

**EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING**

Virtual via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/94935771200?pwd=bEk5aW0yRWVCaG1qcmJmMGxSS11kdz09>

Meeting ID: 949 3577 1200 Password: 736948

December 2, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.

**Minutes**

**ATTENDANCE**

Board members: Stinson, Goldstein, Chieda, Hicks, Parker, Wible

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Zachery, Del Conte

73 members of the staff and public, and the recording secretary.

**CALL TO ORDER**

J. Stinson called the Easton Board of Education Special Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kim Miranti, Sweet Briar Trail, said that she has two children at SSES and that she was disappointed in the decision to go remote. She said that our town is small and she is worried that numbers are being looked at that are not in our town. K. Miranti said that whatever means needed to be taken should be before our children are taken out of school.

Carolyn Oppenheim, Hunting Ridge Road, said that she disagrees with the previous public comment. She said that with the in again, out again, it's been difficult and there's been no consistency. C. Oppenheim said that she's thankful for the teachers and that she thinks the numbers will continue to go up.

Robin Abramowicz, Morehouse Road, said that she thinks teachers are doing a good job, but that she's disappointed with Dr. Harrison's email. She said that the youngest children in schools are not the spreaders and she would have hoped that we looked at data from the town and the schools.

Beth Natt, Maple Road, said that she is not surprised at all that we are going remote. She said she prefers remote to going back and forth. B. Natt also said that she feels there are many aspects of Google Classroom that are not being used; she thanked everyone for all of their hard work and said that this is an impossible situation.

Paul Wizda, Asmara Way, said thank you to the BOE for their continued partnership and that it was disheartening to get the email about moving to remote learning because the transmission rate is so low. He said that he challenges the BOE to get our kids back in school and that hopefully over time we'll have a middle ground.

Gada Alkhatib, Tuckahoe Road, said that she has three kids in SSES and that she is disappointed that we have taken the kids out before the rise in rates.

Dave Cohen, North Street, said he hopes plans have been firmed up for how much time teachers spend with students each day; he said he wants an adjustment so that there is less down time. D. Cohen said that he echoes everyone's feelings about the transmission rate and that it is not that high. He said that we need to make a commitment to in-person learning.

Nikki Kaldawy, Staples Road, said that when we go back, she hopes there is a plan. She said she hopes the district is looking for remote teachers and if there can be long-term subs and remote teachers then that would really help.

Nicole Constantino, Morehouse Road, said that this really stinks, but that she thinks we should be all-in or all-out; this half-in doesn't make sense. She said that she works in the Easton Town Hall and they are seeing two to three positive cases a day and in a small town, that is a huge number. N. Constantino also thanked everyone for all that they do, and said be well.

Kim Keil, Sweetbriar Trail, said that she is extremely disappointed at the decision and that it is not reflective of Easton. She asked what intervention strategies are going to be implemented once the students go back and that this will end up being a whole year of being remote.

Allison Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road, said that she is disappointed and echoes many of the previous comments. She said that we've had months to put a plan together and that she knows everyone is working hard but we need to get the students back into school.

Josh Bailey, Sunnybrook Drive, said that he wanted to thank Dr. Harrison and that he thinks it is a prudent decision to stay in remote learning. He said that it is not normal to have to wear a mask at school or many of the other protocols. J. Bailey also thanked the teachers and said that there is no easy decision.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Chieda thanked everyone for their comments; she encouraged the public to make their opinion known. She said that perceived tensions at BOE meetings are simply the result of huge transition and change within BOE leadership and Central Office leadership; if you're seeing anything then it's growing pains, so keep giving grace. J. Chieda said that people are having very different experiences with remote learning and urged people to keep reaching out if you don't feel your child is having a good experience.

R. Hicks said welcome to Clarence Zachery and that he echoes other earlier comments. He said it's helpful when we understand the numbers, that some of this information might be more helpful to us. R. Hicks said that there is conflicting information floating around at national, state and local levels.

D. Wible welcomed Clarence Zachery. She said that she is definitely disappointed, but that it is the responsibility of the Superintendent to follow the guidelines from health officials. D. Wible said that the demands and needs are tremendous right now and that everyone on this call wants our children to be back in school, but that there are things out of our control that impact our town.

J. Stinson said that echoes much of what J. Chieda had said earlier. He said that he knows not everyone is having that great experience, so we are committed to bringing it to you.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE: HEALTH DATA AND DISTANCE LEARNING**

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rydell Harrison, said that he echoes many of the earlier comments and that it was disappointing to send his email earlier this evening. He said, as an educator, it is extremely difficult to keep our students out of the schools. Dr. Harrison said his decision reflects a shift in thinking from a reactive to a proactive approach. He said the driving factors in his decision were: the local health data, the consideration of the health of our students and staff, and an interruptive model vs. consistency. Dr. Pierson Ugol added that the District has been and will remain committed to bringing the children back into the classrooms. An extended conversation continued on contact tracing, schedules, consistency and the length of time for continued remote learning.

#### **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CURRENT BUDGET TIMELINE AND PROCESS REVIEW**

J. Stinson shared an organizational chart for the budget process which included: December to discuss contracts and health care; January to discuss positions and programs; February to complete budget reviews; and March to submit the budget to the Easton Board of Finance. C. Zachery led a discussion about the proposed process, with the reminders of staying within the budgetary limitations and reserves.

#### **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: ENDURING GOALS AND MISSIONS**

J. Stinson first said that the intention of this part of the meeting was to discuss “how we think about our enduring goals, our mission as a District, and how we think about what we value.” He presented a chart on the enduring goals and aspirations for the District which are Academic Excellence, Building A Caring Community and Cultivating Future Ready Learners. Each goal had several details, which were meant to serve as what you would observe in a learner had they been through this. An initial discussion included: how to possibly revise the chart, should the chart even be revised at this time since an accurate accounting of where students are is not yet available, should staff be included within these goals, and the need to include the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force standards on the chart. A further discussion followed on what types of interventions will be needed, the quantity of interventions and the need for professional development for staff so that they may implement these interventions.

#### **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAMS TO ACHIEVE ENDURING GOALS**

It was agreed that this was discussed in the previous Discussion and Possible Action section.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Vivian Hardison, no address given, asked if the BOE thought the budget would change, and if there would be more paraprofessionals in 2021 to support the teachers.

David Antonez, Judd Road, said that there is no equivalent to having kids in school and that the social emotional part is what he’s most concerned about.

Allison Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road, said that we should move forward and outward and not lose sight of anything. She said that she thinks the next big debate will be about the COVID vaccine and that she thinks everyone should start now to think about immunizations and have a discussion.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Parker said that it was a good discussion this evening, but before we start implementing we need to know where our kids are. He also said that in regards to the budget, we are doing well; we have only spent about half of what we put aside for COVID.

J. Chieda asked us to consider how support staff and contracted workers such as bus drivers are faring during distance learning.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education meeting be adjourned. (Parker, Hicks).  
Approved. Unanimous.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by,  
Gretchen Goldstein  
Secretary, Easton Board of Education

Recorded by,  
Sarah Ota