

JACKSON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MAY 8, 2023  
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 5:30 p.m. on May 8, 2023 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, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. R. Rotante, Assistant Superintendent; Ms. Michelle Richardson, Board Secretary; Mr. M. Zitomer, Board Attorney.

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

Mrs. Gardella asked how the agenda will run at this meeting, and if questions can be asked of it?

Mr. Palmeri answered that if she has a question regarding the agenda, this would be the time she could discuss it, and we will be going through the agenda, step by step, with opportunities for discussion.

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

**MOTION CARRIED**

**SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT/INFORMATION ITEMS**

Mrs. Pormilli shared a slide show presentation on the budget for the 2023-2024 school year.

Jackson School District

2023-2024

Proposed Budget

Public Hearing

May 8, 2023

Where we Began:

2023-2024 Tentative Budget Introduced March 15

	2023-2024 Tentative Budget	Change from Previous Year	% Change
General Fund Tax Levy	\$ 93,274,419	\$1,828,910	2.00%
State Aid	\$ 29,738,363	(\$7,939,642)	(21.05%)
General Fund	\$136,773,421	(\$5,782,118)	(4.06%)
Federal/State Programs	\$ 13,696,973	(\$5,371,501)	(31.75%)
Total Debt	\$ 8,433,500	\$ 2,686	0.03%
Total Budget	\$158,903,894	(\$12,150,933)	(7.10%)

What We are Facing This Year

The Impact of S2 to the Jackson School District

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 = \$896,460

Originally, we expected to lose \$2.5 million this year.

In March we learned we would be losing \$6.2 million.

SBs were just passed to shore out this year - so we are back to a \$2.1 million loss.

Unfunded April 1st

Overall

\$19 million will be lost in state aid over 7 years

This Budget is a Reflection of the 6 Years' Worth of Decimating Budget Cuts

- We have been discussing, and advocating against - the S2 funding formula that has cut our aid more than \$18 MILLION in 6 years (will be \$19 million or higher over the course of 7 years.)
- Meanwhile, our expenses have risen higher than the mandated 2% cap on our tax levy.
- We have been forced to operate in a "cut model" budget, year after year.
  - Reduce operational costs
  - Cut staff
  - Feature needed facilities improvements
  - Seek additional revenue
- We have needed to draw from (and not generate additional) surplus funds - which are for emergency needs and were traditionally rolled over to support the following year's school budget needs.

Advocacy

We have aggressively pursued multiple avenues to advocate for a review or pause of S2 cuts and to draw special attention to the unique circumstances faced by Jackson.

- Met with legislative counsel to seek S2 formula from state
- Testified to Senate and Assembly Budget Committees on multiple occasions
- Gathered public support to advocate for our students or S2 cuts
- Worked with legislators to create bill to establish nonpublic transportation consortium pilot program and provide funding for impacted districts
- Met with Governor's Office to discuss our challenges
- Met with District 11 Legislators
- Multitude of requests to the Governor and the Commissioner of Education to come to our district and discuss needs
- Multitude of meetings with the Guilford County Superintendent
- Met with staff from the DOE

Factors Impacting the 2023-2024 Budget

REVENUE:

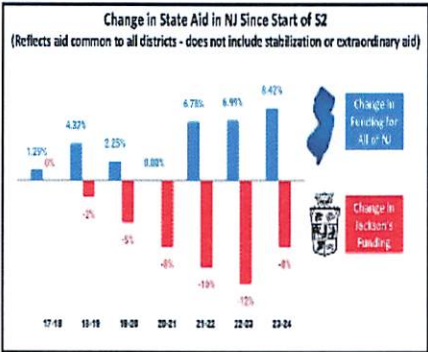
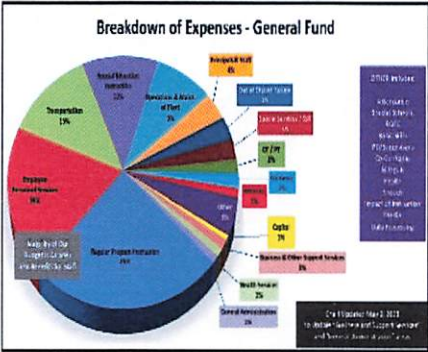
- State Aid - Impact of cuts over the past 6 years
- Other Aid - Other types of temporary aid have kept us afloat
- Surplus - We have been utilizing surplus funds to support programs, and in addition have not been able to generate new surplus, as in the past
- Tax Levy Cap - 2% Cap limits our ability to keep on top of rising costs

EXPENDITURES:

- Fixed/Mandated/Costs Outside of Our Control - Gas prices, tuition increases, increases in special education out of district transportation, contractual obligations
- Needs - Curricular, Extra-Curricular, Facility, Security, Technology
- Inflation - Between 6% and 8%

ENROLLMENT:

- Decreases in enrollment are leveling a bit
- Our state aid cuts FAR EXCEED our enrollment decreases



### State Aid Cuts Far Exceed Enrollment Decreases

Year	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24
Total Aid	\$50,735,886	\$49,870,372	\$47,573,088	\$46,291,564	\$46,374,618	\$37,668,035	\$28,786,361
% Change	0%	-1.71%	-4.62%	-2.96%	0.18%	-23.70%	-23.00%

**Since 2017: Cumulative Loss of State Aid = - 41.39%**

*When the state re-evaluated our aid loss in March, we received \$4,218,397 back in the form of miscellaneous revenue (not categorized by the state as "aid").*

*To present a full, fair picture of aid vs. enrollment, if this were counted as aid, our*

**Cumulative Loss of State Aid = - 33.1%**

Year	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24
Enrollment (Oct. 15)	8,189	8,106	7,994	7,830	7,353	7,254	?
% Decrease	-1.60%	-1.14%	-1.41%	-1.54%	-6.34%	-1.34%	?

**Since 2017: Cumulative Loss of Enrollment = - 11.9%**

### Decreased Staffing Levels Since 2017

**151.5 Positions  
Have Been  
Eliminated  
Since 2017-2018**

Administration	Nurses Aides
Teachers	Non-Certified Supervisors
Paraprofessionals	Security - Full Time
Bus Drivers	Security - Part Time
Secretaries	Receptionists
Custodians	Technology
Food Service	Garage
Lunchroom Aides	Van Aides
Grounds	Support Staff

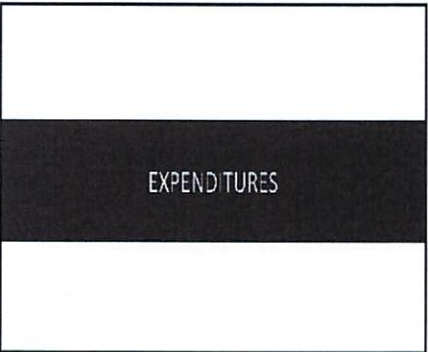
**Every Area Has Felt the Impact of Staff Cuts  
Many Have Been Accomplished Through Attrition/Retirements**

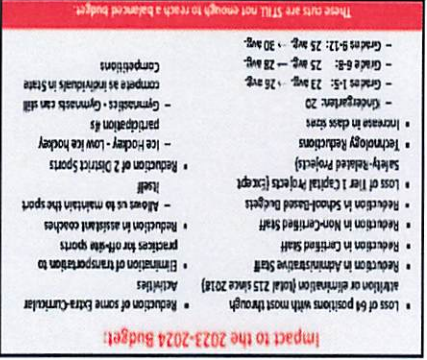
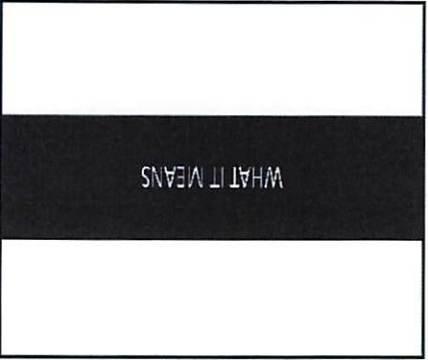
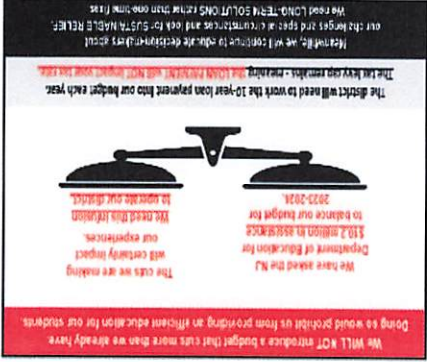
### We are Efficient and Effective: How We Compare

**What is the NJ "Adequacy Budget"?**

Every school district in 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.

- We are \$9 Million UNDER Adequacy in spending this year, according to the State of NJ's Adequacy Budget calculations. Will be even more millions under adequacy for the 23-24 school year.
- We are 14th lowest in Budgetary Cost Per Pupil (out of 92 NJ K-12 Districts)





**Challenges in the Face of Funding Cuts - Continued**

ELL Students					
<div> <div> 2022-2023 (On-Base) Increase: 1078 students or 38.0% increase </div> <div> 2022-2023 (On-Base) Increase: 4093 students or 48.0% increase </div> </div>					
17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
655	1,101	1,427	1,946	2,709	3,687
4,750	4,750	4,750	4,750	4,750	4,750
23-24	23-24	23-24	23-24	23-24	23-24

Total Non-Public Students (Transported and All)

**Analyzing Every Option**

On campus, at the time we determined closing the school was not best for the district.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of some Extra-Curricular Activities</li> <li>Elimination of transportation to practices for off-site sports</li> <li>Reduction in assistant coaches</li> <li>Allow us to maintain the sport</li> <li>Reduction in 2 District sports</li> <li>Ice Hockey - Low Ice Hockey</li> <li>participation is</li> <li>Gymnastics - Gymnasts can still compete as individuals in State Competitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of 64 positions with most through reduction in Administrative Staff</li> <li>Reduction in Certified Staff</li> <li>Reduction in Non-Certified Staff</li> <li>Reduction in School-Based Budgets</li> <li>Loss of Tier 1 Capital Projects (except Safety-related Projects)</li> <li>Technology Reductions</li> <li>Increase in class sizes</li> <li>Kindergarten: 20</li> <li>Grades 1-5: 23 avg., 25 avg.</li> <li>Grade 6-8: 25 avg., 28 avg.</li> <li>Grades 9-12: 25 avg., 30 avg.</li> </ul>



Why is this Loan Necessary?

- We have met with the Executive County Superintendent multiple times, going through each line item in the budget. He has communicated to the Department of Education that the district has been fiscally responsible.
- We explained that it was with great anguish that we were seeking this assistance, but that we have no other choice.
- By law the district must continue to operate under a 2% tax levy cap, which allows us no mechanism to take necessary programs and positions in the face of devastating cuts.
- We have HOPE that S2 will not remain in place for the 2024-2025 budget year.
- We have HOPE that a more balanced funding formula for the state is developed.
- We have HOPE that our state aid will increase for ELL, special education, transportation and security.
- However, the district can not plan with just hope. We need ACT NOW to protect the education of our students.

We Will Also Be Seeking a Special Question on the November 7, 2023 Ballot

To raise an additional \$4,075,000 for the General Fund for 2023-2024.  
These funds will be used exclusively to add the following positions:

6 Guidance Counselors  
2 Student Assistance Counselors  
6 Interventionist Teachers  
10 Elementary Teachers  
12 Secondary Teachers  
1 Nonpublic Student Coordinator  
1 Nonpublic Secretary  
4 Child Study Team Members  
4 ESL Teachers

Tax Impact of Special Question:

The average home in Jackson is assessed at \$779,686.  
The impact for this average homeowner would be:

- \$93/year
- \$8/month
- 25 cents/day

If approved by voters, the funds will result in a permanent increase to the tax base.  
If the special question is defeated, we will not be able to add these positions to meet the needs of our students.

Why This Special Question is Being Proposed

6 Guidance Counselors  
Needer for increase in mental health and better student-to-counselor ratios

2 Student Assistance Counselors  
Needer for increases we are experiencing in substance abuse

8 Interventionist Teachers  
Needer for academic intervention to improve academic progress

10 Elementary Teachers  
Needer for class size reduction

12 Secondary Teachers  
Needer for class size reduction

1 Nonpublic Student Coordinator  
1 Nonpublic Secretary  
Needer for management of all state non-public funds that are required to be managed by the school district (e.g. Title I, etc.)

4 Child Study Team Members  
Needer for better ratio of special education student-to-case manager

4 ESL Teachers  
Needer for increases in student population and instructional needs for ESL students

What's Next:

2023-2024 BUDGET

- The budget being voted on tonight is based on the approval from the Department of Education on our loan request.
- District will need to work 10-year loan payment into budget each year.
- 2% levy cap remains – LOAN will NOT increase your taxes.
- The 2023-2024 Budget approved tonight goes into effect July 1.
- We will strategize with departments to implement cuts effective July 1.

NOV 7, 2023 SPECIAL QUESTION

- We will create a series of opportunities to discuss special question and impact to your family prior to vote.
- On Nov 7, voters decide on special question.
- If approved, the funds will result in a permanent increase to the tax base and the positions funded will be added to the district to better meet the needs of students.
- If not approved, we will not be able to add these positions to meet the needs of our students.

There will be multiple PUBLIC meetings and opportunities to discuss the special question and its impact prior to the November vote.

Budget Figures  
and  
Tax Impact

Tax Levy Information

The "tax levy" is the amount to be raised by taxation.  
It takes two forms:

- "General Fund" tax levy (i.e. operating budget)
- "Debt Service" tax levy (i.e. previously approved construction projects, reference)

This year's tentative budget contains a general fund tax levy increase of 2 %

2023-2024 Proposed Budget			
Comparison from 2022-2023 Budget			
	2023-2024 Tentative Budget	Change from Previous Year	% Change
General Fund Tax Levy	\$ 93,224,419	\$1,836,910	2.00%
State Aid	\$ 29,735,363	(\$7,910,642)	(23.05%)
State Aid Loan	\$10,225,067	\$10,225,067	100%
General Fund	\$143,660,026	\$1,104,487	0.77%
Federal/ State Programs	\$ 13,696,973	(\$6,371,501)	(31.75%)
Total Debt	\$ 8,433,500	\$ 2,486	0.03%
Total Budget	\$165,790,499	(\$5,164,120)	(3.09%)

\* When the state re-evaluated our aid loss in March, we received \$6,212,287 back in the form of miscellaneous revenue (not categorized by the state as "aid")

**What does this budget mean for taxpayers?**

- TOTAL Tentative Budget is \$165,790,499
- .0005-cent increase to the School Tax Rate
- 2023 Tentative School Tax Rate = \$1.4203 per \$100 of assessed home value
- Average home in Jackson is assessed at \$350,688
- \$2 increase per year for the average homeowner

After May 9, look on our Budget Information Page to view the full, detailed budget document and tonight's presentation.

[www.JacksonSD.org](http://www.JacksonSD.org)

The decisions we are making are painful.  
Please know they were made with careful consideration for what would have the least impact on students' education and experiences.

**This is NOT the budget we want.**  
It is the budget we are forced to endure given our extraordinary challenges.

We will continue our efforts to educate decision-makers about our unique circumstances and for the funding we need to run our district.

We are hopeful a solution is on the horizon.  
Until then, we will continue to put students first, always.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Mrs. Pormilli explained that we had postponed the hearing to allow a few more weeks to put together a difficult budget. At the March meeting, we presented a tentative budget, that we were uncomfortable with, due to significant cuts needed to approve that budget.

We have spent every day working on the budget since March. Year after year our state aid reductions have continued for 6 years due to the S2 cuts, with an overall cut of \$19 million over 7 years with the S2 in place.

This year's state aid was cut by an additional \$4.1 million, which was eventually given back, still resulting in a \$2.1 million cut this year.

These cuts over the past 6 years have been decimating to the district, resulting in yearly reduced operational costs, cut staff and postponed needed facility improvements.

We have been advocating and aggressively pursuing the need for more revenue. We have met with the Ocean County Superintendent to review our budget. We met with staff of the Governor's office over spring break, and have made multiple requests to the Governor and the Commissioner of Education to come to our district and discuss our needs.

It was determined, at this time, that closing Rosenauer Elementary School would not be a viable option to save costs.

A summary of the impact of the proposed budget follows:

Loss of 64 positions  
Reduction in administrative staff  
Reduction in certified staff  
Reduction in non-certified staff  
Reduction in school-based budgets  
Loss of Tier 1 Capital Projects  
Technology reductions  
Increase in class sizes  
Reduction of some Extra-Curricular Activities  
Elimination of transportation to practices for off-site sports  
Reduction in assistant coaches  
Reduction of 2 district sports – Ice Hockey and Gymnastics

Still, this is not enough cut to reach a balanced budget. So, that means we couldn't cut more, and maintain giving our students a thorough and efficient education.

We have asked the NJ Department of Education for \$10.2 million in assistance, over a 10-year interest free loan. This loan will NOT impact your tax rate.

### **Proposed Ballot Special Question**

We will also be seeking a special question on the November 7, 2023 ballot to raise \$4,035,000 for the general fund for 2023-2024. The additional tax levy, if approved by voters, will fund new positions to meet the needs of our students. It will raise the average homeowner taxes approximately \$96/year.

Those new positions would be:

6 Guidance Counselors (more are needed due to mental health on the up rise)  
2 Student Assistance Counselors (to help address the rise in substance abuse)  
8 Interventionist Teachers (to alleviate academic progress gaps)  
10 Elementary and 12 Secondary Teachers (to reduce class sizes to a more comfortable ratio)  
1 Non-public Student Coordinator and  
1 Non-Public Secretary (to help manage the non-public funds, such as Title 1)  
4 Child Study Team Members (to better the ratio of Special Ed students to Case Managers)  
4 ESL Teachers (for increases in the student population with needs for ESL)

The above are all new, additional positions.

If the Special Question is approved after the November 7, 2023 ballot, we will add the above proposed positions. If it is not approved, those positions will not be added.

### **Budget**

Tonight, we vote on the budget. If approved, the new budget goes into effect July 1, 2023.

Ms. Richardson spoke about the budget numbers and their tax impact. She explained the budget's effect on taxes would be approximately \$2 for the year, per average homeowner.

Mrs. Gardella spoke about class sizes. She stated that most educators would agree that the smaller the class size, the better the situation is for the students. With the proposed average class sizes, we have some buildings with smaller classes and some with larger classes. The class sizes will be varied, based on the class itself. We took an average for the presentation. She feels it's very important that we maintain smaller class sizes.

If we don't get the November tax levy increase, Mrs. Gardella asked how we will bring equity to the district, moving forward.

Mrs. Pormilli answered that the board would discuss this issue moving forward, to make the schools more equitable. Some of our schools have a higher capacity than others. What do we do about the trailers, and getting the kids back into the buildings? This would all be discussed by the Board of Education.

Mrs. Gardella thanked Mrs. Pormilli for her presentation, and wants the public to understand that the state aid we receive for transportation is much less than we spend.

Mrs. Pormilli stated that we receive \$600,000 in transportation aid. The S2 froze us at that amount the last 6 years, meanwhile, the calculations show that we should be receiving \$6.6 million.

Mrs. Gardella also talked about security costs, and the importance of that expense.

Mr. Palmeri stated on behalf of this budget that he commends Mrs. Pormilli and her entire staff for working countless hours on this budget. He knows they put together the best possible outcome of a very terrible situation.

Mrs. Gardella mentioned that if you look at some of the line items, some of the areas go up by significant percentages.

Mrs. Pormilli explained that the last two years, we received ESSER funds and Stabilization Aid, which offset a lot of our expenditures the last few years. You might see some lower numbers, which have now increased for the 2023/2024 school year. This is because we no longer have the ESSER funds or Stabilization Aid to offset those expenses.

Mrs. Gardella stated that it is not easy to hear of the staff reductions. If you review some of the line items, we do have increases in salary and wages in certain areas. She asked why we see those increases this year, when we have so many staff positions being cut.

Mrs. Pormilli answered that we need to meet certain ratios of teacher per student, for instance, with the ESL population, we may have to add teachers. In the past, we had applied some of our ESSER funds toward part of salaries, such as Occupational Therapists or Speech. Without the ESSER funds, we need to keep those positions, but move that money over to the general budget. The only additional staffing we are putting into place are based on requirements. Preschool state aid will pay for those teachers who are hired for the preschool program.

Mrs. Gardella asked about the Non-Public positions mentioned with the Special Ballot Question. She asked if a Transportation Coordinator is included?

Mrs. Pormilli answered that it's different, transportation is not included under the Special Ballot question.

Dr. Osmond asked if she heard correctly, would the loan be 0% interest?

Mrs. Pormilli answered that is what is being recommended to the Department of Education. It is not yet finalized, but the Ocean County Superintendent recommended a 0% interest loan.

Dr. Osmond asked when will we find out when we are approved for the loan?

Mrs. Pormilli answered that she has not been given a timeline.

Mrs. Gardella asked, what happens if we approve the budget, then don't get the loan?

Mrs. Pormilli explained that the motion says "pending the approval of the loan". If we don't get the loan, her best guess in that scenario would be that we then don't have a budget. She doesn't know what the state would do in that situation.

Mrs. Barocas asked if we could add a calculator on the website for families at home to see the tax implication for their household.

Mrs. Pormilli replied that we can look into that.

Mrs. Pormilli then concluded her Superintendent's Report, and turned the meeting back over to Mr. Palmeri.

## **2023-2024 BUDGET HEARING**

### **a. Public Forum – 2023-2024 Budget Items only**

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

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

Jonathan Scott, resident, spoke about the Jackson Childcare Academy rates that were published at the previous Board of Education meeting. His rates are going up 71% for 2 kids at Elms, which is \$474 more per month. He understands the funding issue with the district, but a 71% increase in childcare is unreasonable. He asked how much was budgeted for before & after care above what parents pay? How much was paid this year? He asked the board to please explain the increase. He feels it is completely unreasonable, and believes the program should be self-funded. He asked, with the monies parents are paying, is it subsidized for other programs, and other students? Are the books open to the public to see the itemized costs for the childcare and what was collected by parents? What is budgeted for the 2023/2024 school year? He received little to no notice of this drastic increase. He randomly looked on the Board of Education



minutes, and that is how he found out. No email was received from the district. He is curious as to why no notification was sent out to warn parents. This is a need for parents, not a want.

Mr. Palmeri stated they will address all questions at the end of the public forum.

Amy Howells, resident, has kids who attend McAuliffe and Rosenauer. She thanked the Board of Education for keeping Rosenauer open. She thanked them for all their work on the budget. She asked about the loan being recommended for 0%. What if they come back with a higher interest rate? Will we still accept the loan?

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

Mrs. Pormilli responded to the question about the childcare rates. She explained that the intent of the district is not to burden families, but we needed to increase rates to sustain the program. She will review the detailed questions and get those answers. We did a comparison to other surrounding districts, and most of them use the YMCA and most are higher in childcare rates than ours. She has responded to a few parents with questions about the childcare increases. We are looking to see if there are any solutions, perhaps a larger discount for the second child. With regard to the lack of communication, she explained that this isn't something we normally put out. We did post it on the childcare page of the website, but did not send a broadcast; we don't normally in that case.

With regard to the question about the loan interest percent, if it came back at a higher percent, she imagines we would have to accept the loan and reflect that increase in the budget for the 2024/2025 school year.

Mr. Palmeri replied that with regard to the loan, we are in the hands of the state.

Ms. Richardson responded to the question about the childcare financial records. She explained that the district's audit reports, which includes Child Care, are posted on our website every year.

## **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 approved the following 2023-2024 budget resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF JACKSON IN THE COUNTY OF OCEAN, NEW JERSEY ON MAY 8, 2023 AS FOLLOWS:

1. The Board of Education approved the 2023-2024 budget for the submission to the County Superintendent's Office in the amount of \$165,790,499.00 that consists of a Total General Fund of \$143,660,026.00, Federal/State Programs of \$13,696,973.00 and Debt Service of \$8,433,500.00.
2. The Board of Education approved the Tax Levy amount raised for General Funds of \$93,274,419.00 for the ensuing 2023-2024 School Year.

### **Document A**

3. The aforesaid budget submission numbers are contingent upon receipt of a Department of Education loan to the District in the amount of \$10,225,067.00, and should that loan not materialize, the Administration is directed to formulate a new budget, less those anticipated funds, to be approved by the Board at a future meeting.
  4. If the loan is granted, the Board hereby accepts same and any delineated conditions for repayment set forth therein.
2. The Board of Education approved the following additional 2023-2024 budget resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF JACKSON IN THE COUNTY OF OCEAN, NEW JERSEY ON MAY 8, 2023 AS FOLLOWS:

RESOLVED that in addition to the regular advertised budget, the Jackson Township Board of Education will seek approval from the district's legal voters to raise an additional \$4,035,000.00 in the 2023-2024 school year to better serve the needs of students. The additional levy will provide funds for the following positions: Six (6) Guidance Counselors; Two (2) Student Assistance Counselors; One (1) Nonpublic Student Coordinator, One (1) Nonpublic Secretary; Eight (8) Interventionist Teachers, Ten (10) Elementary Teachers; Twelve (12) Secondary Teachers; Four (4) Child Study Team Members; Four (4) ESL Teachers, and the employee benefits related to the new positions. The taxes, if raised, will be used exclusively for this purpose. Approval of these taxes will result in a permanent increase in the district's tax levy.

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 and thanked Mrs. Pormilli and the administrative staff for the hard work that went into creating the budget.

Mrs. Barocas thanked Mrs. Pormilli and the staff for working diligently and collaboratively on the budget. It's not exactly where we all want to be, but she appreciates the time and effort that was put into getting us to where we are today. Thank you for thinking of our children and everyone else.

Mrs. Rivera thanked everyone for attending in person, online, for their input and comments, and thanked Mrs. Pormilli, and her staff for working on the budget.

Mrs. Gardella thanked everyone for coming out tonight. She said the Board of Education will be looking at everything that concerns our students and their families. She thanked the administration staff for helping answer all her questions and for putting students first. She wished everyone a good night.

Dr. Osmond thanked everyone for coming, she thanked the administrative staff for working very hard on the budget and doing the best they can, given this difficult situation.

Mrs. Kas thanked everyone for coming out, and thanked Mrs. Pormilli and her team for doing an excellent job on the budget and presentation. We made some tough decisions tonight and she finds it very sad that our Governor has denied our district over \$18 million in the past few years with S2 cuts, which now put us in this situation where we need to take a \$10 million loan. It makes no sense – you take and then we have to give back. In a time that mental health to our students is so important as a top priority, he put our district in a dire situation. We lobbied to the Ocean County Superintendent, we tried to meet the Governor directly several times; he was never personally available. We have been fiscally responsible, and yet here we are today.

We have a unique transportation issue. Besides Lakewood, there is not another town in the state of New Jersey that has non-public transportation costs as high as ours. This year it's \$4.5 million (about half of the loan) and next year it is expected to be up to \$6 million. It's over 26 percent of our overall transportation costs, and it's going to continue to grow at a rapid rate that is unsustainable for any district, not just ours, and the state refuses to hear our pleas. Not only do they not listen, but they cut our state aid and our transportation aid significantly. Other towns with far less needs receive tremendous amounts in transportation aid compared to our measly \$600,000. To clarify, that \$4 million that the government claims that they gave back – that money was an unexpected increase in our S2 cuts. We were anticipating \$2 million, and it was increased to \$6 million without any explanation. So, do not be fooled that we received any additional extra funding. They took back what they weren't supposed to take in the first place. That was not a gain, it was just a relief. We have been called out in some media outlets as having a "bloated" budget. I certainly do not see that. We have programs for our students, programs that these children desperately need, especially after the pandemic. So, cutting staff, programs, sporting teams, and increasing class sizes, all while taking a loan which may or may not have interest, is not in the best interest of our students. As a resident, as a tax payer, and as a Board of Education member with students in the district, I'm deeply dissatisfied with our current government administration.

Mr. Palmeri stated the 2023-2024 budget that we just passed is the best possible outcome of a very bad situation. The loan we have requested from the Department of Education in the amount of \$10.2 million is a stop gap, with the last six years of S2 cuts decimating our budget. There are

no other options to prevent the total unraveling of our district. Moving forward, we need our state legislators to develop and pass a fair and equitable school funding formula; one that properly funds every school district. If not, this problem will continue to persist, even with this loan. We still had to make hard decisions for the 2023-2024 school year, by cutting over \$5 million from our budget. These decisions never come lightly, and they hurt every time. With that being said, we need to stop the district from unraveling. However, there is still more work to be done and we will continue to do that work. Thank you.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Richardson", written in a cursive style.

Michelle Richardson  
Business Administrator/  
Board Secretary