



Joint East Greenwich School Committee - Town Council Meeting and School Committee Meeting & Budget Workshop

Monday, February 5, 2024
Hybrid Meeting: Swift Community Center & Via Zoom

Minutes

Those in attendance for Joint Meeting and School Committee Meeting - Budget Workshop

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

Additional Attendees: Dr. Brian G. 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

Absent: Mr. William Hangan

Those in attendance for Joint School-Town Meeting

Town Council: Mr. Mark Schwager, President; Ms. Caryn Corenthal; Ms. Renu Englehart

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

Absent: Mr. Michael Donegan; Mr. Michael Zarella, Vice President

I. 6:30 pm - Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

At 6:31 pm Mr. Donegan called the Town Council meeting to order and Ms. Powell called the School Committee meeting to order.

Mr. Schwager and Ms. Powell read a joint statement.

Joint Statement of the East Greenwich School Committee and East Greenwich Town Council on \$150 million school building project

The East Greenwich Town Council and the East Greenwich School Committee are the two governing bodies that keep our town moving forward. These are separate bodies under the law, each with its own statutory authority the responsibility to

work on behalf of the community to support municipal interests, sound financial management and the educational needs of the public schools. Our Joint Meeting tonight is required under state law as part of the budget preparation for our 2025 Town budget. This joint meeting is an opportunity for the School District and Town to update each other and the community on where we are and where we are going with our financial plans.

And this setting also provides an opportunity for the School Committee and Town Council to update each other and the community on where we are and where we are going on the \$150 million School Master Facilities Project that was overwhelmingly approved by voters this past November.

On Thursday, January 25, the School Building Committee took a major step to advance the project by unanimously recommending the proposed plan to the School Committee and Town Council. The plan includes a new 1st through 5th grade school at Frenchtown Elementary, an extensive addition/renovation and transition to a 1st through 5th grade school at Hanaford Elementary, a significant addition/renovation at East Greenwich High School, and a renovation at Meadowbrook to convert it to an Early Childhood Education Center for pre-K and K students. On Wednesday January 31, the School Committee voted unanimously to approve and endorse the project. The Town Council has yet to approve the project. The approval was delayed pending a mutually agreeable Town Ordinance. This ordinance will detail how the educational, design, and cost components of the project will be managed after our application is approved by The Rhode Island Department of Education.

A draft ordinance was proposed by the Town Council in January. In response to concerns with the initial ordinance language, Superintendent Ricca - acting within his statutory authority, and with the full knowledge and support of the School Committee - sought clarity from RIDE regarding governance and oversight of the project.

To address these concerns, and settle on the final language of the ordinance quickly, the School Committee and Town Council each met separately in closed session to determine what they wanted in the ordinance to ensure the project was properly managed and governed.

The School Committee designated Chair Alyson Powell and the Town Council chose VP Michael Donegan to meet together, each with support from our legal counsels, to represent the interests of our groups, and draft an ordinance that meets the needs of each body. Working together they ultimately reached an agreement on the language of the ordinance.

The Town Council will review the new proposed ordinance agreement in closed session after this Joint Meeting. It will then schedule a meeting on Wednesday for a

vote to approve the submission of the School Construction Master Plan Stage 2 Application to RIDE

This is a big project. Every East Greenwich Resident is going to have a stake in this: they are investing their money, they will put up with several years of construction projects, there are going to be many meetings of public officials, town staff and town residents. And despite everyone's best efforts, there are likely to be some disputes before the opening ribbons are cut. But our community is capable of doing big things, as long as we work together to maintain the public's trust.

The School Committee and Town Council understand this. We did not become elected officials to gain status or power. We are your friends and neighbors, and we are committed to public service and to maintaining this public trust. We are optimistic that together, the School Committee and Town Council will be successful in bringing this transformational project to life for East Greenwich. This is an exciting project that will have a major positive impact on our community for decades to come. It is time to move it forward together.

II. Joint Meeting with Town Council

- A. Pre-budget meeting between School Committee and Town Council; to present estimate of revenues FY 25 and School to present estimate of total expenditures, projected enrollments, with resultant staff and facility requirements and any necessary or mandated changes in school programs or operations per RIGL 16-2-21.

Town of East Greenwich, Town Manager Andrew Nota

Mr. Nota said that it is important to understand unique considerations while reviewing the budget. He explained that, as was the case in December, today's meeting is far in advance of having solid budget numbers.

- 1 - Collaboration between town and school
- 2 - Funding constraints
- 3 - Impact on services
- 4 - Prioritization of essential services
- 5 - Efficiency matters
- 6 - Long term financial planning
- 7 - Community involvement

2024 Budgetary Projections

- Revenues
 - Levy trend 2024 v 2023
 - Projecting 98% collection rate
- Budgetary Surplus \$1.3 million - Gaap surplus of \$680,000

2024 Expenditure Projections

- Expenditures
- Anticipated transfer to Capital Reserves

FY 2025 - Intergovernmental Aid

- State Aid to Education
- Municipal State Aid
- School Construction Aid

Statistical Profile - Tax Growth

Current Outstanding Debt

Debt Service Required Property Tax Need

2023 Six Year Capital Improvement Program

Projected Bonding Projects

General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance

Town Council members asked Mr. Nota questions about the budget presentation.

East Greenwich Public Schools - Dr. Brian Ricca and Mrs. Maggie Baker

Agenda

- EGPS Budget Process
- Key Variables in the Development of EGPS Budget
- EGPS FY 24 Budget Projections
- EGPS FY 25 Governor Proposed State Aid - proposed increase of \$762,216 from FY 24
- The Story of the FY 25 Budget, Related to the Strategic Plan
 - Excellence in Learning
 - Distinguished Teaching & Talented Staff
 - Efficient & Innovative Systems
 - Engaged Community
- EGPS FY 25 Considerations
 - Enrollment
 - Career and Technical Education
 - Decrease in ESSR Funds
 - Social-Emotional Learning (Students & Adults)
 - Student Support Services Audit

Councilwoman Corenthal asked about line items “purchase services” and “other purchase services”. Mrs. Baker explained legal, professional and audit services are “purchase services”. “Other purchase services” covers tuition to other districts, private and charter schools.

Councilwoman Englehart asked about the increase in the legal services settlements.

Attorney Lombardo explained that these special education legal settlements came in the aftermath of the pandemic. Out of district placements have increased in order to try to prevent the need for future settlements.

Ms. Englehart inquired whether any of these settlements were covered by insurance. Attorney Lombardo replied that it had been looked into but that it was not covered by insurance.

Ms. Englehart asked whether these students can remain in the District. Attorney Lombardo replied that the profile of student settlements are often students in need of residential placement and can not be serviced in the District.

B. Public Comments (related to Item II. A.)

Public Comment

Ms. Virginia Sanders

Ms. Sanders inquired why services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy and doctor services are provided by the school district. She asked whether that is the role of the family.

Dr. Ricca replied that part of a student’s profile may include the need of various therapists to access their education.

Ms. Bucka explained that federal law mandates that anything that prevents a child from going to school must be addressed by the district. There is a requirement that students with disabilities have the resources necessary for them to access education. Providing these services in house is more economical than having a student attend an out of district placement.

Mr. Justin Cahir

Mr. Cahir complimented Dr. Ricca and the District for the CTE program offerings. He asked how much money is allocated to the Multi Tiered Support System (MTSS) and what are the performance metrics used to determine the program’s worth.

Mr. Marcaccio replied that there is no specific allocation for MTSS. It is an umbrella organization around assessment screenings, diagnostic and performance metrics. He

has proposed that money be allocated for a MTSS Coordinator. This position has been funded in the last several years through grant funds - about \$120,000/year.

State performance and district assessments are used as metrics. MTSS is a short-term burst of support for students who may be falling behind.

Tiered Supports

- 1 - general screening data
- 2 - advanced intervention
- 3- for neediest students, intensive work

III. Adjourn Joint Meeting

At 7:37 pm, on a motion by Ms. Corenthal, seconded by Ms. Englehart, the Town Council voted 3-0 to adjourn the Joint Meeting.

IV. Convene School Committee Meeting & Budget Workshop

The meeting resumed at 7:53 pm.

V. Action Item

- A. School Committee Approval of MOA, EG Association of Educational Support Professionals - Mileage Reimbursement

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the MOA. Mr. Murphy was not present for the vote.

VI. Budget Hearing

- A. Elementary and Secondary

East Greenwich's Primary Schools - Frenchtown Principal Maryann Crudale and Meadowbrook Principal Dom Giusti

FY 24 Successes

- Both schools are recognized by RIDE as 5 Star schools ★★★★★
- School Improvement Teams
- Focus on MTSS
- Right to Read
- Curriculum PD
- PBIS
- PTG sponsored social and enrichment programming
- Building Civic awareness

Strategic Plan Alignment

- Excellence in Learning
- Distinguished Teaching & Talented Staff
- Efficient and innovative systems
- Engaged community

FY 25 Considerations

- Increased costs for basic supplies
- Increased costs for field trips fees and transportation
- Added furniture back into budget
- Frenchtown: one more section/classroom
- Meadowbrook: 13 classrooms (K-2); 3 classrooms (Preschool)

Meadowbrook & Frenchtown General Fund Actual & Budgeted by Object: Fiscal Years 2021-2024

There was a discussion about the need to replace furniture in the schools. Principal Smith (via Zoom) stressed the need for replacement furniture even for schools that will be rebuilt in future years.

Dr. Quinn said that the projected increases were on target.

Ms. Cecil-Karb said that there are needs in the present such as furniture.

Mr. Munoz congratulated the principals on their schools' 5 star ratings. He commended the work and involvement of the School Improvement Teams and suggested that their participation in the final budget hearings with the Town would be helpful. Mr. Munoz encouraged principals to tell the Committee what the schools' needs are. He also wants to show how programs are tied into the Vision of a Graduate.

Ms. Bucka pointed out what goes away when the budget is cut by the Town. Children learn better on paper and those supplies are not optional.

Dr. Quinn says that there is a perception that the school department could be doing more for less money. He said that is a fallacy. Top performance is being produced with less resources.

East Greenwich's Upper Elementary FY '25 - Eldredge Principal Dan Seger on behalf of himself and Hanaford Principal Coleen Smith

Successes in FY 24

- School Accountability - increase in Star ratings
- Site-Based Management
- High-Quality Curricula
- Collaboration

- MTSS
- PBIS
- School-Community Partnerships
- PTG Enrichment Programming
- Student Council
- Music Program
- EGPS Website

Strategic Plan Alignment

- Excellence in Learning
- Distinguished Teaching & Talented Staff
- Efficient and Innovative Systems
- Engaged Community

Considerations for FY 25

1. Increased costs: supplies & materials, transportation, fees, copying
2. Furniture line added into budget

Eldredge and Hanaford General Fund Actual & Budgeted by Object: Fiscal Years 2021-2024

Mr. Munoz said that it is important for principals to express their schools' needs and to tell the story about what is able to be accomplished with limited resources.

There was a discussion about the success of the music program which has been able to introduce music to Eldredge and Hanaford students. A modest investment of \$15,000 introduces all students to chorus, strings and band. Principal Smith shared that the music teachers at Hanaford are planning community performances and touted the benefits of the program.

East Greenwich's Middle School - Archie R. Cole Middle School - Assistant Principal Beth Cauley on behalf of herself and Principal Melissa Centracchio

Successes in FY 24

- 5 Star Accountability Rating ★★★★★
- New Schedule Implementation
- MTSS School-based Improvements
- PBIS - Attendance
- Right to Read - Implementing strategies and expectations
- Math Intervention
- Second Step Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum
- National Jr. Honor Society
- Student Council
- Spelling Bee

- COA Enrichment / Clubs
- Learn 365
- Music
- Arts & Music Showcase
- Sports
- Cole Mile

Strategic Plan Alignment

- Excellence in Learning
- Distinguished Teaching & Talented Staff
- Efficient and Innovative Systems
- Engaged Community

Considerations for FY 25

- Increase in costs: supplies & materials, transportation, dues & fees
- New budget items: world language textbooks, ESL, Nurse

Cole General Fund Actual & Budgeted by Object: Fiscal Years 2021-2024

East Greenwich High School - Assistant Superintendent Michael Podraza on behalf of Principal Pat Page and Assistant Molly Sylvia

EGHS Snapshot

2023-2024 Annual Report

- Five Star School ★★★★★
- Focused
 - Graduation Requirements
 - Under-Resourced Populations
 - Top-Talent Retention
 - Structured Systems
 - Emotional Intelligence
- Attained / Expanded
 - NEASC
 - Post-Secondary and Industry Partnerships
 - Unified Programming
 - Grants
 - Research Opportunities
 - Curriculum Implementation
 - Purposeful Community Engagement
- Strategic Priorities
 - Excellence in Learning

- Distinguished Teaching & Talented Staff
- Efficient and Innovative Systems
- Engaged Community

EGHS General Fund Actual & Budgeted by Object: Fiscal Years 2021-2024

Mr. Munoz inquired about the credit recovery program. Mr. Podraza explained how it currently works and how that could be improved.

Ms. Cecil-Karb inquired about the PSATs. Mr. Podraza said there's no standards for 9th graders and this program would address that gap.

B. Athletics

East Greenwich Athletics - Athletic Director Casie Rhodes

Success in FY 24

- 6 students will be signing for Division 1-3 Athletics
- Implementation of Athletic Trainer / Assistant AD
- Co-op with Tollgate for Boys Hockey
- Grant written for \$5,000 for new wrestling mats

Considerations for FY 25

- \$3,000 transfer from Hockey Rink Rental to Gymnastics Rental
 - Will be working with North Kingstown to develop a joint gymnastics program with NK paying for the coach and EG paying for the facility rental

Athletics General Fund Actual & Budgeted by Object: Fiscal Years 2021-2024

Mr. Munoz asked whether co-op teams are a trend. Ms. Rhodes replied yes, but it does depend on the sports and numbers. She predicts seeing more than we have in the past.

C. Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning - Assistant Superintendent Michael Podraza

Fiscal Year 2024 Successes

- Balanced & Sustainable Professional Development
- Programmatic Grants Supporting Instruction & Students

FY 25 Considerations

- RI General Laws
 - High Quality Curricular Materials
 - Right to Read Act
 - Education Accountability Act

- Strategic Plan & Vision of the Graduate
- New Regulations for Graduation
- State Accountability
- Continued Support
- ESSER to Local 100%
- Contractual: Grade level leaders (K-5) in SY 23-25

Teaching and Learning: General Fund Actual & Budgeted by Object: Fiscal Years 2021-2024

Mr. Podraza said that more time is needed for professional development and that using substitutes is not working out well enough. He is looking to shift professional development into a more embedded model.

Mr. Munoz asked about the use of third party trainers. He suggested showing the costs associated with unfunded mandates.

Dr. Quinn inquired about the grade level leaders. Mr. Podraza said that they will need some professional development and will use a train the trainer model.

Ms. Bucka inquired about course guides for unified programs. She noted the high cost and need for professional development with each new curriculum that is adopted.

Ms. Bucka asserted that web-based programs are unsustainable. Last year she raised the question of how they are being used and what is the impact. She said that these types of programs need to be curbed and again said that children do not learn best from web-based programs.

Mr. Podraza said that it is difficult to access some platforms' data. An analysis is being conducted on the usage of the learning platforms.

Ms. Bucka pointed out that the special education audit showcased the need for additional special education professional development.

VII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey, School Committee Clerk

Approved 2-5-24