

Easton Board of Education Meeting  
December 13, 2016  
Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board of Education: Bindelglass, Cheida (arrived 7:41 pm), Hicks, Parker, Shortt,  
Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Sullivan, Edwards, Fox Santora, Kaplan  
Others: Approximately 8 members of the public.

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 regular meeting held on November 9, 2016 as submitted. Shortt, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Alyssa Mocco, Morehouse Road: stated she feels the Board should take into account during their long-range planning initiatives, the distribution of grades in the Elementary School, placing younger students on lower floors and older grades on higher floors. She also noted that separate busses for older/younger students may be a good idea in the future. Ms. Mocco then asked that the Board consider starting the Elementary School days earlier so that children may have extra down-time after school. Finally, Ms. Mocco stated that she would like to know why the "acceptable" number of students in a given kindergarten or 1<sup>st</sup> grade class keeps changing, and asked what is actually best for our students. She then suggested parking busses as HKMS if it is closed.

Diane Ronen, Tuckahoe Road: Stated that there are too many early dismissal days/parent-teacher conference day disruptions for the students and parents. She suggested that there should be more parent-teacher conference times offered at night, giving the students the benefit of a full school day, and more flexibility to working parents.

Gretchen Goldstein, Brianna Lane: Suggested that her experience in a Miami, Florida school was that every Wednesday school was dismissed 1.5 hours early to accommodate conferences/workshops/meetings/PD. She found this to be a good solution.

Lisa Keane, Wedgewood Drive: Agreed that early dismissal on Wednesdays was a good idea. She also announced that the PTA would be hosting Dr. Leonard Sax at the SSES Cafetorium on 1/12/17. He will be speaking on building more resilient students and addressing some of the challenges to parenting today.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

A. Enrollment Projections 2017-2018:

Dr. McMorran gave a presentation on Easton Public Schools Enrollment Projections to 2026, a study by Peter M. Prowda, Ph.D. It is anticipated that the enrollment decline that began in 2008 will come to an end and eventually increase. The total enrollment should level off to approximately 800 students continually over the 10 year projected period. Dr. McMorran urged the Board to resist from tying any future budget directly to enrollment projections as they do not correlate in a manner that allows for the two figures to be unequivocally tied.



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CHRISTINE HALLORAN  
TOWN CLERK EASTON CT

**B. Evidence-Based Budgeting for Effective School Strategies:**

Dr. McMorran discussed how the Administration will organize their budget presentation into the examination of six sections of the budgets. This will allow for greater understanding of each component. Dr. McMorran noted that this preliminary information is intended to serve as general information for the Board to reflect upon before a budget is reached. The six sections are as follows:

1. General Instruction
2. Special Education, Speech Services, Special Services and Psychological Services
3. Operations and Management of Physical Plant, Student Transportation, Technology Plan, Ed. Media Services, Health Services and Food Services
4. School Administration, Central Office Administration, Board of Education, Debt Service, Fund Transfers
5. Magnet School, Curriculum & Instruction, Humanities, STEM, Industrial Technology, Integrated Language Arts, PE/Health, Guidance, and Kindergarten
6. Student Activities Athletic and Student Activities Co-Curricular

**AGENDA ITEM ADDITION**

Mr. Parker noted that he would like to add an agenda item at this point as allowed at a regular meeting.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education add agenda item B.1, adoption of the Town of Easton 457(b) Plan. Shortt, Bindleglass. Approved. Unanimous.**

B.1. Ms. Peggy Sullivan explained that the Easton non-certified staff and custodial staff participate in the pension plan offered by the Town of Easton. The Town adopted a defined contribution plan in 2012 which these Board of Education employee groups became eligible for with their last contract negotiation. It applies only to employees hired after July 1, 2015 and kicks in six months from the date of hire. A legal document is required by the Plan that makes the Easton Board of Education a participating employee since the Board of Education operates under a different federal employee identification number than the Town of Easton.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education adopt the governmental 457(b) plan sponsored by the Town of Easton, CT effective January 1, 2016 with respect to non-elective profit sharing contributions and effective as soon as administratively feasible following execution of the appropriate documents for employee elective deferrals and matching contributions. Hicks, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education adopt a resolution authorizing and directing the Superintendent to execute and deliver to the Administrator of the Town of Easton, CT Eligible 457 Plan a Participation Agreement of such other document or documents as such Administrator deems necessary or appropriate to evidence the adoption of the Town of Easton, CT Eligible 457 Plan by the Easton Board of Education. Hicks, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.**

**C. Superintendent's Contract: One Year Extension:**

Mr. Hicks explained that the negotiating committee met to discuss renewal of Dr. McMorran's contract by one year and makes that recommendation to the Board for approval.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education extend Dr. McMorran's contract by one year. Shortt, Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.**

**D. 2017 Board of Education Meeting Schedule**

In order to accommodate Board members' schedules two dates were amended from the 2017 proposed Meeting Schedule. They are as follows:

- The **Budget Workshop** previously slated for Wednesday, February 1, 2017 will now be held on **Monday, January 23, 2017**

- The Regular Meeting and Budget Workshop previously slated for Tuesday, February 14, 2017 will now be held on Monday, February 13, 2017

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept the 2017 Proposed Meeting Schedule with the following changes:**

- **The Budget Workshop previously slated for Wednesday, February 1, 2017 will now be held on Monday, January 23, 2017**
- **The Regular Meeting and Budget Workshop previously slated for Tuesday, February 14, 2017 will now be held on Monday, February 13, 2017**

**Shortt, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.**

E. Alternatives for Professional Development and Parent-Teacher Conferences

Mr. Parker addressed the ongoing discussions on the benefits/drawbacks of minimum days for students, teachers and administration. These minimum days are used to accommodate numerous activities that cannot occur concurrent to an undisrupted school day, such as; parent-teacher conferences, professional development, and curriculum work. He noted that other than encouraging ongoing traditional parent-teacher conferences, the schools were also developing student skills to advocate for themselves.

Ms. Fox Santora noted that in the elementary school, staff and administration are accommodating to parents' needs and schedules. She reiterated that parents are always allowed and encouraged to contact the school to set up time to meet with educators to address their children's' needs. Most teachers offer before school conference times, and employ Sign-up Genie to make the process easier. She noted that evening hours could be discussed if parents desired these time slots. Ms. Fox Santora also acknowledged that they must be sensitive to families who have estranged parents, and that two conferences per student needed to be accommodated in these situations. Finally, she expressed concern that after multiple 20-minute + conferences in a row, it is difficult at times, for teachers to be sharp, precise and encompassing of the full spectrum of discussion each student's guardian/parent deserves.

Ms. Kaplan noted that both parents and teachers are free to initiate meetings at any time. She addressed that when she pooled teachers at her school, they stated that there were approximately 15-18 team and individual meetings per year that took up time outside the classroom. Ms. Kaplan expressed that she felt the best time for conferences was after school.

Dr. Pierson Ugol stated that Easton School System does better with less than comparable systems in regards to time away from the classroom for meetings, conferences and professional development. She noted that Easton relies on specialists in Math and Literacy, which saves time. Pierson Ugol noted that with the incoming new Science Program there will be challenges ahead in balancing rigorous PD with school hours. The required learning time will exceed the designated hours.

Ms. Cheida acknowledged that regular early dismissal is difficult for the community.

Mr. Parker asked if there was a way to work with/expand the current Park and Rec after school program to accommodate any potential changes.

Mr. Hicks commented that he rarely heard that PD was an issue, and that if conferences were extended across three evenings, the problem could be partially alleviated.

Mr. Parker asked Dr. McMorran and the Administration to explore and research this issue further so that the Board could make a more informed decision when the time comes.

F. Policies – Second Reading

Four policies were presented for second reading.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the following policies:**

- 1331 Community Relations – Smoke-Free Environment
- 1700 Community Relations – Otherwise Lawful Possession of Firearms on School Property
- 3523.11 Unmanned Aerial Systems (Drones)
- 3542.22 Food Services Personnel – Code of Conduct

**Hicks, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.**

**G. Policies – First Reading**

Seven policies were presented for first reading.

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

- 4121 Substitute Teachers
- 4111/4211 Recruitment and Selection
- 4112.5/4212.5 Security Check/Fingerprinting (includes regulation)
- 4112.51/4212.51 Employment/Reference Checks
- 4112.2 Certification
- 4118.14/4218.14 Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disabilities (includes Regulation)
- 4118.41/4218.41 Rights, Responsibilities & Duties: Electronic Mail

**Bindleglass, Chieda. Approved. Unanimous.**

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

Special Services: To be brief, Ms. Edwards referred the Board to her written report. Ms. Edwards also informed the Board that in addition to the reasons stated during discussion under section “E”; teachers were also pulled from the classroom for PPT (Planning and Placement Team Meeting).

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction: To be brief, Dr. Pierson Ugol referred the Board to her written report which includes information on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. There are also tables with details about professional development and District meetings.

Samuel Staples Elementary School: In addition to her written report, Mrs. Fox Santora wished to recognize “Team Nick” a support network of former and current teachers of Joel Barlow student, Nick Tiseo’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. He is battling leukemia and “Team Nick” provided photos reminiscent of his time in the Easton Schools to his Facebook page in recognition of his 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

Helen Keller Middle School: In addition her written report, Mrs. Kaplan wished to acknowledge 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Jennifer Rose who last year won an ELF grant for \$200. She used this grant to join “I Earn”, a program that connects students globally. Last week, 16 of her students went to the UN to present to six members of the Department of Sustainability on what their global student counterparts are doing to promote sustainability on an international level. The students and teacher received great praise. The Board expressed its pride and acknowledged the groups’ accomplishments. Finally, Ms. Kaplan took this opportunity to express gratitude to Ms. Sullivan for her years of service; Ms. Fox Santora seconded this notion of gratitude.

Director of Finance & Operations: In addition to the transfer report provided to the Board, Mrs. Sullivan stated that the health insurance claims as a total were down. She noted that there is a parent lunch at Samuel Staples Elementary School this Thursday, December, 15, 2017.

Superintendent of Schools: Dr. McMorran thanked Ms. Sullivan for her years of service, dedication and the high standards she brought to the school system.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Alyssa Mocco, Morehouse Road: Stated that her concern was less about how disrupted school schedule affected parents, but more on a negative affect it could be having on students. She also expressed that she was concerned that the changes in science would lead to additional reading and communication skill practice in the subject.

Ms. Pierson Ugol said that there would be additional cross-disciplinary skills highlighted in the new science curriculum.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Mr. Hicks thanked Ms. Sullivan for her dedicated service.

Mr. Parker then also thanked and commended Ms. Sullivan for her service. He then discussed his attendance of a CES Legislative Breakfast last week. The focus of the discussion was on finance and it was noted that CT was not in ideal fiscal shape. It is rumored that the district's state funding could be cut altogether or partially. He stated that while this is unfair, he was focusing on actions to take. He is researching ways to negotiate with the state to bargain for benefits other than financial payments. Two negotiation points could be the Special Education Burden of Proof on the schools, and tuition for students to magnet schools.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

**Motion: move to Executive Session to discuss the Easton Intermediate Administrators' Association. Hicks, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.**

The meeting recessed at 9:27 pm.

#### RECONVENE

The Chair reconvened the meeting to public session at 9:46 pm.

**Motion: move that the Board of Education approve the Agreement Between the Easton Board of Education and Easton Intermediate Administrators' Association – July 1, 2017-June 30, 2019. Bindelglass, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.**

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move to adjourn the meeting. Bindelglass, Cheida. Approved. Unanimous.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm.

Recorded by Elise Cavanaugh