



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 4, 2023
6:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting: Cole Middle School & Via Zoom

Minutes

Those in attendance

School Committee: Ms. Alyson Powell, Chair; Ms. Nicole Bucka, Vice-Chair; Ms. Clare Cecil-Karb; Mr. William Hangan; Mr. Kevin Murphy; Mr. Tim Munoz; Dr. Eugene Quinn

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

At 6:02 pm, Ms. Cecil-Karb made a motion to recess Open Session and go into Executive Session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings pursuant to RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(3) School security upgrades; RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-4(a)(4) Investigations. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion which passed 7-0.

I. Call to Order

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Seal Executive Session minutes of April 4, 2023 and disclosure of Executive Session votes of April 4, 2023

On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Mr. Hangan, the Committee voted 7-0 to Seal the Executive Session minutes of April 4, 2023.

Ms. Powell disclosed that no votes were taken in the Executive Session.

IV. Public Comment

V. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

A. March 20, 2023 School Committee Minutes

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the March 20, 2023 minutes.

B. March 21, 2023 School Committee - Master Plan Community Forum Minutes

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0-1 to approve the March 21, 2023 minutes. Ms. Bucka abstained from the vote.

VI. Discussion and Possible Action

A. Superintendent's Recommended FY 24 Budget

Dr. Ricca introduced his recommended budget and shared the process of developing this budget with input from many stakeholders. The budget request is a 3.75% increase. Dr. Ricca noted that the largest bargaining unit (teachers) is scheduled for a 3% raise.

- All non-emergency funding was stopped in February
- The budget is judicious with the use of reserve funds
- Look to hire teachers no higher than Step 5
- Anticipation of return of state funds lost last year
- Prioritizing usage for any unexpected funds
- Maintaining the budget for school needs

Mrs. Baker and Dr. Ricca presented the budget.

- Review of budget process and factors influencing budget
- Review of FY 24 revenue and expenses
- Review of FY 24 personnel considerations
- Review of fund balance
- Approval of the FY 24 budget

Assumptions and Changes

- Assumptions: Health Insurance, Dental Insurance, Transportation
- Changes: Pension ERS, Pension MERS, Teacher Contract Increase, Administrator Increase, Paraprofessionals and Custodians

Sources of Revenue for FY 24

East Greenwich School Department - FY 24 Proposed Expenses \$47,672,998

FY 24 Considerations: New Personnel Request

- Budgeted:
 - 2 elementary teachers
- Unbudgeted

- 1 Self-Contained teacher at high school
- 1 Trainor (Athletics)
- Special Education Administrator
- 1 .5 FTE Occupational Therapist at Meadowbrook
- 1 Floater Custodian
- 1 Safety/Security Officer
- Increase current Speech Pathologist to 1.0 FTE at Cole
- 1 Building Paraprofessional at Eldredge
- ESS Program

Total unbudgeted personnel request \$506,108

Total unbudgeted purchases services \$315,000

EGSD Fund Balance

Fund Balance Audited balance as of 6/30/2022 \$3,656,877

FY 23 Budget \$974,965

FY 24 Budget \$857,451

Turf Field \$387,915

Est. Balance \$1,436,546

Dr. Ricca noted that there have been 2 emergency purchases this year and cautioned that the fund balance is being spent down.

- Key variables in the development of FY 24 EGPS budget
- Annual federal grants which supplement our educational programs
- Grants to supplement our educational programs for FY 23
- Annual federal grants which supplement our educational programs for FY 23
- Projected FY 24 State Aid - East Greenwich
- East Greenwich Public Schools At A Glance (as of 3/29/23)
- School Appropriation and Percent Increase History
- Enrollment Snapshot - Current Enrollment - Projections
- Factors that influence enrollment and budget planning: Home School, Career & Tech and Charter School Students

Dr. Ricca said that he intends to present the budget to the Town with an understanding that both teachers and Town employees were given a 3% raise. Essentially, the increase in this budget is only an additional .75%.

Ms. Bucka inquired about the funding for the proposed athletic trainer position and the difference between School Resource Officers and the Safety/Security Officer.

Ms. Powell clarified that the Safety/Security Officer role would be a one year only position in order to implement security upgrades.

Ms. Bucka noted that many of the unbudgeted personnel requests are related to student services. She asked whether IEP obligations would be met without these positions being filled. Mr. Marcaccio replied that the obligations would be met but it would be difficult. Ms. Bucka asserted that the student services positions are the priority over the athletic trainer and safety/security officer.

Ms. Bucka asked whether there has been discussion about phasing out classroom paraprofessionals. Attorney Lombardo replied that there have been discussions about reallocating the duties of the classroom paraprofessionals. Ms. Bucka inquired about formalizing Mr. Bob Houghtaling's role in the schools.

Dr. Quinn discussed the historical tax levy over the last 100 years. He cautioned about the potential impact of underfunding the schools.

The Committee weighed the options of sending the Superintendent's proposed budget to the Town vs sending the entire budget to the Town, including all of the identified new personnel requests.

Dr. Ricca said that he would be reluctant to propose a 5.9% increase given all of the positive momentum with the relationship between the District and the Town.

Ms. Bucka asserted that the unbudgeted positions being removed from the budget disproportionately affect students with special needs.

Dr. Quinn pointed out that the school department has essentially been level funded some years which has created a hole in the budget.

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb , the Committee voted 6-1 to approve the Superintendent's Recommended FY 24 Budget in the amount of \$47,672,998, with the addition of the unbudgeted Special Education Administrator in the amount of \$79,001. Mr. Hangan voted against the motion.

Mr. Hangan noted that the inclusion of the Special Educator Administrator in the budget motion did not take into account consideration or discussion of the other identified needed positions.

Dr. Quinn noted that this final amount is still under a 4% increase.

VII. Action Items

A. School Committee approval of SY 2023-2024 Academic Calendar

Mr. Podraza explained that the proposed calendar was developed in line with the strategic plan. He reviewed the calendar and noted aspects of the calendar. The calendar includes "Right to Read" days, a testing window for Kindergarteners, parent - student - teacher

conferences and early release days. Mr. Podraza discussed student absenteeism during holiday weeks. He talked about the challenges of meeting student needs and RIDE requirements during distance learning. Therefore, distance learning days are not included in this recommended calendar. Mr. Podraza said that this calendar can be duplicated for SY 24-25.

Ms. Bucka inquired about increasing professional development for staff. She also asked about family child care needs during Thanksgiving week and said that it would be important to notify parents.

Ms. Cecil-Karb said that she had heard concerns about the number of full weeks off from school but that she was satisfied with Mr. Podraza's explanation of the rationale behind the calendar.

Public Comment

Mr. Taylor Yeaton

Mr. Yeaton asked whether Kindergarteners would attend all three testing days and whether a specific day could be requested. Mr. Podraza replied that Kindergarteners would be scheduled on one of the testing days and that parents can make a date request to the school principal.

Dr. Ricca said that he would look into family concerns about child care surrounding the calendar. He praised Mr. Podraza for his deliberate work on this calendar and emphasis on student led conferences.

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the proposed SY 23-24 school calendar.

- B. School Committee approval of appointment to Policy Subcommittee - Mary Ward, public member

Mr. Munoz spoke of his support of the appointment of Ms. Ward to the Policy Subcommittee and noted her extensive involvement in the school community.

On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve Mary Ward's appointment to the Policy Subcommittee.

- C. School Committee approval of purchase of security upgrades

Ms. Powell reported that the details of the upgrades were discussed in the Executive Session.

On a motion by Mr. Hangan, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the purchase of security upgrades including cameras, visitor management software, radios, radio equipment, accompanying licenses and installation.

D. School Committee approval of Employee Contract - Melissa Ferreira, Confidential Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the contract for Melissa Ferreira, Confidential Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent.

VIII. Policies

A. School Committee By-laws - First Read (revision)

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to table the first read of the policy revision.

IX. Superintendent and Staff Reports

A. Personnel Report

Dr. Ricca noted that the report includes 4 retirements and Spring coaches. He and the leadership team will address unfilled positions in June and decide whether to maintain the open positions or instead look to use those funds for other needed positions.

X. Subcommittee Reports

A. Personnel

B. Special Education Advisory Committee

XI. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 9:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey
School Committee Clerk

Approved 4-18-23