

Special Meeting - Budget
South Orange-Maplewood
Board of Education
May 4, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education of South Orange-Maplewood was held using the online video conference platform on May 4, 2020.

Board President Annemarie Maini called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

Adequate written notice of this meeting of the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education was sent to the Township and Village Clerks, The Star Ledger, the News Record, TAPintoSOMA.net, villagegreennj.com, all schools and is posted on the District website.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Motion made by Board President Maini, seconded by Board Member Zubieta to allow distance participation for this Special Board meeting during the COVID-19 emergency.

Motion passed 8 yes, 0 no.

ROLL CALL: Present: Board Member E. Baker, Board Member Cuttle,
Board Member Joshua, Board President Maini,
Board Member Mazzocchi, Board Member Siders,
Board Member Wright Board Member Zubieta,
Student Representative Lily Forman

Absent: Board Member R. Baker

8 VOTING MEMBERS AND ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT

BOARD PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

The School Board meeting is a business meeting in public not a meeting with the public. Oftentimes it may appear to members of our audience that the Board of Education takes action with very little comment and in many cases a unanimous vote. Before a matter is placed on the agenda at a public meeting, the Administration has thoroughly reviewed the matter with the Superintendent of Schools/Chief School Administrator (CSA). If the Superintendent of Schools/Chief School Administrator is satisfied that the matter is ready to be presented to the Board of Education, it is then referred to the appropriate Board Committee. The Members of the Board Committee work with Administration and the Superintendent to assure that the members fully understand the matter. After the committee discusses the matter, it is presented to the full Board for discussion before any action is taken. Only then, is it placed on the agenda for action at a public meeting.

HEARING OF INDIVIDUALS AND DELEGATIONS

None.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Dr. Taylor read made the following statement:

While the subject of this Special Meeting is our statutorily mandated Public Budget Hearing, I am compelled to offer a brief comment on our current circumstances. Today Governor Murphy announced that New Jersey schools will remain closed for the duration of the school year. While this announcement does not necessarily serve as a surprise, it nevertheless is a disappointing conclusion to an unprecedented crisis. Our School District and our community at large has experienced many tragic losses of life. The acknowledgement of our cumulative grief is the first step in healing together and moving forward as a District family. Please know that as a School District family, we support our community as we adjust to this new normal of distance learning. This includes thinking outside of the box with regard to instruction, support and grading. To that end, this evening a letter was sent to all families and Columbia High School students regarding specific grading that will guide our distance learning. Our teachers and staff also received a similar letter. This instrument is the result of a collective effort of our District Administrators in consultation with other school districts dealing with similar challenges. It was our goal to be as thoughtful as possible. We realize that each family in our District has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic differently. We've heard from parents who are overwhelmed with their child's academic workload and we've heard from other parents who are concerned about keeping their child academically motivated. We believe that you will find this instrument to be innovative, fair and equitable.

I would like to close by speaking directly to the students of the Columbia High School Class of 2020. Please know that Dr. Morgan and I have spoken often during these distance learning circumstances, about you and the annual culminating activities. We've also discussed ideas and options with colleagues in other districts. Also, please know that your parent leaders, teachers and other supporters have reached out to us advocating on your behalf. We are all working to provide you with a positive, memorable experience as you exit your high school years. We of course must be compliant with social distancing. We will also be speaking with your senior class representatives about different possibilities. We ask you, the class of 2020 to please share your thoughts and ideas with those who are representing you.

Thank you and please stay safe.

**Board Member R. Baker arrived at 7:50 p.m.
9 Voting Members Present**

2020-2021 SCHOOL BUDGET AND TAX LEVY PRESENTATION - Mr. Roth & Dr. Taylor

Mr. Roth addressed the changes to the proposed 2020-2021 Budget. Since the adoption of the Preliminary 2020-2021 Budget, the New Jersey Department of Early Childhood provided additional guidance regarding the state funded pre-school expansion program. Pre-school expansion funds can only be used to provide services for regular education students. Since pre-school programs are inclusive of all students, regulations require districts to account for local funds that are used to support students with special needs in the pre-school program.

The pre-school budget was updated to identify funds used to support students with special needs attending both Montrose Early Childhood Center and partnering pre-school sites. Originally, funds were only identified for students attending Montrose Early Childhood Center.

The change in appropriations does not impact the local tax levy or modify anticipated pre-school grant revenue. The change reallocates the funds in the tuition account lines that are used for pre-school students with special needs to the pre-school program account lines. The identified pre-school funds are then appropriated within the pre-school program account lines. The required changes are reflected in resolution 4007 Adoption of 2020-2021 School Budget and Tax Levy, which is on the agenda for Board approval tonight.

Dr. Taylor addressed possible concerns regarding the possibility that State Aid may be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Governor will provide an update on State Aid within the next two weeks. We will receive guidance from the county and the State if our State Aid will be impacted. Since the State extended their fiscal year by three months we may not know the net effect of revenue changes until summer. The guidance we have now is to move forward as if nothing has changed, until we receive the exact amount of funding changes.

Dr. Taylor assured the Board that he and Mr. Roth are monitoring unexpected changes to State Aid.

ITEMS FOR ACTION

MOTION made by Dr. Taylor, seconded by Board Member R. Baker, that the Board of Education approves the following:

4007. WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, the South Orange and Maplewood Board of Education approved a preliminary budget to be submitted to the Executive County Superintendent of Schools for approval; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary budget was approved by the Executive County Superintendent of Schools on April 2, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary budget was advertised in the News Record of Maplewood and South Orange on April 23, 2020; and

decrease from last of \$215,072. Why are we seeing such a big decrease? Are we cutting library positions? Are you cutting funding from the book budget?

Response: The term undistributed is essentially any expenditure that is not directly in the classroom. So media center salaries as well as supplies fall outside of the classroom even though it is a critical service. We've had some movement as far as salaries, but there is no cut to the supply or book budgets for the media centers.

NEW BUSINES

- Board Member E. Baker thanked Dr. Taylor for speaking to the concerns of the Columbia High School Graduating Class of 2020 and requested that Dr. Taylor send a formal communication to students and families with directions on how to weigh in with questions and suggestions regarding end of year culminations.
- The Parenting Center Food Distribution Event will take place on Saturday, May 9th from 8-11 a.m. at Our Lady of Sorrows. Curbside contactless pickup is available on First Street.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board of Education will meet in Closed Session on Monday, May 11, 2020, at 6:30 pm in the Superintendent's Office or via Webex to discuss personnel and legal issues, negotiations and other matters to be announced at a later date. Immediately following the Closed Session, the Board of Education will meet in Public Session at 7:30 pm via Webex or in the District Meeting Room, 525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ. Action will be taken.

MOTION made by Board President Maini, seconded by Board Member Joshua, that the Board of Education meet in Executive Session prior to the May 11, 2020, Public Meeting to discuss personnel, legal and Special Education matters, and negotiations, the nature of which will be made public at a future date. Motion unanimously approved.

MOTION made by Board President Maini, seconded by Board Member Joshua that the Board of Education adjourn. Motion unanimously approved at 8:08 p.m.

Paul Roth, Board Secretary