

Filed subject to approval

Easton Board of Education
September 8, 2015
Minutes

Attendance:

Board of Education: Bobroske, Hicks, Horowitz, Parker, Peskay, Underberger
Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Sullivan, Brownstein, Burke, Edwards, Freeston, Fox Santora, Kaplan,

Others: Ten members of the staff and community, and a representative of the Easton Courier.

Mr. Parker called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education recess to Executive Session to discuss contract negotiations with the Easton non-certified staff. Underberger. Peskay. Unanimous. Executive Session commenced at 7:33 pm.

RECONVENE PUBLIC SESSION

Public session resumed at 7:37 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept the minutes of the August 4, 2015 Special meeting as submitted. Underberger. Peskay. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Laura Wheatley, 52 Vista Drive: Questioned why school started before Labor Day. She also asked about the 15 minutes added to the school day and why parents don't know more about how the additional time is allotted. She also asked if the idea of having recess at HKMS was gone and wondered if Easton is trying to be on the same schedule as Redding schools.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

DISCUSSION OF JUNE 20, 2015 OPERATING BUDGET RESULTS

Mrs. Sullivan reported that the health care reserve was significantly reduced this year. Easton claims have run very high for past several months. Surplus funds of a little more than \$200,000 will be applied to the Health Care Reserve.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Motion: move that the Board of Education approve the three-year contract between the Easton Board of Education and the Easton Non-Certified Staff, CSEA SEIU Local 2001, CTW as negotiated over the summer and as discussed during Executive Session: Peskay, Underberger. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON ANONYMOUS GIFT OF \$1,000

Kim Fox Santora reported that an individual contacted her to donate \$1,000 anonymously to SSES to be used at the discretion of the administration with at least one half going to a scholarship fund for Nature's Classroom.

Motion: move that the Board of Education accept with gratitude the anonymous donation of \$1,000 to SSES to be used as designated by the donor. Bobroske. Peskay. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED MASTER PLAN FOR MOREHOUSE CIVIC PARK

Peggy Sullivan reported that there will be a Planning and Zoning Commission Hearing at 7:30PM on October 28, 2015 at the Easton Public Library Community room to review a plan for the Morehouse Civic Park. Mrs. Sullivan shared the plan drawings with the Board and with the public members in attendance. The plan includes placement of solar panels, a cell tower, a possible school bus depot, and both active and passive recreation areas.

DISCUSSION OF BUILDING-BASED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR 2015-2016

Dr. Pierson Ugol presented a color-coded calendar of professional development planned for the current school year and explained that the majority of the professional development will be provided by the district's math and language arts specialists. Number of days on the calendar will depend on the pacing of the instruction throughout the year. Emphasis of embedded classroom support means teachers will be out of their classroom less for professional development. She reported that the State Department of Education expects school districts to provide 18 hours of professional development per year for their certified staff. There was a discussion about the amount of time that teachers should be out of the classroom.

A "Save the Date" message has gone out to parents. Dr. Yep Ban Har will be providing a presentation to staff during the day on September 29th and a parent information session will be held the same evening on an overview of student-enter mathematics instruction. He will return in May 2016 to provide further training.

DISCUSSION OF EXTENDED LEARNING TIME

Mrs. Kaplan reported the additional 15 minutes per day in the schedule at HKMS allowed a schedule change that includes a 43 minute block of time every day for students called ELT (Extended Learning Time), creating an 8-period day. Some examples of work during the extended learning time will be: students working on interdisciplinary projects together; exploration of grade-specific essential questions that have been developed to be used in Easton and Redding. SRBI support will be provided during that time to students who need it instead of pulling them out of Fine & Practical Arts classes. There will be 20 minutes of sustained silent reading on days there is not interdisciplinary work happening. Mrs. Kaplan reported that this new schedule was communicated in the Easton Courier, the HKMS Cougar Connection, and on both the HKMS website and the PTA website.

DISCUSSION OF CLUSTER GROUPING IN GRADES 2-5

Kim Fox Santora discussed the teachers being open about the challenge of differentiation of instruction in the classroom using a variety of instructional models. The instructional model of cluster grouping is being implemented. Rather than distributing high achieving students broadly, cluster grouping puts like learners together, and clusters similar achievers in less classrooms. Focus will be on high-achieving math students in grades 2-5. Students will be identified by how the student is performing, reviewing data in such things as multiple units of study, SBAC scores, and how the students are doing day-to-day in their class. Goal is to improve instructional models in grades 2-5 and to continue challenging these students. It is estimated that it will take two years for teachers to master this instructional model.

Move: move that Board Reports be added to the agenda. Underberger. Hicks. Unanimous.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Kaplan reported on new and returning staff. She described summer building work that included: gym floor was fully sanded, lined and shellacked; carpet in band room was replaced; two new water fountains installed; new LED lightbulbs throughout the school; new tile and moisture barrier in three classrooms; cafeteria chairs were replaced. Every science classroom now has science lab tables, and new curtains in the Library/Media Center. 310 students are enrolled at HKMS (ten above projection). PTA hosted a back to school tour. Really helpful to incoming sixth graders. A successful Open House was held on September 3rd.

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Kim Fox Santora reported on the hiring of new staff -- all student focused and full of energy. Going solar was the biggest summer project at SSES and the work remaining is out in the field, away from the school building. Conduit pipes will be painted and will blend in with the school. The solar

power will power half of SSES and will be turned on in October. Fire panel was properly repaired and now works well. Enrollment is 34 students over projections (581 vs. 547). There are 27 new students mostly in grade 5. Grades K-2 will receive 15 minutes of Spanish every day; 3rd grade students will receive Spanish instruction three times a week for 20 minutes each. Screening is taking place now for all children in reading, writing and math to determine who needs extra help.

Special Services: Ms. Edwards reported on the hiring of Stacey Thomas as long-term substitute in pre-school. Just prior to school opening the Easton and Redding special education elementary staff met together and special education middle school staff met together. United work being done in both districts. Monthly staff meetings will be held to continue to define expectations for year. Opening of school was successful. Continued focus will be on building capacity of staff to be less reliant on the services of the Center for Children with Special Needs. The District Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) will be working at both schools and also allows us to reduce the time we use the Center.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction: Dr. Pierson Ugol reported on the curriculum work that occurred over the summer months. She also gave a presentation on the health and wellness curriculum, including the state framework in this curricular area and how the DARE program functions as one piece of the curriculum. She discussed improvements that will be happening in this area, as well as implementing measures of efficacy. There will be a follow up report in spring 2016.

Director of Finance and Operations: Mrs. Sullivan reported on the solar project update. Representatives of the State Health Department will be meeting with town officials later this month to discuss transferring the oversight of the SSES septic system from DEP to the State Health Department which will reduce the requirements for the school. Working with DATTCO and town officials to investigate using natural gas powered school buses and creating a bus depot in Easton. The contract with DATTCO expires June 2016. A Board member representative will be needed on the tri-district Transportation Committee. Mrs. Sullivan added that we will have to go out to bid on Food Services because the state guidelines were not in compliance with the federal guidelines in the previous bid. A board member volunteer will also be need to serve on the Tri-District Food Services Committee. She also reported that \$182,733.48 was received from town of Bethel as repayment of the property taxes paid to them as a result of our winning the lawsuit that we brought against them. The repayment will be split three ways between the ER9 districts.

Superintendent: Dr. McMorran spoke to a text that teachers have been reading: *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement and Understanding for All Learners* by Ron Richards. Another book by the same author, *Creating Cultures of Thinking* – curriculum and professional development teams will be looking at this year. Dr. McMorran also discussed measurements and metrics of progress, the need for a suite of in-house and external assessments, and how external assessments such as the state mandated assessment is just one tool.

BOARD REPORTS

Long-Range Planning Committee: Mrs. Bobroske reported that the committee was not able to meet over the summer for numerous reasons. The State pulled money for Redding grant that had been earmarked for Jonathan Costa work. Leadership on Redding side has changed with Kim Ajavananda moving out of the district. Eric Witt is new Redding representative. Mrs. Bobroske will be stepping down as the Easton LRP chair. Work will continue with existing committee structure until the election.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Christine Calvert, North Street: Supports two-tier busing hopes it will be considered again. She feels the current SSES dismissal time is too late and asked that the start and end times be relooked at.

Sarah Lehberger, Kachele Street – Expressed a desire to volunteer as a parent representative on the Food Services Committee and would like to work on the Wellness Program. She expressed that the PTA is eager and willing to partner with the Board in these endeavors. She spoke to physical activity impacting mental health and its importance for young children.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Adam Horowitz commented that he attended the HKMS Open House and was very impressed, especially with the teachers' willingness to help.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 pm.

Submitted by Regina Bobroske, Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Vicki Cram