

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING WITH  
BUDGET PRESENTATION

Helen Keller Middle School-Library Learning Commons

January 14, 2020-7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Parker, Goldstein, Chieda, Hicks, Reed, Stinson

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

Others: 30 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 December 10, 2019 Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting. Stinson, Hicks, Approved, 5-0 (Chieda abstained).**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nikki Kaldawy, Staples Road, Easton: voiced her appreciation to the board members for all their hard work. She said that she hopes the board will look at people and not numbers when decisions are made to move teachers to different grades and rearranging teams. In her opinion, the students suffer academically from these changes.

Anne Manusky, Morning Glory Road, Easton: spoke about her concerns regarding health and wellness education and its place in the curriculum.

Carolyn Oppenheim, Hunting Ridge Road, Easton: commented on the lack of a library media specialist and how her children miss using the library at HKMS.

Nicole Konstantino, Morehouse Road, Easton: spoke about the dramatic decline in her children's reading due to the lack of a media specialist at HKMS. This is limiting their access to books and the media center is not accessible to the students.

Daniele Fanzo, Cedar Hill Road, Easton: shared her concerns about possible class size increase and lack of a media specialist at HKMS.

Sophie Fanzo, Cedar Hill Road, Easton: provided a student's perspective and said that the media center at HKMS is always closed. Last year, as a sixth grader, she enjoyed innovation space. The room where this was held is no longer available for students' use. She also said that many students are not able to use other libraries due to transportation issues.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Mr. Hicks asked about the school library hours. Ms. Kaplan responded that typically the library is open from 8:05 a.m. to 2:50 p.m., but it has become more difficult to staff, so it is open fewer hours. The library has not been available to students 31% of the time. The library has been closed in part due to a lack of substitute teachers to cover classes.

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CHRISTINE HALLORAN TOWN CLERK EASTON CT

## ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Pierson Ugol spoke about the professional learning that went on in the fall with leadership teams from the high school, Helen Keller Middle School, and John Read Middle School. She explained that the purpose of the PL is to begin to look at student learning in the future, which will assist in developing the profile of our graduating 8th graders and graduating 12th graders. Dr. Ugol will be meeting with the high school team to solidify their work and then move on to meeting with the middle school teams.

## BUILDING ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Samuel Staples Elementary School - Ms. Fox Santora reported the addition of 8 students in January. She speculated the increase may be due to Easton schools' good reputation and small class size. Mr. Parker spoke about the changes in various grades, both adding and subtracting students from classes.

Helen Keller Middle School - Ms. Kaplan reported on the PTO coffee topic concerning the negative impact of smartphones and technology on middle school students and how it can be resolved. She also spoke about the musical extravaganza that took place on January 14 and was enjoyed by all. She spoke about "Pride Pics", which are pictures taken by staff and students every Friday to showcase student accomplishments. Ms. Kaplan reported that the average class size at HKMS is 21-22 students. At this time, the largest class is French, which has only one section containing 26 students. Mrs. Chieda was pleased by the parent attendance at this meeting and encouraged them to continue to share their observations and concerns.

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

Dr. McMorran introduced his presentation by saying the purpose is to show how many students are anticipated and how many teachers and resources will be needed for the coming school year. Board members have the task to go over the proposed budget before the next budget meeting on January 23, 2020. Dr. McMorran also provided a handout entitled "Easton 2020-2021 Proposed Budget". Following the presentation, Ms. Fox Santora spoke about the particulars of reading instruction and how reading group size depends on students' reading levels. Mr. Stinson expressed concerns about being on the edge of "just good enough". The board has the job to contemplate the 4.2% increase. Ms. Reed asked about tuition if outplaced students leave the district mid-year. Dr. McMorran said the remaining unspent funds for outplacement are reimbursed to the district. Dr. McMorran encouraged members of the board to compare the Easton BOE budget with the Region 9 BOE budget. Mr. Parker spoke about the challenges of the number of new positions and restoration of other positions. He asked members to send questions prior to next budget workshop on January 23.

## DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Ms. Del Conte spoke about the number of students in special education. The fifth grade class at SSES this year is large and will be moving to HKMS, which will increase numbers for the middle school. Mr. Stinson asked if there was a way to know the anticipated number of outplacements. Ms. Del Conte will provide that information at the next meeting. Mr. Reiss spoke about the budget object summary and that grants and paybacks will be added in when they are received by Central Office. He reported that the cost to replace the current Phoenix financial system will be covered by funds in the snow plowing budget.

**Motion: move to approve the transfer of \$6,693.75 from 11-2600-422 to 11-2320-999 and the transfer of \$6,693.75 from 12-2600-422 to 12-2320-999 for the total aggregate \$13,387.50 as presented. This is needed due to the migration from Phoenix to the replacement system (e-FinancePlus). Stinson, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.**

Mr. Reiss said there were no health insurance concerns at this time. The December claims remained in the same range and Central Office claims are consistent with prior years.  
Dr. McMorran thanked the PTO for providing coffee and desserts at tonight's meeting.

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Stinson spoke about the policy committee, which has been meeting every Friday to update policies. Mrs. Chieda reported that the Easton Board of Education Facebook page is now public and the communication committee will be looking at protocols for social media currently being used by the Redding Board of Education. The communication committee will also be looking for ways to reach members of the community who are not on social media. There will be a public forum about the new online Easton Courier on Saturday, February 1, 2020 on West Campus of Sacred Heart University in Fairfield.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Nicole Konstantino, Morehouse Road, Easton: reported that the Easton PTO will no longer be able to fund extracurricular activities at the school.

Carolyn Oppenheim, Hunting Ridge Road, Easton: commented that she always receives a notice from the school regarding option to opt-out of health and wellness lessons for students. She also said that the part-time social worker is a great asset to students and we should consider changing her to full time.

Nikki Kaldawy, Staples Road, Easton: spoke about how some families are moving to Easton based on recommendations from friends. She does not think the Prowda projections are very helpful in predicting future school populations. She asked about exploring opportunities to raise money for schools.

Devon Wible, Woodland Drive, Easton: spoke about the importance of small class size and that students and teachers rapport has a significant impact on social emotional health and student safety.

Kristi Sogofsky, Adams Road, Easton: shared her experience regarding small class size vs. larger class size. She noticed a difference in her child's performance when class size increased when her son and daughter both had the same teacher.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Ms. Reed spoke about the importance of attending Board of Finance meetings if possible. The members of the board expressed their thanks to everyone that attended the meeting.

Mr. Hicks suggested asking businesses in the area if they offer contributions to help fund extracurricular activities.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education Meeting with Budget Presentation be adjourned. Reed, Stinson. Approved. Unanimous.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Recorded by Deborah DeLorenzo

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary