

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING AND BUDGET WORKSHOP
February 13, 2018
Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

Board of Education: Parker, Chieda, Bindelglass, Hicks, Reed, Shortt
Administration: McMorran, Reiss, Torre, Kaplan, Mohr, Brownstein
Members of the Public: Approximately 30 and staff members

CALL TO ORDER:

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

January 9, 2018 Regular Easton Board of Education Meeting:

Motion: move to approve the January 9, 2018 Regular Board of Education Meeting Minutes. Bindelglass, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.

January 11, 2018 Special Easton Budget Workshop:

Motion: move to approve the January 11, 2018 Special Board of Education Meeting Minutes. Shortt, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.

January 23, 2018 Easton, Redding, Region 9 Joint Boards of Education Regular Meeting:

Motion: move to approve the January 23, 2018 Regular Easton, Redding, Region 9 Joint Boards of Education Meeting Minutes with the following corrections:

Page 1, first paragraph should read:

Dr. Irwin called the meeting *and the Redding Board* to order at 7:31 p.m.

Page 1, first paragraph, add:

Mr. Parker called the Easton Board to order at 7:31 p.m.

Mr. D'Agostino called the Region 9 Board to order at 7:31 p.m.

Page 1, under 'Public Comment': the word "Selectman" should be corrected to read *Selectmen*

Page 1, under 'Discussion and Possible Action: Presentation by the Easton Redding Community Caring (SIC) Coalition', 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence, should read: "The Superintendent referred *the* Boards to their respective student privacy policies requiring that such surveys be opt-in rather than opt-out."

Page 2, under 'Review of Joint Committees', 3rd paragraph, 4th sentence down: remove ...

"director of finance and operations. The committee's mandate includes reporting back at the May tri-board meeting regarding feasible locations for central office." Replace with: *Director of Finance and Operations and Superintendent of Schools. The committee will explore all the viable options and make a recommendation for discussion at the Joint Boards of Education Meeting in May.*

Page 2, under 'Discussion on Central Office Budget', Region 9 Motion: correct date to 2018-19

Page 2, under 'Discussion on Central Office Budget', Redding Motion: remove the word 'Unanimous'

Chieda, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Anne Manusky, Easton: Requested that a discussion regarding the letter she sent to the Board of Education be added to the meeting agenda. Mr. Parker responded that he would consider it.

Claire Wilkes, Easton Road, Easton: Thanked the Board of Education for their “steadfast commitment to doing what is right for our kids, and balancing that with fiscal responsibility.” Expressed specific knowledge of the challenges of each budget season, and expressed concern over potential cuts to student programming and increased class sizes. Supports a minimum budget increase of 3.5%.

Mr. Parker decided not to allow Mrs. Manusky’s letter to be added to the agenda, but gave her the option to speak during public comment:

Anne Manusky, Easton: Referenced her letter sent to the Board of Education explaining her belief that the Easton Board of Education is out of compliance with CT General Statute 220-10 and requesting a moratorium on all new and updated curriculum provided to district since the last curriculum committee met in 2010. Expressed concern over sexual education and social/emotional learning being carried out in the schools, and expressed concern over a new book, *Esperanza Rising*, that is required reading for sixth graders.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT:

Mrs. Shortt stated that, as a school counselor for over 18 years, she disagreed with Mrs. Manusky’s assertion that sexual health and social/emotional learning is inappropriate.

Mrs. Chieda was pleased to see so many people in attendance at the meeting.

Mr. Parker asked the Board to consider the formation of a curriculum committee to address incorporating the Next Generation Science Standards into the curriculum, once Stephanie Pierson Ugol has returned from leave. Mr. Parker has reached out to the Redding Board of Education Chair, as well.

Mr. Parker talked of receiving many emails expressing concern over the budget process. Assured meeting attendees that the Board of Education has no interest in doing anything to adversely affect children and that they are considering challenges that are unique to this year. Encouraged people to keep reaching out to him, with a promise that he will respond to questions and concerns promptly.

Motion: move to agenda item VI B to VI A because students have come to present. Chieda, Shortt.

Mrs. Chieda then asked if the agenda item could be moved to before administrator reports.

Motion: move to agenda item VI B to IV because students have come to present. Shortt, Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CYBER PATRIOT CHALLENGE

Students from HKMS presented their work in the Cyber Patriot Challenge, a national cyber-defense competition. The 8th grade HKMS Cyber Patriot cohort will move to JBHS next year, at which point a new cohort will be formed at HKMS. Plans are in place to bring the program to JRMS and to the elementary schools, as well.

BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Mr. Brownstein reported events at SSES, including chorus concerts and science professional development.

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Kaplan reported events at HKMS, including highlighting faculty members. Mrs. Kaplan shared the news that the HKMS Math Specialist has resigned due to workload. A replacement specialist will not be hired for the remainder of the school year. An interventionist will be hired in the interim.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SCHOOL CLIMATE

Mr. Brownstein and Mrs. Mohr presented about the School Climate surveys administered at both SSES and HKMS. Findings reflected that the majority of students in both schools feel that their school environment is safe and healthy, and that they feel part of a community, feel happy to be at school, are treated fairly, and have adults they can talk to as needed. Mrs. Mohr also spoke about the benefits of Restorative Practices training to address relationship building between faculty and students and focus on positive discipline.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: 2018-2019 PROPOSED BUDGET

Dr. McMorran referenced 26 areas that require funding so that schools can run, five of which are Special Services, Buildings/Grounds, General Faculty, Transportation, and Technology. Noted that there are circumstances particular to this year that are causing increased budgetary needs in these areas, and how those increases would impact the remaining 21 areas of funding. Presented possible reductions from 9.3% "Point of Departure" to 3.5%. Discussion ensued to dissect and troubleshoot the 18-19 proposed budget. The Board agreed that they would not be asking Dr. McMorran to go below 3.5%.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

Special Services: Mrs. Torre reported on student special education services. Corrected a clerical error in the Special Services board report and spoke of transition meetings and extended school year planning underway.

Mr. Reiss reported on unexpended funds at this point in the school year. Asked the Board to support transfer of funds for excess costs due to snow removal.

Motion: move to transfer \$24,000 from object code 111 to object code 422. Shortt, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.

Mr. Reiss reported on health insurance claims: December 2017 and January 2018 claims were low or on par with averages.

BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mrs. Shortt announced that there is a Policy Committee meeting scheduled in March to do first round of policy review.

Mr. Hicks announced that there will be a Transportation Committee meeting on Thursday, 2/15, at JBHS.

Mr. Parker announced that he will be looking to put two board members on the future Curriculum Committee and asked the Board to consider whether they would like to serve on the committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Carolyn Oppenheim - Hunting Ridge Road, Easton, expressed concern about impact of budget reductions, especially regarding class sizes, special education, and Spanish.

Anne Manusky – Morning Glory Drive, Easton, implored attendees to protest Common Core to legislators because it is developmentally inappropriate, and attributed the increase in the need for special education services to Common Core and the need to “fix” children. Mrs. Manusky also attributed the increase in special education services to the failure of the state to carry out Connecticut Act 14-39, which was supposed to raise the minimum age of kindergarten.

Nikki Kaldawy - Staples Road, Easton, advocated for telling the Board of Finance that our schools have needs that cannot be cut for budget reasons, and commended the Board for their hard work throughout the budget process.

Heidi Hanson - Wilson Road, Easton, thanked Mrs. Mohr for her work on the School Climate presentation, and noted that if programming is cut for budgetary reasons, it will be at a great disservice to the 93% of students who currently participate in extracurricular activities.

Lori Longo - Buck Hill Road, Easton, asked the Board to reconsider the reduction of the ILA Specialist at HKMS, because the ILA Specialist has been a tremendous help to her child.

Diane Ronen – Tuckahoe Road, Easton, warned that losing the ILA Specialist will allow students to fall through the cracks, expressed that it is vital to have an ILA Specialist, and suggested the Board ask for more money.

Craig Lucca - Ridgeline Road, Easton, warned of increasing tax costs pushing young families out of Easton and of making Easton cost-prohibitive to new families looking to relocate there.

Jen Nolleberg – Ridge Road, Easton, illustrated the importance of school programs and clubs, and highlighted the personal relationships fostered by the school leadership at HKMS, and expressed concerns about losing extra supports for students who need it. Expressed gratitude for the Easton schools.

Kristi Sogofsky – Adams Road, Easton, asked the Board to go to the Board of Finance and ask for more money. Questioned the decision to leave a new HR position at Central Office in the budget at the expense of necessities in the schools.

Carolyn Oppenheim - Hunting Ridge Road, Easton, urged parents to show up and support the Board of Education in person at the Board of Finance meeting if change is wanted.

Sarah Lehberger - Kachele Street, Easton, equated tax dollars to private school tuition for her child to go to a "top-notch" school, and warned that if services are reduced in Easton, parents will move out and pay for an education elsewhere.

Nikki Kaldawy - Staples Road, Easton, has been giving tours at SSES, and has been hearing that families are choosing Easton for more land, more house, and for the good schools.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT:

Dr. Bindelglass reported that the Board of Finance has a number in mind that is well-below the number that will be presented to them. Argued that if people feel that the 3.5% increase is too low, the conversation with the Board of Finance should have already started.

Mr. Parker gave the history of perspective of the Board of Finance from the past few years, and the fact that this budget is a significant departure from what they have seen in the past. Reminded parents about the March 7 Board of Finance meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move to adjourn the meeting. Bindelglass, Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 10:51 p.m.

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary
Recorded by Tom McMorran