

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

January 9, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.

Helen Keller Middle School Learning Commons

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

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Hicks, deJesus, Young, Parker, Natt

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Matz, Fox-Santora, Clapp

Other: 7 members of the public and recording secretary.

CALL TO ORDER

R. Hicks called the Easton Board of Education meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT: None.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

J. Parker, Chair of the Facilities Committee mentioned that the scheduled meeting for 6 p.m. today had been moved to next month.

A. Young reminded the board that the finance committee would be meeting after this meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon presented the proposed 2024-2025 budget for Easton public schools.

Dr. McKinnon outlined seven sections. 1. budget process and introduction, 2. strategic priorities, 3. budget drivers, 4. enrollment, staff changes, and grants, 5. cost centers, 6. budget summary, and 7. next steps.

In section 1, Dr. McKinnon presented data on superintendent proposed budget percent increases across the 9 CT districts, with Easton coming in at a little above ~6% as compared to the average of a 6.1% increase. Despite the fiscal challenges that school districts are facing, Dr. McKinnon explained that he is committed to quality for Easton schools and promoting fiscal awareness. Two examples of priorities within this are: allocating grant funds to reduce operations and using the strategic plan to promote financial sustainability.

In section 2, Dr. McKinnon explained that the strategic plan is meant to identify goals and metrics to achieve each year, and that they are focused on the future with the next two years in mind. This plan has been worked on for the last 18 months. Some of the priorities are: high quality teaching and learning, meeting the needs of all learners, and promoting effective operations and skillful staff. An example of an achievement in 2023 was adding key support positions like a math coordinator. When looking to the future, this achievement will help in the process of trying to strengthen problem-solving abilities especially in grades K-8 in math (connected to priority 1.7). Additionally, there is a strategic plan in place for special education. Some priorities are: leadership and systems, communication and family engagement, and learning environment and special programs. Based on feedback from the community, the way in which the special education leadership functions has been changed for better efficiency and to support students, families, school staff, administrators, etc. For more information go to www.strategicplan.org



In section 3, Dr. McKinnon outlined the main budget drivers as: medical insurance (with a \$113,587.58 and 5.00% increase), utilities (\$35,638.44; 7.21%), Easton teacher's bargaining contract (~\$500,000; ~7%), Easton non-certified staff (\$366,247.94; 15.56%), transportation (\$81,557.32; 7.18%), and special education outplacements (\$390,685.23; 141.39%).

In section 4, Dr. McKinnon went over some enrollment trends at the Easton schools. For Samuel Staples Elementary School, the student population is 621 students in 2023-2024 and a projected 644 students for 24/25. In Helen Keller Middle School, the student population is 284 students in 2023-2024 and projected 290 in 24/25. The charts showed that there is projected growth for both schools over 10 years. Some staff changes have included an increase of 0.5 FTE custodian in HKMS and a decrease of 0.17 FTE Director of Special Education. Next, Dr. McKinnon went over the grants like the status of the "Right to Read" Grant funding. For the 2023-2024 academic year, in Easton, the funding increased to \$123,000 and \$116,000 for Redding for the CKLA Pilot for grades K-3.

In section 5, the cost centers for Samuel Staples Elementary School, Helen Keller Middle School, PPS, facilities, technology, curriculum/instruction, district wide, and central office were presented. For Samuel Staples, the total cost center change was a 5.66% increase. For Helen Keller, the total cost center change was a 4.77% increase. For Pupil Personnel Services, a 9.22% increase. For facilities, an increase of \$14,567. For technology, a 33.90% increase. For curriculum and instruction, a -54.91% decrease. For the district wide cost centers, a 5.33% increase. For the central office, a 6% increase.

In section 6, Dr. McKinnon gave a budget summary. For 2023-2024, the budget total is \$18,614,956.40 with an increase of 3.64%. For 2024-2025, the projection is \$19,779,511 with an increase of 6.36%.

In section 7, Dr. McKinnon stressed the importance of the community's engagement in understanding and viewing the Easton schools' budget. There is a link provided to a survey, where input and questions can be provided. If anyone would like to view the entire presentation, it can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/er9.org/easton-budget>. Further, anyone is welcome to attend meetings to ask questions and make comments.

J. Parker asked a question about the effect of the elimination of the Bridges program on the students. Principal of Helen Keller Middle School, Dr. Steven Clapp said that the program was a tough loss as it was extremely helpful, and HKMS is seeing the effects. Another board member asked if Easton administrators saw a measurable difference in the budget's PPS section like hiring more permanent staff versus relying on the services of substitute teachers especially under Ms. Katz's purview as Director of Special Education. Principal of Samuel Staples Elementary School Kimberly Fox-Santora said she could not see a measurable difference, but Dr. Clapp mentioned that there was a lot less pulling from other districts for teachers as much.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Move that the Easton Board of Education Regular meeting be adjourned. (Parker, deJesus)
Approved 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Submitted by Jeff Parker
Recorded by Liadan O'Connor