

Pleasantville school board meeting continues Tuesday with layoff vote

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PLEASANTVILLE — The school board here will resume its meeting from last week with a vote on whether to cut at least 11 positions to balance its budget for next year.

During a lengthy meeting last week, the Board of Education approved an \$88.3 million budget for 2019-20 with a 2% increase in the school tax levy and the reduction of 11 positions. But the board did not take action on any personnel agenda, which included the resolution to cut the 11 positions and several staff transfers.

Superintendent Clarence Alston told The Press last week that the district was required by the county executive superintendent to eliminate positions that are unrecognized, such as dean of students and principals on special assignment, to get its budget approved.

Michael Yapple, spokesman for the Department of Education, which oversees the offices of the executive county superintendent, provided clarification that the department is not forcing the district to take specific action regarding staff, "but rather we discussed with local school officials issues such as unrecognized job titles, administrative spending caps, legal costs, and high administrative costs."

In total, the salaries of the 11 positions amount to more than \$800,000, not including the costs of pension and health benefits. Many of the people who hold those positions are to be reassigned elsewhere, among them athletic director Stephen Townsend and Nanette Stuart, both of whom are classified as principal on special assignment. The reduction in force also eliminates the positions for two deans of students and the position of director of curriculum and instruction.

Kelli Best, the district coordinator of guidance, who earns \$111,000, was on the reduction-in-force list last Tuesday morning, but by the meeting that evening, her name was removed. It is unclear if she will be placed back on the agenda.

The meeting takes place 5 p.m. at the high school cafeteria.