

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

Held remotely via Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/j/93035490248?pwd=N0dzeldHM3pZMjFONW5ZTFJRR3dHZz09>

Meeting D: 930 35490248, Password: 06612

July 12, 2021 - 6:00 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

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

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol

Others: 20 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 6:04 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Rydell Harrison, reported on the CDC updated guidelines for schools which were released last week, that said masks should be worn by students ages two and up who have not been fully vaccinated and a three-foot distance should be maintained for those who are not fully vaccinated. He said that the State of Connecticut is reviewing these guidelines and that they need to wait for the State's recommendations before deciding upon strategies for the District. Dr. Harrison also reported that there are 17 new kindergarten and 22 new grades 1-5 enrollees at SSES; and, 10 new enrollees at HKMS. He said that he had spoken with the administrations at SSES and HKMS and that they do not anticipate any impact on staffing. J. Chieda commented that the CDC guidelines are disappointing and she had written to her legislators about it and urged others to do so as well.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Pierson Ugol, reported that teachers are working furiously on the summer curriculum work for the new math program, "enVision." She said that there will be adjustments to the units of study so that teachers have more flexibility to meet the needs of all students. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that work on the public facing documents pertaining to the curriculum will not be done until the teachers return. A short discussion followed about whether or not a certified teacher should be hired on a short-term basis to help complete this work; Dr. Pierson Ugol did not feel this was needed. Dr. Pierson Ugol also reported that links to the DEI Survey had been sent to students whose parents had granted permission. She said that results will first be shared with the Climate Committee and then the DEI Task Force. J. Chieda asked what was being done about people taking the survey multiple times. Dr. Pierson Ugol replied that in order to delete multiple survey responses from the same person, an email address would need to be connected to the responses and the District is not doing that. She said that all information will be important and that it is only one data point.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Policy Committee: J. Stinson reported that they had wrapped up inter-board work for guidelines for efficiency and effectiveness. He said they hope to have a meeting about it in late summer.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: APPOINTMENT OF NEW BOARD MEMBER TO FILL VACANCY

The Easton Democratic Committee recommended Jennifer de Jesus to fill the Board seat vacated by Gretchen Goldstein. J. de Jesus spoke about herself, saying that she has a daughter in 1st grade and has worked for IBM for 15 years in the areas of finance and accounting. She said that she will be an asset to the Board during budget time and that she is willing and able to help where needed.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept the recommendation from the Democratic Town Committee and appoint Jennifer de Jesus to fill the BOE seat vacated by Gretchen Goldstein. (Parker, Wible). Approved. 5-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: ELECTION OF BOARD SECRETARY

J. Stinson said that Board members D. Wible and J. Parker had expressed interest in becoming the new Board Secretary. An election was held with Board members writing their choice for Secretary on a piece of paper, which was then up to the computer screen. There were two votes for D. Wible and three votes for J. Parker.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education fill the position of Board of Education Secretary with Jeff Parker. (Hicks, Chieda). Approved. 5-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: FORMATION OF PERSONNEL SEARCH COMMITTEE FOR DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education establish the following:

1. A joint Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education Personnel Search Committee of the whole, consisting of the membership of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education for the purpose of identifying a Director of Finance and Operations. The Personnel Search Committee shall be chaired by the Chairperson of the Board of Education then acting as chairperson of the joint boards; and

2. A Personnel Search Steering Committee, to consist of two members of each of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education with equal representation from the Towns of Redding and Easton. The Chairpersons of the Easton, Redding, and Region 9 Boards of Education shall be members of the Steering Committee ex officio. This Steering Committee shall be considered a subcommittee of the Personnel Search Committee and be empowered to collaborate with the Superintendent to design and implement a process for

1) reviewing resumes; and

2) interviewing and screening candidates. The Steering Committee shall be co-chaired by one member from the town of Redding and one from the town of Easton to be selected by the Committee and shall provide regular updates to the Personnel Search Committee. The Joint Personnel Search Committee and Personnel Search Steering Committee and shall be automatically disbanded upon the execution of a contract between the three boards and the Director of Finance and Operations. (Hicks, Parker). Approved. 5-0.

R. Hicks and J. de Jesus were named as the Easton representatives to the Steering Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Maureen Hanley, Andrews Road, said that she was confused about the meeting notices and cancellations. She said that she wants the new superintendent to focus on education and to leave the rhetoric out of it.

Agnes Bebon, Blackrock Turnpike, said that with the new Director of Digital Learning she hopes that ER9 schools will continue to provide support and accommodations to students to make them successful.

Dana Bensen, Pond Road, wanted to know if it is appropriate for the community to share the Superintendent of Schools job listing with people.

Gale Bellas, Crescent Drive, said that she had sent an email to the Chairs of the ER9 BOEs, in which she said that the best way to change the face of ER9 was to hire more people of color in the schools.

Debbi Barer, Hay Street, thanked the BOE for all that they're doing making every student feel welcome and included, keeping the schools safe and working hard to keep diversity and inclusion education in our schools. She thanked Dr. Harrison for his brief and impactful service as our superintendent. D. Barer encouraged the hiring of people of color and the teaching of honest history.

Carolyn Oppenheim, Hunting Ridge Road, thanked the Board, staff and administration for getting through a difficult year. She said that CRT is not taught in the schools and that people use that as a smokescreen to get people to not get along. C. Oppenheim said that we need to let our officials do their jobs.

Pat Lamay, Burr Street, said ditto to what D. Barer and C. Oppenheim had said. She thanked everybody and wished Dr. Harrison the best.

Jessica DiPietro, Jesse Lee Drive, said that she agrees that we need to keep a blind eye on the hiring process. She said that all of us need to look at where it starts from -- the home -- and not just in the schools.

Robin Abramowicz, Mohawk Drive, said that she realizes that people are disappointed about the CDC guidelines, but that it is premature to unmask our kids and that wearing masks is not as disruptive as we thought it would be. She wished good luck to Dr. Harrison.

Maureen Hanley, Andrews Road, told a story about her 6th grade daughter in social studies class. J. Stinson cut off M. Hanley as she violated BOE Public Comment policy.

Dana Bensen, Pond Road, said that public comment is important and part of your job. He said it helps the Board hear from the community.

Mimi Jacob, Morningside Drive, said that BOE represents themselves so well and sorry for the distraction that takes you away from the work you need to do. She told Dr. Harrison that her family respects him and that if kids need to be masked in the fall, then let them be.

Debbi Barer, Hay Street, said that M. Hanley was wrong when she earlier said "Nazi Jews." D. Barer said that the Jews were persecuted by the Nazis.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

R. Hicks said that the public should email Dr. Joseph Erardi or the BOE with their input on a new superintendent.

J. Stinson said that the public can also attend a focus group on the new superintendent conducted by Dr. Erardi.

J. Chieda said that it is unlikely that the public will be involved in the interview process, but that they will be included as much as possible. She said that Public Comment is not intended as a back-and-forth and that there is a need for the community to have a discussion. J. Chieda also said that the BOE needs to get back together and sit in the same room.

D. Wible said that there is no evidence of CRT being taught in the schools, and that all of the curriculum work being done is in the area of math. She said that if anyone has concerns about what has occurred in the classroom, then contact the teacher; and if you don't get answers, then contact the principal.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education Special meeting be adjourned. (Parker, Hicks).
Approved. 5-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Submitted by Jeff Parker
Secretary, Easton Board of Education

Recorded by
Sarah Ota