



EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING REGULAR MEETING
Helen Keller Middle School - Library Learning Commons
December 10, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Parker, Goldstein, Hicks, Reed, Stinson

Absent: Chieda

Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Reiss, Del Conte, Brownstein, Kaplan

Others: 10 members of the public and staff

CALL TO ORDER

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

BOE: MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Gretchen Goldstein replaces newly elected First Selectman David Bindelglass

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education appoint Ms. Gretchen Goldstein to the Board of Education due to the resignation of Dr. David Bindelglass. Hicks, Stinson. Approved. Unanimous.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 12, 2019 Regular Meeting as submitted. Stinson, Hicks. Approved, 3-0-2. (Reed, Goldstein abstained.)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anne Manusky, Morning Glory Drive, Easton: shared three concerns:

1. Four-year-olds attending kindergarten: She proposed that Easton require that kindergarteners are five years old by August or September in order to begin kindergarten. This would result in fewer students in special education and fewer students struggling to access Common Core curriculum.
2. Inappropriate health and wellness education content (including terminology) taught in the schools which does not consider the age of the child.
3. Literacy expert, Louisa Moats, states that most children learn best with phonics; however, Ms. Manusky believes that Easton schools are adhering to a whole language philosophy.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION REPORT

Dr. Pierson Ugol reported that she will form a textbook review committee for elementary and middle school mathematics in order to purchase a new edition. The committee will be comprised of teachers, administrators, BOE, and parents. The textbook review committee will begin to meet the second half of this school year and continue their work through the fall of 2020. This will have no bearing on the budget at this time. Teachers will continue to use current resources, except Math in Focus electronic resources

which will expire during the 2020-2021 school year. Print resources are available through next year. It is typical to go through this process every four-five years. The current resource is not aligned to Common Core standards. Dr. Pierson Ugol is currently gathering samples and checking with DRG A districts to determine what they are using. The new texts will impact the 21-22 budget.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: BOE BYLAW UPDATE

It is the democratic party's turn to hold the positions of Board Chair and Board Secretary. John Stinson has shown interest. According to the BOE bylaws, this change should happen now. A suggestion was made at the last meeting to hold the elections in June 2020. The reason to consider this change in date is to allow the current leadership to finish the school year while new leadership can transition over the summer when Board business is slow. Mr. Hicks stated that he would like to see the community outreach efforts of Mr. Parker continue, for example, the invitation to the Board of Finance members to attend BOE meetings when early budget discussions occur. A further consideration is if Mr. Stinson were to take this leadership role, he would be 18 months into his two-year term.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education move the BOE officer elections from December 2019 to June 2020. Stinson, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2020-2021 BUDGET

Mr. Parker presented Phase 2 of Budget Development: Health insurance impact on the budget. Brown and Brown oversee health insurance matters. They compared the Easton program to the state plan.

It was determined that the high deductible plan is preferable, as it results in a savings to the district of almost \$200,000. Teachers and administrators have the high deductible plan. Paraprofessionals and custodians have a PPO but will change next year to the high deductible plan.

Brown and Brown - projected 9.5% increase. While difficult to project due to many variables, they look at claim history. Anthem provided a projection that is very similar. A further consideration is that there is a tax of 4% added to whatever the state number would be. The dollar amount of the increase is projected to be \$226,000, yet this is a work in progress.

Salary = Benefits Increase for 2020-2021

Contractual Salary 1.93% increase

Health Insurance 9.5% increase

Total 3.26% increase

School Board Needs and Wants List:

- Full-time staffing of the Media Center at HKMS: Options are to hire a Media Specialist, a second paraprofessional or to house the Tech Aide in the Media Center
- Restore Helen Keller extracurricular activities
- Possible kindergarten teacher.
- Money for targeted professional development for teachers and/or administrators. Mr. Parker states that it is our responsibility to prepare the staff the best we can.
- Replace SSES parking lot (tie into major bonding project that town is doing.)

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: HEALTH CURRICULUM

Dr. Pierson Ugol sent the board a packet of materials including the narration of health curriculum lessons which include an overview of sexual abuse prevention lessons and the one 45-minute puberty lesson, which is taught in 4th grade. This lesson focuses on understanding about changes in one's body: emotional and physical. Two board members spoke favorably (from personal experience) about the fourth grade program. Dr. Pierson Ugol stated that all health curricula only teaches abstinence. Sexually transmitted diseases are taught at the middle school level. Parents can opt their child out of these lessons. Ms. Reed reminded everyone that the State puts requirements on the district.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the Health Curriculum. Stinson, Reed. Approved. 4-1 (Hicks opposed).

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPROVAL OF 2020 PROPOSED BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

There was a discussion of dates and possibly combining Easton meetings with Tri-Board meetings. No changes were made. Dr. McMorran reminded the Board that they can make changes later in the year.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the scheduled board meetings for 2020. Hicks, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SSES: METRICS WE WANT TO BE MEASURED BY

The staff and students of Samuel Staples prepared a video depicting what the school community wants the public to know beyond the quantitative measures. They selected to present this information in the format of their morning announcements. Included in the video were special projects and interviews with students.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: HKMS: METRICS WE WANT TO BE MEASURED BY

The staff and students of Helen Keller Middle School prepared a video depicting what the school community wants the public to know beyond the quantitative measures. They selected to present this information with two students hosts conducting interviews with students and teachers sharing strengths of their school. Mrs. Kaplan said the video will be shared for wider viewing.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Director of Special Education Jennifer Del Conte shared that conversations with parents center around the ways in which special education staff and administration will support their children. Special education numbers in Easton are flat.

Director of Finance & Operations Scott Reiss reported that a February update on the Object Summary will provide a better picture of where we will be. \$4500 will be directed to heating repairs at SSES. This work revealed a need for further work which will require a transfer of funds. The insurance analyst shared that four months of claims come in around 170K. While it is early in the year, last year claims were about 190K. It is normal for claims to be lower early in the year. It is also not surprising that November claims are higher.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Stinson shared that as a member of the policy committee he is working alongside attorneys from the Redding and Region 9 boards, who are providing legal advice. They will meet on a quarterly basis so

there aren't as many policies to go through moving forward. First readings will be in January; second readings in February.

Wellness Committee: Ms. Reed shared that Chartwells provided their annual food tasting. A new dietician has been hired.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Welcome and congratulations to new board member, Gretchen Goldstein.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education meeting be adjourned. Hicks, Stinson.
Approved. Unanimous.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Recorded by Liz Rimkunas