



## East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 20, 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. Kevin Murphy; Mr. Tim Munoz

**Additional Attendees:** 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 Michael Polak

**Absent:** Mr. William Hangan; Dr. Eugene Quinn

#### I. Call to Order

Ms. Powell called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

#### II. Pledge of Allegiance

#### III. Public Comment

#### IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

- A. May 15, 2023 Joint School Committee - Town Meeting Minutes
- B. May 16, 2023 - Executive Session Minutes
- C. May 16, 2023 - Regular Meeting Minutes
- D. June 6, 2023 Executive Session Minutes
- E. June 6, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

*On a motion by Mr. Murphy, second by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the minutes.*

#### V. Action Items

- A. Varnum Armory Lease Agreement

Ms. Powell explained that this is leased storage and workshop space for maintenance.

*On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the Varnum Armory Lease agreement.*

B. FY 24 Budget - Discussion and Action

Dr. Ricca explained that the Town Council reduced the School Department's budget by \$500,000. To meet that budget reduction, the following adjustments have been made. :

Revenue

Increase two CTE seats	\$30,000
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Expenses

General supplies (reduce 10%)	\$25,000	
Classroom Furniture	\$26,000	
Copier Leases	\$14,000	
Building Improvements	\$75,000	
3.4 FTE Unfilled Vacancies included)	\$330,000	(benefits
Total Reduction in Purchase Services	\$140,000	
Total Reduction in Salaries and Benefits	\$330,000	

These reductions do not affect any person currently employed. Through the work of the Senior District Leadership Team, it was determined that the following positions would be cut. These are positions that were unfilled in FY 23.

- .6 FTE Music Teacher
- .4 FTE World Language Teacher
- 1.0 FTE School Psychologist either or 1.0 FTE Guidance Counselor
- 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional
- .40 FTE Department Head

Ms. Bucka asked how these cuts were identified.

Dr. Ricca said that as much reduction as possible was made without cutting personnel. It was determined that all current employees would have a job next year. Jobs that went unfilled this year, which were in the budget for next year, would be cut, hopefully without bringing harm to students.

Ms. Bucka expressed her appreciation for the difficult job done by the administrative team. She stated that the budget approved in April was already lacking in special education staff and that the District does not have adequate staff to provide services to children. The

District continues to not meet statutory obligations. Ms. Bucka requested a decision making flow chart for budget cuts.

Mr. Munoz stated that it is difficult to see reductions in a psychologist and guidance counselor - positions that affect so many students. While he understands the logic of cutting these positions because they have been unfilled, these positions are needed now more than ever.

Mr. Murphy inquired why these positions remained open throughout last year and asked what the District could do better to fill the positions.

Dr. Ricca said that there are a number of reasons including offering salaries that could be more competitive. The \$500,000 reduction can only go so far without cutting personnel.

Mr. Munoz pointed out that Bob Houghatling does a good job of bringing stories about how drugs affect people directly to the Town Council. Perhaps the District could do the same to show the impact of reduced services on students.

Ms. Powell explained that the budget approved in April did not meet all of the District's needs and obligations. Any further reductions in the pattern seen in the past several years is going to put the District in an unsustainable position. There is an inability to add positions which are desperately needed. The next step will be taking away positions.

Mr. Munoz said that for pennies on the tax rate, the District is losing critical mental health services.

Mr. Murphy pointed out that while ignoring improvements needed to buildings results in larger problems, the same can be said if we ignore children's mental health needs.

*On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the Superintendent's revised recommended FY 24 budget in the amount of \$47,202,998.*

## **VI. Superintendent & Staff Report**

### **A. Finance Report**

Ms. Baker gave a financial report, highlighting these items.

- The District was awarded grants in the amount of \$658,000 to supplement programs.
- Bond expenses rise as safety and security projects are implemented
- Due to statutory requirements, a bid went out by the Town for auditors; a new auditor won the bid.

Ms. Powell inquired about the final amount of fund balance that will be used in FY 23. Ms. Baker replied that that number will be known after the books are closed.

Ms. Powell pointed out that using any of the fund balance puts the District in the negative as a starting point.

Ms. Bucka said that there is a misconception that the District is doing well when it is able to survive when starting with a million dollars unbudgeted. She suggested that the District promote any grants they are awarded and specify that these grants are supplemental.

Ms. Baker said that expenses were frozen in June.

#### B. Naming of EGHS Softball Field

Dr. Ricca shared that a request was made to the District to name the high school softball field in memory of Olivia Pasaretti. Olivia was a junior at East Greenwich High School and passed away in January 2022. Because the fields are owned by the Town, the naming request was sent to the Town Manager. At a recent meeting, the Town Council unanimously approved the naming of the field for Olivia.

### VII. Subcommittee Reports

#### A. Finance Subcommittee

Mr. Murphy inquired about the action that Barrington took to override the 4% cap on tax increases.

Ms. Bucka asked how we are getting the information from the Finance Subcommittee out to the public. Dr. Ricca responded that he wants to articulate the values that the EG community holds for education to the Town.

*At 7:02 pm, on a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Mr. Munoz, the Committee voted 5-0 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)(1) - Job Performance - Superintendent - Individual has been notified, including his right to have any discussion held in open session.*

*At 9:50 pm Mr. Murphy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Munoz, to adjourn the Executive Session and Reconvene the Open Session. The Committee voted 5-0 to approve the motion.*

### III. Seal Executive Session Minutes of June 6, 2023 and Disclosure of Executive Session Votes of June 6, 2023

*On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 5-0 to Seal the Executive Session Minutes of June 20, 2023.*

Ms. Powell reported that no votes were taken during the Executive Session.

**IX. Adjournment**

*On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 pm.*

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey  
School Committee Clerk

*Approved 7-18-23*