

**Town of Easton**  
**Board of Finance – Special Meeting Minutes**

Date/Time: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 – 7:00 pm  
Location: Easton Senior Center, 650 Morehouse Road, Easton, CT and  
Virtual meeting using the Zoom app.  
*A recording of this meeting is located at:*  
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/easton-board-of-finance>

**Attendees:** Members: Art Laske-Chair, Jackie Kaufman-Clerk, Andy Kachele,  
Paul Skrtich, Ira Kaplan, Michael Kot; Alternates Present, but not seated: Michael  
Gutowski (zoom), Maureen Williams (in person)  
**Absentee(s):** Gregg Saunders  
**Guest(s):** Christine Calvert-Finance Director/Treasurer, Dr. David Bindelglass-First Selectman, Kristi  
Sogofsky, Second-Selectman, Robert Lessler, Second-Selectman  
**Call to Order:** Meeting called to order at: 7:06 pm by: Art Laske

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**I. *Appointment of Alternates***

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NONE.

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**II. *Review Department Budgets***

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**A. Easton Board of Education**

- Dr. Jason McKinnon, Superintendent and John Stinson, Chairman presented to the Board together with: Sarah Scrofani, Director of Technology & Digital Learning; Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, second superintendent; Jenni Choela, Board of Education. The Board of Education (BOE) provided a 2022-2023 budget slideshow submitted into the record and displayed on the Zoom Presentation dated 3.8.22 to guide its presentation. A copy is available on the Board of Education Website ([www.er9.org](http://www.er9.org) "Proposed 2022-23 Budget Documents Related Presentations")
- A. Laske stated for the record questions presented by G. Saunders, who could not attend tonight.
- The Board of Education presented its budget discussion in terms of its Core Principles: Academic Excellence, Future Ready Learners, Community Centered, Efficient & Transparent. The 2022 Budget Process is outlined in a web-based program, built for schools; BOE enters information, and that system is designed to organize it and make it available to the public again various cost centers. This will be used in the future for actuals.
- 2022-23 Budget: 2.78% increase from last year (\$488,199.08).
- SSES: 8.5% increase mostly associated with certified staff needs (11.05%); because of enrollment increase demands; most contract not longer than 3 years.
  - Discussion regarding various contracts and associated terms
  - Dr. McKinnon stated that over the prior 10 years, enrollment has declined, but that is over. Enrollment (Easton & Redding) is expected to be higher

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than the state average over next 2 years. In a period of sustained enrollment growth.

- SSES Projections: a new teacher/section for K-2: we know from community that these students are the most vulnerable based on pandemic learning. Rate of growth projected (19%). Board of Education has been looking at a where to add sections.
- Discussion regarding the impact of Covid 19 schooling on student performance and budget. Student achievement in grades 3-8 declined since last year. K-2 do not take assessment test and are measured in other ways. Discussion regarding IEP, tier 2 intervention services; math and reading services. K-2 has had a decline in achievement and increase in levels of intervention. Board inquires of student enrollment confirmations and projections. Board of Education reported as of March 7, 2022, Kindergarten enrollment is 90 students, with projected increase. Continued discussion regarding methods for calculating projections, home school students, and consultant projections and methods, including decrease in homes for sale.
- Discussion regarding increase in staffing needs (classroom and supporting teachers), class size and intervention relationship, continuation of Junior Bridges Program to reduce impact on increased intervention, health insurance costs for new hires.
- HKMS:
  - Mr. Stinson corrected a decimal error on the total instruction and operation line: 20.67% (not 2067.23%)
  - 3.07% increase in certified staff (contractual increases, not more necessarily more teachers); 10.4% increase in non-certified staff.
  - Assistant Principle was 11-month and that is now a 12-month position.
  - Mr. Stinson explained the increased in the "Other Payments" section, which include stipends for teachers for extracurricular activities partially funded from grant money. Further discussion regarding importance of extracurricular activities on student achievement.
  - Further discussion between the Board and BOE regarding specific line-item amounts, grant funding and impact of grants on budget lines, costs regarding non-instructional paraprofessionals (pay for security guard – it was in a different place last year, but now relocated to HKMS budget), cost increased regarding classroom libraries and instructional texts and the impact on reading proficiency
  - Dr. Pearson reviewed the new math program and associated technology.
- DISTRICT WIDE COST CENTER:
  - Represents 20% of overall Easton budget and represents a decrease from last year; major change is decrease in health insurance.
  - Discussion regarding health insurance and claim coverage, and health reserve fund (\$740,000) and the risks associated with decreasing the reserve; focus on being responsible and avoid making special appropriations where it can be avoided.
  - Discussion regarding budget associated with utilities, oil, gas. These are budgeted at \$3/gallon; not locked in, budget number only.
  - Board suggested BOE go back to Brown & Brown regarding renewal (Anthem)

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- **FACILITIES:** .4% decrease – 2% of the budget
    - Trash removal budget was corrected: it was not represented (SSES) that was an error
    - Discussion regarding budgeted facilities maintenance projects, and KD&G report review.
    - Dr. McKinnon reviews proposal for ER9 Facilities Manager to be shared by Easton and Redding: 3 days/week at Joel Barlow, 1 day/week Easton, 1 day/week Redding. This position will evaluate the facilities on a regular basis. This is a value added for facility projects. They can facilitate small repairs and oversee large ones. Discussion regarding potential overlap between Town facilities/Public Works assistance with same type of work and how this position may represent a cost savings (or not) for long term physical plant maintenance.
    - Chairman Laske recommended a meeting in the future with the BOE to review the physical plant and repair items that are expected long term, but not specifically itemized in this year's budget.
  - **PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES:**
    - Special education costs increasing statewide and locally; Junior Bridge teacher - provides a continuum for students and is a significant return on investment. You save on out of district tuition and transportation when this position is properly funded.
    - Discussion of line items, breakage, budget cushion of \$50,000 to cover same, and benefit of the breakage last year; pre-K tuition, quantified savings coming out of HKMS.
  - **CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION:**
    - .39% increase – because curriculum work was slashed last year. This is paid to teachers on an hourly rate; review and development for new curriculum. Plus, additional time and professional development and write curriculum to prioritize standards. It is highly unusual to see this cut entirely last year and unthinkable to do 2 years in a row. We need to help teachers achieve these goals.
    - Discussion of Technology costs, life of tech and replacement schedules and chrome books. Cloud based device as an instructional tool to access educational programming and software. SSES: 1 chrome book/student years 4 & 5; 3G share devices, K-2 have in classroom chrome books; HKMS: 1 chrome book/student (students take these home). 4–5-year refresh cycle; replace one grade level every 4 years; \$250 per chrome book.
  - **CENTRAL OFFICE:** discussion regarding Central Office budget items and modest increase in budget, including staffing, medical, operations, etc. (Easton share), increase of one employee in a tech position, HSA contributions and medical plans.

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- Q&A: The Board asked specific follow up questions and the BOE responded:
    - BOE provided context and detail for the differences between the budget files for ER9 and Easton BOE Grant relief.
    - BOE discussed spending associated with covid grant relief funds, including Cares Act, SR I&II, Nursing time for contact training, cleaning/health a& safety supplies, webcams, chrome books (needed for 1:1 3-8 for testing and for upper grades, but not needed for younger students otherwise requires extended testing which is disruptive to student learning), offset HKMS extracurricular program, interns/substitutes, summer academy, 1.5 para professionals, lab para professional, lunch support and extracurricular staff support at HKMS, table dividers, consulting services, testing over the summer, special training for teachers for structured literacy, special education support.
    - Discussion regarding when the need for additional staffing will decline or how that will be managed when covid relief funding is over.
    - Discussion regarding Open Choice program financing at SSES and associated costs/student income for participation.
    - Discussion regarding class size and BOE's recommendation to keep class size small to meet gaps. Further discussion regarding K-2 class size, student/teacher ratios, request for staffing charts from prior year, health insurance and pre covid claims numbers (not an average, but the actual number from 2018-19, including spend amount and number of claims).

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III.

*Adjournment*

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Action/Motions: M. Kot made a motion to adjourn at 9:39 pm.  
Motion (Second): P. Skrtich seconded.

**Result:** Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Submitted by,



Jackie Kaufman – Clerk