

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, February 8, 2022 – 7:30 p.m.

****IN- PERSON****

Helen Keller Middle School

On YouTube

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

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members: J. Stinson, J. Parker, R. Hicks, J. Chieda,

On Zoom: D. Wible, J. DeJesus (joined at 7:31pm)

Administration: Dr. McKinnon, Dr. Clapp, S. Scrofani, Dr. Pierson-Ugol, S. Petruzzelli, J. Del Conte, K. Fox Santora

Others: Members of the public: 10

CALL TO ORDER:

Jon Stinson called the Easton Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:30pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion: move to approve meeting minutes of November 9, 2021 Easton Board of Education Special Meeting, November 9, 2021 Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting, ER9 Joint Boards of Education Regular Meeting on January 6, 2022, January 11, 2022 Easton Board of Education Special Meeting, January 22, 2022 Easton Board of Education Budget Presentation Regular Meeting. Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Lou DiPietro, Jesse Lee: in favor of student mask wearing being “optional” moving forward.

Anthony Possidento: Gate Ridge: in favor of student mask wearing being “optional” moving forward.

Rachel Mazzarelli: Ground Pine La: read a letter from her 5th grade daughter (Rihanna) about the difficulty she has experienced in wearing a mask in school all day. In addition, Rachel asked the question: “Who makes the decision on whether or not we continue with the mask wearing policy in school?”

Tania Gaspar: Tatetuck Trail: agreed with Rachel Mazzarelli’s opinion on wanting masks to no longer be mandatory.

Drew Cystak: Drewberrie Ln: give the decision to the parents of Easton school children on whether or not a mask should be worn in school.

Julia Bassett, Dairy Ln, referenced Dr. McKinnon's letter to parents. Science shows masks are not effective in controlling the virus. Please listen to parent letters on this subject.

Drew Cystak relayed a story of watching Keller students at play and the difference over the last 2 years. Far more interactive than months ago.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT:

Jon Stinson: the 3 boards of education have given the authority to make the "mask decision" to the Superintendent.

Jenny Chieda read a 4 ½ page letter stating her feelings and concerns while asking several questions to both the Superintendent and Easton BOE. She believes the district has the best interest of our children and the schools have done a wonderful job in making the best of a difficult situation. However, the message the children are getting is to be fearful. We can no longer say the "kids are resilient" and they will "get used to it". We must make evidence-based decisions and not those solely tied to just how people feel. Jenny stated, "I am confident that mask wearing, distancing and other protocols can be safely phased out and eliminated."

Jeff Parker: Thanked Jenny for her thoughtful letter and agreed with the content. He thanked the parents for being at the meeting tonight and for sharing their thoughts during public comment. Finally, he stated a belief that Dr. McKinnon would be diligent in his review of the facts surrounding "mask wearing" and would make the right decision for our children.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS:

Superintendent, Dr. Jason McKinnon shared that of the 80 letters he had received from parents the split between being for or against making masks optional was running 50-50. He will meet with local health officials and make the best decision of our staff and students.

Samuel Staples Elementary School Principal, Kim Fox-Santora shared a 3-minute video a second grade class put together called "All Are Welcome Here". The emphasis on the presentation was on "empathy for students that are hearing impaired".

Helen Keller Middle School Principal, Dr. Steven Clapp, updated the board on student participation in extra-curricular activities. 176 students out of 318 were involved in at least one activity.

Director of Special Education, Jen Del Conte deferred her presentation until the Easton Board of Education Budget Workshop to be held on Thursday February 10, 2022.

Director of Finance and Operations, Scott Petruzzelli shared that the district benefited from \$170K in breakage from teacher retirement against the incentive of \$102K each year for three years. He also answered a wide variety of board questions on multiple subjects. A possible glitch in the health insurance report surrounding \$342K board contribution made from last year needs to be investigate as the board did not approve that transaction.

DISCUSSIONS AND POSSIBLE ACTIONS

Dr. McKinnon shared several technical edits that brought the dollars and percentage increase down to 4.30% (from 4.45%) and the dollar figure down to \$775,428. He also provided data showing that 97.4% of the expense is non-discretionary leaving only 2.6%. New Items in this year's budget is an additional second grade teacher, a new teacher for our special education "Junior Bridges Program", and Easton's portion (\$17,000) of a new position of "Facilities Manager" shared across the 3 districts.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Pierson-Ugol joined in the discussion on the topic of money needed for curriculum work and its importance to the professional grow of our teachers. Finally, the use of the ESSER grant money was shared with the board. These are federal dollars given to the district to help our students recover from learning loss that took place during the height of the pandemic.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting be adjourned. (Jeff Parker, second by Randy Hick) Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:01pm

Submitted by Jeff Parker
Secretary, Easton Board of Education