

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Held virtually via Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/j/97844957453?pwd=TndYVlklTmQzaitwemt1bVdaY3daY3dUQT09>

Meeting ID: 978 4495 7453, Passcode: 06612

March 9, 2021 - 7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Zachery, Del Conte

Others: 39 members of the staff and public, and the recording secretary

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the February 8, 2021 ER9 Joint Boards of Education Special meeting, pending possible review of curriculum discussion. (Chieda, Wible). Approved. Unanimous.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the February 9, 2021 Regular Board of Education meeting and Budget Workshop as submitted. (Parker, Chieda). Approved. Unanimous.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the February 11, 2021 Regular Budget Workshop as submitted. (Hicks, Parker). Approved. Unanimous.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

D. Wible read aloud a letter from Tracy Carralucci, Morninglory Lane, in which she said she supported the DEI Task Force and the work they are doing.

R. Hicks said a huge thank you to teachers and administration for getting the schools open and keeping them open. He asked if the administration plans to incorporate any of the suggestions contained within the -- alumni generated -- Social Justice Policy.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rydell Harrison, first said he wanted to respond to R. Hicks' question. He said that while he appreciates the work of the ER9 Social Justice Committee (not a school district sponsored group) and other suggestions from people, that is not how our curriculum development works. Dr. Harrison said that curriculum development is led by Dr. Pierson Ugol, and is a collaborative process

with our teachers and administrators that reflects the values of the BOE and administrators and makes sense for our District. Dr. Harrison shared a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: The Why of DEI," that focused on the areas of changing demographics, social & emotional learning, and a safe school climate within the Easton School District. The presentation included a three-phase model to guide the work as: 1) Review Assets and Challenges; 2) Develop a Theory of Action; and, 3) Develop and Implement a Plan.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, reported that students in grades 5-8 will be taking the NWEA assessment in March, and that it was a purposeful decision to implement this assessment early and as a non-standard administration of the assessment. Dr. Pierson Ugol explained that a non-standard administration means that the District did not allow the number of instructional weeks to pass between what the testing norms would use for the Fall norms and then for the Spring norms to be considered valid. She said they will get really useful student performance data that will inform differentiation, enrichment and SRBI support. Dr. Pierson Ugol said we need to be careful not to compare the percentages to what would be for a typical spring administration of the assessment. She also said this data will inform possible summer explorations for students.

Director of Finance & Operations, Clarence Zachery, reported that the new Budget Object Summary provides more detail than had previously been available in these reports. He said that the EFinance Plus product has rolled out well, but that the add-on feature of reporting is problematic; he also said that their customer service has been problematic. R. Hicks asked about any on-going grants, cost-sharing and COVID reimbursements. C. Zachery replied that some grants are still in the application process; cost sharing is not available yet; and, COVID reimbursements from the State of Connecticut have been received.

Director of Special Education, Jennifer Del Conte, said that there has been a significant percentage change from 2020 to 2021, but cautioned that numbers only tell part of the story. She said this proves that early intervention works. She also said that her department is in the throes of planning for the Extended School Year and determining which students need summer instruction.

Samuel Staples Elementary School Principal, Kimberly Fox Santora, reported that by March 31, there will be 11 more students who will have returned to in-person learning. She talked about a fundraising effort held with Redding Elementary School called, "Coin Wars," to raise money for Houston Kids Meals; SSES raised \$3,292.43 for the organization, all in coins. Fox Santora said that a 10-month secretary had just left her position at SSES for a 12-month position in Redding, and that a long-term substitute SpEd teacher had just started for a SpEd teacher on maternity leave. She said that a Part 2 of the Implicit Bias workshop would be held for the staff, and that, so far, they have 76 potential kindergarteners on their list from local preschools.

Helen Keller Middle School Principal, Susan Kaplan, said that it's feeling a little more like school, and that the recent vaccination clinics have put a smile on staff faces. She said 86% of students are learning in the building, and 14% are temporarily learning from home; she said there are 40 students with 504s, which translates to 12% of the student population, and that this is similar to other schools in the area. S. Kaplan thanked the PTO for the snacks for staff.

## BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Tri-District Food Services: J. Parker reported that the Tri-District is in the last year of its contract with Chartwells Food Services and that he hopes we will not have to go out to bid, and instead, that the State of Connecticut has a mandate about renewing food services contracts within the COVID guidelines. C. Zachery replied that the State of Connecticut didn't mandate, but did give Districts the option of renewing food services contracts; he said that ER9 has exercised this option. C. Zachery said that there is usually an administrative increase in the Chartwells contract, but that he did not have this number yet and that Chartwells has been a great partner.

Curriculum Committee: D. Wible and J. Chieda reported that District math specialists will be meeting this summer to develop a curriculum that will align with the Connecticut Common Core standards; they said it will be an assemblage of best practice resources instead of a math textbook and will focus on what students in Easton need, with the least amount of financial impact to the community. Dr. Pierson Ugol added that the summer work will include the development of a shared and aligned pacing calendar for both Easton and Redding.

## DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: POSSIBLE EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS SPECIAL EDUCATION SETTLEMENTS

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education move to Executive Session to discuss special education settlements and invite Dr. Harrison, Dr. Pierson Ugol, J. Del Conte and C. Zachery. (Parker, Hicks). Approved. Unanimous.**

The Easton Board of Education moved to Executive Session at 9:12 p.m.  
The Easton Board of Education returned to Regular Session at 9:38 p.m.

## DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SECOND READING OF TITLE IX PROPOSED POLICY

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept Title IX Policy as amended. (Parker, Hicks). Approved. Unanimous.**

## DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: ENRICHMENT, MODALITIES AND RECOVERING FROM COVID

Dr. Pierson Ugol explained a summer plan offering connectivity between school, the public library, the Parks & Rec Department and the Town of Redding to hold academic and enrichment classes and clubs for students in Easton and Redding. Dr. Harrison said the focus would be on acceleration to grade-appropriate work, rather than remediation, as acceleration prioritizes grade-level skills and understanding and remediation traps students in below-grade level work. Dr. Pierson Ugol reported that testing data is showing that students are on-par in reading, but are showing a weakness in the calculation strand in math. Both Dr. Harrison and Dr. Pierson Ugol said that the summer program will be designed to meet the needs of students and will be offered across the two towns. Some BOE members expressed concerns about: the Board not being involved and informed of this plan, how parents will know if their children should participate, the potential development of inequities in students if they don't participate, and pressure to have children participate.

J. Chieda asked about the "Modalities" part of the Agenda Item, expressing that this part was not fully discussed. J. Stinson said that perhaps this could be a standing agenda item. In addition, she expressed

Page 3 of 5

concern over the summer program and wanted to be sure this would not cause more imbalance of learning needs come September, if some students that participate would then be “ahead” in curriculum. She suggested that the BOE discuss the program further.

#### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: HEALTH INSURANCE FUNDING DECISION

C. Zachery reported that Anthem had contacted him about a big claims number that will be coming in for the month of February. He also explained that Anthem had changed their internal systems, and as a result, statements will look low. It was decided that a decision could not be made on the health reserve funding until more and complete numbers were provided by Anthem.

#### BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET PRESENTATION PREVIEW AND FEEDBACK

J. Stinson shared a PowerPoint presentation of the Easton Board of Education 2021-2022 budget that will be presented to the Easton Board of Finance at their meeting on March 10, 2021. As well as the 2021-2022 budget, the presentation included the mission and guiding principles for the District, the budget creation process and a history of the budget’s starting point to the final presented amount. There was minor feedback from BOE members about: page numbers, class size and sections within charts, projected enrollment numbers and featuring the Director of Digital Learning position more prominently. J. Stinson said that he and Dr. Harrison would be answering numerous questions from the BOF during the meeting. BOE members conveyed well wishes to J. Stinson and Dr. Harrison for the BOF meeting.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Alison Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road, suggested the BOE have a town hall style meeting, where there could be an exchange of comments and questions between board members and the public. She also requested that more time be discussing STEM and STEAM in board meetings; wondered when it became a bad thing to not be affected by COVID; asked where the talk of remediation is coming from since all reports have been good up until now; and, that her family moved to Easton for the schools and will now be leaving Easton because of the schools.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Parker wished J. Stinson and Dr. Harrison good luck for tomorrow night.

D. Wible said good luck tomorrow night to J. Stinson and Dr. Harrison.

J. Chieda said a quick thank you to our administrators; and that it is evident that they had really thorough answers to our questions during this budget process.

R. Hicks asked if any communications had been distributed to let town residents be aware that the BOF meeting is happening.

J. Chieda said she would get working on it tomorrow morning.

Dr. Harrison said a huge thank you to J. Chieda and D. Wible who brought breakfast to the Central Office staff on Friday; it was much appreciated. He also said a sincere thank you to the BOE members, saying that the public does not see the many hours of work that the BOE puts in behind the scenes.

J. Stinson said thank you to everyone at Central Office and all that you do, such as the vaccination clinics for District staff.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:54 p.m.

Submitted by Gretchen Goldstein  
Secretary, Easton Board of Education

Recorded by  
Sarah Ota