

JACKSON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 7, 2024
JACKSON MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL FINE ARTS CENTER AUDITORIUM

An Official Meeting of the Jackson Township Board of Education was held in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law and was called to order by Board President, Giuseppe Palmeri, at 6:04 p.m. on May 7, 2024 in the Jackson Memorial High School Fine Arts Center Auditorium.

Present: Mrs. Gardella
Mr. McCarron
Mrs. Barocas
Dr. Osmond
Mrs. Rivera
Mrs. Kas
Mr. Palmeri

Also present: Mrs. N. Pormilli, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. D. Baginski, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, Dr. L. Godlesky, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. R. Rotante, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. M. Zitomer, Board Attorney and Ms. C. Morris, State Monitor.

After the salute to the flag and the Certification of the meeting according to the tenets of the Open Public Meeting Law, the Board President made the following statement:

“This meeting is in compliance with the Open Public Meeting Law and has been duly advertised in the newspaper as an Official Meeting.”

On a motion by Mrs. Rivera, seconded by Mrs. Kas, the Board of Education approved the agenda as submitted by the Superintendent of Schools.

Approve
Agenda

Roll Call Vote: Yes: Mrs. Gardella
Mr. McCarron
Mrs. Barocas
Dr. Osmond
Mrs. Rivera
Mrs. Kas
Mr. Palmeri

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Palmeri thanked everyone for attending tonight to support our district. We put in our time because we care so much and this is what we fight for every day – for you and for our kids. He also acknowledged and thanked some of the elected officials here tonight for attending and for their continued advocacy for our district - Assemblyman A. Sauickie, Mayor M. Reina, Council President J. Kuhn and Councilman M. Burnstein for attending tonight. He turned the meeting over to Mrs. Pormilli for the Superintendent’s Report.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Mrs. Pormilli thanked everyone for being in attendance; it is great to see a full audience. She went to the podium to share a slide show presentation on the budget for the 2024-2025 school year. Normally this would be called a Budget Hearing Night. However, we had to change it to a Budget Update. We still have an enormous budget deficit and the budget remains unbalanced, therefore there is no vote on a budget. You need to have a balanced budget in order to have a vote. So tonight will have a public forum for you to provide input.



Update on Proposed Budget
May 7, 2024

Purpose of Tonight’s Update

Normally, tonight would feature the Public Forum on the Proposed Budget.

However, we still have an enormous budget deficit and our budget remains unbalanced.

While there will not be a vote on the budget, we are providing important updates, and there is a public forum at which the public is welcome to come forward.

Purpose of Tonight’s Update

- Explain our funding crisis - history of aid cuts, revenue and cost challenges
- Status of District request to NJ Department of Education \$10.2 million in assistance for the current 2023-2024 budget
- Where we stand in the 2024-2025 budget process
- What has changed since we introduced the Tentative Budget for 2024-2025

Understanding Our Funding Crisis

- Over the past 7 years, this district has been devastated by the loss of HALF OF OUR STATE AID
- We have cut the budget in every area - including curriculum, activities and athletics...
 - AND postponed needed facilities improvements...
 - AND cut 215 positions - including administration, certified and non-certified staff...
 - AND increased class size ...

State Aid Cuts

2018-2019	= \$1.3 million
2019-2020	= \$2.3 million
2020-2021	= \$3.5 million
2021-2022	= \$4.3 million
2022-2023	= \$4.6 million
2023-2024	= \$2.1 million
2024-2025	= \$4.4 million

We have done everything within our control to put kids first in the face of monumental and compounding funding losses and increased costs.

- Every year our budget includes the maximum 2% tax levy increase permitted by law - an increase that does not come close to covering increased costs
- We sought voter approval in November 2023 on a Special Question to add needed positions. Voters did not approve it, the positions could not be added and class sizes grew.
- We have cut 215 positions including administration, cut sports and coaches, reduced electives, and postponed curriculum, technology & facility improvements
- We have increased revenue, sought grants
- We have advocated strongly to legislators, governor, commissioner
- We have testified annually at Assembly and Senate Budget Hearings

**UPDATE: Status of Current Year Budget 2023-2024
Advance State Aid Requests (aka "Loan")**

NOTE:
We have been using the word "loan" for the past year both in presentations and in discussions at the county level of the NJ DOE.

The NJ DOE has explained that the use of the word "loan" is not accurate and that it should be described as a request for an "advance state aid payment."

NJ DOE:
"In extremely rare instances, and only when certain fiscal conditions are met, State law empowers the Commissioner of Education to recommend to the State Treasurer an approval of an 'advance state aid payment' to ensure the provision of a thorough and efficient education in the current budget year, after adoption of a balanced budget."

*Pormilli noted this means that there is room for the Commissioner to help districts that are struggling.

**UPDATE: Status of Current Year Budget 2023-2024
Advance State Aid Requests (aka "Loan")**

- Current Status: The state monitor is still working with us on the exact amount of funding she will be recommending the district receive as advance state aid to support the current budget.
- Once that recommendation is made, the Commissioner of Education will make a final determination on the monitor's recommendation
- We are hopeful to have that determination by the May 14 Board of Education meeting.
- In addition, the district is being permitted to utilize \$4.4 million in unspent funds and interest accrued from 2002 and 2006 referendum projects to support the current budget. This is the only motion the BOE will be voting on this evening.

A Balancing Act: Where We Stand for 2024-2025

- On March 20, we introduced a Tentative Budget that included a \$30 million deficit. Our Tentative Budget included a revenue line item for \$30 million in assistance we would be seeking from the NJ DOE to close that deficit.
- On April 4, the Jackson School District was informed by the county office that we are not permitted to include any kind of state assistance in the budget document in order to balance our budget.
- As we said we would do during our Tentative Budget presentation, we worked to find fiscally responsible cuts. We have identified areas that could be reduced without compromising our commitment to our students. These cuts are difficult, but necessary to try to close the gap.
- Even with these cuts, we still do NOT have a balanced budget - we have a \$25 MILLION DEFICIT for the 2024-2025.

Tonight we are discussing the budget as it stands. However, there will not be a formal vote on it, as it remains unbalanced at this time and has not been approved by the county.

Changes Made Since the Tentative Budget

- Jackson Township has agreed to pay the FULL cost of our School Resource Officer (SRO). This cost used to be split by township and district.
- Reductions in substitute staffing, instructional supplies, custodial supplies, office supplies
- Reducing overtime district-wide
- Utilizing cooperative agreements in boys and girls swimming, girls bowling, girls cross country - no athlete will lose opportunities in this arrangement
- Increasing anticipated revenues, e.g. grants, increased facility rental revenue
- Elimination of funding for summer curriculum work (utilizing grants)

Result: \$3 Million in Reductions

To be clear:
The Jackson School District is not recommending a budget that cuts these items.

HOWEVER,
if our aid is not restored and if we do not receive state assistance, the state could make cuts to close the \$25 million budget gap.

What could \$25 million in cuts look like?
The items listed below are defined by NJ as NOT being part of a "Thorough and Efficient" Education.

- Elem Class Sizes = 30
- MS & HS Class Sizes = 35-40
- Closing Schools
- NO Athletics
- NO Clubs, Band, Theater
- NO AFJROTC
- Significant reduction of security officers
- NO Courtesy Busing
- NO Academic Supports (beyond the classroom)
- Limited or NO AP Courses
- NO late buses
- NO facility improvements
- Reduced Electives

What is the NJ "Adequacy Budget"?

For every district, the state calculates what would be the necessary funding level to provide a "thorough and efficient education" to every pupil in that district. This is what is referred to as the Adequacy Budget.

Budget Year	How Far is Jackson Above or Below Adequacy?	Why?
2024 - 2025	\$23,783,325 BELOW	Budget has \$30 million DEFICIT
2023 - 2024	\$8,593,278 BELOW	\$10.2 million DEFICIT - Requested \$10.2 million from NJ DOE
2022 - 2023	\$1,120,390 BELOW	Drained all existing surplus
2021-2022	\$1,082,703 Above	Offset by COVID Funding Postponed the financial bill
2020-2021	\$494,257 BELOW	
2019-2020	\$1,605,975 Above	Last year of actual "adequate" funding

**UPDATE: Status of Current Year Budget 2023-2024
Advance State Aid Requests (aka "Loan")**

- While developing our current (2023-2024) budget last spring, we included a revenue line item of a \$10.2 million loan from the NJ Department of Education because we knew we could not cut the budget any further.
- On May 2, 2023, as recommended by the then Ocean County Superintendent of Schools, we wrote a formal request for \$10.2 million in assistance for our 2023-2024 budget.
- We spent months participating in diligent review and discussions with county and state DOE representatives.
- In January, the NJ DOE assigned a state monitor to the district, as is required when a district has a budget deficit and is seeking assistance from the DOE

2024-2025 Budget Update

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE:
CREATE A BALANCED BUDGET

in the face of monumental and compounding aid losses, and after making extraordinary cuts, and having costs rise exponentially...

that does not decimate what we consider to be a safe, thorough and efficient education for our students.

Changes Made Since the Tentative Budget

The district has identified **27 Positions** to be cut for 2024-2025 all through attrition (i.e. retirements, resignations)

- 6 Paraprofessionals
- 8 Teachers
- 1 Secretary
- 1 Administrator
- 10 Vacant Bus Driver Positions
- 1 Security Officer

These losses would mean the district has cut 242 Positions over the past 7 years

Result: \$2.4 Million in Reductions

Changes Made Since the Tentative Budget

OUR POSITION

- We still have a \$25 million deficit
- We have made all the fiscally responsible reductions we can
- We CANNOT CUT ANY FURTHER without sacrificing a safe, thorough and efficient education for our students
- Our students deserve the same opportunities as their peers and it is our responsibility to provide those opportunities.
- The DOE, through the county office and fiscal monitor, will need to identify how to close our remaining budget gap unless another solution emerges.
- We will continue to work with the NJ DOE to answer all questions and to demonstrate our fiscal responsibility and commitment to students.

Result: \$3 Million in Reductions

NEXT STEPS

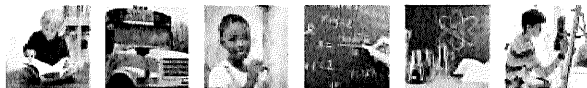
Pending Legislation

- There are a myriad of proposed bills in both the Assembly and Senate that could impact school budgets in New Jersey.
- If these or any other measures become law, the district and Board of Education will work together to evaluate the possible impact on our budget.

Continued Advocacy:

- We will continue to work tirelessly for solutions to save our district.
- THANK YOU to the BOE, staff, residents and students, and Jackson Mayor and Council who advocated for our district. YOUR EFFORTS HAVE BEEN NOTICED!
- THANK YOU to the legislators and NJ DOE representatives who are working with us to consider solutions.

*Pormilli noted it could also mean no more preschool program or going back to half day kindergarten. This would be heartbreaking.



**"If ever there can be a cause worthy to be upheld
by all toil or sacrifice that the human heart can endure,
it is the cause of education."**

*~ Horace Mann, an American politician and education reformer,
best known for promoting universal public education and teacher training.
He is widely known as known as "the father of American education."*



Welcome to the
Jackson Board of
Education Meeting

Would You Like to Be Heard During the Public Forum?

When the public forum is announced,
please come to the microphone and
write your name down before speaking.

Mrs. Pormilli open the meeting to Board questions.

Board Questions

Ms. Rivera asked Ms. Morris to explain her role and responsibilities with being assigned to a District in financial distress.

Ms. Morris Responded: The law requires if a district asks the State DOE for an advance payment of state aid it must also be assigned to monitor. Ms. Morris arrived in January with the anticipation that an advance payment or loan was coming but as indicated, there has been a delay in that. There were a number of questions that had to be asked and answered. We are still struggling with some of the issues that would involve a decision on that. The commissioner is awaiting a recommendation from Ms. Morris as to how much the advanced payment should be -what the District needs to complete the 2023-24 school year before we even approach 2024-25. There is a section in 18A that describes all of the authority and responsibility when a state monitor is assigned. Ms. Morris will provide a copy to the Board. A monitor's responsibility is to oversee the financial issues of the district - not to step in and actually remove responsibility from the Superintendent or the Business Administrator. It lets you run your district and produce results. Jackson has a very difficult issue because it does not involve something that can directly be corrected by the monitor. The district has a revenue issue so it needs to find more revenue. It is not a spending issue. To Ms. Morris' knowledge, there has been no mismanagement of any kind and the appropriate cuts have been made. Finding revenue to support all of those things is a perfect storm because there is so many factors that impacted our district all at one time, (ex. Covid, gas prices, inflation) all have factored into the District's financial crisis.

Mr. McCarron asked Ms. Morris to explain how a district qualifies for a loan or state aid advancement and who makes that ultimate decision?

Ms. Morris Responded: If you already have a monitor assigned as in this case, Ms. Morris' recommendation would go to the Department of Education and ultimately the Commissioner of Education has to make a recommendation to the Department of Treasury. All of the information gathered would be needed to support his request. Ultimately, the Department of Treasury can say yes or no to the recommendation.

Ms. McCarron asked Ms. Morris: Do you feel we need a state aid advancement for both this year and next year?

Ms. Morris Responded: It's been difficult for district employees working with the Superintendent and Business Administrator to separate working on two different budgets. Ms. Morris withheld her recommendation because her final recommendation has not been shared with the Commissioner yet and he should be informed first. Once shared with the Commissioner, it will be shared with the Board.

Mr. McCarron asked Ms. Morris: If you don't recommend the loan, will we still have you present and be responsible for your salary?

Ms. Morris Responded: If we don't get the loan, she leaves. Mr. McCarron asked if we don't get the advancement, do we get her salary back. Ms. Morris did not know and thought it was a very good question and will ask her boss.

Ms. Barocas asked Ms. Morris to explain what the New Jersey Department of Education defines as a thorough and efficient education for students and what curriculum programs and extracurriculars are included in that education?

Ms. Morris Responded: There is a complete booklet outlining what an efficient education is with legal interpretation. Over the years, the courts have been challenged to determine whether a district is providing a thorough and efficient education. It involves a tremendous number of different aspects of what we feel a child should be provided through the public-school system. It's supposed to give an equal opportunity to every student in the system and provide the necessities to prosper and earn a living. As far as the financial aspect, it's very foggy. What one family considers a necessity for their children is different for another family. Some successful people in one area would probably not prosper if they had not had the opportunity to have that experience in their educational program. We have been wrestling with that the last few weeks and looking at this budget as to what is absolutely necessary.

Mr. Palmeri asked Ms. Morris to explain why the County Business Administrator, Tina Trueba, suggested to our administration that we should default on our debt services bond and not pay our attorney fees for the school year?

Ms. Morris responded: She can't speak for someone else but every aspect of the budget is being looked at for a possibility of resolving the problem. Delayed payment is option only if it is determined to be a wise decision. She doesn't think anybody actually recommended defaulting on anything. Everything is being looked at as a way to generate revenue to get through this year without even looking at next year yet.

Mr. Palmeri asked Mrs. Pormilli: Have we ever defaulted on any loan or purchase order payment before? Mrs. Pormilli stated no not since she has been here.

Mr. Palmeri asked Ms. Morris: It seems the county has some recommendations that differ from yours, so it is a slight contradiction of information. Are we working to get clarity on how we can keep functioning appropriately without defaulting because that could have great credit implications on the district? For example, we're looking to lease busses and the vendor is reluctant to approve the lease to purchase because they're unsure how we're going pay for it because we don't have a budget this year or next year. These busses need to be replaced as it is a safety issue. So, even suggesting to default would further hinder our ability to get such loans. Would you agree with that?

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Ms. Morris Responded: She agrees. Every aspect of the budget is being looked at including deferring payments that can be deferred. That selection is not made at random. She had a phone conference with bond council to discuss this option. We are exploring every possible area for cuts that have the least impact on our children. Mrs. Pormilli made it very clear to me from day one - her first priority and this district's priority is the kids. Ms. Morris is trying to support that and agrees with her. She assures us this recommendation would not be made without expert bonding counsel.

Ms. Kas asked Ms. Morris: Can you explain how Transportation, Security, Special Ed and MLL funding stayed the same throughout this, when these particular categories increased significantly in our district. For instance, MLL rose over 450% and non-public transportation rose over 750% and those numbers stayed the same.

Ms. Morris Responded: They all became part of the formula itself. When the formula was written, it was written for all 600+ districts in the state. She doesn't know if at the time, everybody was aware of the impact for each of those districts, but she thinks the formula impacted each district differently. She is aware that is part of our revenue problem.

Ms. Gardella asked Ms. Morris: Did the determination of S2 funding mean to get away from categorical aid and just consider equalization aid?

Ms. Morris Responded: Ms. Morris hesitates answering because she was not part of that discussion of what people thought the formula would do and does not know what they intended it to do.

Mr. Palmeri asked Ms. Morris: At Lakewood's BOE Budget public hearing today, they submitted their budget to the DOE with a \$104 million loan request included in it. Jackson was told not to do that. Jackson was told to cut our budget by \$30 million. Lakewood has \$104 million in their budget and is going as planned with their budget planning process. Do you speak with their state monitor? Are there different rules for them when our budget is half the size of theirs and we have 2,000 more students than them?

Ms. Morris stated she would not comment on this.

Dr. Osmond asked Ms. Morris: When it comes to a thorough and efficient education, you can't give us specifics because what's good for one person isn't necessarily good for the next. So, looking at what our potential cuts for the \$25-\$30 million, in your opinion do you think we would be giving students a thorough and efficient education?

Ms. Morris responded: Ms. Morris stated we would have to know the exact list of the cuts first. Decisions are still being made on that list and she doesn't know if it's possible to get there without affecting some of those thorough and efficient areas. She knows Mrs. Pormilli feels very strongly that kids should be considered when it comes to what has to be cut. She certainly hopes the cuts don't affect the kids but she does not know. Ms. Morris can't promise tonight that we're going to find \$25 million in areas that don't affect this. Almost everything in a school affects the kids one way or another. So, she doesn't know if it's even possible to answer that and say that absolutely no.

Dr. Osmond asked Ms. Morris: When you say we're looking at everything including defaulting loans and debts, do you also discuss how that's setting us up even more for future issues even if we get through this year and next year?

Ms. Morris Responded: This is definitely under consideration.

Ms. Gardella asked Ms. Morris: Can you explain again when we see that we're functioning \$23 million under adequacy, what that actually means to us?

Ms. Morris deferred to Ms. Pormilli. Ms. Pormilli stated it is not a determination of state aid, it is how we are spending. So, we are spending \$23 million under adequacy. Mr. Baginski, BA, added that the State has a state adequacy report – last one issued was for 2023. It sets forth ratios for how many principals and teachers you should have and how much you should be spending on cocurricular activities. Based on all of those ratios, that is what puts us at \$23 million below adequacy. So, when you applied our ratios of how many staff members versus what we spend, we end up \$23 million below what the state deems to be adequate spending for a school district our size. It is a public document on the NJDOE website. It applies a calculation to how much you should be spending for a custodian, for health benefits, etc.

Ms. Gardella asked where are we supposed to look for that revenue to make up for that? Ms. Pormilli stated there are only two ways to get significant amounts of revenue - through state aid or a tax levy. The only other way is through smaller pieces like grant funding, but that is not enough for such a large gap. It also has to be consistent revenue that the district can count on. Mr. Palmeri asked for clarification - the State DOE came out with an adequacy report that says we're not spending enough money. We need to spend \$23 million more to be adequate yet in 7 years they took \$23 million from us in funding. Ms. Kas added that this proves we are fiscally responsible. Ms. Pormilli stated it demonstrates we are fiscally responsible and it is not a spending issue, it is a revenue issue and there needs to be a fix to this. Mr. Palmeri reiterated this was caused by the Department of Education.

Ms. Kas asked Ms. Morris: If we currently have issues with bus leasing companies, how do you suggest we go forward securing money or financial loans with other companies if our credit is going to be bad and we don't have the state aid needed to follow through.

Ms. Morris responded: Some kind of legislation has to kick in to help the district. She doesn't know exactly how that legislation should be written. The formula for adequacy involves the fact that when you look at adequacy, what you're being told is, that based on the formula and the way that the state determines aid, the local fair share should be coming more from the tax rate then it should be coming from state aid. Ms. Gardella stated she was wondering if the S2 has a specific amount the local fair share is supposed to be paying? Ms. Morris responded that there is a formula that determines that. Ms. Gardella asked if Ms. Morris knows what percentage the S2 expects people to pay. Ms. Pormilli responded that is based on each town's wealth so each school district is different. Ms. Gardella asked if NJ18A or NJ6A (written before S2 funding) have any law or statements in there that would help at District in financial distress? Ms. Morris responded that there are school laws that pertain to the financial management and running of a school district addressing what you can and cannot do. Ms. Morris said the tax levy question that went out to exceed the 2% cap is one example. But the voters have to approve it. If the public says yes then you can exceed the 2% taxes to support the budget. Some districts get this approved every year.

Ms. Gardella asked if there are any laws that allow the Commissioner to step in and help a district in financial distress?

Ms. Morris responded: The commissioner has a lot of power in this area and can make emergent decisions based on financial distress if there is no wrongdoing or overspending. The commissioner cannot raise our tax levy on his own.

Dr. Osmond asked Ms. Morris: Seems to me that everybody's waiting for new legislation and hopefully that will bail us out and other district are in similar situations but there's no guarantee that that is going to happen. If it doesn't happen, then what?

Ms. Morris replied if you don't have the money, cuts would have to be made. Dr. Osmond responded that then we would find out the definition of a "thorough and efficient education".

Ms. Gardella said to Ms. Morris: Obviously we're putting students first and there are laws about MLL services that we provide. The state does require certain things and we have to have for all students including gifted and talented programs and intervention services and other items for students so there is an outline for a thorough and efficient education. The BOE is standing behind it making sure that we are offering one.

With no further questions, Mrs. Pormilli concluded her Superintendent's Report and turned the meeting over to Mr. Palmeri.

PUBLIC FORUM

On a motion by Mrs. Rivera, seconded by Mrs. Kas, the public forum was opened by acclamation.

Mr. Palmeri made the following statement: "Please sign in clearly and state your name and whether or not you are a Jackson resident. Each person is allowed a maximum of five minutes to speak. No person may speak more than once on a topic until all others have been heard."

1 (left) Roger Derickson-asked Ms. Morris on a scale of 1-10 how would you rate Jackson's fiduciary management? Ms. Morris declined an answer. Mr. Derickson noted this has been going on for 7 years. Students have a been getting a great education here-Jackson is rated very high in the state. The state put us in this situation- S2 failed – leaders should change. People want to live in Jackson for the education we provide.

2 (right) Susan Springfield – involved parent of 4 – Being involved in band and drama expanded her son's abilities and skills. It afforded him great learning experiences and opportunities. He is who he is because of these opportunities. The opportunities at JMHS allowed him to be accepted at an accredited college. Academics are important but so are arts.

3 (left) Jennifer Kuhn - Council President and BOE Supporter – why would we ever be advised to default on loans and defer payments destroying our credit. She asked Ms. Morris why can't we add the loan to our budget like Lakewood.

4 (right) Nate Towlen –Memorial student – very involved in many aspects of the performing arts program – ever since joining them, it taught him a lot as a student and person – these opportunities inspired him to decide to study music education in college. He is advocating for the school so others have the same opportunities as him. Performing arts is not only a cocurricular but it is also a fundamental part of a well-rounded education.

5 (left) Paul Migaj – father of two special needs students – happy with elementary education currently receiving – questioning how effective it will be with larger class sizes. If his daughter falls behind now due to decreased services like speech therapy, she will never catch up. Some classrooms are in trailers and the school can't afford to put the students in actual classrooms. He noted S2 works well for some districts but not Jackson. He asked Ms. Morris to help us and recommend that we receive money until a formula is adjusted.

6 (right) Cathy Dipierro - involved band parent- Her son is talented in film and digital media – these experiences are outside core curriculum. AP classes and extracurriculars expanded his ability to excel and allowed him to be a competitive college applicant. Extra activities helped him socially and emotionally. ROTC prepared him for leadership rolls. Forcing cuts is contrary to education and other towns are not being forced to cut them. She wants the state to meet the funding obligations. She addressed Ms. Morris to ask the Commissioner to address our districts questions.

7 (left) Michele McCann – lifelong resident who attended school here, district employee and has kids in district- She chose to raise her children in Jackson because of this district. Many former students now work in the district. Many families are moving out of district because they are concerned about the quality of education the town can provide due to these funding cuts. Large class sizes are not effective and will cause kids to fall through the cracks. Extracurricular activities allow students a sense of belonging and purpose. The children are the ones who get hurt from this situation.

8 (right) Daniel Dipierro- JMHS Freshman – Being involved in many areas like band and Air Force ROTC are very important to his education and necessary to add to college and scholarship applications. Digital media is a program that will help with obtaining future jobs – it inspired him to have the career goal of creating documentaries. If these programs aren't in our schools then students miss out on the opportunity to experience them.

9 (left) – Ryan Nice - moved to Jackson for quality education provided here – his son is currently in the business academy taking several AP classes – if AP classes are no longer offered he is concerned that colleges will see kids had AP classes in their freshman or sophomore years then dropped them junior and senior years – colleges won't know that the classes were eliminated they will think the students dropped the classes because they don't care and they will be passed over by a college thus affecting their college and professional future. He asked to continue the legacy of all these great activities and cocurricular activities that are available to our students.

10 (right) – Isaac Elsner – has high functioning autism who graduated from an out of district school funded by Jackson School District – worried that students like him will not get education that they need. If we lose electives, we lose the advantage over others. He fears what will happen to our community – if education is lacking who would move to our town. He noted it seems Jackson has been singled out – why do others receive funds and not us. He asked Ms. Morris how she expects a district to make up \$24 million in revenue without defaulting on debts and not destroying the district.

11 (left) Kimberly Morrison – lifelong resident, alumni, teacher and JMHS parent – She chose to raise her children here because of the education available here and was inspired to become a teacher in district because of her experiences. She fears her younger children are going to lose the same opportunities and programs her older children had. She is very involved in a variety of aspects as a parent and notes that fundraisers help with a lot of things not funded by the school.

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As a special ed teacher – her students deserve to have the necessary resources. She is going to continue to do her best with limited resources. She asked Ms. Morris to do what she can to help our community and our students.

12 (right) Christopher Drury – Memorial band dad – marching band is more than music; it provides structure, discipline, responsibility and a level of coordination, teamwork and camaraderie. His daughter had issues during Covid and band saved her. He worries if these programs are cut.

13 (left) - Rania Asi – 10-year Jackson resident – She addressed Ms. Morris stating she is concerned that our children are getting less while we are paying more in taxes. She is concerned that our tax dollars are going to towns other than Jackson and to areas other than her children's education.

14 (right) Geralyn Drury – Jackson resident - She noted Covid hurt the mental health of many students including her daughter – band gave her daughter purpose. Not every student fits into the typical school programs and extra curriculums give them a sense of purpose.

15 (left) Paul Herrmann – resident and district teacher – He is concerned that this is going to drive people and staff away from the district and teaching careers. If it causes a teacher education shortage and causes people to run away from this career, he wants it noted that it is the state that created this problem.

16 (right) Jessica Wilder – District alumni, teacher and parent – She feels strongly that the education in elementary schools should not be left out of this discussion because it is the foundation of learning for every student. She is concerned the outdated curriculum won't be replaced due to budget cuts. She doesn't know how she could physically fit more students in her classroom. She is worried about the foundation of learning for all her students.

17 (left) Veronica Burnett – Music teacher and coach in Jackson for 35 years – Encouraged that the community is very unified tonight. She thanked the BOE for making the hard decision to not cut anything more and letting the state make the cuts. She addressed Ms. Morris stating everything being cut is someone's favorite thing or favorite job. She is worried the state may decide too late in our favor and people are going to leave before the decision so we will still lose our great experiences. She urged Ms. Morris to please advocate for the "loan" so we don't have to eliminate anything.

18 (right) Tom Riley – wife is a lifelong Jackson resident and daughter at Johnson and his son will be in preschool next year. \$30 million in cuts is impossible. He is nauseated by 35 kids in a classroom because it will not be effective and will cause students to fall through the cracks. He is a college level professor and if cuts happen, he would volunteer to teach chemistry to help student get ready for college.

19 (left) Laura Spencer – 22-year resident – She thanked BOE for going above and beyond. She is pleased with the education of her boys – AP classes have set them up for success in college. Extracurriculars are important for mental and physical health. Her boys are part of the swim team – last years' cuts eliminated the bus to YMCA and cut the assistant coach. The assistant coach was so dedicated to the students that he volunteered his time. Her son is part of the drama club where he learned skills and bonded with others. We need funding to do what is right for our children.

20 (right) Jon Myers – Son will attend preschool next year and daughter in Kindergarten. He asked Ms. Morris what exactly the funding formula is. Ms. Morris stated that court has not released the formula so she doesn't have it. Mr. Myers asked if it is proprietary information, is it fair that taxpayers don't know exactly how it is being used. Ms. Morris said personally she doesn't think so but she was not involved in that aspect so she just doesn't know the answer. Mr. Myers asked for an update on the lawsuit requesting the actual formula. Ms. Pormilli responded that the lawsuit is over. The districts received a formula that was difficult to understand and we asked for numbers being plugged into the formula but did not receive those numbers. The case ended before she became Superintendent. Mr. Myers asked if there will there be follow up. Ms. Pormilli stated it is up to the districts to appeal. There was one appeal already but appeals cost the districts significant money. Mr. Myers asked the BOE to push for the appeal. Increasing class size is not acceptable and doesn't seem physically possible.

21 (left) Joyce Jolliffe – Kindergarten son – moved here because of the great education available in the district. She asked Ms. Morris what will our district be like in 10 years and what will happen when we can't close the budget gap. Ms. Morris responded the state would look at other options like combining districts. A complete financial analysis will need to be done to address this. Ms. Jolliffe questioned how many of the Abbott Districts (now SDA) received money. Ms. Pormilli didn't have that information with her tonight. Ms. Jolliffe is concerned we may become an Abbott District.

On a motion by Mrs. Rivera, seconded by Mrs. Kas, the Board of Education approved a 5-minute recess at 8:09 pm.

Reconvene at 8:15 by Mr. palmeri

22 (right) Tom Smith – Parent of 3 and Band Parent – the band is more than an activity - it is community involvement. He stated parents need to share their personal stories and be more involved.

23 (left) Michelle Drozd – The bonds the students have with the teachers is amazing – teachers come to sporting events. We live in a different world with active shooter drills so it's great that there is social emotional communication with teachers. She stressed that extracurricular activities mean something and get students involved.

24 (right) Maia Minty – JMHS sophomore arts academy program – She noted that music teaches counting and pattern recognitions, builds confidence – music and art just as important as common core classes. Without having these opportunities available, some students won't even know they have an interest in it due to a lack of exposure.

25 (left) Evan McIntyre – Parent of high school AP and elementary student – He asked where will these students and programs be in the future with these cuts. He moved to Jackson for the education system. Without these programs and education, how will they pursue college? He tried to call the Governor's office but was never able to connect. He asked why the revenue isn't shared equally among districts – he doesn't understand. He asked why the Governor is opening a French museum when that money could go to education. Not providing funding is taking away our kids' future.

26 (right) Henry Torres – JMHS freshman – played AYF football and band where he made a lot of friends. During Covid, his sister started wrestling and she placed 6th in state and he also started wrestling. Budget cuts are going to affect people trying new sports and making friends as a result.

27 (left) Debra Jones – resident, alumni and employee. If we are fiscally responsible, how do we have to cut so many needs and how are we not getting the help needed. Our district has great programs and our staff serve our students with social emotional needs. She asked Ms. Morris to do what is right. She needs Ms. Morris to help this district that has done everything right. Teachers are essential workers – schools need to stay open and keep offering what we offer.

28 (right) Rosalia Mazzio – JMHS band student – She suffers from stuttering. She met many people that helped her smile and teams hold opportunities for scholarships and making friends. Band, teams and clubs are not just for fun – it helps students socially and academically.

29 (left) Dante Martin – Goetz student – He thinks cuts would impact our learning. He stated his classes are already big and adding more students negatively impacts learning. He is an athlete and it is part of his school experience. He looks forward to playing football at JMHS. He asked for help for our school districts because teachers and students deserve it.

30 (right) Angela Miron - 4 students in the district –She moved from Lakewood to Jackson for the education. She works 17 hours a day 6 days a week so she can pay for sports, clubs and trips so that her kids can have a better life in the future. Her daughter is attending Ursinus college with scholarship thanks to programs she was involved in here. She wants her son to have the same opportunity as her daughter. She is worried about the education of all Jackson kids.

31 (left) Assemblyman Alex Sauickie – alumni, assemblyman, father and his wife is teacher. He is here to give a glimmer of hope. He stated the state caused this problem not the district and the only way it will get fixed is through legislation. He thinks Ms. Morris will recommend the right thing but he does not think the DOE will do the right thing. He met with the Commissioner last week and said he wants to work with him but he got nothing in return. State aid is the income tax you already paid – in 2021 Jackson paid \$68 million in taxes and is getting \$23 million in state aid. Newark paid \$44 million in taxes and getting \$1.25 billion in state aid. 140 school districts lost funding (equaling \$104 million) this year while Newark got a raise. So, our tax dollars went to Newark and other districts. Senate Bill 2 (S2) passed in 2018 was sponsored by then State Senate President Steve Sweeney who wants to run for governor next year. So, the man who caused this problem wants to run for NJ Governor next year. The States' own report states that Jackson was inadequately funded by \$23 million dollars. For example, we should be receiving \$7 million for transportation but are getting \$600,000. It is a district and state issue and an issue for both Republicans and Democrats. A voting session was added for this Monday. Typically, it is added to pass something. They also added committee meetings for Friday which typically means they need to get something through committee for voting on Monday. He thinks the budget will be delayed which helps to get other legislation in like the legislation he submitted to pay for the monitor and the bill that calls it a loan. He hopes this may be one of the things voted on.

32 (right) Gracie Sauickie – She is a very involved student. This district allowed her to take many levels of music classes which will allow her to study it past high school. Her math class this year had 30 kids in it and she can't imagine having 40 kids and is not sure they'd even fit the desks in the room. This school gave her amazing opportunities. She is worried her younger brother won't have the opportunities she had to take the AP classes and be a part of band if they are cut. She thinks it will be near impossible for our students going to college to compete with students from other high school when applying to colleges if we don't have extra curriculars, AP classes or electives.

33 (left) Patrick O'Callaghan – his son is a Switlik student -He hears the Governor talk about inequities. He doesn't understand how some towns like Edison and Colts Neck receive increases while Jackson received less. He thinks the S2 formula that doesn't work is borderline corruption. He asked Ms. Morris where the inequities are coming from. Ms. Morris has no answer. He is worried for the future of his son's education. This inequity causing a substandard education is not acceptable. Mr. Palmeri called order for language then Mr. Palmeri ended his speaking time for continued lack of order.

34 (right) Lauren Hernandez - She grew up with a poor education with no desks and sharing books so she moved to Jackson to give her children a better education than she had. The Holman class sizes are already large making them larger would hinder learning. Her son has learning issues – but teachers help him excel – she fears cuts will prevent him and other students from learning. Her daughter is involved in JTV and it saved her. She fears for her son's education because he may not have things available to him.

35 (right again) Kylah Hernandez (daughter of #34) Film allowed her to find her spark in life through JTV – it makes her happy and confident and it feels like a second home to her. This all helped her be able speak tonight and gave her a reason to go to college – she is afraid if we cut programs like this we are going to lose the sparks of other students.

36 (left) Dinah Perrine – She is concerned about future of her very involved grandchildren in the district. She said Ms. Morris stated earlier that if the cuts are made, a complete analysis and plan would have to be done. She thought that was what was already happening now. Ms. Perrine asked who Ms. Morris' report gets sent to and who the decision maker is. Ms. Morris responded that the report goes to the DOE, the County Office in Ocean County and it will go to the Commissioner of Education – he ultimately asks the Treasurer for the recommended funding or he can reject the report she gives him. Ms. Perrine asked if the BOE invited any legislators or decision makers to this meeting tonight. Mr. Palmeri stated that the advocacy committee chaired by Ms. Gardella has spoken with over 15 assembly people and state senators to invite them to attend meetings or listen virtually and they speak to them frequently- they continually refused the invitation. Ms. Pormilli added that we have also been asked by legislators to assist by providing feedback into bills they have been trying to write so, we have been very involved in the process. Ms. Perrine asked if we can we edit the video of speakers and to send to them.

37 (left) Christine McGinley – She stated that parents can go to Trenton and ask to speak with someone and they can go to committee hearings. Their website has the dates of the meetings. She doesn't think they will come here so we need to go to them.

Seeing no one come forward, on a motion by Mrs. Rivera, the public forum on agenda items only was closed by acclamation.

RESOLUTIONS FOR ACTION

Based on the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the following resolutions were presented for formal approval by the Board of Education.

FINANCE

On a motion by Mrs. Rivera, seconded by Mrs. Kas, the Board of Education approved the following motions:

1. The Board of Education approves the following resolution for the transfer of unspent referendum funds into the **2023-2024** budget:

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF JACKSON
IN THE COUNTY OF OCEAN, NEW JERSEY ON MAY 7, 2024 AS FOLLOWS:

Whereas, the 2023-2024 budget submission was contingent upon receipt of a Department of Education loan (advanced State Aid) to the District in the amount of \$10,225,067.00 and should the loan not materialize, the Administration was directed to formulate a new budget, less those anticipated funds, to be approved by the Board at a future meeting; and

Whereas, the 2023-2024 budget's \$10,225,067.00 loan (advanced State Aid) has not been received; and

Whereas, *N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-14.1(h)(v)(2)* allows the district to anticipate the prior year referendum funds as part of the designated general fund balance of a subsequent school year's budget;

Be It Resolved, that the Board of Education approves the transfer of unspent prior referendum funds in the amount of \$4,271,167.59 into the General fund for the **2023-2024** school year budget, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-14.1(h)(v)(2)*.

NOTE:

<i>Account Name</i>	<i>Account Number</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<i>BOND REFERENDUM 2002</i>	<i>1006009638</i>	<i>\$1,470,395.94</i>
<i>BOND REFERENDUM 2005</i>	<i>1006009646</i>	<i>\$2,792,292.07</i>
<i>INTEREST BOND REFERENDUM</i>	<i>1006009653</i>	<i>\$8,479.58</i>
<i>TOTAL:</i>		<i>\$4,271,167.59</i>

Roll Call Vote: Yes: Mrs. Gardella
Mr. McCarron
Mrs. Barocas
Dr. Osmond
Mrs. Rivera
Mrs. Kas
Mr. Palmeri

MOTION CARRIED

Board Comments/Discussion

Mr. McCarron thanked everyone for coming out and he appreciates the passion for our school district. He stated the BOE will continue to work hard for the district.

Dr. Osmond thanked everyone for coming. We all have students in the district. The state needs to take into consideration that if they take all these things away from the students, they will have too much time on their hands. You can balance a budget by cutting everything but now you are going to have students who are home early with parents who work. She encouraged parents to come to future meetings. She congratulated the students for the courage to speak tonight.

Mrs. Rivera thanked everyone for attending in person and live stream. She thanked the staff and Mrs. Pormilli for their emphasis on the students. She thanked Mrs. Morris for clarifying questions. She pleaded that we don't close any schools considering class sizes, security and safety. Children will suffer with all these cuts.

Mrs. Gardella thanked everyone for coming out tonight. There are a lot of districts in NJ suffering like Jackson. She appreciates legislators coming out to offer new bills to fix the problems. It is imperative that we have small classrooms for fundamental learners, access to activities for teens, we need career paths for young adults and we need a commissioner who understands he has the authority to help in an emergent situation. She thanked Mrs. Morris for helping us tonight.

Mrs. Barocas thanked everyone who came tonight, those watching live stream and those who spoke. She thanked Governor Murphy for putting money towards free preschool however at the rate he is cutting funds and decimating the schools there will be no K-12 schools for these preschoolers to attend.

Mrs. Kas thanked everyone for coming out especially the young students who spoke. It is disheartening that we are being punished and we did nothing wrong and our students are going to suffer because of cuts. We have award winning programs and curriculums here. A thorough education includes extracurricular activities, teams and smaller class sizes. We need to keep advocating for our district.

Mr. Palmeri thanked everyone for showing up tonight. He thanked everyone for sending letters to the Governor, legislation and DOE. We will not cut anything further that will negatively affect our students and we will continue to advocate.

There being no further discussion, on a motion by Tara Rivera, the meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel Baginski
Business Administrator/Board Secretary