



INSTR # M2020000380
DATE FILED 05/28/2020 09:50:18 AM
CHRISTINE HALLORAN
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EASTON CT

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EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

Virtual Meeting via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86407938131?pwd=VE9XOGErWFMvZnZ5eGhtTm1ldk5vZz09>

Thursday, May 21, 2020

7:00 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Parker, Chieda, Goldstein, Hicks, Reed, Stinson

Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Fox Santora, Kaplan, Brownstein, Mohr, Reiss

Others: 12+

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Parker called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move to approve the minutes from the May 12, 2020 Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting as presented. Brownstein, Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Adam Parker, Wedgewood Drive, Easton: offered Dr. McMorran his sincere congratulations on his upcoming retirement. He also commended the Board on its decision to send the letter to Region 9 regarding the surplus funds remaining from this fiscal year.

Nikki Kaldawy, Staples Road, Easton: expressed her thanks to both Dr. McMorran and the Board for all of their hard work.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Mr. Stinson spoke about the partnership between Dr. McMorran and the students and how the success of education in our district is a result of his wisdom and hard work. Ms. Chieda expressed her thanks to Dr. McMorran for always making students a priority and wished him the best. Ms. Reed, Ms. Goldstein, and Mr. Hicks thanked Dr. McMorran for providing a nurturing environment in all the schools for the students over the years.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2020-21 OPERATING BUDGET

Mr. Parker shared some good news that class sizes at SSES will be preserved and there will be 5 sections for each grade level, with the exception of fourth grade, which will have 4 sections. He is hopeful that other budget cuts will be for only one year. Proposed reductions to the budget include alterations to funding for: the media center specialist, substitutes, professional development, textbooks, summer salaries, clubs and activities at HKMS, student council at SSES, and the Wingman program at HKMS. One member of the staff has resigned. Dr. McMorran emphasized this is for one year and does not mean cuts will be the same for next year.

Human resources make up about 80 percent of the budget. Dr. McMorran spoke about trying to maintain programs by reducing parts of programs and reassigning staff. Easton schools are HOTS approved schools and are obligated to continue arts programming. He is hopeful that these programs can be reinstated later. Dr. McMorran explained that part of the proposed reductions include some SSES art and music class hours, HKMS Discrete Math, and replacing retiring teachers with teachers who have fewer years of experience. Dr. McMorran said cuts have to be made to office staff and outside Special Education professional services. He said we have to provide services to Special Education students by law, and at this time, the state has turned responsibility for Special Education funding to towns. Dr. McMorran said that they had to make these reductions in the budget in order to get to the number set by the Board of Finance.

Mr. Stinson said the list was well thought-out, but proposed we take time to discuss and consider any closing public comments. Ms. Chieda asked about computers and possible funds for Chromebooks/iPads. Dr. McMorran indicated that there are no funds in the budget allotted for PPE, hands-free faucets, plexiglass screens, and other Covid protective equipment. We may need funds for those items and possible physical alterations to buildings. He also said that teachers may need further supplies for distance learning. Dr. Pierson Ugol spoke about student supplies for learning at home and is still exploring costs to make them available to students, if needed. Mr. Reiss spoke about an overage of about 550K for this year. He said air conditioning repairs could be done that are pending. Mr. Reiss spoke about a settlement obligation for special education in the amount of 76K that funds could be put toward. Mr. Reiss also spoke about advanced fuel purchases that we are obligated to pay. Possibly the town highway department can use some of the fuel. The cost of liquidating the fuel is about 80K.

Board members discussed proposed reductions. Ms. Chieda asked about the 8th grade math teacher, saying it is an important consideration because of the transition to high school. Ms. Kaplan said the teacher she hired is an excellent choice. Ms. Goldstein asked about the music program at SSES. Ms. Fox Santora said we will lose Chorus in grades 4 and 5. Mr. Stinson spoke about the media specialist and how people may begin to think we do not need one. Hopefully people will not see this as a reason not to hire a media specialist in the future. The media specialist could contribute greatly to distance learning. This could be our opportunity to hire one to improve distance learning. Ms. Chieda was concerned that we are planning for next year as a distance learning year, while it is still possible that we may be going back to classroom learning. Mr. Parker said that the media specialist is a great loss which we will try to get back next year. Ms. Goldstein spoke about loss of extracurricular activities and how a middle school should not run without extracurricular activities because they are a critical part of the student experience and development at that age. Mr. Parker said it is possible that some extracurricular activities will be happening in the fall.

Ms. Chieda asked about Discrete Math. Ms. Kaplan said it is offered to 8th graders and is an extra class students can elect instead of art. Mr. Parker asked about the new Physical Education teacher, and Ms. Fox Santora said there is a person applying for the position. Ms. Chieda expressed her concern about the loss of office staff at SSES and said that we should try to find a solution. Mr. Parker asked if this could be a safety concern. Ms. Fox Santora is also concerned about reducing office staff at SSES due to high traffic of parents in the main office and many responsibilities for office staff at the elementary level. Dr. McMorran said itemization of the

proposed budget cuts and reductions should be done by June 9 in order for contract finalization to be done by June 16. He praised Mr. Reiss for all his hard work with the budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Ms. Reed encouraged the public to email and continue to provide input for the budget. Ms. Chieda spoke about continuing to look for ways to mitigate budget losses. Mr. Stinson thanked everyone at Central Office and teachers for doing an amazing job. Mr. Parker also thanked the entire Central Office staff and for their dedication during the difficult budget process.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the meeting be adjourned. Stinson, Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.

The Special Meeting of the Easton Board of Education was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Deborah DeLorenzo