

Thursday, June 26, 2025

Listen to the Report

Under the wire: Budget talks, on eve of summer recess, get serious

A months-long stare down between the Republican-led House and Democratic-led Senate on some of the budget finally showed signs of easing Thursday.

Governor [Gretchen Whitmer](#), House [Speaker Matt Hall](#) (R-Richland Township) and Senate [Majority Leader Winnie Brinks](#) (D-Grand Rapids), after a day of inaction, met at 7 p.m. in Whitmer's ceremonial Capitol office.

By the time they concluded, there was new life to completing at least the K-12 budget by the July 1 statutory deadline. Hall was ebullient about the prospects of completing the K-12 school aid budget and perhaps a road funding deal. Budget [Director Jen Flood](#) voiced optimism. Brinks said there was a long way to go, but conversations would continue Friday and through the weekend. The Senate added session days to its calendar for July 1 and July 2. The House already had July 1 on its calendar.

The rest of the budget – departments, community colleges, higher education, revenue sharing – will have to wait beyond the July 1 deadline.

The only real concrete action of the day came when the House discharged the Senate version of the K-12 budget ([SB 166](#)) from the [House Appropriations Committee](#) and moved it to the House floor. The House and Senate both adjourned just after 8 p.m.

Flood told reporters she's optimistic about getting action on Tuesday, saying there were great conversations Thursday night.

What remained unclear was the willingness of Brinks and her Senate Democratic Caucus to complete a road funding package without some understanding of what the full budget looks like. Whitmer and

Hall prefer to get a **road** funding package done now and build the rest of the budget around it.

Brinks told Gongwer News Service in an interview at her Capitol office after she, Hall and Whitmer met there is "certainly a long ways to go" since they are only working with a partial House budget.

"We did have what I would call a positive meeting in terms of trying to make progress, and we'll continue having our appropriations folks meet throughout the weekend and see if we can make significant progress," Brinks said. "I think we'll have the beginning of some good conversations this weekend, and there will be more pieces that need to be in place for us to fully complete the whole budget, but we're going to get started. Some of those pieces will come into play and into place as we get through some of those initial conversations."

Brinks said she has always wanted a conversation on **road** funding to move in conjunction with the budget conversations.

"Naturally, some pieces will get done sooner than others, but any deal that we come to will have to be contemplated in the context of the whole. That's the Senate's view," Brinks said.

The majority leader repeated oft-used comments she has recently made that she wants to make sure the budget is done right.

"It's more important to get it right than it is to do it fast, because there's a deadline that some folks didn't do their homework for early enough," Brinks said. "We will work diligently, but we will keep our priorities straight, and we're not going to make a bad deal for kids in order to complete something fast."

Brinks said she has worked well with the governor and her staff during the process and has kept open regular lines of communication. She added that it is an adjustment and challenge to work under divided government.

She also was not concerned about any attendance issues by members next week ahead of any possible votes.

"We'll see what's ready for a vote, but at this point, our members have been very good about attendance when we need them to be here to do the business of the state, so I don't anticipate that," Brinks said.

Hall told reporters after the meeting with Brinks and Whitmer that House Republicans were committed to working through the weekend to get something done on the K-12 budget and a **roads** plan by July 1.

"I'm still hopeful after our meeting with Governor Whitmer and Leader Brinks that is still on the table," he said. "It's going to be a challenge, but I'm hopeful that's still on the table."

Hall said that if the Legislature can come to an agreement on **roads** and K-12, the rest of the budget will be easier.

"It's really going to unlock the rest," he said.

Deadlines are a powerful motivator for this Legislature, Hall said.

"There were a few days out of the paid sick leave and tip credit bills where it seemed like a long shot, we were going to get it done, and then in those last 48 hours we really came together and were able to make it happen," he said. "I think after our meeting today, we're on a **roadmap** that will put us in a position to get it done."

Hall said that that he expected both the Senate and the House to be in to vote on Tuesday.

"I'm optimistic we'll at least be able to announce something by July 1," he said. "We may not be able to vote on it by then, because there's a lot of mechanics and bills and things, but I'm really optimistic we'll be able to do that, especially with Governor Whitmer coming in and helping us."

Hall said it was a victory for the House that the Senate scheduled session for next week.

"If we keep that deadline I think we're going to get this done and make progress," he said. "K-12 and **roads** would be a really good outcome, and is an aggressive outcome, but I'm optimistic it's possible."

Hall said that House Republicans have maintained that it's possible to fund a **roads** plan without increasing revenue, but that others have said they want to see a revenue increase to support **roads** funding.

"As you're working through that, you have to take all perspectives into account," he said, hinting that a compromise on increasing

revenue for **roads** might be possible.

Hall said he wasn't sure whether there would be a conference committee.

"We haven't gotten to that place in the conversation yet," he said. "I'd say all options are on the table."

Following session on Thursday, [Rep. Alabas Farhat](#) (D-Dearborn), minority vice chair on the House Appropriations Committee, was seen going into Hall's office for a meeting.

"We're hoping we can come to some kind of common-sense agreement on what a budget should look like," Farhat told reporters before the House session adjourned on Thursday. "This is a process that usually takes one or two months to negotiate that we're trying to see condensed into four or five days. So, we've got to make sure we get it right. And it's OK if that brings us close to the deadline, but we have to get it done before July 1."

Farhat said that the School Aid Fund budget that the House voted on, which uses about \$1 billion in one-time funding to pay for the higher education budget, is "structurally unsound."

"We have to unwind that in order to properly fund both," he said.

Farhat said there was an appetite to get the K-12 budget and **roads** done by Tuesday.

"We just have to break the logjam at this point," he said. "We shouldn't be in this spot right now where we're five days from the statutory deadline contemplating whether or not we'll have a budget."

Farhat said he believed it was possible to pass a **roads** plan without passing the rest of the General Fund budget because he believes that a sustainable **roads** plan will require an increase in revenue.

"We have to look at ways where we can insulate our budget and our General Fund so we can protect patient and Medicaid, we can protect families and we can also fully fund **roads**," he said. "**Roads** is a huge issue ... If we're talking about having all the tools on the table, whether that's revenue, whether that's modest cuts, and whether that's agreeing on realistic targets."

Farhat said the Senate and the House may not need to have a conference committee to pass the education budget.

"The whole point of conference is to get the leaders all into one room to negotiate a budget. You could argue what they're doing now is a form of that," he said. "We should not let process and procedure get in the way of making sure that we get this done by July 1."

School groups watched with a mixture of frustration, hope and confusion Thursday.

Robert McCann, executive director of the K-12 Alliance of Michigan, said of the situation, "Educators, students, and parents are watching this continued inaction closely and will hold Lansing politicians accountable if they continue to put party politics and other priorities over our classrooms and kids."

– By Elena Durnbaugh and Nick Smith; Zach Gorchow contributed

[Back to top](#)



[About Gongwer](#) [Contact Us](#) [Capitol Jobs](#) [Weekly Journal](#)

[State Affairs Pro](#) [Gongwer Ohio](#) [Pay Your Invoice](#)

[MichMash Podcast](#)

Copyright 2025, Gongwer News Service LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms of Service](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

