

Filed subject to approval

Easton Board of Education
Meeting
April 12, 2016
Minutes

Board of Education: Bindelglass, Chieda, Hicks, Parker

Administration: McMorran, Sullivan, Pierson Ugol, Freeston, Fox-Santora, Brownstein, Kaplan, Burke

Others: ten members of the staff and community for the student presentations, four members of the public stayed for the remainder of the meeting.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion; move that the Easton Board of Education accept the minutes of the March 8, 2016 meeting as submitted. Bindelglass, Chieda. Approved. Unanimous.

STUDENT PRESENTATION

Helen Keller Middle School students, Luke Wergeles and Tyler Petrino, described their work in Discrete Math and use of their knowledge to do an analysis of sports athletes' performance.

Samuel Staples Elementary School student, Ian Lent, presented the board with his entry for the Connecticut Invention Convention. Ian invented an automated programmable method for feeding his fish while he was away.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dr. Bindelglass commented that he spoke with Gary Simone of the Easton Parks & Recreation Department regarding AED's (Automated External Defibrillator) on the Town's playing fields. Mr. Simone is willing to assume ownership of the issue, including putting the purchase and maintenance in his budget, turning the program over to the Parks & Recreation Department. Mr. Parker asked that Mr. Simone provide a schedule for installation of the devices on the fields.

Mr. Hicks questioned the number of minimum days for the students. He asked if it was more beneficial to have a full day for professional development rather than a minimum day. Dr. Pierson Ugol noted that a minimum day counts as a full day of education. Full day professional development would add days to the calendar and be a contractual issue. Mr. Hicks noted that this should be a consideration during the next contract negotiations. Dr. Pierson Ugol noted that next year, there are only five early dismissals (minimum days) days for professional development, compared with six this year. Mrs. Chieda noted that the minimum day can be disruptive for families and for learning. Dr. Pierson Ugol was asked to prepare recommendations on professional development that is the ideal or best way for all stakeholders.

Mrs. Chieda commented thanked the administrative staff for the huge number of hours spent attending meetings during the recent months. She also noted the importance of communication, especially notices of meetings. She suggested the development of some means of communicating on a town-wide basis. Mr. Parker asked that this be discussed further at the next board meeting.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON STUDENT CONNECTEDNESS AT HKMS

Mrs. Kaplan reported on a program developed through the school's advisory program and teacher Annie Mohr. The concept was to connect with others in town by inviting Easton "seniors" to visit the school and demonstrate how education today is different from the education they experienced. Students shared what is happening in the classroom, use of technology, etc. The seniors shared their ideas, stories and experience with the students. Mrs. Kaplan showed pictures and a video of the activities.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: LEARNING BASICS OF CODING

Patrick Keane and John Stinson, both residents of Easton, presented a program on learning the basics of coding for a before/after school program for the children of Easton. They have established a non-profit company to offer these services. The program would be taught by graduate and under graduate students at Sacred Heart University. Mr. Stinson noted that six teaching candidates have been identified and background checks would be completed. The program would require a staff teacher to be present to assist with classroom management and payment would be in the form of a stipend funding through the PTA. In addition, they would like an administration to be available in the building.

Mr. Keane indicated the program is ready to move forward with a six-week pilot session beginning in May. This would be a test or prototype program, with a full program in the fall. Staff members at both the schools have indicated their interest in participating in the program. Mr. Keane and Mr. Stinson have completed curriculum work for the first level of classes and are working on the next level. The first 6-week session would cost \$50/student, with the potential for some scholarship assistance. They hope to get the cost of the program down to about \$10 registration fee in the future, and are considering other fundraising activities.

Discussion followed. Board members were in agreement that the program be tested in the spring to judge the interest, and then make a decision regarding the continuation of the program.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept the proposal for the CS Explorer program for basic coding opportunities for the students of Samuel Staples Elementary School and Helen Keller Middle School as presented for the spring of 2016. Hicks, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON PERSONALIZED LEARNING: IMPLICATIONS FOR LONG-RANGE PLANNING

Dr. McMorran presented information on the meaning and use of Personalized Learning and the Personalized Learning environment and what this concept means for the teacher. The elements of a Personalized Learning System have four defining structural elements: competency-based, offers multiple paths of study, uses variable time, and includes meaningful assessment and accountability. This information and the understanding of the concept will be a vital element for long-term thinking and planning.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON BUS DEPOT UPDATE

Mrs. Sullivan reported that consideration of the Morehouse Road property has been eliminated as a bus depot option because it did not fit the Master Plan for Parks & Recreation and Zoning. An alternate location, Veterans Field, appears to be a better fit for the bus depot. There is sufficient land available to construct a 2-bay garage and office. There is plenty of parking available for the buses and for the driver's personal vehicles.

Mrs. Sullivan consulted with Redding's First Selectman, Julia Pemberton, and there are no locations that would be suitable for the bus depot. Mrs. Pemberton is in support of whatever solution would be financial beneficial to both Redding and Easton.

The next step is to get an architect on board to prepare drawings and to get estimates to build the building and create the parking area. The Easton Public Works Department is willing to assist where possible. A natural gas line is available at that site should there be a decision to go with natural gas powered vehicles. Mrs. Sullivan stated that the goal would be to have the facility available for July 1, 2017. There will be additional discussion at the Tri-District meeting on May 17, 2017.

The Easton Board was in agreement to move forward with the location at Veteran's Park.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the proposed siting of a bus depot for the school transportation fleet at Veteran's Park. Parker, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON POLICY REVIEW

Mr. Parker reported the Policy Committee is recommending acceptance of five policies for a first reading. The board members were asked to review the policies and forward any questions to Mr. Parker. The second and final reading will be scheduled for the next meeting.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept the following policies for a first reading:

1. **Policy 5113(a): Students Attendance and Excuses**
2. **Policy 5113.2: Student Truancy**
3. **Policy 5131.6: Drug Use, Drugs and Tobacco (including Performance Enhancing Substances)**
4. **Policy 4115: Evaluation and Support Program**
5. **Policy 4131(a): Personnel—Certified Professional Development**

Motion by Parker, seconded by Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction: Dr. Pierson Ugol presented information and data on teacher absences from the classroom. Teachers are out of the classroom for a number of reasons including school meetings, Tri-District meetings, and personal days. The personal days include illness, family illness, personal days and bereavement. Dr. Pierson Ugol elaborated on the types of school and Tri-District meetings that teachers attend. She noted that by State statute, the teachers are mandated to receive a minimum of 18 hours of professional development opportunities. She noted that Easton meets and exceeds that requirement. She also provided a chart showing two different weeks with the absences and category of absence.

Special Services Report: Mrs. Freeston provided her written report and noted that work is being done to prepare for the transition of students from one school to the next. Work is also being done on the Extended School Year program for the summer.

Director of Finance: Mrs. Sullivan reported the Health Insurance claims for February were down, but not down to the monthly budget amount. The Health Insurance Committee will meet to review all options, including a change to a fully insured program, change in broker, etc. Mrs. Sullivan reported the news that the Governor has announced the intent to reduce the ECS (Excess Cost Sharing) for Easton to 0%. The Food Service Committee reviewed the two RFP that were received, and has invited both vendors to come back with a presentation. That Committee will have a recommendation for the Tri-District meeting on May 17, 2016.

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Kaplan reported on student achievements and the upcoming Spaghetti Dinner.

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Mrs. Fox-Santora reported on the recent HOTS program with the teacher artist in residence. She also announced that teacher Tara Brophy was recognized as a Weller Teacher of Excellence.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Parker noted that the Board of Finance has finalized the Board of Education budget at a 1.05% increase. This resulted in further reductions that included elimination of the recess aid at HKMS and a 0.2FTE position for Discrete Math. The Board of Finance indicated that if the right candidate was found for the Discrete Math (\$12,700) position, the Board of Education could request reinstatement of that position. Mr. Parker noted that some savings (\$9,500) was realized with the announcement of a teacher retirement.

Mr. Parker also noted he received a letter from the State Legal Department advising that it was time to be work on the collective bargaining agreement with the administration of SSES & HKMS. Mr. Hicks has volunteered to serve on that committee, and another board member will be needed for the work that will be done over the summer months.

Mrs. Sullivan reminded all that the Easton Town Meeting is on April 25, 2016.

Mr. Parker announced that Patrick Keane has been added to the Long-Range Planning Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education adjourn the meeting. Chieda, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:11 pm

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Acting Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday