



EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL BUDGET WORKSHOP

Virtual via Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/j/98436292065?pwd=N2xNNHdoOTFFWWQyU2xhZmNrVHRpUT09>

Meeting ID: 984 3629 2065, Passcode: 06612

January 25, 2021 - 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Stinson, Chieda, Goldstein, Hicks, Parker, Wible

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Zachery, Del Conte, Fox Santora, Kaplan

Others: 80+ members of the public

CALL TO ORDER

J. Stinson called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

J. Stinson paused public comment per rule 11.20A to allow Dr. Harrison to make a statement:

Dr. Harrison addressed concerns regarding a post on his personal Facebook page following the events at our Capitol. He stated, "While my intention was not to be divisive, it has become clear to me that my post has offended some members of our community, and for that I am truly sorry. One of our aspirational goals for our students is to build a caring community, and I want to make sure that my actions reflect that desire as well. As I mention in my message to our families, I am buoyed by the hope and promise that we see in our students, the partnerships we developed with our families, and encouraged by the opportunities that we have as educators to positively impact the world one student at a time. And so with that I think that it is really important to make sure that I am continuing to build our positive relationships with our community members so that we can partner together to do what's right for our students. So as we go forward I am happy to meet with any members of our community who would like to discuss further and you can feel free to reach out with me to set that up, thank you."

PUBLIC COMMENT

N. Kaldawy, Staples Road: reminded everyone that the Board of Finance in the past has been brutal as it relates to the BOE budget, so she hopes we go high in our funding request.

B. and C. Bardani, Soundview Drive: appreciate the efforts of the BOE. Stated that they are deeply offended by Dr. Harrison's Facebook post, and appreciate his apology but feel it was wrong and they question his ability to remain objective on matters going forward. They request that the BOE put this topic on a future agenda.

A. Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road: is in favor of improving education of students, and hopes the money is not spent blindly. Requested that the BOE make meaningful changes when spending money, especially in light of current unemployment and foreclosures.

R. Barker, Morehouse Road: Mr. Barker read Dr. Harrison's Facebook post and asked how labeling people that you disagree with is doing better for our children.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

R. Hicks stated that Dr. Harrison's Facebook post was inappropriate and divisive. He suggests that the policy committee review appropriate activity around social media posting and our collective staff.

J. Parker concurred with the comments of R. Hicks regarding a policy for social media guidelines. We have them for BOE members and Mr. Parker feels we should have them for all members of the ER9 community.

D. Wible thanked Dr. Harrison for publicly apologizing, and reminded people that he has done so 3 times. She asked that people take him at his word, stating that his post is being used to divide us. She suggests we come together.

J. Chieda thanked C. Zachery for hand-delivering the budget books. She thanked those in attendance and welcomed new community members and explained that this is the exploratory time as it relates to the budget process. She encouraged the public to continue to email the BOE with any questions about their priorities and concerns. She then stated that there have been a lot of meaningful, thorough and thoughtful conversations relating to Dr. Harrison's Facebook post. She was not offended but she can see where people may have been. She does not have any doubts about Dr. Harrison's ability to carry us through this budget season, and asked that we try to come together and move forward.

J. Stinson thanked the public for speaking up and explained the events surrounding Dr. Harrison's interview with News Channel 12 and subsequent FB post in regard to the events at the Capitol on January 6th. J. Stinson repeated that Dr. Harrison has apologized and hopes we can move on from this and get to the task at hand of doing the best that we can for the kids in our district, and focus on student outcomes.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPROVAL OF MATH CURRICULUM RESOURCE FOR K-5

Approval of the new math resource was discussed. Cost was discussed in general terms, it was stated that the cost will be amortized over 2 years. It was explained that the BOE is voting on adoption of the resource rather than the exact cost. S. Pierson Ugol explained that the change in the resource does not change the instructional approach used within the district, inclusive of children continuing to learn via pen and paper.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education select enVision, a division of Savvas Learning Company, LLC, as its K-5 math curriculum materials provider effective July 1, 2021. We empower Central Office administrators to negotiate the most favorable contract term and pricing. (Chieda, Wible). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: NON-LAPSING ACCOUNT

C. Zachery stated that a law was passed that allows a BOE to place unexpended funds (not to exceed 2% of the budget) into a non-lapsing account. Board members discussed the various pros and cons of such an account.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education authorize the board chair to engage in conversation with the chair of the Board of Finance as it relates to the formation of a non-lapsing account. (Parker, Chieda). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2021-2022 BUDGET REVIEW

C. Zachery reviewed budgetary numbers related to Positions & Programs. New hires are the biggest budget driver, accounting for 6.39% of the increase. Within the budget, 83% of the increase is due to contractual obligations, SPED tuition, transportation contracts, and curriculum (inclusive of DEI curriculum funding and a new math resource). Enrollment projections were discussed and K. Fox Santora stated that similar to other years, kindergarten numbers are difficult to predict (current enrollment is at 60 for the 2021 year, while the Prowda projection is 108 students). K. Fox Santora is requesting 5 sections of kindergarten to ensure teacher/pupil ratios remain consistent with past years. Our district has filed 87K in COVID-related claims and expects to receive 100% reimbursement. Costs for cleaning the busses have not yet been filed. A number of capital improvement projects across both buildings were mentioned, and it was suggested that those items be held from the current budget and covered through the bonding process. S. Pierson Ugol stated that summer support to make up for student loss due to COVID will be assessed at a later date in the year. K. Fox Santora drew attention to a new lighting issue in the mechanical rooms that requires immediate attention at SSSES (at a cost of approximately 10K). The value and worth of funding of the DEI curriculum work was discussed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road: stated that she feels the students have room in the course of the school day to increase time spent on PLTW, coding, and STEM related curriculum, and she would also like to see budgetary spending increases in those areas as well.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Chieda stated that we have not yet assessed all students and it is too early to think we won't have a need to address shortfalls. She stated that while performance assessments look promising, needs will become evident. Contact time with teachers is unknown, and so we should be ready to provide funds to support any remediation.

J. Parker Thanks C. Zachery for his budget preparation and thanked Dr. Harrison for taking responsibility for what he did and said.

D. Wible thanked faculty leadership for getting kids back in school, and reminded the community to take their part in following the protocols that will help keep the schools open.

J. Stinson thanked CO staff and building leaders for all work on the budget, and asked everyone present to please remember all of the protocols that help keep schools open and to please remind students, too.

J. Chieda stated how important it is to heed the protocols coming from building administration.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education meeting be adjourned. (Parker, Chieda). Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Submitted by,
Gretchen Goldstein
Easton Board of Education Secretary