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CHRISTINE HALLORAN  
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*Filed subject to approval*

## EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

March 10, 2020– 7:30 p.m.

### Minutes

#### ATTENDANCE

Board members: Parker, Chieda, Hicks, Reed

Board members participating remotely: Goldstein, Stinson

Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Reiss, Kaplan, Fox Santora

Others: members of the public and staff, and the videographer

J. Parker called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the February 11, 2020 Regular Meeting and Budget Workshop as submitted. Reed, Chieda. Approved. Unanimous.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the February 13, 2020 Regular Budget Workshop as submitted. Reed, Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the February 18, 2020 Special Joint Meeting of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education as submitted. Chieda, Hicks. Approved. (Reed abstained).**

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Parker spoke during Public Comment at the Region 9 Budget Workshop requesting that the 19-20 budget surplus of \$622,000 be given back to the Easton and Redding communities. This would provide substantial savings to both boards. He sent a follow-up email to the Region 9 Board and will plan to attend their next Budget meeting to see if they will act on it.

#### ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Pierson Ugol reported that this spring, Easton, Redding, and Region 9 schools will host a Tri-State Consortium consultancy visit in all five schools from April 29 - May 1, 2020. The focus of this visit is special education and response to intervention. The Tri-State Consortium is an organization that supports high-performing member school districts in the tri-state area in continuous, systemic improvement through systems thinking and collaborative inquiry. Districts are visited by request. Our tri-district will focus the visit and provide guiding questions. A final report from the Tri-State Consortium will provide comprehensive feedback which will be made public after sharing with the districts and boards of education.

#### BUILDING ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Dr. McMorran asked the school principals to give a "State of the Union" address:

Mrs. Fox Santora - Samuel Staples Elementary School:

The school goal is related to Tier 1 instruction. Each teacher selected a group of students to closely monitor over the course of the year; they utilized baseline assessments and progress monitoring tools to design instruction that would accelerate achievement. Teachers were asked to design a means to chronicle the story of these students, including an honest reflection on instructional decisions. Each teacher has met with administration to share the documents they have begun to create. Lots of data has been collected. Mrs. Fox Santora shared the winter screening results of the Fountas and Pinnell individual reading assessment and the Acadience measurement tool for math.

A wish of administration and teachers is for the instructional leaders to work with paraprofessionals to build their skills so they can better work with small groups. Teachers wish for more coaching from their instructional leaders; leaders are working with Tier 3 students, resulting in less time for coaching which includes going into classrooms and modeling lessons. If teachers had more time with instructional coaches, together they could look at small groups and make sound instructional decisions. Instructional leaders also write curriculum, attend PPTs, meet with Dr. Pierson Ugol regarding curriculum, and attend professional development to stay abreast of the most current research and practice.

Mr. Parker and Mrs. Chieda wanted to know what items in the budget are tied to these concerns and asked that Mrs. Fox Santora share ways the Board can support in the future. Mr. Hicks stated that minimum days for professional development do prevent teachers from being pulled from the classroom but cause child care concerns for working parents. Dr. McMorran stated that it is wise to use specialists to provide Tier 2 and 3 instruction; however it cuts into the time they can coordinate and collaborate: taking curriculum and designing units that translate into daily classroom instruction. Ideally specialists are used for aligning efforts.

Mrs. Kaplan - Helen Keller Middle School:

Grade level teams look at data carefully and empower students to set goals in order to improve.

Mrs. Kaplan shared progress toward school goals. She is pleased with the data cycle process and excited for the Tri-State team to come. Special Education leadership, Jenn Del Conte and Kara DiBartolo, collaborate with administration and staff and are working at a great speed. Vertical teams led by Dana Aponte participate in multiple data cycles every 6 weeks, looking over each student's data asking what core skills students need support in for the next 6 weeks. Incredible progress is made with this process. Similar processes are in place within other departments at HKMS and are successful.

Mrs. Kaplan also shared the need for teachers to have more professional development to address the emotional dysregulation of students in order to mitigate their emotional ups and downs.

Technology use outside of school is impacting classroom environments, infiltrating the school days.

Mrs. Kaplan urges parents to institute family rules that include no phone in the bedroom two hours before bed. The school is consistently dealing with students who have had negative contact with peers at home, late into the night. Some students are arriving to school exhausted, not restoring themselves overnight.

Mrs. Kaplan ended by stating that she is unhappy with math data from last year and implores the board to allow her to hire a new teacher for next year.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: REVIEW OF SAFETY PLANS FOR RESPONSE TO HEALTH ISSUES

COVID-19 impact: Dr. McMorran began his presentation asking: How are we going to keep our community (not only the children) safe? The decision regarding the closing of schools will be

determined by the need to reduce the transmission of the virus. He raised concerns regarding school closings, such as students spending time in other public spaces, and the need for the elderly to care for students while parents work.

When in school, teachers have taught students to engage in social distance and personal cleanliness. Only

a handful of parents have kept their children home. Dr. McMorran is seeking clarification with Hartford regarding truancy requirements if people are self-quarantining. The administrative team continues to meet to plan for possible closing. Some important considerations at this time are to keep the parent community and the larger community informed; requesting that staff and faculty stay home when ill; and maintaining a student's 504 or IEP goals, if the schools were to close.

In the event of a closing: According to the approved calendar, there are 12 days in June that can be used before needing to take days from the five allotted for April break. Therefore, if the schools are closed for less than two weeks, these days will be made up. Seeking a state waiver to authorize on-line learning is a poor second choice. However, staff and administration will prepare for this possibility. Dr. McMorran is taking guidance from health leaders in both towns.

Thursday, March 12th is a delayed opening to discuss logistics of remote learning. Friday, March 13th is an early dismissal, allowing staff to suggest some voluntary activities for students if school is not in session.

#### DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Ms. Del Conte shared Easton Special Services Goals: 2019-2020 Update

Goal #1: To improve participation and performance of students with disabilities in statewide assessments.

Goal #2: To increase regular class placement and time with nondisabled peers.

Goal #3: To decrease the prevalence rate. Easton is currently just slightly above the state percentage (15.9% vs. 15.4%.) The state rate has increased.

Goal #4: To decrease out-of-district placement. The discussion on how to build capacity within the district continues.

Ms. Del Conte also shared a document titled: Special Services Comparison: March 2019 to March 2020. She called the Board's attention to the number of meetings held. Less meetings keep teachers with students.

Mr. Reiss shared that in 2015, the Easton Energy and Environment Task Force facilitated an energy audit of Helen Keller Middle School. One of the top recommendations was to implement a series of improvements to the existing Building Management System controls. At the time, the project was estimated to cost \$36,000 to implement, yielding an \$18,000 annual savings. Mr. Reiss shared with the board that it is his intent to get an actual proposal, including projected savings. He is not currently seeking an official board approval but welcomes feedback. He will have the results by May.

Mr. Hicks asked if this is the same group who recommended solar panels. Mr. Parker said some are the same, and requested that this would not impact the current budget.

Mr. Reiss proposed two transfers of funds. Transfer #1 is due to changes in student needs, outside services are required in lieu of budgeted outside tuition. Transfer #2 is due to changes in multiple student needs, additional BCBA outside services are required.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve two transfers of funds: \$14,400.00 from Tuition- Private Schools to Other Professional Services and \$30,000.00 from Tuition-Private Schools to Other Professional Services. Hicks, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.**

Insurance claims continue to be in good shape. February claims were average. If claims continue this way, there will be a positive balance for the end of year for the health insurance reserve.

Dr. McMorran thanked members of the board for expressions of confidence in these last trying weeks.

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mrs. Chieda and Mr. Stinson determined a purpose, structure and process for the Easton Board of Education Standing Committee on Communications. The purpose is to consider a variety of communications media to explore the most efficient and effective means to disseminate accurate, timely and useful information on educational activities and programs, student accomplishments, administrative information, and budgetary processes in furtherance of governance transparency and community outreach.

They will meet on an as-needed basis. They wish to give other board members time to think about the purpose, structure and process proposed.

Mr. Parker stated that the next Board meeting on April 14th was scheduled to fall during Spring Break. Since some Board members have plans, a new date was determined: Tuesday, March 31st - 7:30PM

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education change the date of the next Regular Meeting from Tuesday, April 14, 2020 to Tuesday, March 31, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. Hicks, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.**

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Diana Ronan, Tuckahoe Rd., Easton: requested that leadership please hold off on a decision regarding the 5th grade Nature's Classroom trip, which is two months away. She also expressed the difficulty of getting into Art 1 (a prerequisite) at the high school due to cutting an art teacher. It would be great if Art 1 could be taught in middle school.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Ms. Goldstein and Mr. Stinson also requested that a decision on Nature's Classroom be held off at this time. Ms. Reed thanked Mrs. Kaplan for the lymphoma fundraiser. Mrs. Chieda asked the administration to pass along to the staff the board's appreciation for the way they are handling this trying time. Mr. Parker thanked Mrs. Fox Santora and Mrs. Kaplan for the midterm report card, which helps guide the direction the board needs to go. Dr. McMorran stated that a decision regarding Nature's Classroom has not been made. He is working to waive the Art 1 requirement.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Elizabeth Rimkunas