

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING REGULAR MEETING
Helen Keller Middle School - Library Learning Commons
October 15, 2019 – 7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Parker, Chieda, Bindelglass, Hicks, Reed, Stinson

Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Reiss, Del Conte, Fox Santora, Kaplan

Others: 25 members of the Board of Finance, public, staff, and the videographer.

Mr. Parker called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the September 10, 2019 Regular Meeting as submitted. Hicks, Stinson. Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nicki Kaldawy, Staples Road, Easton: Would like the Board to go to the town with a bigger number. She thinks the town wants a higher percentage for the schools. Restore the Library Media Specialist position.

Krista Zilberg, Lobdell Lane, Easton: Getting the basketball court has been such a challenge. How can we (town boards) work together for the sake of our kids?

Caroline Oppenheim, Hunting Ridge Road, Easton: She challenged the Board of Finance to work more effectively with the Board of Education. She expressed concerns regarding the lack of a Library Media Specialist this year and the impact on students (library usage).

_____ Burr Street, Easton: Came to Easton for the quality of public education; Concern that Easton may lose residents if the educational system is not a draw.

Kristen Hall, Black Rock Turnpike, Easton: Sister moved here for the schools. Schools are the most important reason we are here.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Mrs. Chieda reminded the audience of the importance of participating in the upcoming municipal elections. Get to know the candidates. Many are here in this room. She is concerned about the direction the schools are headed if further cuts result in the next budget cycle.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Pierson Ugol will unpack terms related to the two priority foci.

This evening: *authentic intellectual work*. To provide examples, she showed two video clips.

Both examples highlighted Inquiry Based Learning: learning for real life purposes; students

applying what they learn for purposes beyond school. She said there are currently pockets where this work is being done, but the goal is to make it systemic. Dr. Pierson Ugol stated that you cannot put a percentage on how frequently this level of student ownership will or should occur in a classroom. She reiterated that we are teaching dispositions: grappling with ambiguity and perseverance, yet teaching and learning also remain focused on content acquisition. Lessons are differentiated through the level of teacher support and the challenge of reading materials. Mrs. Kaplan provided a few examples: Project Lead the Way-8th graders are creating aerospace vehicles. Another example of authentic intellectual work is 6th graders designing a container that can send a vaccine safely to Africa.

Mrs. Chieda added that this type of curriculum work underscores the need for small class size and teacher professional development which needs to be supported in the budget. Dr. Bindelglass concurred that this is an example of why costs are different than when we were in school. Dr. Pierson Ugol closed with a reminder that we are not changing content, rather process.

BUILDING ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mrs. Kaplan thanked the PTO for the program: Hidden in Plain Sight. She recommended viewing the program website for ways teens may hide alcohol and drug use in "plain sight." Mrs. Kaplan has accepted a \$1,000 grant for an 8th grade trip to the Bronx Zoo, a trip that correlates to science objectives.

Mrs. Fox Santora provided a further example of authentic intellectual work: a grade 4 erosion project. Additionally, she stated that teachers have completed universal screenings and are looking at a lot of data; setting growth targets; figuring out who needs what intervention; and creating groups in respective subjects. Intervention plans are developed. The School Psychologist presented a well-received professional development session on executive functioning on Friday, October 11th. The new student-initiated Diversity Club put on a play.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2020-2021 BUDGET MODEL PRESENTATION

Mr. Parker explained how the budget process has worked in the past. The focus of the presentation was on salaries for the approximately 150 people who work for the school district. Mr. Parker explained that the baseline increase needed to meet contractual obligations is 1.93%. Teachers get a general wage increase and teachers in years 1-16 get a step increase. Steps have been around for a very long time; there used to be many more steps.

Later in the presentation Dr. McMorran explained the Easton salary scale (with steps). He stated that most teachers are hired with a master's degree. Both Redding and Region 9 salaries are higher. He shared the Redding salary scale. Mr. Parker explained the four steps of an administrator. Custodians are due for a 2% increase in salary. Next year's student population is flat (give or take 10 students).

Salary and benefits equal to 76% of the education budget. This does not include all special education expenses, transportation and increase in Easton students attending Barlow. Last year's budget was an overall increase of 1.48%.

The Board of Finance explained some of the issues they are facing: bridge repairs and rampant tree removal due to disease. The discussion moved to ways to increase revenue in town. They welcome ideas from the community. Subsequent Board of Education meetings will address the rest of the budget.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SMARTER BALANCED PERFORMANCE 2019

Dr. McMorran started his presentation by reading an essay by a successful businessman who used to think schools should operate like a business. The essay powerfully portrays why schools and businesses must operate differently. The Smarter Balanced test, also administered in 26 different states, measures Literacy and Math. Our results indicate that we are stopping short of being great. A comparison between Easton and Redding was shared. Easton received the highest score in CT for grade 7 ELA: 91.3%.

Dr. McMorran outlined several factors to consider when interpreting the scores:

- Alignment of curriculum and assessments (impacted by professional development money taken from the budget)
- Experienced grade level teams make a difference as does a stable grade level team
- Reasonable class size
- Plans for additional support for targeted students
- A warm and supportive environment

An example of how reasonable class size plays a part in scores: one 8th grade math class had 29 students. Easton did score in the top 10 in many areas when compared to other districts in the state.

When considering experienced and stable teams, it is important to note that over the last five years, 40 teachers have left Easton due to retirement, resignation, a move or leaving to join a neighboring district. Teachers, for example, were leaving for New Canaan and Redding. We are replacing veteran teachers with new teachers who require a great deal of professional development.

SBA scores provide two measures: achievement at a certain level and how an individual has grown over a year (growth target). We want to see improvement in each. If students are not showing growth in either, students need additional support, beginning with the teacher and moving to support staff, as needed. Change input (resources) to improve the output. There is a relationship.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: POLICIES SECOND READING

- 3323 Soliciting Prices (Bids and Quotations)
- 4135 Teacher-Administrator-Board of Education Relationships
- 4135.3 Negotiation/Consultation
- 5118.1 Homeless Students
- 5141.4 Reporting Child Abuse, Neglect & Sexual Assault
- 5144.12 Student Discipline: Restorative Justice Approach
- 6141.322 General Requirements

- Policy & Appendix
- 6141.3221 Computers: Websites/Pages
- 6172.12 Policy & Appendix Magnet Schools

This discussion was tabled.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Jennifer Del Conte stated that she is working closely with building principals to determine that the department is doing everything they can to support our students.

Scott Reiss updated the Board on negotiating the contract for migration of the replacement payroll and financial system. The oil tank was filled. There was minor work on the boiler. The cost came under budget (\$60,000 set aside- the cost = @ 53,000). The balance will go back to the town budget. The gym work is complete. The electricity line item is above budget impacted by a tropical summer. Solar fields issue: Encon working through, working for approvals to interconnect with public utility system. Mr. Parker thanked Mr. Reiss for his extensive help with today's budget presentation.

Dr. McMorran shared that there will be a cyber security (securing data) presentation at the next Tri-Board Meeting on October 29th. In light of urgent concerns re: vaping in the community, the ERCC (Caring Coalition) is a good place to get involved. Their mission is to promote positive choices for students as opposed to only avoiding negative.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anne Manusky, Morning Glory Drive, Easton: Expressed concerns about the health curriculum and gave an update about cases pending in Hartford. Ms. Manusky is concerned about Common Core curriculum.

Adam Parker, Wedgewood Drive, Easton: Thanked the Board of Finance for staying until the end of the meeting. Transparency is the key for both parties during this process.

Alyssa Kolesar (via text): Cuts to the education budget are atrocious. Cuts mean larger classes, less support staff and less Spanish instruction.

Diane Ronan, Tuckahoe Road, Easton: The HKMS library is closed much of the time. The staff member monitoring the library is also a recess aide therefore when she is at recess, the library is closed. The initial thought was that parents could help, but the books are not moving from the library therefore reshelving is unnecessary.

Sarah Lehberger, Kachele Street, Easton: Moved here for the schools. Seeing where teachers are going: New Canaan, Redding, Wilton (Reacting to the data in Dr. McMorran's presentation on teachers leaving Easton) she shared that current residents of Easton looked at those places too when deciding where to live. She would hate to see Easton earn the reputation as a district that severely cuts their budget. Look at long haul, need real solutions. The boards need

transparency - need the community to know what is happening during budget season and its impact on the town. We need everyone to solve the problem.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Mr. Stinson thanked Mrs. Fox Santora and Mrs. Kaplan for their leadership, for leading with kindness. Mr. Parker and Dr. Bindelglass thanked the Board of Finance for attending tonight. Mr. Parker will present the "budget layer cake," each layer of the budget explained to the Board of Finance.

Mrs. Chieda stated the importance of experienced grade level teams. Teachers and administrators have left for a variety of reasons, not just for higher pay. Some leave because of limited resources and faculty cuts that make their jobs too stressful and they don't feel they can do right by the children.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education meeting be adjourned. Bindelglass, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Liz Rimkunas