

Filed subject to approval

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom
March 31, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Parker, Chieda, Goldstein, Hicks, Reed, Stinson
Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Reiss, Del Conte
Others: 17 members of the staff and public, and the recording secretary

J. Parker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the March 10, 2020, Regular Meeting as submitted. (Hicks, Goldstein). Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Adam Parker, Wedgewood Drive, Easton: said he had a positive comment, an observation and a question to state. His positive comment was that he is impressed at the ability of the District to mobilize and execute a curriculum and that Dr. McMorran has been concise and clear on expectations. His observation was that he is shocked and disgusted about criticism of the distance learning process appearing on social media. His question was that he is wondering if there would now be implications, positive or negative, to the budget process.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

G. Goldstein said she wanted to publicly say thank you to everyone.

J. Chieda said that C. Parkin said it eloquently last night when he thanked the three Districts' staff. She also said that she thinks most people are stunned at what the District has been able to do; that the administrators are perfect for this town and have embraced all of us in this town.

K. Reed said thank you to all, and that as a BOE member and a parent, she feels that the District clearly cares about all of our kids.

J. Stinson said a shout out to his childrens' teachers; that it was a sense of normalcy for him and his kids to hear from them.

J. Parker said a shout out to J. Stinson for organizing the meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: DISTANCE LEARNING UPDATE

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Tom McMorran, initiated the update by stating that, "On behalf of our staff, our gratitude goes to the parents and towns of Easton and Redding." Dr. McMorran said that there is a small number of students who do not have internet access and that Chromebooks have been lent out to students. He said that it is important for parents to continue to monitor their kids' computers. Dr. McMorran said that in terms of the process, the distance learning is still in an asynchronous structure for now. He said that the three Districts are committed to the entire child. Dr. McMorran reported that the majority of students are receiving and responding to their assignments, and that if families are not responding then the Districts are following up with them. He also thanked the BOE for the professional development time given to the teachers.

Samuel Staples Elementary School Principal, Kim Fox Santora, reported that she is very encouraged by what she has seen in the daily lesson plans and work from her staff. She said, by and large, that her parents are very happy, and that any issues from parents are mainly about technology challenges and non-reader/low-reader engagement. K. Fox Santora said that she feels the distance learning is well-paced and that it evolves and grows weekly. She said that she is enormously proud of her staff. J. Chieda asked about the plans for teacher feedback on student work. K. Santora said that this component will be coming soon. R. Hicks asked if any of the distance learning practices would be productive when returning to the classroom. K. Santora said that she sees some of the technology as a powerful way to demonstrate learning and that they will continue to look at it closely. S. Kaplan agreed, especially about the tools the students are using to explain their thinking.

Helen Keller Middle School Principal, Susan Kaplan, said that she was grateful to Dr. McMorran and Dr. Pierson Ugol for their leadership during this time. She said she appreciates the pace at which the distance learning is being conducted and that the pace is right. S. Kaplan said that she thinks some of the changes being made will impact learning going forward. She said that she is in awe of the HKMS staff for all that they have done so far. J. Parker asked where she thought the HKMS learning would be in two weeks. S. Kaplan said that she thinks they will be evolving faster. J. Parker asked if there were any students not able to access the internet in their homes. S. Kaplan said that there was one student without an internet connection at home, and that a Kajeet internet device had been ordered for this student.

Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, expressed her sincere gratitude toward the District's tremendous teachers, and a thank you to the Easton families and the leadership team. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that work is now being done to refine the match of methods with age groups. She also said that monitoring of progress is now beginning to be done.

Director of Special Services, Jennifer Del Conte, reported that the current situation has been a challenge, but that her staff has risen to the challenge. J. Del Conte said that she has been consulting with other school districts and listening to parents, and that this situation will only make them a stronger faculty. J. Stinson asked about the learning opportunities for students in her department. J. Del Conte said that they are using digital learning. J. Chieda asked how services such as OT/PT and speech were being addressed. J. Del Conte said that they are taking an asynchronous approach and providing at-home activities. She said speech therapists are, in some instances, checking in with students by phone. J. Parker asked if students will make-up

these lost hours during a summer session. J. Del Conte said that there may be increased services during a summer session depending on the compensatory services due to each student.

Dr. McMorran said that the District is looking to Hartford for guidance on numerous issues including: the school calendar, how to grade, report cards, and how to protect the privacy of everyone.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: UPDATE ON BUS CONTRACT

Director of Finance & Operations, Scott Reiss, reported that he has had meetings with the bus company and the District's legal representation about what costs the District is obligated to cover when not in session. He said that he has also had conversations with other school district business managers across the state on this issue. S. Reiss said that contributing to the conversation is an interpretation of the recent CARES Act passed by the federal government. Dr. McMorran said that S. Reiss has been an absolute champion for the District.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vincent Mase, Fieldstone Drive, Easton: said he applauds the teachers and administrators for what they've been able to do. He said that we will look back and realize that the kids are learning some good skills right now, such as independence and tech savviness. He said he thinks the District will find a lot of things that will help in the future. He also said he'd like the District to close the loop on some of the tasks that are handed in by students.

Adam Parker, Wedgewood Drive, Easton: said he wanted to share the old saying, "Tough times don't last, tough people do."

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Chieda explained to V. Mase how to check on his childrens' assignments within their Google Classrooms.

J. Parker thanked everyone for their time. He said that he is encouraged by K. Fox Santora and S. Kaplan, and that the special needs students are in good hands.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by,
Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Sarah Ota