

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Access as follows:

<https://zoom.us/j/98184079670?pwd=NX1PeEFDSHVzWUZDOUFhY3BackRDZz09>

Meeting ID 981 8407 9670 Password 06612

December 8, 2020

7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Zachery, Del Conte

Others: 58 members of the staff and public, and the recording secretary.

CALL TO ORDER

J. Stinson called the Easton Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 Special Joint Meeting of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education as submitted. (Parker, Hicks). Approved, 5-0-1. (Chieda abstained).

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 Easton Board of Education Regular meeting as submitted. (Hicks, Chieda). Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nikki Kaldawy, Staples Road, said that we all want to be back in school. She said that for years she listened to Dr. McMorran say that more help is needed at Central Office, and that people need to remember that we don't have the resources because so much has been cut from our budgets. She also said thank you to everyone.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

D. Wible said that she applauds the efforts of Central Office and administration in listening to public input and acting on a shift in the lunch times of students in the same school.

J. Chieda said that she wanted to quickly acknowledge the comments that the BOE has received. She said that the BOE appreciates your feedback.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUILDING REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rydell Harrison, first said that he echoes J. Chieda's comment about appreciating all the feedback and sharing of thoughts and concerns from the public. Dr. Harrison shared

local COVID data in the form of graphs on new COVID cases, positivity rates, the correlation between COVID cases in schools and the community, and a comparison of positivity rates in surrounding towns. Dr. Mark Cooper, Director of Health in our Health District, joined the meeting and explained the importance and relevance of the data contained in the abovementioned graphs. In an extended conversation, BOE members asked Dr. Cooper questions about: transmission in schools, hospitalization rates of children, why some public schools are open and some are not, new cases being parents or not, availability of ICU facilities, staff vaccination, the Easton schools transmission rate and the numbers which would allow children to return to the Easton school buildings.

Director of Finance & Operations, Clarence Zachery, reported that there was only one transfer this past month and explained an unusual line in the Budget Object Summary that he had already spoken to J. Parker about; the unusual line is simply an accounting necessity because of the transition phase from the Phoenix system to the E-Finance Plus system.

Director of Special Services, Jennifer Del Conte, gave a report to further the understanding of Special Services that included: the complexities of the Easton School District's current Special Education population; the continuum of Special Education services and programs offered at SSES and HKMS; and the programmatic and financial impact of the Jr. Bridge Program. J. Del Conte's report focused primarily on the Jr. Bridge Program, and she said this program fills a gap for the participating students, provides for the continuity of friendships and relationships and is more cost effective for the District than out-placement.

AGENDA CHANGE

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education move Agenda Item 6. B., Presentation by the Board of Finance, to take place after Agenda Item 5. C. (Parker, Goldstein). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PRESENTATION FROM BOARD OF FINANCE CHAIR
Chairman of the Easton Board of Finance, Andy Akachele, gave a lengthy presentation about the role, responsibilities, challenges, expectations and standards of the Easton Board of Finance. His presentation included historical and current anecdotes about the dealings and relationships of the Easton BOF and how they connect to the Easton Board of Education.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUILDING REPORTS

Samuel Staples Elementary School Principal, Kimberly Fox Santora, reported that her staff had made a significant schedule change at SSES this past week, partly in response to feedback the administration had been receiving from parents. She said that initially they felt continuity was the most important factor driving the daily schedule, but that they soon realized that you cannot replicate a normal school day into remote learning. K. Fox Santora shared the new daily schedule, which includes one for K-4 and one for 5th grade. She said all grades start out the day with 15 minutes of SEL time and all grades have lunch/recess at the same time. K. Fox Santora said that the 5th grade schedule is different because that grade has two groupings and the teacher needs to spend the same amount of instructional time with each group. She also shared examples of individual teacher Google Classroom pages which displayed how teachers manage Zoom links, whole-class and small-group instruction and work "on your own time." A

thorough discussion followed that included: logistics, connectivity issues, pacing within the curriculum and state standards for priorities.

Helen Keller Middle School Principal, Susan Kaplan, first gave a comprehensive report on the counseling needs of HKMS students pre-COVID and now, saying that there is definitely an uptick in students needing counseling support. She said the NWEA results show that students are doing really well in reading and a slight dip in math. S. Kaplan said the students' day closely mirrors what they have with their teachers when they are in the building and that there is a five-minute break in between classes. She said that parents received a learning guide on what kids can be doing when not in class. S. Kaplan said that she has started classroom observations and that she has seen free and easy conversation and instruction, and that she is pleased with the level of engagement on the part of the students. She added that a big silver lining in this learning model are the new set of skills -- technology, problem solving, adapting to change, executive functions and communicating their needs -- that students are learning. BOE members had questions about the PRIDE, Homebase, enrichments and the amount of time set aside for non-academics.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Pierson Ugol, reported that they are closely monitoring student progress and that they are cautiously optimistic about it. She said that they have prioritized standards and that pacing is not occurring as it would in a typical year. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that the District is very interested in offering a small-group targeted summer program, and that all teacher evaluations will be conducted on an informal basis and that they began last month.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPROVAL OF THE 2021 EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING SCHEDULE

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept the 2021 schedule of board meetings, with the possibility of making adjustments to the schedule at the January 2021 meeting. (Parker, Wible). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: BOE SPENDING OBLIGATIONS OVERVIEW: CONTRACTS AND HEALTH CARE

C. Zachery said that he had received a report from Brown & Brown which stated that the District's claims history is looking favorable right now. He said that there had been four new positions requested from building administrators and that he would send out a report and staffing requests to BOE members.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: INITIAL DISCUSSION OF PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS FOR 2021/2022

J. Stinson tabled this Discussion and Possible Action until a not yet determined meeting to be held during the week of December 14, 2020.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Krista Zilberg, Lobdell Lane, expressed her gratitude toward S. Fox Santora and her dissatisfaction toward the District's Special Education Department.

Carolyn Oppenheim, Hunting Ridge Road, said that it's clear that COVID is not the school's problem but that of the community. She said that she is astounded that adults act like this and that we are here because of that.

Allison Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road, said that she still has a concern about the student instruction time and that there is not equal opportunity for those who are at grade level or above. A. Bonoff also thanked everybody for all of their hard work.

David Cohen, North Street, said that he thinks there are other ways to decide whether or not to close. He said that the schedule change has not been vast, but that he does appreciate the switching that has been done by the teachers. D. Cohen said that he still has questions about the amount of time spent on instruction. He also said that he appreciates the work that everyone has done.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

D. Wible said that within the course of the evening's meeting she had received messages from Easton residents asking for a special meeting or forum with Dr. Harrison and Dr. Cooper.

J. Parker said that the idea of having a meeting next week is a good one.

J. Chieda asked that the BOE chairman carefully consider the idea of a meeting next week, especially if administration needs to be present. She said that we need to be careful with people's time right now.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education be adjourned. (Parker, Hicks). Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 p.m.

Submitted by Gretchen Goldstein
Secretary, Easton Board of Education

Recorded by,
Sarah Ota