracted paraprofessionals and reassign 3 kindergarten and 1 media paraprofessional to special education
2	Lay off special education secretary	70	
3	Eliminate professional development for teachers	662	Professional Learning Communities (PLC) training
4	Eliminate spring sports funding	48	Not able to pay for coach stipends, field upkeep, referees, etc.
5	Eliminate bus transportation to/from Pinkerton	75-90	
6	Eliminate field trip transportation	320	
7	Freeze supply purchases	662	
8	<i>Possibly other items</i>	<i>TBD</i>	

Supports & Contacts

- **AVS Staff** – Superintendent Rearick will be at AVS tomorrow to support staff and answer questions
- **High School Transportation** – please contact the SAU office at 603-622-3731 if you have questions
- **Sports** – Resident Heather Lockwood and Danika Ashness (Athletic Director) will be coordinating spring sports
- **Various communications** will be sent to parents tomorrow re: kindergarten changes, field trips, spring sports, etc.

What is the impact next year?

- There will be an impact to the 2024-2025 budget, but we don't have a full picture yet.
- We will be looking at various ways to cover the shortfall and will provide more information as we know more.

How to prevent this in the future?

- New Special Education Director and Business Administrator
- Tightening special education and financial controls
 - New Special Education Director will report to the AVS Principal.
 - Approval will be required by Superintendent for any budget line item to go over budget.
 - Policies that affect financial controls will be examined and updated as needed by the School Board.

Next Steps

- Secure DOE approval to over-expend budget, use excess revenue, and secure catastrophic aid
- Execute other elements of our plan – e.g., Trust Funds, expense cutting, etc.
- Provide regular updates as to how the plan is progressing and impacts to students, staff, and residents this year and next.