



bh communitywatch <bhcommunitywatch1@gmail.com>

Fwd: Tentative Budget Information - 2023-24

1 message

Sai Bhargavi Akiri [REDACTED]
To: bh communitywatch <bhcommunitywatch1@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 11, 2023 at 10:07 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Sai Bhargavi Akiri <saibhargaviakiri@gmail.com>
Date: April 10, 2023 at 6:45:37 PM EDT
To: Julie Kot <jkot@bhpsnj.org>, "Dr. Melissa Varley" <mvarley@bhpsnj.org>, Angela Penna <apenna@bhpsnj.org>, Joy Young <jyoung@bhpsnj.org>, Gale Bradford <gbradford@bhpsnj.org>, Robert Cianciulli <rcianciulli@bhpsnj.org>, Jordan Hyman <jhyman@bhpsnj.org>, Pamela Stanley <pstanley@bhpsnj.org>, BOE Dipti Khanna <dkhanna@bhpsnj.org>, BOE Foregger <tforegger@bhpsnj.org>
Cc: "Palmieri, Daryl" <daryl.palmieri@doe.nj.gov>, David Greer <dgreer@bhpsnj.org>, Marybeth Kopacz <mkopacz@bhpsnj.org>
Subject: Fwd: Tentative Budget Information - 2023-24

Dear Julie and Board members.

Hope everyone had a relaxing spring break.

I did a quick search of the district website for the 2023-24 complete budget information. Unfortunately, even after a public commitment made by the business administrator to upload the complete budget on March 13th, it's still missing. <https://youtu.be/WXaid6sdR-k?t=8752> Timestamp **2:55:57**.

According to our **district policy 6220** "A proposed budget requires the critical analysis of every member of the Board during its preparation. The administration shall work with the Board to ensure Board members have a thorough understanding of the budget appropriations, budget revenue, the proposed educational program and the budget's impact to the local tax levy. **The Board shall also provide for community input during the budget development process.** Once the budget is adopted by the Board and approved by the Executive County Superintendent, the Board members shall inform the community on the details of the budget."

"The Board, upon submission of its budget application to the Executive County Superintendent or by the statutory submission date, whichever is earlier, **shall make available upon request for public inspection all budget and supporting documentation contained in the budget application and all other documents listed in N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-8.1** once the budget application has been submitted to the Executive County Superintendent for approval."

Link to district policy https://boardpolicyonline.com/?b=berkeley_nj&s=112818

So, can you please advise:

1. How did the board seek community input during the budget development process?
2. When will the supporting documentation for the current budget be made available to the public?

@Angela Penna – As the board president, are you comfortable with not following the district policy 6220 on budget preparation?

@Joy Young - As the finance committee chair, can you please advise how and when will the resident's questions on the tentative budget be answered?

This is the second year in a row that the board has decided to act as if the school budget is a state secret that cannot be shared with tax paying residents. The whole budget development process is shrouded in such secrecy even after multiple requests for a more transparent process.

Based on experience, some questions are unanswered at the board meetings or via email. So, is this practice of no answers, zero communication on budget, and actual costs incurred by the district using public funds okay with you?

Residents asked specifically at the March 13th board meeting about the process for answering budget related questions. But there is none here in our district, I believe each one of you on the board along with the superintendent, and board secretary is responsible and accountable for managing public taxpayer funds. Therefore, providing answers to how some line items and services have been budgeted for is key.

Here are some of my questions:

1. Restructuring the administrative team: No clear picture of what this actually means based on the presentation and responses received on 3/13 and the vote to abolish supervisors defeated on 3/30/23.
2. Will there be another board meeting to explain the restructuring of the administrative team?
3. How much is budgeted for salaries for the superintendent and two assistant superintendents?
4. What's the budgeted amount for reimbursing travel expenses for administrative staff for 2023-24? (Superintendent, two assistant superintendents, superintendent's office, and business office staff)
5. What's the total number of students getting courtesy busing?
6. What's budgeted for courtesy busing in the 2023-24 budget?
7. Which schools do the majority of courtesy busing students go to?
8. How does voting on who gets the courtesy busing policy make this practice equitable?

Hoping to get answers to the questions above. Also, it would be great if the complete tentative budget along with the supporting information were uploaded to the district website ASAP.

Thank you,

Sai Bhargavi

Begin forwarded message:

From: Sai Bhargavi Akiri [REDACTED]
Date: March 20, 2023 at 2:37:34 PM EDT
To: Julie Kot <jkot@bhpsnj.org>, "Dr. Melissa Varley" <mvarley@bhpsnj.org>, Angela Penna <apenna@bhpsnj.org>, Joy Young <jyoung@bhpsnj.org>, Gale Bradford <gbradford@bhpsnj.org>, Pamela Stanley <pstanley@bhpsnj.org>, Jordan Hyman <jhyman@bhpsnj.org>, Robert Cianciulli <rcianciulli@bhpsnj.org>, BOE Dipti Khanna <dkhanna@bhpsnj.org>, BOE Foregger <tforegger@bhpsnj.org>
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Good afternoon, Julie

Happy spring!

I did a quick search on the district website for the complete tentative budget information for 2023-24 that was voted on at the last board meeting. It's still not available on the BHPS district website.

Unfortunately, at the last board meeting on March 13, 2023, there were no handouts of your budget presentation nor the complete budget information that board members were discussing made available to the public.

As many in attendance at the meeting complained, it was difficult to follow along with the board members' discussion on the **\$62,901,053 budget**.

In response to a resident question on when the complete budget will be available to the public, you responded depending on how the weather is the next day you would be happy to post the 105 pages <https://youtu.be/WXaid6sdR-k?t=8752> Timestamp **2:55:57**.

It's bright and sunny today and I am hoping the tentative budget has been submitted to the county superintendent by now. So, can you please upload the complete tentative budget to the district website?

@Board members - How was it ok for the board and administration not to provide any information on the tentative budget prior to the board meeting? There were NO printouts of the presentation Ms. Kot was giving,

the colors on the presentation made it really hard to see the numbers. Is this how you envision equitable access to the information within the community?

In the future, I would hope we have a budget presented at the board meeting in which there is a handout of the budget available at the meeting as it used to be done, and at which the presentation contains some comparative figures such as prior year values and does not merely recite the purpose of each line.

[@Joy Young](#) - I would hope you would fulfill your campaign promise of clear communication by ensuring the budget documents are available to the public.

[@Angela](#) - It's clear from your actions that the only minor change from last year's budget process was that board members received the budget information 72 hours earlier but you clearly did NOT fulfill the commitment to have a public finance committee meeting to review the budget before the vote. I am hoping as the board president you would at least ensure the complete budget information is made available on the district website ASAP.

Thank you,
Sai Bhargavi

 **Policy-6220.pdf**
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