

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
SOUTH BURLINGTON SCHOOL BOARD
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020
Executive Session at 6:30 P.M.
Special Session at 7:00 P.M.
Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School Library
500 Dorset Street**

PRESENT

Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Bridget Burkhardt, Martin LaLonde, Alex McHenry, Brian Minier
(via phone)

AMINISTRATION/STAFF

David Young, Gary Marckres

GUESTS

Attorney Joseph McNeil

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

There were none.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Elizabeth Fitzgerald made a motion to enter executive session at 6:31 p.m. to discuss labor negotiations with teachers and added that it would be significantly disadvantageous to the district not to do so in executive session. Martin LaLonde seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed. Elizabeth Fitzgerald requested that David Young and Attorney Joseph McNeil attend executive session.

Labor Negotiations with Teachers

In: 6:31 p.m.

Out: 6:55 p.m.

No Action

The executive session was closed at 6:55 p.m.

PRESENT

Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Bridget Burkhardt, Martin LaLonde, Alex McHenry, Brian Minier
(via phone)

AMINISTRATION/STAFF

David Young, Delina Gilroy, Gary Marckres, Amadee Denton, Steve Walker, Andrew Pearson

GUESTS

Attorney Joseph McNeil and approximately 7 guests.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald said the board has community members connected via Zoom as well as members in the audience.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

There were none.

CONSIDER SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET FOR FY 2021

School board members have received a number of emails from concerned citizens about the timing of the budget revote which is currently scheduled for April 2. We understand that this is creating a dilemma based on the fact that schools will officially be closing on Wednesday, March 18 until at least April 6 and that the public meeting associated with the budget would occur within the period of closure for the schools.

We asked legal counsel to approach the Secretary of State and we have asked the superintendent to look at the 30-day revote period that is associated with the South Burlington Charter.

Attorney Joseph McNeil provided the following regarding the FY 2021 budget and special meeting approval.

Attorney Joseph McNeil said he was asked by the board and administration to determine if there was any flexibility that the board could exercise with regards to holding a revote on the budget. The ultimate answer is that under these circumstances, there is the flexibility available to the board to consider a later date outside the closure period. The basis for this is really one word in the Charter, the word "may." From our standpoint as attorneys, in Section 1304 of the City Charter it talks about if a budget of the city or school district is not approved by the voters at an annual meeting, the city council and the school board may submit a budget with or without change at a special meeting to be held within 30 days. It goes on to say in subsection (c) that if the budget is not approved at the annual meeting and is not approved thereafter, the school board has the authority to "diligently pursue" a vote at a later time. So, with the word "may," if you elect not to hold the meeting on April 2 because of the closure situation with the coronavirus, we would suggest you do have that authority so long as you diligently work to hold a vote thereafter before the fiscal year is over and you might want to structure it so that you have more than one opportunity to vote. Because this is a matter of interpretation, we asked to visit with the Secretary of State's office today and the Secretary of State's office concurs with this flexibility under the current circumstances. So, under these unique and difficult circumstances, we feel the board does have this flexibility.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald said that there are some ramifications of not having an approved budget, one of which is the delay, previously requested by the superintendent from the South Burlington Educators Association (SBEA), regarding reduction in force notification to our teaching staff. The superintendent and the union originally agreed to a 30-day extension of the deadline in the Master Agreement. Mr. Young announced that the union has agreed to an additional 30-day extension. The dates are now May 2 for notification to the SBEA and May 15 for notification to the individual teacher. The board and the administration thanked the union for this extension.

David Young recommended that the Board accept the recommendation as presented by

Attorney Joseph McNeil.

Martin LaLonde noted that Donna Kinville has also reached out to the Secretary of State's office about her concerns for the safety and well-being of her staff and the community as they relate to the closure guidelines from the Governor. Martin LaLonde said this additional time would give her office an opportunity to figure out alternatives before the next vote.

The board said that early-May would be the target for a new budget vote. Several questions came to the board via Zoom regarding teacher negotiations, healthcare costs and the proposed new timeline for the budget vote.

David Young said that with everything going on in the schools, he and the administration have not had an opportunity to work on additional budget reduction since the last meeting. He said the budget he presented at the previous meeting was a 9.83% tax rate increase. The administrative team has not had the opportunity to do a deeper dive into the budget but he would suggest that the administration look at transportation, athletics and activities, literacy and mathematics support, alumni and development, and mentoring all of which are not required programs/items.

Martin LaLonde would like to see what a cut in FTE's would look like.

Annie Leupp spoke about the high budget increase in South Burlington as compared to surrounding communities.

Margo Rodgers asked what the administration and board has done to review and consider the recommendations of the community?

Gerry Silverstein asked what the base contractual obligations are with the SBEA? He said that within the current contract there are vertical and horizontal steps which make up the salary components. What percentage of the increase is due to these vertical and horizontal steps? Elizabeth Fitzgerald said it depends on the cohort of the group but the automatic step component is approximately 1½ percent.

John Sterns said our teachers should be happy they have a job and we need to be prepared for what might happen to South Burlington given the state of the economy because of the Covid-19.

Margo Rodgers said the district needs to tighten its belt and find creative solutions to the budget issues.

The board believes the vote rescheduling will allow for the closure and curtailment time to pass and provide additional time for discussion with administration, board, and community on the budget.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald called for a motion to delay submitting the budget to the voters during this period of closure and curtailment ordered by the Governor and the Health Commissioner. Martin LaLonde made a motion to delay submitting the budget to the voters and Alex McHenry seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed.

SPECIAL MEETING WARNING

No action was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

Martin LaLonde made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Alex McHenry seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All were in favor. The motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Chair

Bridget Burkhardt, Clerk