

**Forestville Board of Education Budget Hearing
May 28, 2020 4:00PM-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.

Michelle Merritt: Motion

Carol Woodward: Okay, second?

Dave Caccamise: Second

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

Dave Caccamise: Aye

Michelle Merritt: Aye

Michael LoManto: Aye

Mervin Fry: Aye

Sylvester Clearly: Aye

Carol Woodward: Okay, Mrs. Garrett and Mrs. Fitzgerald, would you like to please present our proposed budget for the 2022 2021 year.

Renee Garrett: Thank you, Carol. I would like to turn it over to Jennifer Fitzgerald our District Treasurer.

Kristin Irwin: If you could wait one second. I am going let Amy in the meeting.

Kristin Irwin: Amy is now joining the meeting. So, one second.

Kristin Irwin: All right, Amy is now in. Jen if you want to go ahead.

Kristin Irwin: Hi. We are going to start the presentation, now, Amy.

Renee Garrett: You're on mute. Can you start again.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Sorry about that.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Okay, everyone thank you for attending the budget hearing. There are a few things I am going to talk about. I am going to talk about the expenditure budget, proposed total

budget, total budget cuts. I am going to talk about the revenue budget, which includes the tax levy. I am going to go over the reserves and then I'm going to look at some other items and the next steps.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: So first I am going to talk about the capital expenditure every year we go out for a proposed budget of \$100,000 for a capital project.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Which we get aide on at approximately 71% by the state and the other thing that we are going to be doing is we are going to be doing maintenance projects and in house renovations.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: This budget has actually been cut drastically. So, we will continue to do projects that are for safety reasons, and that are safety related.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Here's our budget summary. A few things I'd like to point out here.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: We have an overall decrease of two point 2.14% that includes a lot of different things. And I am going to be looking at in our next slides.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: So we are eliminating a teacher position, one elementary teacher.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Three middle school/high school teachers who retired or left the district that we are not. We are eliminating one late bus run, we are eliminating driver's education, we are eliminating a part time mechanic. We are reducing our cafeteria budget. We are also reducing the business office budget.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Tax services will be handled through Forestville and we are eliminating summer curricular work. We are also reducing our technology budget and our building and grounds budget. We are also reducing supplies and material anywhere that we can. We are also reducing professional development.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: We're adjusting our bus purchase plan. Last year, we're actually on a plan a 5-year plan. We were going to purchase two buses. This year, because of the pandemic. We are not going too.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: We're going to be eliminating all summer workers so that we're reducing basically everywhere that we absolutely can.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: The next thing is the tax capital calculation; we're proposing that we increase the tax levy by \$68,173 which equates to 1.72%

Jennifer Fitzgerald: It's based off the calculation given to us by the state. And we are preparing it assuming that we are going to increase the tax levy to the calculated limit, like we've done in the past.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: A state aid update our first measurement period was supposed to actually come out on April 30 now the executive budget reductions in aid are expected probably in mid-June. So there's a lot of unknowns at this time.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Current projected aid is a decrease of over \$300,000.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: So reserves, I would like to talk about the use of reserves and the amount available in each one as well as the regulations on use.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: So the first one I'm going to talk about is the unemployment insurance reserve.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: This reserve fund is used to pay the cost of reimburse to the state unemployment insurance fund for payments made to claimants, in other words, when people are laid off.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: They are eligible for unemployment. The district has to share in the cost of unemployment, this reserve is one way for us to plan for the unexpected.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: As of June 30, we have \$35,801.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: The next reserve is the retirement contribution reserve. This reserve is used for purpose of financing retirement contributions.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: As of June 30, we have \$326,472.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: The Property loss and liability reserve; this reserve is used to pay property loss and liability incurred just answered stated.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: As of June 30, we have \$44,191.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Next is the insurance reserve, this reserve is used to pay my ability casualty and other losses incurred through the district.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: As of June 30, we're looking at \$50,699. Employee Benefit accrued liability reserve; this reserve is used to establish for payments have accrued employee benefits due to an employee.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Upon conclusion of their service to the district. This is our contractual obligations for sick time payout. So we had three people leave the district. And this is where we will be pulling those funds.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: As of June 30, we had \$180,406

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Our next reserve as a capital reserve for capital, capital improvements this reserve is established through voter authorization is a term for 10 years and it shall not exceed \$4 million

Jennifer Fitzgerald: The audit balance as of June 30, was \$590,536

Jennifer Fitzgerald: The last reserve, is the Teacher Retirement System reserve. This is actually new this year. This year it was newly created by the Office of the State Comptroller.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: They wanted everyone to create this reserve. It is a max up to 2% of the total compensated compensation and salaries during the immediate preceding fiscal year.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: The audited balance as well. Technically, there wasn't an alternative balance but when we created this reserve it was \$6,040.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: So here is an actual overview of all the reserves and what we intend to use next year. And it is a total of \$1,239,145

Jennifer Fitzgerald: The revenue summary. As you can see we have a reduction in state aid and we actually have put in the pilot program which is payment in lieu of taxes, which is the Arkwright windmills that they have been put in place and we're looking at using appropriate fund balance of \$842,908 and the reserves of \$250,000 to balance the budget. So, the overall budget that we are looking at is \$12,872,494 that is a decrease from last year of \$281,190.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: So what I'm proposing with the school lunch fund is we're going to do several things that we continue to do. We're going to continue to address the fund balance deficit.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: We're going to work on participation. We're going to continually seeking out ways to improve participation.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: We do a lot of surveys throughout the year. And what kids like and what they don't like. We're going to continue to monitor the monthly reports.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: We're proposing. We are also going to improve food quality as much as possible. We are also going to be using the Farm to School grant to offset some costs and bring in some fresh vegetables and fruits. We are also trying to achieve the 30% initiative, which could save us money as well. My proposal for next year is to consider an increase on meal prices.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: The proposal will be 10 cent increase to account for the increase in cost of living food cost increases in labor increases.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Our next steps, we have an absentee ballot vote on June 9th. All ballots have to be received by five o'clock in properly signed and filled out. So that vote will be a budget vote and the board members, which is Dave Caccamise and Amy Drozdziel.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Any questions?

Carol Woodward: I have one on the unemployment.

Carol Woodward: So, it's gone up for us. And if we lay off more people, it will go up again. Correct.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Yes, absolutely.

Carol Woodward: You anticipate that to be a problem or no.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Well, Carol. Honestly, it all depends on what the final budget cuts come out at.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: It depends on what the cut are going to be during the measurement periods.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: And, you know, if we have to do further cuts.

Carol Woodward: Yeah.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: You know these reserves are for these types of situations.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Hopefully we won't have to use them.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: But if we have to. This is where, you know, we would have to pull from.

Carol Woodward: So do you anticipate that we should take from any of these reserves that you mentioned.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Taking yes. Yes we are looking at using them. Let me get to that slide.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: \$250,000 in reserves.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Okay. And let me show you where.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: So where we are thinking about is the retirement contribution pulling out 200,000 if needed.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Unemployment reserve of 26,000 that covers our three employees that retired or left. I'm sorry, the retirement contribution is the money that will cover the three employees that retired and we're looking at pulling about 64,000 from the Employee Benefit accrued liability reserve, we had to do that in order to balance our budget.

Carol Woodward: So, our Board of Education amount that we, you know, we talked about not attending conferences or limiting the numbers. Is there any way we can get those costs down. Prior to this, or no.

Renee Garrett: Carol. That's a good idea. What we can do is we can give you a three or five year look back on how much we have spent on conferences for board members.

Renee Garrett: And then you can decide as a board what level of spending you're most comfortable with. I know that Jen is working on cutting professional development across the district by doing things like; minimizing the number of staff members attending more local conferences attending more both these conferences, rather than outside conferences, so we can generate BOCES aid.

Renee Garrett: So, looking at the board member line item for professional development is something that Jen can provide you with reports on and you can make those decisions coming into the new year.

Carol Woodward: Okay, just trying to figure a way to cut some more costs if we could you know.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Carol, we're looking everywhere; like we've talked about, Dave brought up the plow contract. Um, there's several things we're looking at every single line to be honest and we're reducing it.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Every single place that we can, I went through the budget line by line.

Dave Caccamise: Jen, whose contract?

Renee Garrett: Dave, You had mentioned the contract.

Dave Caccamise: I'm sorry, I didn't hear that word.

Dave Caccamise: Yes, that's right.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Yeah. And we've actually even talked to facilities about that and how we would accomplish that. And I talked to our current plow contract, he's willing to reduce that if necessary, because we do have costs that we would have to incur if we did bring it back to the district. We would have to buy a plow. You know, there's certain things that are going to cost us. So we need to look at every different option.

Dave Caccamise: Snow removal is a funny thing. It's a crapshoot. You just never know what you're going to get. I mean, we're paying out about \$17-\$18,000.

Dave Caccamise: We had a mild winter. This time next year can be a harsh winter. You just don't know. I don't know if there's an easy answer. I don't know if it's a per diem thing we can

look at. We certainly want the person whoever's doing the snow plowing there. We need that person.

Dave Caccamise: You just don't know what you're gonna get with the weather patterns. So I don't know, something we will need to look at

Dave Caccamise: If you don't care. I'll get back to the number of conferences, you know, it's all turnkey concept usually send one person or two and then report back to the entire board.

Dave Caccamise: We send everybody usually and or majority, should I say and you know which is which is nice as a learning tool. But like you said, when you're looking for costs that might be one of them.

Carol Woodward: Yeah, and I know in the past we have thought, we've been thinking about we limit the amount of people, especially if it's like New York City, it's expensive.

Dave Caccamise: Definitely.

Carol Woodward: Getting back to that plow contract if a plow would be \$5,000 and we're paying \$17,000.

Carol Woodward: I don't know, I mean.

Dave Caccamise: You'd have to pay one of our custodial staff to come in at four in the morning, maybe even I mean that's, yeah, look at because we're going to tack on extra time for them which great there are our own, but, um, we got to see, you know, the costs.

Dave Caccamise: Would that would that entail over time. I mean, or

Dave Caccamise: How would you keep that within the 40 hours right?

Renee Garrett: It could entail overtime. It could also entail changing hours so less staff on duty during the day.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Right. We also when we talked to Jim Knoop he mentioned that we would we would if we did that, we would need possibly better equipment for the sidewalks. So it's, you know, weighing what works best.

Carol Woodward: Right, yeah.

Renee Garrett: Because you would only have two people to do the hand removal and the sidewalk removal instead of the three that we have now.

Dave Caccamise: I wonder if we can do like a per diem. Per diem for plowing because every day. You don't need to have the parking lots plowed. A lot of times, you just need to have the guys shovel and salt. The entrances and the sidewalks. It's not a full blown plowed but I mean you just never know.

Dave Caccamise: Per diem thing we can get sacked with the winner. We're doing it every day. Yeah, I don't know. It's not an easy answer.

Carol Woodward: Right. Yeah, I don't think there is an easy answer. But, you know, and then you really wouldn't you know you're investing some money. If you are buying equipment.

Carol Woodward: I think if you are flexing your hours, say if he has to come in and for then you can leave it.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Yeah, and we're looking at all different options.

Dave Caccamise: Would the equipment be off a state bid Jen?

Jennifer Fitzgerald: I am looking into that. Yes.

Dave Caccamise: Is some money aidable?

Carol Woodward: Mm hmm. Yeah.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: And some of it might even be a double dib but it depends on are usage and on the bus garage only or using it on all your parking lots. So we have to be real careful on which way we go

Renee Garrett: Yeah, the bus. The bus loops and the bus garage parking lot, would be aidable through transportation, the rest would not

Carol Woodward: Is that what we're paying now aidable at all.

Renee Garrett: Yes, same exact concept.

Carol Woodward: Wow. Yeah.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Any other questions budget wise?

Dave Caccamise: Hey Jen, can you go to the the page where we're laying off people.

Dave Caccamise: So is this an estimate because we're waiting for percentage to come in from the governor?

Jennifer Fitzgerald: This is actually what we are planning for right so if the governor comes back and says, well, now we're going to cut another 30% I've heard a lot of talks of 20%; 20% to us is over \$1.5 million

Jennifer Fitzgerald: If that happens, then we will be reevaluating everything all over again. So, these are before that happens.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: This is to account for the cuts that he's already given us.

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Then we're going to look at if he cuts more. Okay. Where can we cut further that will look like. Now there's only one board member going to a conference, you know, things like those, then we'll cut deep

Dave Caccamise: When you say reduce business office budget was that entail?

Jennifer Fitzgerald: Renee, do you want to take that one?

Renee Garrett: We explained this at the last board meeting, Dave.

Renee Garrett: Jennifer has three business office staff members and we would be looking at reducing one.

Dave Caccamise: One with the least seniority or how's that work?

Renee Garrett: We haven't decided yet.

Carol Woodward: And how can we propose to reduce the cafeteria budget.

Renee Garrett: If you remember, at the last meeting. We talked about stopping our share with Pine Valley using an internal person and saving money on salary that way.

Dave Caccamise: Any layoffs are drastic, but this is not as drastic as you seem like a lot of schools are doing right now.

Renee Garrett: Well, it's because we had some retirements and people leave the district and we're not replacing so those are not layoffs.

Renee Garrett: And we are bringing back a special education classroom; in house. So that's saving us money and we're reassigning the teacher position that's being eliminated in the elementary level.

Renee Garrett: And then even the business office position may be reassigned. If a retirement comes in. So that may be our only layoff.

Renee Garrett: Even our part time mechanic is going to be picking up more hours in the bus run. The least senior member there would be affected, possibly, but we do need subs too.

Carol Woodward: I know it's a tough thing. I think you've done a good job with doing what you did.

Renee Garrett: That would be the whole team; absolutely team effort. Every director, every supervisor, both of our principals put a lot of thinking behind this and tried to keep the cuts as

far away from kids as possible when these cuts will still have an impact on students and instruction.

Sylvester Cleary: It sounds like you're looking at every avenue to decrease the budget and that's exactly what we should be doing.

Sylvester Cleary: You know and I once again think the team is doing a remarkable job and doing that and keeping as many employees on the job as possible and still providing for our students. So, you know, once again, kudos to the team.

Carol Woodward: Does anybody else have any comments or questions?

Michelle Merritt: I have one question about the cafeteria budget, with so many people impacted financially right now. Do we think that we meet that like the threshold towards maybe all of our students getting the free to reduced free lunch like some of the other districts that are neighboring us?

Renee Garrett: In order to qualify for Community Eligibility program, we would have to crest a certain number and we can't take that snapshot until June.

Renee Garrett: And now that's being affected by the fact that we're providing lunches for everyone and breakfast for anyone that wants it.

Renee Garrett: So we really have to be in touch with the State Education Department and School Nutrition to find out if we're eligible, because the game has changed, the rules have changed, our measurement has changed because we're in a different model right now so we don't know the answer to that yet. But if we can without it hurting us financially, we absolutely. Well, it's something we take a look at every year.

Carol Woodward: Anyone else have any thoughts or questions?

Carol Woodward: May I have a motion to close the budget meeting?

Slyvester Cleary: Sub move

Carol Woodward: Okay.

Dave Caccamise: Second.

Carol Woodward: Okay, all in favor?

Dave Caccamise: Aye

Michelle Merritt: Aye

Michael LoManto: Aye

Mervin Fry: Aye

Sylvester Clearly: Aye

Amy Drozdziel: Aye

Michael LoManto: Aye

Carol Woodward: Are there any opposed?

Carol Woodward: And the motion is carried at 430PM.