



THE EWING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Immediate Release

The Ewing Public Schools Board of Education BOE Briefs: March 15th, 2021

The Ewing Township Board of Education held its monthly meeting on March 15th in the Fisher Middle School auditorium.

The public session of the Board of Education meeting was also live-streamed to the public beginning at 8:00PM. The livestream link was widely communicated to the community via Instant Alert, Twitter and posted on the district website.

Board President Lisa McConnell opened the Board of Education meeting at 7:00PM and the only action the Board took at that time was to move to a closed session where it reviewed a limited number of confidential items.

Superintendent Michael Nitti then shared a report from the Ewing High School student ambassadors updating the Board and the public on events and developments at Ewing High School.

Featured in the report:

March is dedicated to Women's History Month. Student Council has been running a weekly social media campaign in which students celebrate women in their lives and historical figures that inspire them. Two student organizations, the Film Club and For the Youth, By the Youth, will host a Women's History Month virtual movie on Friday, March 19th with the screening of *Hidden Figures* with a discussion after the film. The district website and Twitter feed features an overview of Black History Month events from around the district.

The week of March 22nd is Spring Spirit Week at Ewing High School which will kick-off the Battle of the Classes spirit competition. Theme days will include Superhero Day, Disney Day, Celebrity Day, Decades Day and Class Day. In lieu of a virtual pep rally, there will be after school activities throughout the week including video game tournaments, movie screenings, game shows and yoga.

Ewing High School Winter Sports update: Ewing High School Girls Basketball team wrapped up the season 13-0 with a come-from-behind win over Robbinsville in the CVC Pod A Semifinal. Even though the championship game had to be canceled due to health and safety protocols, they had a fantastic season. Boys Bowling finished the year with a 6-1 record, while Girls Bowling went 5-0! Unified Intramural Basketball kicks off on Tuesday, March 16th with games being hosted at Fisher Middle School every Tuesday and Thursday. Swimming and Wrestling seasons are getting into full swing and spring sports have begun to meet virtually with practices schedule to begin at the end of the month. A virtual Winter Athlete Parade celebrating the winter athletic teams will debut later this month.

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Other updates from Ewing High School included this year's play *Almost Maine* has been cast and is now in rehearsals. The show will be filmed and recorded in April. Student Council will launch a dedicated Instagram page dedicated to celebrating seniors' plans for after graduation after spring break. Lastly, the School Safety Team is currently administering a student questionnaire to collect feedback on students' experiences with virtual and hybrid learning.

Mr. Nitti was then joined by School Business Administrator Dennis Nettleton as they presented and detailed the school district's preliminary budget for the 2021-22 school year. Following is the Press Release on the preliminary budget, and the documents below can be found attached to this correspondence and/or on the district website:

- The Ewing Public Schools Preliminary Budget PowerPoint Presentation
- The Ewing Public Schools Budget "At a Glance"

Mr. Nitti shared that the final budget will not be approved by the Board until the April 26th meeting of the Board of Education, during which the mandated public hearing on the budget will take place.

Ewing Board of Education Reviews 2021-22 Preliminary Budget

On March 15th, at the regular Board of Education Meeting held in Fisher Middle School's auditorium, Superintendent Michael Nitti and School Business Administrator Dennis Nettleton presented on the 2021-22 Preliminary School Budget to the public. After the presentation, the preliminary budget was reviewed by the Board and approved, and then will be sent to the Mercer County Office of the Department of Education for their review and sanctioning.

The final step in the stipulated process is for the Board to approve the final budget on Monday, April 26th during the required public hearing, which will also be held at Fisher Middle School.

Their budget presentation is titled "***Staying Strong: Moving Forward,***" a reference to the district's theme of "*Ewing Strong; All in this Together*" as the school system navigates the multi-faceted challenges of the COVID public health crisis.

"As I guess everyone knows, this past year was incredibly difficult in pretty much every aspect of school operations," Superintendent Nitti stated. "From the health and safety issues, to the pivot to virtual learning, to operational and facility challenges, it has been daunting, but we really appreciate everyone in the Ewing School Community coming together to work hard on behalf of the students."

The district was not spared budgetary challenges either as the pandemic evolved. Late last spring, the district lost \$800K in anticipated revenue after the state cut aid, forcing the Board and administration to trim its already approved 20-21 budget.

"Fortunately, through prudent and strategic management, the school district was able to absorb that loss and not have it result in anyone losing their position with the district," Nitti remarked.

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Good news was received late last month, when the Ewing Schools actually received an increase in state aid for the 2021-22 budgetary year.

“We were obviously very worried about further state aid cuts as the pandemic continued,” Nitti commented. “So we were grateful and appreciative to actually receive an uptick in state aid. This will help us overcome the burden of unexpected costs on things like PPE, operational upgrades and other unanticipated COVID-related costs, as well as a loss of revenue in other areas.”

Nitti credited many community stakeholders for their work in securing the state aid increase.

“For many years, we have been united in Ewing in emphasizing that we were not being funded properly, so it is nice to finally actually receive an increase in aid, especially during this time of unexpected expenses. We are appreciative of everyone who has worked hard to point out some of the inequities of the state aid funding over the years,” Nitti added.

Programs maintained in the preliminary budget include full-day kindergarten, middle and high school athletics, gifted and honors education, K-12 music and art, and after-school activities and programs. The preliminary budget also supports a continued focus and training on students’ emotional and psychological health, an area of emphasis for the Board and administration.

Again, the school budget is not presented to voters, as the Board does not need to have budget referendums for spending plans that fall within the 2 percent tax cap.

Superintendent Nitti thanked Mr. Nettleton and the Board of Education for their work on the budget.

“Each year, the Board and the administration meet in a retreat to prioritize values and evaluate budgetary options” he stated. “Each Board member makes vital contributions to this process and Mr. Nettleton is very good at explaining variables and challenges.”

The preliminary budget reflects an approximate **3.89%** increase in the budget. Due to steady increases in tax rates over the last few years, the preliminary tax rate is estimated to be approximately **\$1.89**. This is only a **1.82%** increase in the tax rate year over year. With the average assessment for a household in Ewing also going up the impact to the average homeowner in town is an increase of approximately **\$5.62** per month for the 2021-22 School Year.

After final approval, the spending plan will go into effect on July 1, 2021.

All information pertaining to the 2021-22 budget can be found on our website www.ewing.k12.nj.us under the Board of Education tab.

For more information, please contact: Theresa Hullings (609) 538-9800x1102 or thullings@ewingboe.org

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The Board then moved into the “**Superintendent Recommendations**” section of the Agenda. Some items of note:

Finance and Operations

The Board of Education approved the Data & Electrical Upgrades throughout the District

The Board of Education approved the Maximum Travel amount for the 2021-22 School Year

The Board of Education approved the Maximum Public Relations and Professional Services Amounts for the 2021-22 School Year

Curriculum and Instruction

The Board of Education approved the 2021-22 School Year Calendar

As part of the development process, the calendar is reviewed by the Educational Leadership Team, union leadership, the Superintendent's Advisory Committee and various PTA/PTO and parent representatives.

Students will return to school on Wednesday, September 8, 2021 with teachers returning to the buildings for Staff Development Days on Wednesday and Thursday, September 1 & 2, 2021; Friday, September 3, 2021 will be building meetings and new student orientations. The District is closed Monday, September 6, 2021 for Labor Day and Tuesday, September 7, 2021 for the Jewish Holiday of Rosh Hashanah.

Winter break begins with an early dismissal day on Thursday, December 23, 2021.

Spring break is scheduled for Monday, April 11, 2022 through Friday, April 15, 2022.

The last full day of school will be Thursday, June 16, 2022.

School will be closed for students and staff on Friday, June 17, 2022 for the state holiday of Juneteenth.

The last three days of school will be single-session days on Monday, June 20, 2022, Tuesday, June 21, 2022 and Wednesday, June 22, 2022. The final day of school and Ewing High School graduation will take place Wednesday, June 22, 2022 at 4:00PM.

There are four (4) Staff Development days: Wednesday, September 1, 2021, Thursday, Thursday, September 2, 2021, Tuesday, November 2, 2021 and Tuesday, May 3, 2022.

There are three (3) emergency days for the closing of schools. Please note information on the calendar pertaining to the possibility of additional closing of school.

[The 2021-22 Ewing Public Schools District Calendar is attached to this correspondence.](#)

The Board accepted the District Student Safety Data System (SSDS) for 2020-21 Reporting Period 1 (September 2020-December 2020)

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The Student Safety Data System (SSDS) reports must be accepted by the Board of Education each year/twice a year.

This report covers the SSDS reporting period 1 (September 2020-December 2020). Reports are entered into the NJDOE Student Safety Data System (SSDS) data base which generates the reports.

The Board of Education approved a \$3,000 donation to Parkway Elementary School from the Adopt a Classroom.org and Coleman Subaru. The funds are provided for teachers to purchase classroom resources.

Personnel

Ewing Public Schools Welcomes New Teacher

Mary Sudol is joining Fisher Middle School as a Replacement Language Arts Teacher for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year. Ms. Sudol completed her student teaching at Fisher Middle School in the fall semester. Ms. Sudol graduated from Rider University with her Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts and is currently completing her Master's degree in Secondary Education.

The following policies and regulations were approved by the Board as “Second Readings” and are now formal Board policy:

Bylaw 0164.6	Remote Public Board Meeting During a Declared Emergency (Mandated) (New)
Policy 5330.05	Seizure Action Plan (Mandated) (New)
Regulation 5330.05	Seizure Action Plan (Mandated) (New)
Policy 7440	School District Security (Mandated) (Revised)
Regulation 7440	School District Security (Mandated) (Revised)
Policy 8420	Emergency and Crisis Situations (Mandated) (Revised)

The next meeting of the Board of Education will take place on Monday, April 26th, 2021 at 7:00PM in the Fisher Middle School auditorium.