

Easton Board of Education
Meeting
January 11, 2016
Minutes

INSTR # M2016000032
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CHRISTINE HALLORAN
TOWN CLERK
EASTON CT

Board of Education: Bindelglass, Bobroske, Chieda (7:40 pm), Hicks, Parker, Underberger
Administration: McMorran, Sullivan, Pierson Ugol, Edwards, Freeston, Fox-Santora, Brownstein, Kaplan, Burke
Others: 16 members of the staff and community

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion; move that the Easton Board of Education accept the minutes of the December 7, 2015 meeting as submitted. Underberger, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tim Brady, Center Road: Mr. Brady asked if a decision had been made on changing the transportation fleet from a diesel fueled fleet to a propane fueled fleet. Mr. Parker responded that the decision has not yet been made and would not be included in the 2016-17 budget.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None

DISCUSSION OF 2016-17 OPERATING BUDGET

Dr. McMorran presented the administration's proposed operating budget for 2016-17. The presentation included information on enrollment, staffing at both schools, budget history, areas of increase and decrease, educational mandates, comparisons with other area towns and DRG A schools, and addressed some anticipated questions regarding the budget. The proposed increase is 2.17% over the current year budget.

Board members were asked to submit questions to Mrs. Sullivan prior to the budget workshop on January 21, 2016.

Dr. Underberger asked the administration to provide a listing of those items or programs considered, but not included in the budget proposal.

Mr. Parker explained the large increase in the proposed allocation to the Health Insurance Reserve Account. Due to extremely high claims in the current year, the Board requested an additional appropriation from the Board of Finance to cover costs beyond the current Reserve Fund capacity. A Town Meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2016 to vote on the \$1,200,000 appropriation.

Curriculum alignment: Dr. McMorran spoke on the importance of curriculum and the need for additional resources for Dr. Pierson Ugol in the future.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Mrs. Fox-Santora reported on participation in the Geography Bee.

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Kaplan reported on participation in the Geography Bee and upcoming concerts. The 8th graders contributed and distributed over 400 toys to a school in Bridgeport prior to the Holiday break.

Special Services Report: Ms. Edwards reported that work on transition from 8th grade to the high school has begun.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction: Dr. Pierson Ugol reported that transition meetings with the high school have begun. She also reported on the change at the federal level from No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The change means greater control at the state and local level, and less emphasis on standardized testing.

Director of Finance: Mrs. Sullivan reported on the following:

- Food Service contract will be put out to bid as soon as the contract template is received from the State of Connecticut. A survey, that includes suggestions from the PTA Wellness Committee, will be sent out to parents. The goal is to obtain feedback on what is important and how the current program could be changed.
- Transfer Report was provided.
- Bus Depot proposal: Mrs. Sullivan reported on the meeting with the Board of Selectmen regarding the potential of a bus depot on the Samuel Staples site. She noted that the Park & Recreation Department is holding firm on keeping the property for recreational use. Other sites in Easton are being explored. This will not be a budget item in the 2016-17 budget.
- Diesel fuel has been locked in for the next year at \$2.02, compared with \$2.55 in the current budget. As a result of the fuel savings, two tier busing will not be considered for next year.
- Electricity Savings: She also reported on electrical savings as a result of a UI program of replacement of light fixtures with more efficient fixtures. The program will cost \$121,000, in the form of an interest free loan from UI, paid over the next five years from the estimated savings in electricity.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Calendar Committee: Dr. Underberger reported the Tri-District Committee has devised a calendar for 2016-17 that will be presented at the Tri Board meeting on January 27, 2016 for approval. He reviewed the calendar and the changes from the current.

Long Range Planning Committee: Dr. Underberger reported the Committee is being reconvened and is in the process of seeking community members for participation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Robin Abramowicz: Mrs. Abramowicz expressed her concern about the number of ½ days for professional development and conferences, finding the shortened day disruptive for the students.

Carolyn Oppenheim, Hunting Ridge Road: Mrs. Oppenheim expressed her support for giving the children the best education possible.

Christine Calvert: Mrs. Calvert asked what the savings would be if the two tier bus system was implemented. She also asked if the schedule could be adjusted to avoid having the buses arrive at the schools early, with the children having to wait on the bus for 5-10 minutes.

Ann Manusky: Mrs. Manusky announced a meeting on student data privacy that will be held in Hartford.

Tim Brady, Center Road: Mr. Brady also objects to the buses arriving early at the schools and not discharging the students. Regarding the proposed budget, Mr. Brady questioned some of the numbers presented, the high salary increases, and the process for contract negotiations. He challenged the board to think differently with regard to long term planning.

Robin Abramowicz: Mrs. Abramowicz asked the status of the AED's being installed on athletic fields. Dr. Bindelglass responded that he is still exploring the concept, but has some major concerns about the maintenance of the equipment.

Ann Manusky: Mrs. Manusky suggested that the board meetings be videotaped to allow viewing by parents who are not able to attend the meetings.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Hicks commented that the contract negotiation with the unions was eye opening for him. The process is a difficult one. He added that the board is looking at different ideas for long range planning.

Mrs. Bobroske assured those present that the Board takes their fiscal responsibility very seriously. They also are listening to the comments and suggestions.

Dr. Bindelglass also commented that the board needs to be able to explain the budget and to answer questions.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education adjourn the meeting. Underberger, Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 pm

Submitted by Regina Bobroske, Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday