

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 8, 2018

ATTENDANCE:

Easton Board of Education Members: Parker, Chieda, Bindelglass, Reed, Shortt

Administration: McMorrان, Pierson-Ugol, Torre, Reiss

Others: 6 members of the public

CALL TO ORDER:

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

April 17, 2018 Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting:

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the April 17, 2018 Regular Meeting. Bindelglass, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT:

The Board welcomed back and congratulated Dr. Pierson Ugol.

BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS:

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Mrs. Fox Santora proudly reported that 10 students attended the Connecticut Invention Convention (CIC) at UCONN. Three students, Oliver Taylor, Leo Gorder, and Jake Hamlin, were invited to attend nationals at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, MI.

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Kaplan noted that students shared their musical talents at the regional festival. She noted that families have signed up to adopt baby chicks once they hatch as the result of an investigation in science class. Mrs. Kaplan also shared that the theme of the 8th grade team's Cornerstone Project is the impact of technology on society. Mrs. Kaplan reported that the 45th annual pasta dinner was well-attended and a lot of fun.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: EXTRACURRICULAR FUNDING 2018-2019

Mrs. Kaplan prepared her presentation with the hope that the budget passes this evening. Mrs. Kaplan noted that currently, there are 17 student activities funded in the budget and 74% of the students participate in one or more activities. The cost to run all extracurricular activities at Helen Keller is \$46,964. There is a shortfall of \$41,754.

Mrs. Kaplan surveyed a tri-state consortium of schools to learn how they fund extracurricular activities. 17 of the 18 responses indicated that they are fully funded within the budget. One is moving to the town side. Of note, the Wilton District instituted a flat activity fee per participating student for the school year. Students can participate in as many activities during the school year under the flat fee.

Mrs. Kaplan posed the following questions to the Board, if the budget passes:

1. To fundraise or not?
2. To charge parents or not?
3. To offer some activities, but not all?
4. If the decision is to charge, is there a cap on the expense?
5. If activities are not funded, can donors fund a particular activity of their choice?

Mrs. Kaplan reviewed several options, including offering activities based on what the budget can afford, involving ECC/Park and Recreation, fundraise or not fundraise, transfer funds from the drama and yearbook activities, request donations via GoFundMe, and adopt a pay to participate flat fee. The Board discussed the options, including their sensitivity not to exclude students of need, and to expand fundraising efforts to the community at large to support extracurricular activities.

Mrs. Kaplan raised the question if a donor would be able to dictate how the funds would be used versus being applied to a general fund. Dr. Bindelglass noted that a donor dictating how the funds would be used would generate ill will. Dr. McMorran suggested if fundraising is successful, then people would need to know the secondary use of the funds. Mrs. Shortt suggested the surplus could fund the purchase of library books that were cut from the budget.

Motion: move to accept the idea of fundraising for extracurricular activities and funds raised over what is needed will go to the purchase of library books at Helen Keller. Shortt, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: LAST DAY OF INSTRUCTION 2017-2018

Dr. McMorran noted the 10 snow days this winter have extended the end of the school year into the 3rd week of June. By law, Easton must have 180 school days. The 181st day is a teacher/paraprofessional day. Dr. McMorran suggested that Monday, 6/25 be the last day of school for students and that Tuesday, 6/26 be used as a professional development day for staff and faculty. Dr. McMorran also noted that the teacher, custodian and administrative contracts are built on the students' schedule and planned minimal days are negotiated into the contracts.

Motion: move to make the last day school for students Monday, June 25. Reed, Bindelglass. Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move to make Monday, June 25 a full day of school. Bindelglass, Reed. 4-1 Approved. Chieda opposed.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: STATUS OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR MEDICAL INSURANCE RESERVE

Mr. Reiss stated the town has noticed a meeting for May 21st.

Mr. Parker reviewed the voting process. If the \$400k for medical claims does not pass, then there will not be money to finish the school year.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Dr. Pierson Ugol – The schools are shifting gears for the end of the school year. She is working with the principals and Special Education to prioritize and engage teachers to accomplish their goals. Given the reductions in writing next year, it makes this year more important.

Mr. Parker – A new curriculum committee is forming now that Dr. Pierson Ugol is back. Mrs. Chieda and Mrs. Shortt will be on the committee. There is discussion to possibly join with the Redding BoE, especially with new standards coming.

Mr. Reiss noted there are approximately \$210k in funds coming back to the budget. Unanticipated expenses may drive it lower. He is not anticipating any big bills. Mr. Reiss noted medical is about the same as last month's transfer report.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Anne Manusky - Morning Glory Drive, Easton, commented on the upcoming Freedom of Information (FOI) hearing regarding her request for the meeting minutes and dates from the last 3 Easton BoE Curriculum Committee meetings. She noted that the hearing that had originally been scheduled for May 8th was postponed to July, and distributed copies of the Notice of Meeting and Order to Show Cause received from the FOI Commission, as well as letters she wrote to the FOI Commission and to the Easton Board of Education.

Dr. McMorrان clarified that the Board of Education votes on new curriculum decisions.

Nikki Kaldawy - Staples Road, Easton, thanked the Board for the tough budget season. She expressed support for age-appropriate sexual assault awareness and prevention curriculum in school.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT:

Mrs. Shortt highlighted the Helen Keller Connect with Kindness event and bringing the community together.

Dr. Bindelglass recognized Mr. Parker for his role leading the budget process.

Mrs. Chieda commented on sex health education. She spoke with the social worker. She noted she's extremely responsive and encouraged parents to ask questions. Mrs. Chieda requested more detail on the content be provided to parents. The information on the website is general.

Mrs. Chieda noted the concerns about the curriculum. She looks forward to the committee starting and connecting the dots for increases in Special Education, student anxiety, and the change in rigor for the youngest students.

Mr. Parker responded to Mrs. Manusky's public comment appearance. The Freedom of Information hearing was originally scheduled for May 8, 2018^h at 11:00 am, but due to scheduling difficulties, the hearing will be rescheduled and July dates have been provided to the Freedom of Information Commission in Hartford.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the meeting be adjourned. Shortt, Reed. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Christine DiDomenico