

**Forestville Board of Education Special Meeting
May 7, 2020 5:30PM-Zoom Transcript**

Carol Woodward: Would like to welcome everyone and would like to call the regular Board of Education meeting to order. Kristin will now begin to record in three, two, one.

Carol Woodward: Next is the approval of the agenda. May I have a motion to approve the agenda.

Amy Drozdziel: Motion

Carol Woodward: Okay, second?

Dave Caccamise: Second

Carol Woodward: Okay, thank you. All in favor.

Dave Caccamise: Aye

Amy Drozdziel: Aye

Mervin Fry: Aye

Sylvester Clearly: Aye

Carol Woodward: Any opposed? The motion is carried.

Carol Woodward: Now we go to public comment. We have no one here for public comment. We will not go on to the supervisory reports. Mr. Grande, it is so nice to see you.

Dan Grande: I have some good news to share. The Val. And Sal. for the Class of 2020 was figured out this week. Jake Smith is our valedictorian and Nathaniel Bock is our salutatorian. I have been keeping up with emails, keeping up with information coming from the Board of Regents, the State Education Department, our Governor, and our Superintendent. I have been communicating with teachers on a regular basis. I have been in more communication with the counselors and office staff these days as we are trying to schedule for next year. We have to start thinking about opening school in September, and this is the normal time when we would start certain activities. So there is no slowing down with that. I had a couple department meetings this week, which are kind of interesting. I think I am going to do them more regularly now that everyone has technology. It doesn't seem so foreign to have people on the screen communicating back and forth. It's a lot more efficient than communicating with emails and such. I have a full agenda tomorrow. We are going to do an entire faculty meeting with middle and high school. We have a number of topics that were going to cover. There's a lot of questions that the teachers have that we finally have answers too. I am looking forward to writing a letter to the parents and probably have it in their hands by next week on how the year is going to conclude. As far as grading goes and possibly some of the activities at the end of year, like graduation and things of that nature. In my office I kind of watch the door and whatever comes through the

door. Here at home, I'm watching the computer screen. Whenever it comes my way. So it's really the same old, same type of stuff that we typically do on a daily basis.

Kristin Irwin: I would just like to everyone to know that I just let in Mike LoManto. He is now joining us.

Carol Woodward: Does anyone have any comments or questions for Dan?

Carol Woodward: Let's go to Mrs. Marcinelli.

Lindsay Marcinelli: I would really kind of just second everything that that Mr. Grande just shared with you guys. It's really kind of the same thing that's happening at the elementary building I would say for our building. It's been a lot of communication with the teachers one just kind of trying to get caught up from the time that I was out. I am trying to be caught up to speed with them and also really kind of talking with them and planning as we move forwards. They've been really great. I would say too that it's a little different at the elementary without the technology and the teachers have really found ways to be quite creative and connecting with their students and the families. And really going above and beyond. And now that they've heard that school is closed for the remainder of the year they're constantly reaching out to come up with new ideas. So I really do want to thank how much time that they are putting into this and really thinking outside of the box and stepping out of their comfort zone to make this the best opportunity instructionally for our kids. So that's been great. I'm sure that Mrs. Garrett might touch on that we're talking about construction that will be happening at the elementary building so that will be starting soon. So the elementary building will be closed starting next week, Wednesday; to all visitors and staff. So right now, we're kind of just wrapping that up as well as trying to finish the rest of the school year.

Carol Woodward: Thank you. Lindsay. Okay. I believe the rest of the Reports are in your packet. So we'll go on to board reports. The budget presentation in Hanover and Sheridan both have been canceled. Our next budget workshop is May 21st at four o'clock on Zoom. The budget hearing will be May 28th four o'clock on Zoom and the budget vote by absentee ballot only will be Tuesday, June 9th ending at 5pm. I did want to let people know that I have a new cell phone and I have horrible service. Either email me or call me on my landline. I'm trying to work on the problem they're sending me a Booster so that it can boost the reception. I don't know if that's going to work or not. So I'll have to wait for that and go to plan B. One thing we did talk about to help boost the Census is maybe putting Census Information in with some of the packet that go home to the kids just alerting them on how to do the census, give them a little brief informational letter. We thought that might be helpful and our next Facebook article will probably be on the budget vote so and the board elections and I did send a note to the teachers for Teacher Appreciation Week and also to the nurses. I just wanted to acknowledge it from the board so if anybody has any thoughts on what our next posting on Facebook. Would be, just let me know. And I guess that's it. So, let's go on to the Superintendent.

Renee Garrett: Good evening, everyone. Thank you for joining us. We do have construction that is occurring at both the middle school, high school and the elementary buildings, it is in full swing. We've actually increased our schedule so that we will be done sooner. At the high school they're working on the science lab, which is the actual chemistry and physics lab. And at the elementary, they're going to be starting asbestos abatement starting next week, and they're going to be removing heaters in the building that are original to the building. So we're excited for that work to get started. And it's well under way, or it will be by next week. There's also a generator. that's going to be installed at the elementary and the pad is being poured soon. And then Carol, if you don't mind, I'd like to ask Jennifer Fitzgerald our District Treasurer to give us an update on our school budget. Is that okay, Carol.

Carol Woodward: Oh, absolutely.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Good evening, everyone. I just want to go over a little bit of our revenue. Our expenditures and maybe our next steps and some takeaways. We have a lot going on but we received the governor's proposed budget and just to get an idea. It was his original proposed budget was 7,850,220. His adopted budget when he came out with the adopted budget. He has decided to put a freeze on state aid. So what we're looking at is actual last year's level is going to be. It's going to be frozen at our major that's one of our major sources of funding. We're looking at over 57% of our budget. So his actual proposed budget or his adopted budget that came out was \$7,582,427. But after for their consideration and what we really expect to receive we're looking at \$7,266,321. That's a current reduction of \$583,900 which is a very big reduction or reduction. Yes. Um, one thing that we haven't actually received yet was the first measurement period is April 30th and the They have 10 days to respond to the adopted budget so we could see more cuts anywhere from 10% to 20% If we see another 10% in cuts that's \$775,000. If we see 20% it's one point over \$1.5 million. So we're working through all these numbers as we get them and as they come in. Um, the Federal Student stimulus money could bridge that gap, but we can't rely on that because we don't know if that's actually going to happen or not. Other sources of revenue we did go up to the maximum allowable levy for the tax levy. So we're looking at \$4,410,932 that's 30 another 32% of our funding. We are going to have to use reserves. Our reserves for those that don't know they're basically like a savings account and it's actually for these particular reasons for things that we don't foresee. We're going to have to tap into reserves, we're going to have to tap into our unappropriated fund balance. And we're actually really looking forward to receiving the payment in lieu of taxes, which is the Arkwright wind turbine of \$142,000 so we're factoring all these numbers in. On the expenditure side. Our total proposed budget as of right now is \$12,872,494 and this includes the cost drivers majorly are the health insurance increases salary increases contractual obligations, just like anything. You know, the electric goes up the water goes up, things like that. And one thing that we weren't anticipating is health insurance. So, because of this crazy COVID Pandemic we're assuming that people might lose their jobs. So if people lose their jobs we might have an increase in Health insurance because let's say my spouse loses his job. I am going to have to pick up health insurance, and I'm going to have to put him on a family plan. So that's just an example. So we do see an increase in health insurance rising possibly The next steps we're going to review the executive budget after we receive the numbers from the first measurement period, which I'm hoping is on Monday. We're going to finalize reductions in personnel, if needed, and we're going to accept our proposed budget amount tonight. A few takeaways that I want to talk about as we prepare our budget for the coming year. There's no certainty as to how much aid, we're ultimately going to receive. And, um, what's really scary is potential mid-year reductions and state aid present difficult challenges. It's inevitable. But we will need to tap into our reserves and our fund balance, but this is exactly why we built them over the years. This is exactly why we put them there. we put them there. For these types of situations, we build up reserves and fund, fund balances just for these types of circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic will have fiscal impacts on the upcoming fiscal year as well as future years. Also the financial outlook for the public education is changing rapidly and we will adjust as more data becomes available. So, you know, I think that I'm like I said, we're going to have to tap into reserves and fund balance. But that's exactly why we build these types of things. And I think we're going to be fine. I have the administrative team working very close on you know ways we can reduce things and things like that. So I think we're at this point, we're in a good position, but we just need to keep you know tracking forward and look at ways where we can save and things like that. So I want to thank everybody for, you know, working on that. And we'll do what we can.

Renee Garrett: So as Jen, said the proposed budget that we're asking you to consider approving tonight just the dollar amount only is up to \$12,872,494. That's based on the information that we know today. If we do have a cut in stimulus funding, if we do have a cut in aid based on the fact that we don't receive stimulus funding, then we may have to go back to the drawing board and have more cuts. We are thankful that the board has sent out letters to the legislator lobbying for funding and really impressing upon them the fact that it's important that districts receive stimulus money from the federal government. So thank you for doing that.

Carol Woodward: I have a question. What percent, how much of our reserves are we using Jen, like what percent?

Renee Garrett: Well right now Carol, we're looking at over \$400,000 in reserves.

Carol Woodward: Does that leave us a little cushion?

Renee Garrett: In the wrong places. So we may have to realign our reserves at a future date.

Carol Woodward: Does anybody have any other questions? Are you all set Renee?

Renee Garrett: Yes.

Carol Woodward: Okay, we'll go on to the discussion items. Some, like I previously said Census Information going out in student packets. What does the rest of the board, think about doing something like that?

Amy Drozdziel: I think it's a good idea. Yeah, as much communication as we can have with the community is definitely good. As we proceed through all of this.

Carol Woodward: Yeah, I think basically what I would like to put in is how they contact you know how they get that contact information to do the census because they are three ways there's, you can do it online. You can do it. by phone. And then the other option. I think is people coming to your house. But I don't know how that's all going to work out with in this situation so and like I said, our Facebook post. Basically, I think we'll talk about the climate of our budget and give them some numbers. So they have a little bit of a heads up, and as much information. I did work on a letter and sent it to Renee, and Kristin to look at and we'll see how that goes. So that's all I have for that. Is there anything else?

Amy Drozdziel: I think people are really concerned about what they heard the governor say yesterday about his reimagining of education.

Carol Woodward: So I did hear a comment from someone today that they said he doesn't you know, he's thinking that all this schooling that's the way the way we're doing it now digitally is the answer and I had a person comment that they don't realize that that face to face with the kids is paramount. You know, so that might be something that we think about sometime you know. The interaction that our kids have and the whole social aspect of it. So that was the one person that wasn't real thrilled about thoughts on that.

Dave Caccamise: There's still big inequality of services to these kids. Many kids don't have still Internet access and technology. So that's going to have to be all looked at and this is a new way of doing things for everybody. You know, but still I think it's just a band aid temporarily to fix what's going on, like you said, Carol. I don't think it's going to replace it, it can't replace you know human interaction hands on which

kids learn from like seeing and doing. So until we resolve the issue with technology and everyone's on the same level and which you're not right now. You know, as best as we're trying to make that happen. There's still kids we can't reach.

Carol Woodward: I heard him say that he's talked to people and some students are unreachable for one reason or another, and they're not getting any information.

Dave Caccamise: It's true.

Carol Woodward: It's because they don't want to, and parents aren't backing them on this. So that's a big problem. And I just think the whole social aspect of it is daunting you know the kids miss us, our school terribly. Anybody else? We will go on to our new business consent agenda.

Sylvester Cleary: Just a minute, Carol. I just want to make a comment. I, I think. we perhaps should draft a letter to the governor and basically, you know, with some of the same thoughts that we had, as we with the with the letters to our legislators, but in addition to that, to the governor, we, we should somehow get across to be very cautious of what he's trying to do. Moving forward with, you know with this new flow of developing you know, a lot of classes over the Internet and not having face to face communication with our kids. That's a, that's a dangerous situation. Somehow we need to get that point across to the governor.

Carol Woodward: Okay. do you want to get together and work on that?

Sylvester Cleary: Sure.

Carol Woodward: All right, I'll call you in the next couple days I'm working tomorrow. So how about if I give you a call next Monday. Maybe we can start a draft okay and then be presented to the board. And if anybody else has any ideas certainly chime in. You know what we want to say that is really helpful.

Amy Drozdziel: I have one more question. I'm wondering if there's a way that we could solicit some concerns from the community like as we're discussing right now what our concerns are. From what we heard the governor, say, should we, I know that's kind of delicate and we don't you know, we don't want to open up a can of worms, as far as getting the community in an uproar. But can we somehow do that so that we can get ideas from them, or get concerns from them that we can also include in this letter. And just try to maybe somehow ease their minds.

Sylvester Cleary: That's a great idea, Amy, you know, that's a great idea. Speaking of can of worms on this issue we do want to open up a can of worms.

Amy Drozdziel: Well, yeah, that's true.

Sylvester Cleary: Yes. I mean, that's a great idea because we want our parents to stand up to this and if no one's doing it the governor will push it through. I've heard from a number of people who really objected to even the thought of that.

Carol Woodward: How do you think that would look. Amy, do you think we would want, we would want to do with this a Facebook post or just a letter to the community. What do you think?

Amy Drozdziel: Well I if you do it on a Facebook post, you're certainly going to get a lot of thoughts, um, I don't know, I guess. I don't know the best way to go about that right now. I mean, Facebook is quick and kind of easy. We could as you suggest, information going home to students in their meals with about the census. But I don't think everyone's getting meals. So that's not going to reach everyone. Facebook is not

going to reach everyone either. I guess there's no perfect way to do it, but we could do it a number of ways.

Carol Woodward: Yeah, well, maybe keeping that in mind when Syl and I get together to write that letter. It could be same format going out to our school community, you know, or even tweak it a little bit and have one for the school community and one going to the governor. So that might be a thought, you know.

Amy Drozdziel: I think it's just really important that we share with the community that we are all just as concerned as they are, and we're doing whatever we can to advocate for our students. That we want their help.

Carol Woodward: Renee do you have any ideas of how to get that out there.

Renee Garrett: I think if you put together a message for Facebook. We can have them email you directly Carol and you can share those emails with the board and Syl as you design a letter for the governor. So I think let's just stick with Facebook for right now. I know people are going to be reading the transcription from this board meeting and hearing what you're saying. I'm sure more board members are going to get contacted as a result of that. So any board members that get information from community members on this topic can send them to Carol or Syl or both. That should work.

Carol Woodward: Yeah, good ideas. I think like Syl said that it's really important that we get the word out again. When we did our letter to our Congressman Reed it did make the Observer. So, you know, that was that was helpful. People know that we're concerned. Any other thoughts from anybody? Okay, now we will go on to recommendation from the superintendent to approve agenda items A through D. Can I have a motion on that?

Sylvester Cleary: Sub moved

Carol Woodward: Second?

Mike LoManto: I'll second, Mike.

Carol Woodward: Hi Mike.

Mike LoManto: Hi.

Carol Woodward: All in favor.

Dave Caccamise: Aye

Mike LoManto: Aye

Amy Drozdziel: Aye

Merv Fry: Aye

Sylvester Clearly: Aye

Carol Woodward: Any opposed? The motion is carried. Now we will go down to additional items. Recommendation upon of the superintendent to approve the following motion. Notice of annual meeting and election of Forestville School District. Can I have a motion for that?

Amy Drozdziel: Amy, I'll move. Thank you.

Merv Fry: Merv, second.

Carol Woodward: Thank you Merv. All in favor.

Dave Caccamise: Aye

Mike LoManto: Aye

Amy Drozdziel: Aye

Merv Fry: Aye

Sylvester Clearly: Aye

Carol Woodward: Motion is carried. Wow. Um, unless anybody else has anything to say. We'll move for adjournment.

Dave Caccamise: I have something I just I wanted, I meant to say it during the time that Dan was speaking. I was going to ask Dan to elaborate more on graduation, how it's going to look and to discuss the plans. What are the options? Student feedback? Teacher feedback? What's graduation in your mind? What do you think it's going to look like?

Dan Grande Well, at this point, we really don't know exactly what it's going to look like. We are looking at a number of options. As you can imagine, there's a lot of companies out there that are trying to capitalize with us. So there's a lot of businesses out there that want to promote virtual graduations, and they'll set it up for a certain amount of money. We're looking at that we want to find out. No one will commit to how much money that would cost. We've heard ideas of drive-in graduations, we've heard virtual graduations, I think a lot is going to be determined by what the governor says in the next few weeks as far as social gatherings go. Some districts have been meeting with other principals in other regions. So we get together frequently, and we have about 25 or 30. The question you know that's most popular right now is the one that Dave just asked, what is everyone doing with graduation? Since there's so much unknown and uncertainty, moving forward, not a lot can be solidified. I would love to be able to say, hey, you know, we're going to have a graduation at the auditorium with just the students and we'll separate them and put them out in the audience, and we'll have videos. That that would be great. Um, however, I don't know if we can even do that. So we're going to be looking at a lot of our options. I have another email that will be going out to the seniors, Dave, you're probably aware, I've sent out a couple emails to seniors. There's going to be another email is going out to them and I'm going to try to solicit some input from the seniors. You know, we think that we know all the options that are out there, you know, we hear, probably the same stuff as them. But you know with the stuff that's out there, it might be nice to hear which way they're gravitating which way they would like which way will make that moment special for them. Obviously, just like the rest of you, we were all hopeful that we'd be back to school by now, and a little bit of our normalcy was restored. But we're not there. So right now we will do something for graduation. When I talked to the Val. and Sal. the other day I made it very clear that, you know, we're going to expect them to do their salutatorian address, their valedictorian address. There will be, you know, a speech from the principal the superintendent anyone that we've typically had in the past, but what that looks like. I don't know. We're hoping to get a little bit more aggressive with that as soon as we get some other things figured out and moving forward, as I mentioned, tomorrow, I've got a faculty meeting. And there's a whole list of things that we've got to talk about that they need to work on in the next week or two. Fortunately, and I said this to Renee, we had a meeting just before we had the board meeting, fortunately, we still do have several weeks before our scheduled graduation would have been held.

Again, I don't know exactly what we're going to do. There's some districts out there that are hoping that August 17. I don't know why they picked that out but August 17 that they'd be able to do an outdoor graduation. Some districts are talking about a Labor Day graduation. Some districts are talking about and don't fall off your seats, laughing, but a black Friday graduation. One of the things that Renee, and I talked about in the beginning before we started talking about virtual graduations, and all of these other ideas that are floating. You know, we've got a small district. We don't even know if we're going to be open in the spring or in the fall. We're hoping that will be open. We don't know what education is going to look like moving forward. If we feel that the kids have been cheated out of a formal graduation. We always have the ability to have the kids come back like next year graduation I said to Renee, we've got such small classes, why couldn't we. If we can't give them something that we feel is special enough that they will be able to remember for years. Why couldn't we have next year's graduation be two classes up on the stage graduation class of 2020 and graduation class of 2021 so they have that formal opportunity to walk across the stage and shake hands, but it's all ideas, Dave, and the rest of the board. It's all ideas that we're throwing out there. I'm glad that you asked, Dave, kind of texted me during the meeting. So I knew that he was going to ask that question and I'm glad that he did because I want you all to know that, you know, behind the scenes. Renee, and I and the counselors and other people are hot on this topic. This is something that we were going to have answers to soon. But I think if we decide too soon. What we're going to do. We may limit ourselves. So if we're able to just give ourselves a little bit more time, the governor opens up, you know, different avenues and businesses and the social distancing we might find that two weeks down the road. There's another idea out there that will be even more special than some of the ideas that were thinking we could do right now. So I am the type of person, I listen to everyone so as board members over the next few days the next couple of weeks, feel free. Feel free to pick up your phone, feel free to email me with suggestions that you have. you know, like Amy said you know, talking to parents and you as you're out there, pounding the pavement and somebody has different ideas or whatever. No idea is crazy at this point. We don't know exactly what anything is going to look like a week or two weeks from now. So we're just kind of filtering through all the information we have. We're going to do our best I've said to the box. And I said to the Smiths. This week when I talked to him. I go, whatever we do you can be guaranteed that it's going to be special. And it's going to be something that will mark this year for these kids as an outstanding year not a negative year that ended on a sour note. a negative year that ended on a sour note. I feel especially bad for the seniors. You know, they work 13 years to get to this point where the last two and a half months is the best time of their life. Up to this point. They've got class night. They've got their trip. They've got a prom. They've got all these activities that will culminate into a commencement ceremony in June and then that will be the pinnacle. COVID-19 has stripped these kids have a lot of the things that other kids have fond memories about. So I'm glad you asked the question, Dave.

Dave Caccamise: I'm glad that you know yeah and I keep our options open. I think that's very good. I think that's a wise thing to do. I think, to keep it as real as possible. Absolutely. So that's important too. I think you'd mentioned crossing stage, whether it's a handshake or an air hug. At this point, I don't know, but I think to keep it to keep it real you know as possible is important too. So it was a date of the 27th. Is that still graduation until the governor says otherwise?

Dan Grande: Or is this is this that's a date on our calendar. Just a number That is, at this point, just like every other date in the calendar. We've cancelled everything at this point that is no different than any other date. But the nice thing about that as we have it on the calendar if we can figure out something before then, or things start to alleviate a little bit before then, we can still hold to that date and make sure that it is special. When I said to Renee before the meeting. I talked briefly about the emails that I was receiving from those companies that do the virtual stuff. Before we'd spend a penny. I am going to meet

with Mike Murphy and I want to learn more about what they're offering. I'm going to meet with Mike Murphy and say this is what they're offering. How much of this can we do on our own. You know, let's use our own resources and get this thing done. And again, my hope is, you know that in the next few weeks, or whatever, as businesses slowly start to open and regions start to open and more options are out there. I'm hopeful that before the end of the summer, there's something that we could really do to mark this important time for the kids. So we're going to continue to work on it.

Dave Caccamise: Okay, Thanks for your input, Dan. Appreciate it.

Carol Woodward: Anything else before we adjourn. Okay, can I have a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Dave Caccamise: sub moved

Carol Woodward: Okay. Second?

Merv Fry: Second.

Carol Woodward: Okay. All in favor.

Dave Caccamise: Aye

Mike LoManto: Aye

Amy Drozdziel: Aye

Mervin Fry: Aye

Sylvester Clearly: Aye

Carol Woodward: Any opposed? The motion is carried.