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CHRISTINE HALLORAN
TOWN CLERK
EASTON CT

Filed subject to approval

Regular Meeting
Easton Board of Education
Minutes

Helen Keller Middle School – Media Center

October 12, 2021 – 7:30 p.m. **view remotely via:**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRtQ6dze5a8x5XT5LzBnDHA>

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members: Stinson, Chieda, Hicks, Parker, Wible, DeJesus

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Stinson called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: move to approve the minutes from the 9/14/2021 Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting and the First Reading of the Bullying Policy having been distributed to the board on October 8, 2021. Approved with no corrections, unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anne Manusky- Morning Glory Dr- Thank Dr. McKinnon for FOI information that she had asked for in May of 2021. Concerned “unmasking children” was not on agenda. And Devon Wible of Catapulte Learning suggested that a conflict of interest and ask that she step down from Board of Education.

Carolyn Oppenheim-25 Hunting Ridge Road-Concerned about one of the BOE members sending emails to a community member. She is disappointed in the actions and betraying the trust of the community.

Claire Wilks, Deep Wood Rd.-Read a statement about not trusting a BOE member for betraying the Easton communities trust by forwarding emails to an unhinged community member who got arrested for violating laws.

Amy Traggianese-14 Westwood Drive-Wants to know why a BOE member forwarded parent emails to a community member. Confidence and trust were broken by such actions.

Debbie Barer-109 Sport Hill Road, appreciates that the BOE is looking into the email issue and is taking the matter seriously. His actions violate the BOE bylaws and guidelines. Parents need to hear the truth.

Beth Natt- 51 Tuckahoe Road, She reached out to Jeff Parker about her concern about the decline of the Easton school system. Upon listing multiple issues that the district is facing, she expects an explanation and reason as to his actions.

Mimi Jacobs- Morningside Rd- Sided with the segment of concerned parents that were here tonight and that Parker should apologize to the town.

Amy Wolfcafe- 575 Sport Hill Road, commended the BOE for the hard work they have put forth for the benefit of our children. She feels the BOE emails that were sent to a radical community member, is a vast breaking of the community's trust. She feels the damage to the town is dividing the community. Transparency and trust must be rebuilt with the BOE. Suggested that Parker step down.

Dave Bussolotta-39 Sunset Road-Supports J. Parker, regardless of his email actions. His accomplishments are immense and his record is proof of that. He has worked tirelessly on behalf of our children and we need to take that into consideration.

Bob Natt-51 Tuckahoe Road, he is a long-standing resident and feels the Easton community has been an asset for his family. He feels betrayed by the actions of specific board members. The schools are a wonderful part of our community.

Anne Manusky- Morning Glory Drive -Commended the board for their hard work. Our schools are top-notch and have been positively ranked within the state of Connecticut. She opposes the "Common Core" initiative.

Kerry Anne Linnane- Burr St.- Thanked the Board of Education. Top in the state and Parker should apologize.

Rani Menon- Stones Throw Rd-Reiterated her disappointment at the recent action of BOE member who shared parent emails. Although he apologized, there has been no explanation as to why this happened and what is going to be done to prevent this in the future.

Debbie Barer- Sport Hill Rd.-Stated her anger towards the Save Our Schools initiative. She hopes this issue will be resolved.

Alicia Young-Silver Hill Rd.- Feels a lot of people are pre-judging an audit that hasn't been completed. She stated the board needs to focus on the kids, not investigations.

Rocky Sullivan- Jessie Lee Dr.-: Board member needs to be held accountable for his actions. He knew what he did was wrong, and was aware when he stated he needs to "stay out of the fray". He also referenced the walkway issue.

Alison Bonoff- Gregory Farms Rd.- Wants BOE meetings to back on Zoom. Our schools ranking and scores are falling due to lack of instructional time, especially at HKMS where instruction time was 8 hours less per week last year. Our scores are reflective of that. Schools barely made state mandated minimums for time in academic classrooms. Parker is a pillar of community, responsive to parent's needs. Hope we can forgive and move on.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

R. Hicks-Thanked the members of the community who continuously show up and are supportive of the Boards effort. He feels the distractions of the last 18 months are taking away from discussions that should be centered around our kids. Our focus needs to be on the education of our children, not the continuous noise around it. Board is now divided along political lines which has happened over the last 18 months. Which has never been the case before on his 8 years on the Board of Education.

D. Wible-Wants to thank the efforts of the educators, administrators, and board who have made this year successful. She supports the independent investigation as it takes away from the politicization of the topic. She turned to J.Parker and said she respects him for his hard work and dedication. However, she is disappointed in his actions. Transparency is important and needs to be at the forefront of the board.

J.Parker-Thanked everyone for coming and expressing their thoughts. Responded to public comments. Acknowledged his actions, takes responsibility, and has reached out to community members personally. He added that he is happy to have individual conversations with community members.

J. Chieda-Upset about the negativity, comments, and cruelty that is happening in our town. She expressed her respect for Jeff and disagrees with tossing out of all Jeff's hard work in the process. She is saddened by the discourse on both sides. She discussed the struggles of the last 18 months and how all members have felt the immense pressure.

J. Stinson-Takes this matter seriously and reiterated that this is not the normal in regards to email practices. A full investigation will be at the forefront but I don't think they will find any serious violation.

AMEND: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA 6D

Motion: Easton BOE members discuss the use of social media by its members pertaining to various topics including but not limited to Easton BOE members and topics that have been or will be up for discussion by the board (Hicks, Chieda). Unanimous.

This topic will be discussed in a Policy committee meeting.

AMEND: 6E

Motion: Move to Rescind the current MOA regarding the Vice Principle of Helen Keller Middle School to serve as in an 11 Month Position. (Stinson, Chieda) Unanimous.

REPORTS SSES & HKMS Reports

SSES: Kim Fox Santora discussed teaching children via morning announcements, identifying the need for deeper connections between students, staff, and peers. This is being infused into the daily announcements. She also noted more younger students are seeking services from the school counselor. This may be due to the unique preschool experience due to Covid. The professional learning day was dedicated to learning the new math program. The training was the third one, and

focus was on manipulatives and “turn and talk” opportunities. Assessments are taking place in Math and Reading, targeting students who need intervention services. Additional support staff have been hired to help struggling students. At the end of each cycle, an end line assessment will take place to see measured growth. D. Wible commented on giving parents suggestions on what they can do at home.

HKMS: Dr. Steven Clapp commented that HKMS is in a good routine and systems are in place to help establish good routines. Drop off has been running much more smoothly. Lunch mask breaks have been a great success and kids are enjoying it. Basketball, music, organized games are included in this break. Extra-curricular activities are in full effect and they are fully operational. Support programs are fully up and running. An additional program has been established to help students who struggle with executive functioning. A permanent building substitute has been hired, a new guidance counselor, and a school resource officer is still a need. He appreciates the people who have signed up to be a substitute in the building. One new student has joined in the last month. A Principal’s coffee is set up for tomorrow, as the last one was a great success. Parent workshops are also on the calendar. He is encouraging parents to volunteer in the building, for a variety of tasks.

Director of Special Education: J. DelConte has indicated an uptick in PPT meetings. More students are being referred for services, particularly for emotional/social needs. Many of these students are in the younger grades.

Assistant Superintendent: S. Pierson-Ugol explained the evaluation system that is currently being used providing meaningful feedback, more focused on academics. The curriculum website is taking place and is a priority. Input and feedback were taken into consideration when developing this curriculum website. The website is being done in phases. All building committees have met at least once so far.

Superintendent: Dr. McKinnon stated it is important to him to be visible in the community. He began by starting a social media account so parents/students can feel connected to the daily school day. He went over the results of the superintendent survey taken by parents. He is using the results to develop a communication plan, utilizing emails, social media, and text messaging. He is interested in developing a baseline and then put a plan in place to meet these needs. He went over the results of the survey which included the need to focus on student learning, high quality instruction and student achievement. This data is going to be used to drive an action plan. The overwhelming consensus was that our community loves our schools and are supportive of them. Review of the survey results followed.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

- A. Test Scores-Review of slides by Dr. Jason McKinnon, discussion followed.
- B. Curriculum Site Review-Dr. Pierson-Ugol presented the new curriculum website. She explained the purpose of the website, who it targets, and constructing it so documents can be accessed and changed easily. It was made to be user friendly and a useful resource for parents. Discussion followed.

- C. Review and Proposed Approval of Agreement with the Easton Intermediate Administrators Association for the 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 school years

Motion: Move to Approve Agreement with the Easton Intermediate Administrators Association for the 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 school years. (Hicks, Wible) Unanimous.

- D. Social Media Policy: R. Hicks explained the need for courtesy amongst the board for open lines of communications between each other, as opposed to using social media as a platform. Discussion followed about having a Board orientation for new BOE members.

Motion: Recend the current MOA for the 2022-2023 school year for the Assistant Principle of Helen Keller Middle School (Hicks, Chieda)

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

-None

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 11:19 p.m.

Recorded by Kim Keil