

**Portland Board of Education
Special Meeting
Thursday January 25, 2024 @ 5:30 pm**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Laurel Steinhauser, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm

BOE Members Present: Laurel Steinhauser, Meg Scata, Tim Lavoy, Kim Nagy-Maruschock, Dave Murphy, Stacy Benham; via zoom Sarah Spear

Members Absent: none

Administration Present: Superintendent Dr. Charles Britton, Stephanie Fragola Assistant to Superintendent for Business and Financial Affairs, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Technology Eric Martin, Director of Student Services Dawn Davis, Administrators Jessica Bruenn, Michael Searson, Chuck Hershon, and Kate Lawson

2. Audience of Citizens

Jen Witchy, Cody Lane – She is a teacher and parent in Portland. She gave an overview of what a day looks like in reading instruction. Stated she would like to see questions on the ballot on if the perception of the budget is too high or too low. Supports a 5.31% increase.

Ian Witchy, Cody Lane – the extent of cuts is detracting from the quality of education. Supports 5.31% increase.

3. Approve 2024-2025 Superintendent of Schools Proposed Budget

Dr. Britton reviewed the past three meetings with the budget progression. Gave a snapshot of what was reinstated from the 5th round of cuts. Adding the library media specialist, .5 social studies, and 1 FTE TBD brings the percentage increase from 4.85% to 5.82%. Reviewed removing \$50k in special education transportation, .5 FTE in secretary, adding \$43k for pay to play revenue, and reinstating 2.5 FTE would bring the budget from 5.82% to 5.31% increase.

Laurel acknowledged how challenging this budget process has been.

Tim stated it has been an incredibly hard budget year. The January 19th version is where he feels we need to be. Doesn't support reinstating the FTE's. Supports the 4.85% increase from the January 19th memo. He feels it accommodates the \$81k in additional healthcare costs, preserves class sizes, and meets the needs of the students.

Meg looked at every line item and cuts. Supports reinstating the positions and feels it meets the community's sentiments and supports student success. Supports 5.31% increase.

Stacy doesn't feel there is consensus among the board to reinstate the 2.5 FTE's. She aligns support with the January 19th memo. She pointed out that she didn't care for the calling out of certain positions, and would rather have seen them simply listed as FTE's.

Kim stated she doesn't feel good about the budget in totality with so many cuts. She feels it goes against supporting education. She would like to go with a vote that the Board in its entirety feels is best.

Dave stated they saw many scenarios thrown out. He referenced the year with the 0% increase meant there was not any repairs completed that needed to be done. The parents will need to

step up and support a consolidation because of this. He also encouraged community members to reach out to state representatives as well, as we are burdened by excess costs we can't control. Stated his feelings of confidence in our superintendent being in charge and that he knows what is appropriate of what we can manage. Feels pay to play should be discussed and a thoughtful process of a plan to be put in place. If the renovation plan is where we need to go then we should expedite the process. He believes we should think further out rather than year to year. Sarah would like to revisit the process for next budget season to smooth out the process. She is willing to support the 5.31% increase. She envisions we will recoup some savings with a consolidation. She is hearing the community talk and feels they want more and would be willing to support a higher increase.

Laurel supports a 5.31% increase that restores the 5th round of reductions. She feels the reciprocation of those cuts would mean reduced class offerings and impact student learning. The enrichment opportunity will also be significantly reduced. Her preference is to return the remainder of the positions. She stated her willingness to compromise to have Board consensus and move forward.

Tim stated we should not be singling out positions. He is concerned with the secretary reduction discussion, especially since administration and secretaries have been working on the breakthrough coaching model which significantly streamlines the work progress in the offices.

Dr. Britton stated by the end of June the Board will get a list of how many people we have slated to employ, as this changes yearly. The snapshot of the budget now is his best guess, but staffing will change as it's the nature of the business. Putting the cost of those positions back in the budget gives him greater flexibility to manage.

Laurel feels the budget should reflect the district values.

Meg stated that in looking at the budget she made sure that every stone was unturned in looking at potential savings.

Dr. Britton stated the driving factors of the budget are the special education increases, insurance increase and the cliff. It would be helpful to everyone, the students, parents, teachers and the community, if the budget was fully supported by the Board.

Consensus on the Board to move forward with a pay to play placeholder.

Discussion on splitting the difference between 4.85% and 5.31%, which would be a 5.08% increase. This might save a position or two and not raise class sizes. Discussion on 5.08% increase.

M. Scata moved to recommend to the Portland Board of Education the adoption of the Portland Board of Education Budget in the amount of \$24,743,521.08 representing a 5.08% increase of the 2023-2024 adopted budget, seconded by S. Benham. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

4. Adjournment

T. Lavoy moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:39 pm, seconded by K. Nagy-Maruschock. Unanimously approved. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tricia Dean
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk