



East Greenwich School Committee

Joint East Greenwich School Committee and Town Council Meeting
Thursday, December 15, 2022

Hybrid Meeting: Cole Middle School & Via Zoom

Minutes

Those in attendance for School Committee & Joint Meeting

School Committee: Ms. Alyson Powell, Chair; Ms. Nicole Bucka, Vice-Chair; Ms. Clare Cecil-Karb; Mr. Tim Munoz; Mr. Kevin Murphy; Dr. Eugene Quinn (arrived 5:08 pm)

Additional Attendees: Dr. Brian G. Ricca, Superintendent; Mrs. Amy Healey, Confidential Administrative Assistant; Attorney Aubrey Lombardo; Mrs. Maggie Baker Director of Administration (arrived 5:30pm); Mr. Michael Podraza, Assistant Superintendent (Joint Session only)

Those in attendance for Joint Meeting

Town Council: Mr. Mark Schwager, Chair; Ms. Caryn Corenthal; Ms. Renu Englehart; Mr. Michael Zarella

Additional Attendees: Mr. Andrew Nota, Town Manager; Ms Leigh Carney, Town Clerk; Ms. Trish Sunderland, Town Finance Director; Attorney Andrew Teitz

Absent: Mr. William Hangan, Mr. Michael Donegan

5:00 pm - Open Session

Call to Order

Ms. Powell called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

I. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Review of School Committee By-laws

Ms. Powell explained that the first portion of this meeting will be a discussion of the bylaws. The Committee members had an opportunity to submit recommended changes. In the past a working group of 3 members was created to generate suggestions to bring to the full Committee. Ms. Powell suggested the establishment of a working group consisting of herself, Vice Chair Nicole Bucka and Mr. Munoz.

Attorney Lombardo recommended putting this as an action item on a future agenda.

Ms. Powell began a discussion of subcommittees.

- Should subcommittee chairs be voted on or appointed by the SC Chair?
- Who serves on the subcommittee?

Ms. Bucka spoke in favor of a hybrid style between appointing vs. soliciting feedback. She queried whether members are expected to chair a subcommittee.

Ms. Powell asked that Committee members submit their statement of interest in subcommittee membership to Mrs. Healey by Monday in order to prepare for the discussion at Tuesday's meeting. Ms. Powell suggested beginning with the standing subcommittees with the possibility of later adding ad hoc subcommittees - first and second choice for chair and another that you would like to sit on.

Ms. Powell said that in order to keep all the standing subcommittees, members will all need to be prepared to chair a committee. She shared that it is too much for members to chair more than one subcommittee. The expectation is that all members would share the responsibility.

Mr. Munoz spoke of the importance of members stepping up to serve on subcommittees and ideally chair one.

III. School Committee 101

Attorney Lombardo presented "School Committee 101".

- What is a School Committee
- Sources of Authority
- Three Main Statutes
 - RIGL 16-2-9 General Powers and Duties of School Committee

Mr. Munoz inquired about what should be reported to the School Committee. Attorney Lombardo replied that there is a list of what should be shared with the Committee.

Mr. Munoz inquired about what the School Committee's role is related to curriculum. Attorney Lombardo replied that it is the Committee's responsibility to adopt policy and to guide the budget. Ms. Powell said that the Committee has worked hard to put policies in place and now is the time to move forward to assure their implementation.

Ms. Bucka asked about the role of subcommittees. Ms. Lombardo said that subcommittees can make recommendations.

Attorney Lombardo reviewed the requirements of professional development. There is no one to report professional development to and many district's School Committee members self monitor or have the District maintain self reported professional development.

Attorney Lombardo highlighted the addition of career and technical education programs and governing policies.

- RIGL 16-2-11 General Powers and Duties of the Superintendent

Ms. Bucka inquired what else can be done if issues are not addressed by the Administration, such as the math curriculum for IEP students. Attorney Lombardo replied that a change in policy could be made.

Mr. Munoz inquired about the requirement of the Superintendent to give an annual report on the operation of the school system. Attorney Lombardo said that the District has done this in some ways but not in a comprehensive report. Dr. Quinn cautioned about putting additional work on an already hard working administrative team.

- RIGL 16-2-9.1 Code of Basic Management Principles and Ethical School Standards

3 Biggest responsibilities of the School Committee

- 1) Policy
- 2) Budget
- 3) Hiring of a Superintendent

Tips and Common Areas of Confusion for School Committee Members

- What is the main responsibility of a School Committee Member?
- School Committee Chain of Authority
Ms. Cecil-Karb asked about approaching a teacher or principal as a parent vs. as a School Committee member. Attorney Lombardo said that if a matter directly is related to a member's child it can be personally addressed. If it is a district-wide issue, then it should go through the Superintendent. It is recommended that the member be clear when they are approaching a teacher or principal as a parent.
- Process and Due Process are both important
When a School Committee member receives a complaint, forward it to the Superintendent, especially under these circumstances:
 - Hiring/firing of employees
 - Disciplining student cases
 - Special Education cases
- Dealing with the Press
 - "No comment" is always preferred
 - The Committee should agree that it shall have one (1) spokesperson on important issues.
 - Public statements made by members can be construed as admissions against the District and/or the Town
- Best Practices - Social Media

- School Committee members should be careful when posting on social media
 - School Committee members need to make sure that they do not commit an OMA violation by creating a quorum on social media when responding to posts.
 - School Committee members need to be careful about posting confidential student information and violating FERPA.
- Confidentiality Issues
 - Conduct at School Committee Meetings
 - Open Meetings Act
 - Open Meetings Act: Responding to the Public in Open Session

Dr. Quinn inquired about non residents speaking at public comment on behalf of others. Attorney Lombardo responded that a rule could be instituted to address that scenario.

6:58 pm The School Committee took a 5 minute break

7:00 pm Joint School Committee-Town Council Meeting

At 7:08 pm Ms. Powell welcomed the Town Council to the meeting. She explained that this meeting will set the table for the upcoming budget process. Ms. Powell asked that presentations be limited to 20 minutes with questions to follow.

Mr. Schwager called the Town Council Meeting to order.

IV. Statutory pre-budget consultation between East Greenwich School Committee and East Greenwich Town Council for review of revenue and expenditure projections and discussion on issues affecting preparation of the school budget per RIGL 16-2-21.2 (d).

Mr. Nota gave the Town's presentation:

- Schedule - Town of East Greenwich 2022-2023 Budget Calendar
- What is a budget forecast? Why forecast?
- Taxes: Where do your taxes go: FY 2023
- Town and School Budget to include Debt Service
 - Town Budget
 - School Budget
 - Percentage of Total Budget
- 2023 Projections
 - Revenues
 - Expenditures
- FY 2023 Estimated Revenues
- FY 2023 Estimated Expenditures
- Intergovernmental Aid

- Assumptions & Facts - Expenditures FY 24
- Tax Levy vs. Tax Rate: Understanding the difference
- Funding Status of OPEB
- 2022 Capital Reserve Funding
- School Capital Reserve Fund
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Debt
- Fund Balance
- Financial Management
- Our Weaknesses and Challenges
- Our Strengths and Opportunities
- Cost Unpredictability and Sustainability
- Upcoming Capital Improvements
 - Municipal Capital Projects
 - School Capital Projects
- Charges for Shared Services
- MUNIS System Training and Enhancements

Dr. Ricca and Mrs. Baker gave the District's presentation.

- Purpose
- Agenda
- EGPS Budget Process
- Key Variables in the Development of FY 24 EGPS Budget
- EGPS FY 23 Budget
- Federal COVID Funds
- EGPS Strategic Plan - Strategic Priorities
 - Priority 1 - Learning
 - Priority 2 - Teaching
 - Priority 3 - Systems
 - Priority 4 - Community
 - 3 Year Planning Process
 - 2021-2022 Year 1 Build
 - 2022-2023 Year 2 Refine
 - 2023-2024 Year 3 Optimize
- The Story of the FY 24 Budget
- The Story of the FY 24 Budget, Related to the Strategic Plan

Ms. Corenthal inquired about the salary range for the open school psychologist position. Dr. Ricca explained that the teachers union is allowing for the counting of private service experience towards the hiring step.

Ms. Corenthal inquired about the priorities of the bond monies request. Dr. Ricca replied that there is a meeting scheduled next week to discuss that matter.

Ms. Englehart inquired about the ESSER funds.

Ms. Corenthal inquired about budgeting for projects.

Dr. Quinn noted the need for an increased level of investment in areas that have been ignored over the years.

Members of the School Committee and Town Council praised the presentations and noted that this is a good starting point for the budget process.

V. Public Comment on joint budget session

None

VI. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Zarella, seconded by Ms. Englehart, the Town Council voted 4-0 to adjourn at 8:13 pm.

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the School Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn at 8:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey
School Committee Clerk

Approved 1-10-23