

*Filed subject to approval*

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING AND BUDGET WORKSHOP  
Helen Keller Middle School-Learning Commons  
Tuesday, February 11, 2020  
7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

Easton Board of Education: Parker, Chieda, Hicks, Goldstein, Reed, Stinson

Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Fox Santora, Kaplan, Brownstein, Mohr, Del Conte, DiBartolo

Others: 27 members of the public

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Parker called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the January 14, 2020 Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting. Goldstein, Reed. Approved. 5-0, 1 abstained.**

**It was noted by Mr. Hicks that Constantino was spelled incorrectly in the public comment section, and clarified his board member comment to express that through his research, he discovered other school districts in the U.S. that operate with significant private donations.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the January 21, 2020 Regular Joint Meeting of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education. Goldstein, Chieda. Approved. 3-0, 3 abstained.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the January 23, 2020 Easton Board of Education Regular Budget Workshop. Goldstein, Reed. Approved. 4-0, 2 abstained.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nicole Constantino, Morehouse Road, Easton: thanked the BOE for their efforts. Ms. Constantino shared that she and her family moved here for the quality of the school system and that ever since they have moved here, there have been cuts. She encouraged Dr. McMorran and the board to work with the Board of Finance to pass the budget. Ms. Constantino also spoke about the importance of the media center at HKMS.

Nikki Kaldawy, Staples Road, Easton: asked for clarification about the proposed section distribution for SSES for next year. She expressed concern about shifting teachers around from grade to grade, and the importance of maintaining stability among the faculty. Ms. Kaldawy

referenced the ballot question from the 2019 referendum vote when the town responded that the budget was not too high.

Tracey Carlucci, Morning Glory Lane, Easton: shared that when she toured SSES for her current kindergarten child, she was told that class sizes in kindergarten were 16 or 17 students and that her daughter's class now has 21 kids. She questioned whether or not the amount of work they do with their daughter at home would be different if there weren't as many children in the class. Ms. Carlucci expressed that as a kindergartner, her daughter should be able to come home and play.

Alyssa Kolesar, Freeborn Road, Easton: expressed she has seen class sizes change and is also concerned about the impact that has on the teaching staff. She shared that she has observed the difference that class size makes for her two children. Ms. Kolesar asked if the board could consider meetings on the weekends to better accommodate working families.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Ms. Reed thanked the members of the public in attendance and said that the board takes all of their comments into consideration. Mr. Hicks expressed that the board does the work that they do because they care about the children and the whole community. Mr. Hicks said that the board agrees with the parents in attendance, but it is a matter of combining the needs of the students with the needs of the town. Mrs. Chieda asked the board and members of the public to remain supportive of each other through the process and remember all of the positive things that are happening in the school system during a process that tends to focus on the deficits. Mr. Parker spoke about the board's obligation to balance the needs of the children with the needs of the town.

#### ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Pierson Ugol spoke about the transition from the Atlas software program for curriculum to Google docs. A survey went out to parents via listserv and the BOE Facebook page to gather parent feedback about how they would like to see curriculum information provided to them online.

#### BUILDING ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Kaplan reported that the Joel Barlow counselors came to HKMS to meet with students and parents and 8th grade students selected courses for next year. Performances of "Schoolhouse Rock" will be held in April. Detective Kevin Lyman came and met with 7th grade classes about staying safe online. Math team traveled to Danbury and our students came in third in the competition.

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Mrs. Fox Santora recognized James Balatsos for being the SSES Geography Bee Champion. She also shared that Speckled Rooster Farm is the new lessee of the land in front of SSES. The American Heart Association Kids Heart Challenge kicked off that week. Students are participating in many activities related to the event and it has always been a great success. SSES students have been making Valentines for veterans. Nikki Kaldawy arranged a fun, Superbowl-themed can drive for Operation Hope that was well-received by all. Mrs. Fox-Santora thanked Mrs. Kaldawy for her efforts.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SPECIAL SERVICES REORGANIZATION

Dr. McMorran and Ms. Del Conte gave a presentation outlining the determination criteria for Least Restrictive Environment. They also presented the budgetary considerations for outplacements of special education students at SSES and HKMS. A portion of the presentation was titled "Building Capacity to Support Student Needs with Cost Efficiency". The 2020-2021 proposed budget includes improvements to programming at SSES through Orton-Gillingham trained personnel and increased social work hours. At HKMS, changes will include the creation of a Junior Bridges program for three potential outplacement students. This would include the hiring of one new teacher and one new paraprofessional. Typical outplacement costs range from \$88,000-180,000 per student. The Junior Bridges program would cost from \$40,000-50,000 per student and would enhance program flexibility and oversight. No decisions were made by the board at this time.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2020-2021 BUDGET

The board discussed the 2020-2021 proposed education budget for Easton K-8. Mr. Parker raised questions for discussion about the Spanish program at SSES, the support staff at HKMS, building administration, media specialists at SSES and HKMS, and non-certified staff at SSES and Keller. Further discussion raised awareness of reductions in recent budget cycles to the secretarial staff at SSES, the custodial staff, paraprofessionals, and a bus route. At present, Easton is spending \$0.57 per day/per pupil for supplies. Dr. McMorran stated there are no other assets to reduce. Dr. Pierson Ugol explained that the Spanish program at SSES is running below the recommended minutes per week for students. The impact of SSES class size versus minutes per week of instruction in math and literacy per week was analyzed. Larger classes (20-21) versus smaller classes (16-18) means less critical contact time with students. No final decisions were made at this time. The board did not vote on the budget percentage.

#### REPORTS: DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

N/A

#### REPORTS: BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mrs. Chieda reported that the Communications Committee will share a committee charge for consideration at the March regular meeting.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Amy Zima, Silver Hill Road, Easton: emphasized the importance of the counseling and support staff at HKMS and their ability to mediate issues with students as they arise. Her 5th grader can have a basic conversation with her in Spanish due to the Spanish language program at SSES. Mrs. Zima also expressed support for the media center at HKMS and smaller class sizes to enhance a teacher's ability to address the learning needs of every learning level.

Stephanie Christie, Austin Drive Extension, Easton: discussed the aging population of Easton and shifting priorities. She is concerned that our schools are becoming less of a priority.

Nikki Kaldawy, Staples Road, Easton: suggested that the board consider that other neighboring towns may have similar class sizes, but many more support staff. She also shared her concern

about maintaining the current administrative staff at each school because of how important they are after incidents such as Sandy Hook.

Paige Couchner, Black Rock Road, Easton: spoke in support of the Spanish program at SSES not only because of the language instruction, but also the opportunity to learn about a different culture in a town like Easton that is not very diverse.

Alyssa Kolesar, Freeborn Road, Easton: spoke about the need to maintain and possibly add to the current support staff at HKMS and SSES due to the increase in behavioral health issues in children. Mrs. Kolesar is a professional in the mental health field.

Leopold Linval, Deepwood Road, Easton: asked about the possibility of utilizing students at nearby universities to assist with the media center or classroom support.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Ms. Reed thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and encouraged people to come to the Thursday workshop.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the meeting be adjourned. Hicks, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.**  
**9:58 PM**

Recorded and Submitted by Jenny Cheida, Easton Board of Education Secretary