



## East Greenwich School Committee

Tuesday, September 20, 2022

Hybrid Meeting: Cole Middle School & Via Zoom

### Minutes

#### Those in attendance for Executive Session and Open Session

**School Committee:** Ms. Anne Musella, Chair; Ms. Alyson Powell, Vice Chair; Ms. Nicole Bucka (arrived at 6:02 pm); Mr. William Hangan; Mr. Tim Munoz; Mr. Kevin Murphy; Dr. Eugene Quinn

**Additional Attendees:** Dr. Brian G. Ricca, Superintendent; Mr. Michael Podraza, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. Neil Marcaccio, Director of MTSS; Mrs. Maggie Baker, Director of Administration; Mrs. Amy Healey, Confidential Administrative Assistant; Attorney Aubrey Lombardo

#### **6:00 pm Open Session**

##### **I. Call to Order**

Ms. Musella called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

##### **II. Pledge of Allegiance**

##### **III. Athletic Handbook**

Ms. Musella explained that while handbooks are not approved by the School Committee, the School Committee does review handbooks. This year's Athletic Handbook has had many changes in response to last year's Title IX case.

Dr. Ricca stated that both Athletic Director Casie Rhodes and Attorney Aubrey Lombardo worked on bringing this handbook up to date and aligned with current District policies.

Attorney Lombardo noted changes made to the handbook, such as:

- The handbook addresses both students and coaches
- Links to policies and rules
- Responsibilities of coaches
- Specific guidance/directive that coaches must adhere to

- Transgender, Non discrimination, Child Abuse and Neglect, Drug Policy, Bullying Intimidation and Harassment, Social Media, FERPA, Special Education, Student Fees, Fundraising, Student Conduct
- Head coach responsibilities
- Sign off

Mr. Munoz asked about a pre-season meeting with both coaches and student athletes. Attorney Lombardo explained that the coaches and student athletics have separate pre-season meetings. Ms. Musella echoed Mr. Munoz's question and expressed that it is important to have coaches and student athletes attend a joint meeting so that both groups understand the rules.

Ms. Bucka asked what apps are being used for coach and athlete communications. Ms. Lombardo replied that a contract for the app is in final review.

Ms. Musella asked whether both coaches and students should attest to the handbook and requested that the Committee be updated on the implementation of this handbook.

*Mr. Munoz stepped out of the meeting at 6:15 pm.*

#### IV. **Public Comment**

#### V. **Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings**

- A. September 6, 2022 Executive Session Minutes
- B. September 6, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

*On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the executive and regular meeting minutes of September 6, 2022. Ms. Powell abstained from the vote. Mr. Munoz was not present for the vote. Ms. Bucka noted that she recused herself from a portion of the Executive Session meeting.*

#### VI. **Action Items**

- A. Homeschool Requests SY 22-23, Grades K and 2

*On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the homeschool requests. Mr. Munoz was not present for the vote.*

- B. MOU Between Superintendent and School Committee Regarding Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Timeline

Ms. Musella explained that Dr. Ricca's contract includes a September 15th deadline for approving the superintendent's goals. There has been discussion on tying the goals in with the evaluation process as well as making changes to the evaluation process. Ms.

Musella recommended postponing / extending the September 15th deadline to October 31, 2022.

Dr. Ricca expressed agreement with the extension of the goal deadline and said that he appreciated a thoughtful process.

Ms. Musella noted that there is a personnel subcommittee that currently does not have a Chair. She stated that the personnel subcommittee can be used to start determining the evaluation model or that it can be done through a working group. . If this matter is to proceed through the subcommittee, Ms. Musella would appoint Ms. Bucka as the chair.

*On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the MOU. Mr. Munoz was not present for the vote.*

Ms. Bucka said that she was in favor of using the personnel subcommittee to review the Superintendent's goals and evaluation model. She said that feedback from the previous model would be welcomed.

Ms. Musella said that the Committee would look for draft goals and an outline of the revised evaluation process for the October 11, 2022 meeting with the goal of bringing it to the School Committee for a vote on October 25, 2022. Ms. Musella said that she would leave it to Dr. Ricca, Ms. Bucka and the other members of the personnel subcommittee as to whether they will handle this as a working group or through the personnel subcommittee. Ms. Bucka said that with the stated deadline, it might be best to proceed as a work group.

*Mr. Munoz returned to the meeting at 6:28 pm.*

## **VII. Superintendent and Staff Reports**

### **A. Personnel Report**

Dr. Ricca reviewed the current open positions.

### **B. Employee Handbook**

Dr. Ricca said that the employee handbook is a statement of the District's expectations. He noted that Mrs. Healey and Attorney Lombardo worked on updating this handbook.

Dr. Ricca addressed the questions that Ms. Bucka submitted ahead of time.

- 1) Personal Identifying information - has been revised
- 2) Exit interviews - under review. An invitation to complete the exit interview is communicated to employees who are leaving. One has been completed so far.

Ms. Bucka expressed an interest in soliciting feedback from employees who change positions. She suggested that additional language be added to the section on professional conduct, not just a link to the policy

Ms. Bucka inquired as to how homeschool families access special education services. Historically, parents bring their children forward and the District offers services through a walk in model. Ms. Bucka suggested additional information on child find screening be added to the homeschool application.

Ms. Lombardo said that there are guidelines around families who want some services but not others. Ms. Bucka asked if there's any year to year follow up on how homeschool students are doing. Mr. Marcaccio replied that the District does not and added that Rhode Island does not require universal testing. Attorney Lombardo said that the District can ask for child find screenings but it is not required of families. Ms. Bucka encouraged that notification of screening services be included on the homeschool form.

Ms. Musella requested that the "vision" and "purpose" sections be replaced with the mission statement and that a link to the strategic plan be added. Ms. Musella also asked that "employment agreement" to be added to the evaluation section.

### C. Transportation

Dr. Ricca reported that the District is soliciting feedback from Frenchtown and Eldredge families about after school transportation needs for this year. In preparation for the FY 24 budget, all families will be asked about their needs for after school care.

### D. Building Stage 1

A building committee meeting will be held tomorrow and will review the stage 1 submission in more detail.

## VIII. Policies (First Reads)

### A. Policy # 8310 Code of Student Conduct

Attorney Lombardo reviewed changes in this policy

- Updated language on expulsions and out of school suspension
- Additional responses to violation of the code
- Language related to students over age 18 and FERPA rights
- Special education exception and manifestation hearing
- Substance abuse

*Ms. Powell left the meeting at 6:53 pm.*

*Ms. Powell returned to the meeting at 6:56 pm.*

Mr. Munoz said that school committee members don't have a lot of information about what is going on in the schools. He asked whether information is collected and shared with the School Committee. Ms. Lombardo replied that School Committee members are not briefed on day to day student discipline matters because it is an operational matter

and there is the potential that the Committee could be asked to hear a student disciplinary appeal. A yearly discipline report shall be sent to both RIDE and the School Committee. Ms. Musella said that the Committee has been asking for bullying and suspension information in order to monitor how we are doing.

Ms. Musella suggested that a policy be drafted outlining specific annual reports that need to come to the School Committee.

#### B. Policy # 3110 Financial Overview

Ms. Musella said that this is currently an updated policy. At the suggestion of Ms. Bucka and Mr. Munoz, the policy was adapted into calendar form.

#### C. Policy # 3115 Midyear Transfer of Appropriations within Budget

Ms. Musella said that the title has been changed to "Midyear Budget Reallocation". It has been reviewed by Attorney Lombardo and Director of Administration Baker. The School Committee and the District have an obligation to stay on top of the budget.

Dr. Ricca said that the last page of the policy will be converted from paper to electronic.

#### D. Policy # 3410 Fund Balance

Ms. Musella pointed out the use of fund balance for special education services.

Mr. Munoz said that there is quite a markup of the policy. He asked that everyone carefully review the changes. The policy is important in that the financial request to the Town has been cut due to the larger than usual fund balance. There needs to be long term plans of specific needs with monies set aside in fund balance to meet those needs.

- 1) 3-year strategic plan
- 2) Technical needs for facilities and IT

Mr. Munoz pointed out that the policy specifies that the Committee needs to vote annually on the allocation of fund balance. The policy is not meant to expand the fund balance but to align it with the District's needs.

Ms. Lombardo said that fund balance monies allocated for special education should be only for one time expenses. It should not be used to pay for ongoing needs.

Dr. Quinn said that it would be best if these actions were not reactionary. He advocated for budgeting years ahead.

Attorney Lombardo noted that the Town is obligated to provide funding of all recurring students' education expenses.

Ms. Bucka said that it is important to plan for special education costs.

Ms. Musella explained that it is important for the school district to maintain a separate fund balance from the Town. Without a separate fund balance, the decisions on unexpected special education costs would need to be made by the Town who is not equipped to make educational decisions thus giving the Town discretion in making school decisions.

Ms. Musella asked that the Town Council be sent a clean version of the fund balance policy and requested that suggested changes be submitted before the October 11, 2022 second read of the policy.

Ms. Musella requested that suggested changes to any of these policies be sent to Attorney Lombardo in time for revision and a second read on October 11, 2022.

**IX. School Committee Suggestions for Future Agenda Items**

Mr. Munoz and Dr. Quinn - The tracking of students being educated either in charter schools, private schools or homeschooled.

X. *At 7:42 pm Ms. Powell made a motion to Recess Open Session and Convene Executive Session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5(a)(3) School Security. Ms. Bucka seconded the motion which passed 7-0.*

**XI. Adjourn Executive Session and Reconvene Open Session**

*On a motion by Ms. Powell, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn Executive Session at 8:41 pm.*

**XII. Seal Executive Session minutes of September 20, 2022 and disclosure of Executive Session votes of September 20, 2022**

On a motion by Ms. Powell, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted to seal the Executive Session minutes of September 20, 2022.

Ms. Musella disclosed that no action was taken during the Executive Session.

**X. Adjournment**

*On a motion by Ms. Powell, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 pm.*

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey  
School Committee Clerk

*Approved 10-11-22*