



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 27, 2024
6:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting: Cole Middle School & Via Zoom

Minutes

Those in attendance

School Committee: 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 Ricca, Superintendent; Mr. Michael Podraza, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. Neil Marcaccio, Director of Student Services; Mrs. Maggie Baker, Director of Administration; Mrs. Amy Healey, School Committee Clerk; Attorney Aubrey Lombardo

Absent: Ms. Alyson Powell, Chair

I. Call to Order

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

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

- A. January 23, 2024 Executive Session Minutes
- B. January 23, 2024 Regular Session Minutes
- C. January 31, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes
- D. February 1, 2024 Executive Session Minutes
- E. February 1, 2024 Regular Session Minutes
- F. February 5, 2024 Joint School-Town Budget Meeting & School Committee Budget Workshop

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0-1 to approve the 1-23-24 Executive Session, 1-23-24 Regular Session and 2-5-24 Joint Meeting minutes. Mr. Hangan abstained from the vote.

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the 1-31-24 Special Meeting, 2-1-24 Executive Session and 2-1-24 Regular Session minutes.

V. Action Items

A. Homeschool Request

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the Homeschool Request.

B. Discussion/Action: Potential Staffing Policy

Ms. Cecil-Karb made a motion to develop a potential staffing policy. Dr. Quinn seconded the motion.

Ms. Bucka explained that the special education audit addendum recommended a staffing policy for the District.

Mr. Munoz said that he felt it was a good idea to develop such a policy and noted that there are limited resources for mental health services for students. In addition, Mr. Munoz recommended a yearly workload analysis for all students' needs as a means of illustrating how resources are being taxed. The District does not have the financial budget to be staffed as it should. This annual analysis would include all positions dealing with mental health.

Ms. Bucka said that the personnel portion of the special education audit was specific to special needs students. Other than special education needs, the audit indicated that the District has adequate staffing that needs to be allocated differently.

Mr. Munoz pointed out the void left by Bob Houghtaling's passing.

Ms. Bucka said that sample policy is broad and that special education is not only what is provided to students with disabilities. She expressed interest in stakeholder feedback from staff and SEAC parents.

Mr. Marcaccio said that a student services workload analysis would include all students' needs through special education, MTSS, 504 plans or short term intervention.

Mr. Munoz suggested that the policy should be developed by the Personnel Sub-Committee and brought to the policy sub-committee.

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to develop a potential staffing policy.

C. Appointment of community members to the Facilities Sub-Committee

Mr. Hangan said that both individuals will be a good asset to the facilities sub-committee. Mr. Murphy also expressed his support of the candidates. Ms. Bucka added that Mr. Norris is a SEAC parent and that it is always good to have a SEAC parent on sub-committees.

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0-1 to appoint Mr. Peter Carney and Mr. Michael Norris as community members of the Facilities Sub-Committee. Mr. Munoz abstained from the vote.

D. Appointment of community member to the Finance Sub-Committee

Dr. Quinn spoke highly of Mr. Budway and said that the District is fortunate to have him on the finance sub-committee.

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, second by Mr. Hangan, the Committee voted 6-0 to appoint Mr. Samuel Budway as a community member to the Finance Sub-Committee

E. School Committee approval of COVID Sick Day MOA - EG Custodians/Maintenance Association

Dr. Ricca explained that COVID sick days have already been extended to the other two bargaining units.

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the COVID Sick Days MOA.

F. School Committee approval of Hard to Fill Positions MOA - EG/EA/NEARI

Dr. Ricca said that this MOA codifies what is already being done in practice. He said that the teachers union leadership has been a partner with the District in this matter, allowing clinical experience to count towards hiring steps in order to recruit qualified candidates.

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the Hard to Fill Positions MOA.

G. School Committee approval of Contract Templates (Interim Director of Technology, Athletic Director, Meadowbrook Principal, Director of Finance, Administration and Operations)

Dr. Ricca expressed gratitude to Mr. Chris Scheib, Mr. Dom Giusti, Ms. Casie Rhodes and Mrs. Maggie Baker for their continued leadership in the District.

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the contract templates.

H. School Committee approval of lease of Auto Scrubbers

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to table the action item.

VI. Discussion

A. FY 25 Budget Development

Dr. Quinn explained that yesterday's Finance Committee included a discussion on the budget process. The focus is on itemizing, prioritizing and categorizing expenditures instead of asking for a lump sum. The District needs to provide a better explanation for why funding is requested, state the priorities and indicate what money will be spent on. The forecast can show what the appropriation is likely to be.

Dr. Quinn showed a slide with the anticipated state aid - an increase of \$762,216 to \$6,731,190. This is not a final number and may be reduced by \$138,762 due to the core instruction amount.

Mrs. Baker explained that she has been in contact with RIDE, RIASC and RISSA. and is monitoring these numbers.

Ms. Bucka asked whether the School Committee should be advocating as a group to the General Assembly.

Dr. Quinn stated that EG is falling behind in state aid. Urban core districts are receiving 85% or more of their funding from state aid and are seeing greater % growth . State aid is growing at twice the rate of local appropriations.

Ms. Bucka said that when putting together a financial ask, it is important to show what will be cut if full funding is not provided.

Attorney Lombardo said that other districts are circulating a resolution addressing funding.and offered to share feedback on state aid legislation.

Dr. Quinn said that it is important to make it more visible what the reasons for the money we are asking for are and what the impact to taxpayers will be and also the

reason for these priorities. It is important to start this discussion now rather than wait until May.

Mr. Munoz asked about the impact to the taxpayers.

Dr. Quinn responded that he could create an itemized bill for each taxpayer.

Dr. Ricca said that these calculations could show what the impact of the inclusion of specific positions would be to each taxpayer.

Quinn said that he is able to create sample tax bills based on the proposed tax rate. The tax bills could break down the cost per home for specific positions.

Mr. Munoz said that the approach to funding should focus on what the risk to educational programs is if funding is not provided. He advocated an approach that brings to light the educational impact rather than the impact on taxpayers.

Dr. Quinn replied that that information would be illustrated in the District's list of priorities. It is important to say why we need this money.

Ms. Bucka said that a community such as East Greenwich should not have to decide between supplies and mental health services.

Dr. Ricca pointed out that human beings are the lion's share of what is being spent on education. Level funding all non personnel expenses would have a negligible impact on the taxpayers.

Ms. Cecil-Karb left the meeting at 6:57 pm.

Mr. Munoz said that the Town Council looks at bottom line numbers and not the impact that budget cuts have on education.

Dr. Quinn presented predictive analytics for school appropriation and discussed the difference between a forecast and a prediction. A prediction point estimate has no variability and no method for validation. Forecasting does go back and does validation. The advantage of a forecast is that it shows how much variability there is.

Ms. Bucka asked whether other districts are coming together to make a statement regarding hold harmless for enrollment reductions.

Dr. Ricca replied that it is being contemplated but its future is unknown.

Attorney Lombardo said that districts are coming together on issues such as caps, increases for MLL and special education high cost calculations but districts have different positions on hold harmless for enrollment reductions.

Ms. Bucka asked whether the District is planning any public statement about the effects of revaluation on the tax rate. Dr. Quinn replied that he thought that would be handled by the Town. Generally when property values go up, the tax rate goes down. Ms. Bucka said that it was important to point out that a tax increase is not a result of the bond or the school budget.

Ms. Lombardo shared that her office has developed a list of unfunded mandates. It will be shared later this week.

VII. Sub-Committee Reports

A. SEAC

Ms. Bucka reported that SEAC has asked for Dr. Quinn's assistance drafting a letter to the General Assembly addressing the lack of funding for special education students.

B. Facilities

Mr. Hangan said that he is excited for the approval of cleaning robots (one for Cole and one for EGHS) which will help alleviate staffing shortages.

Ms. Bucka said that students with special needs need to work on developing vocational skills. She said that there could be a potential partnership between those students and the District.

Attorney Lombardo said that RIDE came out with a ruling that students under 18 who can not get a BCI, are no longer eligible to work in a school district.

VIII. Adjournment

At 7:32 pm, on a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Hangan, the Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey
School Committee Clerk

Approved 4-9-24