

Filed subject to approval

Easton Board of Education
Meeting
February 10, 2015
Minutes

Attendance:

Board of Education: Bobroske, Horowitz, Parker, Peskay (7:42 pm), Underberger

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

Others: 14 members of the staff and community, and a representative of the Easton Courier

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 January 12, 2015 meeting as submitted. Underberger, Horowitz. Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept the minutes of the January 13, 2015 meeting as submitted. Underberger, Bobroske. Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dr. Peskay arrived, 7:42 pm, during the public comment segment.

Cathy Dunsby: Mrs. Dunsby spoke in support of the 2-tier busing proposal. She stated that she would prefer that the younger children be on the bus with the older children who will watch over them. She is very comfortable with the proposed change.

Elisha Border: Mrs. Border is also in support of the 2-tier bus proposal. She cited statistics and information regarding the need for more sleep for high school students, environmental data, etc. She left a copy of the information with the board chair. She stated that the benefits for the majority outweigh the complaints of a few.

Ilene Haas: Mrs. Haas commented that she has had experienced with 2-tier busing when Easton had that model and she found there were no problems. She felt the proposal is responsible and a help to the environment. She understands the issues of changing family routines and work schedule, but would support the proposal.

Darrell Bradford, Redding resident: Mr. Bradford stated his opposition to the 2-tier busing proposal. He does not believe the change will substantially impact the sleep time for high school students. He noted that the bus routes would be longer with children spending more time on the buses, will create child care situations for many families, will create problems for the administration with handling behavior problems involving two schools, and questioned who would look after the children when they arrive at school or are waiting for the bus.

John Reilly, Redding resident: Mr. Reilly agreed with the comments of Mr. Bradford. He urged the board to look at the bus routes and examine how long the rides would be. He also suggested there would be additional costs for monitoring the children once they are dropped off at the schools at different times.

Ron Berry, Mile Common Drive: Mr. Berry was not in support of the 2-tier bus proposal.

Cathy Thompson, Mile Common Drive: Mrs. Thompson expressed her concerns about the 2-tier busing proposal, primarily the length of the bus route and the unproductive time the children would spend on the bus.

Jennifer Forlenza, Judd Road: Mrs. Forlenza expressed her gratitude for the services her daughter is receiving from the Special Services Department. She noted her daughter has made tremendous progress and the school is meeting her educational needs. She offered her support for the Special Services Department.

Bettina Grob, Flat Rock Drive: Mrs. Grob asked if the decision by Easton was contingent upon what Redding does with regard to the 2-tier bus proposal. Mr. Parker responded that it is not contingent upon what action Redding takes.

Jeanne Fones: Mrs. Fones stated that her experience with 2-tier busing in the past had been a good one.

Cathlin DeMarrais: Mrs. DeMarrais stated she has a concern about the 2-tier bus proposal and the time the children will spend on the bus.

Christine Calvert: Mrs. Calvert thanked the Superintendent for the weather related decisions made, the cancellations and the delays. She noted that the safety of the children is foremost.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dr. Underberger thanked all for coming out to the meeting and expressing their opinions.

Mrs. Bobroske thanked the mom who commented on her experiences with her special needs child for the positive feedback.

Dr. Peskay commented that children can be taught how to productively use the time on the bus, whether it is reading, listening to music/book, doing worksheets, etc.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON POLICY REVIEW

Mr. Horowitz presented two policies for a second and final reading. There were no significant changes in the policies since the first reading.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve Policy 3542.33: Food Sales Other than National School Lunch Program as reviewed for a second and final reading. Horowitz, Underberger. Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve Policy 6142.101: School Nutrition and Physical Activity (School Wellness) as reviewed for a second and final reading. Horowitz, Underberger. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON TWO-TIER BUSING PROPOSAL

Dr. Josefsberg acknowledged that the proposal has created parental fear of the mixed age busing proposal and the potential disruption of family routines. He believes the benefits of the change are benefits to all. He noted that it is good to save money when you can, but not at the expense of the children. In this proposal there are definite fuel and labor cost savings.

Mrs. Sullivan reported the average bus run for the schools is 33 minutes, with the longest at 36 minutes. A one-hour limit is imposed by the State. The bus company has done sample bus runs and found the proposal to be doable. Currently the bus capacity is 1080 seats, the current student population is 869 and only about 600 students are using the bus. About 10 years ago, a 2-tier bus system was used, but was stopped when the school population became too large to accommodate all the children without adding more vehicles.

Dr. Josefsberg indicated that if Easton changes to the 2-tier system and Redding does not, there would be no change to the Barlow start time.

Dr. Underberger commented that the issues of disruption of routine and the young/older student behavior problems seem to be more sensitive than the start time at the high school, the alignment of school hours, financial impact, and time spent on the bus and environmental concerns. If only Easton makes the change, there will be no change in alignment or start time for the high school.

Mr. Parker stated that his children were in school at the time of the 2-tier bus system and they had no difficulty with it.

Dr. Josefsberg reported that the Redding board is still discussing the proposal and the Region 9 board has not addressed the proposal as yet.

Board members were in agreement that further consideration of the proposal was warranted before a decision is made. The cost implications of the proposal are not a part of the proposed budget.

RECESS

The Chair requested a 5 minute recess. The meeting recessed at 9:00 pm.

RECONVENE

The Chair reconvened the meeting at 9:05 pm.

DISCUSSION OF THE 2015-16 OPERATING BUDGET

The starting point of the proposed budget was an increase of 2.49%. Mrs. Sullivan provided a list of technical edits (based on new information and corrections), reducing the increase to 2.36%.

Dr. Josefsberg indicated the next step to reduce the increase would be to look to capital items, technology requests and level readers for SSES. He noted that staffing was reviewed with no possibilities of reduction.

Discussion followed. The concept of establishing a separate account for capital expenses was discussed. Mr. Parker will explore that potential with the Board of Finance.

Board members requested that the administration provide a listing of potential reductions for consideration to bring the budget increase to 1%.

The board will continue the discussion of the budget on Wednesday, February 11, 2015.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Mrs. Fox Santora reported the student celebrated the 100th day of school and created a field of 100 snowmen in front of the school. She announced the local winners of the PTA Reflections contest. These students will move on to the state level contest.

Dr. Peskay left the meeting (9:56 pm)

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Kaplan reported that a local musician has created a musical march for the school orchestra. She also noted that the evaluation process is moving along nicely with wonderful and inspiring results.

Special Services: Mrs. Friedlander reported the BASES program continues to grow. Staff is working with Redding to plan community trips to local restaurants, grocery stores, etc. to provide the students with real life experiences. The Pre-School lottery was conducted. Training of the Easton & Redding staff continues for IEP and goals/objective writing.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction: Mrs. Pierson Ugol provided a listing of activities that were planned for a recent staff development minimum day. Unfortunately, that minimum day was cancelled due to weather conditions. A meeting has taken place for the vertical alignment math team and the language arts team, with the Barlow teachers participating in the meetings. Work is continuing on the World Language conceptual framework for grades K-12.

Director of Finance: Mrs. Sullivan reported health insurance claims are as anticipated. The Transfer Report was provided for review. The Bethel tax issue for the transportation fleet is ongoing. The court transcript was received; both attorneys filed briefs and have 30 days to respond to the briefs. At that point, the judge will have 120 days to respond.

Superintendent: Dr. Josefsberg commented that he appreciated the thoughtful discussion of the 2-tier busing proposal.

LONG RANGE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mrs. Bobroske noted that the weather has caused cancellation of meetings, currently rescheduled for 2/18. She is hopeful that a report will be available in April.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMITTEE

Mrs. Bobroske reported the committee is in the process of reviewing candidates. Chairperson Sara Sobel has indicated a recommendation would not be available until March.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Christine Calvert: Mrs. Calvert commented when her children were a part of the 2-tier bus system, there were no problems. Regarding the budget and the need for playground supervision at HKMS, she asked if a staff member could be moved from SSES to cover that need.

Ron Berry: Mr. Berry commented on the transportation needed for a HKMS student traveling to Barlow for a math class, asking if alternative options were considered. He commented that the schools are a business and staffing is the major cost. He stated that the board needs to develop a long range plan, 5-years out, to address both the decline in enrollment and the capital needs of the facilities.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The executive session scheduled for the meeting was cancelled.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education adjourn the meeting. Bobroske, Horowitz.
Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 pm

Submitted by Regina Bobroske, Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday