

*Filed subject to approval*

Easton Board of Education  
Meeting  
January 21, 2016  
Minutes

Board of Education: Bindelglass, Bobroske, Chieda, Hicks, Parker, Underberger  
Administration: McMorran, Sullivan, Pierson Ugol, Edwards, Freeston, Fox-Santora, Kaplan, Burke  
Others: eight members of the staff and community

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None

DISCUSSION OF 2016-17 OPERATING BUDGET

Dr. McMorran began the discussion with a listing of other area towns and their initial budget proposals. Those increases ranged from 6.42% to 1.24%. None of the budgets have been approved as yet. He also provided a listing of the Easton adopted budgets from 2007 to the current year.

Board members discussed some of the question that had been submitted. These included:

- Classroom size at Samuel Staples Elementary School: concern about the delivery of service to each student. The discussion of 5<sup>th</sup> grade included the concern about space limitations if there are more than 21 students in the room and discussion of potential of moving the 5<sup>th</sup> grade to the middle school.
- Other personnel: discussion of role of academic mentor and the guidance counselor
- LCD projectors: the SmartBoards are at the end of their life and many need to be replaced.
- Capital item: at Helen Keller, the only items are the replacement of two exterior doors. The egress door for the Library is damaged/safety concern and the exterior cement slab needs to be replaced. This is a safety concern. The other is a door used by custodians and for deliveries.
- Professional development allowance for teachers: Both schools allow \$200 per teacher for use for professional development, conferences, workshops, etc.
- Curriculum work: discussion of the budget for summer curriculum work. Dr. Pierson Ugol presented information on the number of curriculum leadership positions in other area towns.
- Health Insurance: the increase is based on the Anthem projections for next year's claims.
- Insurance benefits for non-certified staff: those who work over 30 hours a week are entitled to insurance benefits and many opt for the family plan. Each participating non-certified individual pays about 18% of the cost; the certified staff pays about 20%.
- School supplies: Dr. Underberger asked why the supplies accounts were not decreasing along with the decrease in enrollment. He suggested a 10% decrease in those accounts.
- Copy machines: could there be greater efficiency with the use of and number of copy machines.
- Discussion around reviewing base numbers as well as increases – examples included extracurricular activities (play) at Helen Keller.

Following the discussion, Mr. Parker requested the administration to come back with what the budget would look like with a 1.5%, 1.0%, 0.5% and 0.0% increases. This will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting on February 8, 2016.

Special Education Budget: Ms. Edward presented budget information. She noted that while the general student population was decreasing, the number of students needing special education services is increasing. She explained the staffing needs and the relationship with the Center for Children with Special Needs (CCSN).

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Christine Calvert: Mrs. Calvert questioned some of the increases in the budget. She asked what the potential savings would be if the two tier busing was instituted. She also noted that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class size seems to be based on an assumption that there will be six additional 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

Beverly Dacey: Mrs. Dacey stated that the budget discussion is the same discussion that she heard 15 years ago. She noted that the Common Core is at the heart of everything and that is not being discussed, adding that curriculum consists of what the State mandates that you have to do. She also questioned the progress with planning for the future, the impact of the health insurance reserve shortfall on the Town's financial status, and the need to adjust to current economic times. She also questioned the contractual agreement with staff for tuition reimbursement and asked if there was any incentive for staying with the district for a period of time.

Tim Brady, Center Road: Mr. Brady provided his worksheet showing the budget increases and cost per pupil increases since 2010. He included a chart of classroom sizes, current and proposed for the other DRG schools, grade K-4. He urged the board to keep consolidation of facilities in mind, and to consider closing one building.

Gretchen Goldstein: Mrs. Goldstein spoke in support of the proposed budget, adding that she understands that there may need to be an increase in spending.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mrs. Chieda commented that she would support the proposed budget, and the need to take a positive approach to education if Easton is to attract families to move to the town.

Dr. Underberger commented that the board's job is to do what is best for education, but to question how the money is being allocated, to justify the expenditures, and do this for all the members of the town.

Dr. Bindelglass noted that the budget deliberation is difficult, especially on an annual basis and addressing current trends.

Mrs. Bobroske commented that the board has to balance what is best for the children with fiscal responsibility.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:26 pm

Submitted by Regina Bobroske, Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday