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CHRISTINE HALLORAN  
TOWN CLERK  
EASTON CT *Filed subject to approval*

# EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86583695639?pwd=WFROaUdseko3NFpHRXZTTjhhcE9lUT09>

Meeting ID: 865 8369 5639 Password: 06612

June 9, 2020

7:30 p.m.

## Minutes

### ATTENDANCE

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

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

Others: 67 members of the public and staff

J. 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 from the May 1, 2020 Easton Board of Education Special Meeting as submitted. Hicks, Stinson. Approved.**

**Unanimous.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes from the May 21, 2020 Easton Board of Education Special Meeting as submitted. Goldstein, Stinson. Approved.**

**Unanimous.**

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Wendy Bowditch, Todds Way, Easton: thanked Dr. McMorran and Jeff Parker for their service. She recalled how Mr. Parker went to bus stops across town in the fall to assure a smooth opening to school.

Lara Fayek, Wilson Road, Easton: wants to address the issue of race and our educational system. She proposed that the Board of Education initiate a task force to develop an anti-racism curriculum. As a social studies teacher in another district, she is happy to help.

Pat Hamlin, Old Sow Road, Easton: when referring to the budget, she stated that all is important, which results in hard decisions. She especially values staff and the arts. She thanks the Board of Education for being thoughtful.

### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

G. Goldstein thanked J. Parker for years of service to the Board and the town.

J. Stinson thanked J. Parker for everything he has done for Easton. He thanked Dr. McMorran for his hard work. He thanked Lara Fayek and promised the issue will be given the serious consideration it deserves. He wishes he could adequately thank J. Parker and Dr. McMorran and celebrate our 5th and

8th graders. We need celebrations but not yet. He acknowledged hard decisions that need to be made this evening.

K. Reed thanked J. Parker for his years of service, going above and beyond, living and breathing education in Easton. She also thanked Lara Fayek for speaking out on an important issue.

J. Parker: This is a year like no other. He thanked administration and teachers for “turning on a dime” to teach remotely. He also acknowledged the Central Office staff, parents and students.

#### BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS

Mrs. Fox-Santora thanked Mr. Brownstein for a successful Family Trivia Night. They have been working with classroom teachers on fall classroom placement. They have hired a 1.0 Physical Education teacher pending Dr. McMorran’s approval. The two administrators have vetted 540 narrative report cards that clearly detail the achievement of Samuel Staples students. Pick up and drop off of materials can be done at the silo doors, open from 8-2.

Mrs. Kaplan acknowledged parents and students: There was not a single student who did not participate in Distance Learning; eighty eight percent of students received grades in all subjects. This is due to students engaged by teachers, para professionals, counselors and specialists. She is grateful to the entire community. She and Dr. McMorran hired a Student Resource Officer who Chief Doyle recommended. She thanked the Custodial staff who went through all lockers; they are still cleaning and painting the walls. She acknowledged the creativity of Ms. Mohr who assisted behind the scenes in the sprucing up of HKMS. She commended social studies teachers for having important discussions (in Google Meets) with students regarding social justice. She is sad for 8th grade students but is excited about the beautiful June 16th ceremony that she hopes the whole community will watch virtually. Eighth grade students were a part of the preparations.

J. Parker asked to add one more agenda item: a request for funds to pay for a superintendent search.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: STATUS OF REOPENING PLANS

Dr. McMorran stated that he cannot give a comprehensive plan due to the complexity of reopening the schools safely in the fall. He is carefully tracking what is happening in Hartford. Central Office is currently planning for multiple contingencies. He is looking at the physical buildings and how to make them safer. For example: screens in the main office and the cleaning of each building.

Here are a few of the many questions and considerations to be addressed throughout the summer:

Will we need bus monitors on every bus to assure student distancing?

Can we have 10-11 students in a classroom?

If we need more space, we need more people.

What will Hartford fund?

Teachers and staff need time for training.

When considering Distance Learning, we need more secure filtering.

What are the PPE needs?

How do we address equity issues?

Dr. Pierson Ugol said daily work goes into the formulation of contingency plans: creative thinking, reviewing facilities, pricing, working toward a formal plan when we have clear parameters. A Reopening Committee meets weekly. Experts are invited to attend. For example, some meetings include

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the nursing staff, others include food services. At one time six different options were being considered as a means to access cafeteria food to students; two seem to be the best options, the goal being getting food to students with minimal touch. Basic safety needs dominate discussions. Nurses will work to train staff and, in turn, information will be shared with parents. Attention to social distancing, entry and exit protocols are being considered. Dr. Pierson Ugol is running focus groups with staff at each school in the district. She is also soliciting parent feedback and input. In a recent parent survey, she received over 700 responses, a terrific response rate. Overall the feedback is positive. There are areas to consider, too. She is grateful for the robust parent response.

In the area of curriculum and instruction, content leaders are working hard: looking at units of study and prioritizing. They are determining what materials students need (no communal sharing). They are asking teachers what they wish they had at home: what teachers could use to teach in a remote environment. She will continue to update as the plan develops.

R.Hicks asked that the results of the survey be shared; Dr. Pierson Ugol said the survey closes on Friday, and she will get a summary out to all. R. Hicks also asked when Hartford may be making some recommendations. Dr. McMorran said he expects some direction in a couple of weeks. He added that the Fairfield County schools will likely collaborate, making similar decisions. Hartford is getting some pressure to come out with some guidance.

J. Chieda requested the board participate in this process in some way as was mentioned at the last Tri-Board meeting.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: FINALIZE 2020-2021 BUDGET

Page 1 of the budget is the same; there are two new additions: a savings of approximately \$39,000 a HKMS hire from Masters step 16 to Masters step 2; and a savings of approximately \$27,000 for a new Physical Education teacher from Masters step 1 to Bachelor's step 2. There is breakage, the replacement of a teacher with a new teacher on a lower pay scale. With this savings, the Board can restore something previously cut. A priority is the hire of a 10 month Office Assistant for Samuel Staples to begin in August. There is a 300,000 surplus (1.8% of the budget). Due to COVID-19, there is an additional \$300,000 for a total of \$600,000. The Board discussed using a portion for items in next year's budget. Two expenses will draw upon these funds: \$51,000 for a Special Education settlement payment and \$23,000 for SSES air conditioning repairs. J. Parker clarified that the Office Assistant will help address a security issue due to a busy elementary school, a strong desire expressed by Mrs. Fox Santora. J. Stinson asked if the Media Center Specialist could be restored, could this person serve as a Distance Learning specialist? He also questioned if funds could be provided to support the work of Dr. Pierson Ugol: revise curriculum, hire consultants. G. Goldstein asked if there is any discussion related to the calendar, the number of school days. Dr. McMorran responded that 180 days equals 900 instructional hours. He stated that the district is planning for 180 days of teaching and learning. J. Stinson advocated for extra curricular activities. J. Parker wants the Board to consider surplus for COVID protection. G. Goldstein said money well spent would be to find a HKMS Media Specialist who could lead technology K-8. Dr. McMorran's advice is to wait on the decision to spend the \$74,000 until July/August. If the Board decides to use the money for extracurricular activities or put it towards a Media Specialist, there is still time.

J. Chieda asked the board to consider the health reserve. She is concerned that SSES as a HOT school is cutting art and music. She wants to restore the Discrete Math program as well as extra curricular

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activities. J. Parker stated that the Health reserve balance of \$700,000 is at the top end of what Brown and Brown would recommend. J. Cheida maintained that a portion of these funds could be used to restore art, music and Discrete Math. J. Parker shared concerns regarding COVID expenses of reopening. J. Cheida feels that the Board of Education cannot fully absorb COVID reopening costs under current guidelines and the Board may have to go to the Town to request funding. J. Parker responded that it would be difficult to go to the Town after restoring many items cut from the budget.

K. Reed shared that the Board of Education did not agree to all of the cuts. It was unfortunate that the budget was presented to the Board of Finance without sharing with the Board of Education. J. Parker responded that the budget process included seeking the Superintendent's guidance in a series of cuts that would not damage people and programs. J. Chieda stated that the cuts are not related to COVID. These are cuts by the Board of Finance that they thought were appropriate. J. Parker worried about the teachers if a decision was not made this evening. K. Reed stated that this is the first time the Easton Board of Education is meeting since the budget was finalized by the Board of Finance.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the budget report as provided by Mr. Scott Reiss with the following changes: reinstatement of an Office Assistant at Samuel Staples Elementary School; reinstatement of a pressure washer; reinstatement of textbooks for classroom libraries; and return to initial allotment for summer curriculum salaries. Approved, 4-2 (Chieda, Reed opposed.)**

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS

G. Goldstein was nominated as Board of Education secretary (6-0)

J. Stinson will serve as Chairman of the Board of Education (6-0)

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPOINT MEMBERS TO THE JOINT CALENDAR COMMITTEE AND THE JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

This agenda item was not discussed.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH (added to agenda)

J. Stinson, G. Goldstein and R. Hicks serve on the subcommittee. The community will be engaged; there will be focus groups. Postings for the position will be as far and wide as appropriate. The process will be accelerated. The hope is to have a new Superintendent by the start of the school year. The other Boards need to approve the cost, as well.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education allocate up to \$4,000 toward the hiring of a consulting firm, G.E. Consulting, charged with the search for a new Superintendent for the Easton/Redding/Region 9 school system. Goldstein, Stinson. Approved. Unanimous.**

#### DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Reiss restated that there is \$700,000 in reserve for health insurance. Staff is delaying, not eliminating health care visits.

#### BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Adam Parker, Wedgewood Dr., Easton: thanks J. Parker and congratulates J. Stinson and G. Goldstein.

Anna Mendez, Brookside Dr., Easton: is disappointed for students in grades 5 and 8. She feels all recognition for students has come from the PTO. She stated that teachers were advocating for a celebration for these graduates.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Parker thanked Dr. McMorran for serving 13 years as Superintendent and an administrator, for his leadership and friendship. He will be sorely missed. K. Reed thanked the administration and teachers for dealing with this unusual situation so well. J. Cheida acknowledged the calls and emails requesting something special for the 5th and 8th graders. Perhaps in August or September, there can be a welcoming ceremony. R. Hicks thanked the administration. He stated that Dr. McMorran will be missed tremendously. He also expressed his thanks to J. Parker. G. Goldstein also stated that Board members have seen emails from parents of 5th and 8th graders. It is very unfortunate. She too agrees that maybe there is something that can be done in the future. J. Stinson shared his compassion for parents of 5th graders. He said the Board will consider creative ways to celebrate in order to mark the occasion, offering to have a dialog with the community. J. Stinson also thanked Dr. McMorran.

Dr. McMorran commended the Board for the honest conversation. He acknowledged J. Parker's dedication to the town. In response to the decisions regarding celebrating 5th and 8th graders, he asked the town to not hold the Board responsible as it was his decision after consulting with local experts. He continued that Easton and Redding have done a fine job of social distancing resulting in lower cases of virus in these towns.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:47 p.m.

Submitted by,  
Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by,  
Liz Rimkunas