



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, January 9, 2024
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 Ricca, Superintendent; Mr. Neil Marcaccio, Director of Student Services; Mrs. Maggie Baker, Director of Administration; Mrs. Amy Healey, School Committee Clerk; Attorney Aubrey Lombardo

I. Call to Order

Ms. Powell called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

- A. December 12, 2023 Joint School Committee - Town Council Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0-2 to approve the December 12, 2023 minutes. Ms. Bucka and Mr. Hangan abstained from the vote.

VIII. Action Items

- A. Homeschool Requests

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the Homeschool Requests.

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to move Action Item C up before Action Item B.

School Committee Approval of Staffing Contract - Norton Education Staffing & Recruiting

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the staffing contract with Norton Education Staffing & Recruiting.

School Committee Approval of SY 2024-2025 Program of Studies

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Munoz, the Committee voted 5-2 to table the approval of the SY 2024-2025 Program of Studies. Ms. Bucka, Ms. Cecil-Karb, Mr. Hangan, Mr. Munoz and Mr. Murphy voted in favor of the motion. Ms. Powell and Dr. Quinn voted against the motion.

School Committee Approval of Facilities Subcommittee Member

Dr. Quinn made a motion to approve the appointment of a Facilities Subcommittee member. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion.

Ms. Bucka asked whether the District advertised for this position. Her understanding of the process was that the District would advertise that it is looking for volunteers, candidates would be interviewed and a recommendation made to the School Committee.

Ms. Powell replied that there is a volunteer application on the District's website. There was no active solicitation for candidates. People submitted applications, they were reviewed by the Subcommittee Chair, and a recommendation was made to the Committee.

Mr. Munoz said that the opening should be advertised and candidates should be interviewed. The selection process should not be first come, first serve. Mr. Munoz also expressed reservation about community members sitting on a subcommittee while also serving on a SIT team.

Mr. Munoz made a motion to table the appointment. Mr. Hangan seconded the motion which was approved 6-1. Dr. Quinn voted against the motion to table.

VI. Discussion

A. School Committee Communication

Ms. Powell explained that this discussion comes at the request of Ms. Bucka and Ms. Cecil-Karb. They seek to discuss how the School Committee communicates with the public, staff and administration and amongst themselves.

Ms. Bucka reported that numerous social media groups had misinformation about the activities at the high school around Thanksgiving. Ms. Cecil-Karb noted that many social media groups are private and exclusive, some even gender exclusive.

Ms. Bucka posed the question of how the School Committee can show that they are paying attention to issues raised on social media without violating open meetings laws or inadvertently looking as though they are speaking on behalf of the Committee. Attorney Lombardi cautioned that some participation in social media could violate open meetings laws and expose the individual and District to liability.

Ms. Cecil-Karb inquired about what can be done to inform the public of the School Committee's constraints when it comes to responses on social media. She added that elected officials outside of the School Committee regularly respond on social media and the School Committee's lack of engagement may appear as though they are avoiding issues.

Mr. Munoz stated that social media needs to be treated with restraint and that it is often a toxic pool of misinformation. He expressed concern with gendered barred and private sites. In a company with a Board of Directors, individual members would not go over the head of the CEO to comment on operational matters or respond to social media.

Ms. Powell said that a communication protocol was established by the School Committee a couple of years ago. She herself responds to social media posts with an offer to meet with individuals to discuss issues and concerns. Ms. Powell said that it is not clear to people that Committee members are not acting on behalf of the District when interacting on social media. It is important for people to know where to go for information.

Ms. Bucka pointed out that the bulk of this conversation has focused on what they can not do. It is important to earn the community's trust and be a conduit between the District and the community. Ms. Bucka suggested that the School Committee members go through social media posts, gather questions and ask that District administrators respond to questions within 24 hours.

Ms. Powell responded that such a process would be difficult to capture all social media questions and suggested that a place to send questions to the School Committee should be established.

Mr. Munoz said that there is software available that can search social media. He did caution that it is not the School Committee's job to tell the administration that there are questions that should be answered. Mr. Munoz said that it would be more efficient to direct questions directly. Operational questions should be sent to building leaders, utilizing the communication protocol.

Dr. Ricca said that community members should address operational questions directly to him. He promised to provide honest, truthful answers with integrity. Dr. Ricca stated that engaging in social media or mining posts would not be a good use of time. There is no accountability on social media.

Ms. Bucka suggested regular communication between the School Committee and staff through scheduled office hours.

Ms. Powell said that the Committee should not engage with people spreading misinformation. There should be a place that people can go to ask a question and get a response from the School Committee.

Dr. Quinn stated that having a FAQ page on the website would be valuable.

Mr. Munoz said that there needs to be more ways to meet community members. While public meetings can be intimidating, community forums are welcoming to people. He offered his support to the suggestion of office hours.

Attorney Lombardo offered that other school committees hold topic specific community workshops.

Ms. Powell summarized the action steps that the School Committee will look to take to improve communication:

- Adding a FAQ page on the website addressing governance and the role of the School Committee
- Having scheduled office hours for School Committee members on a rotating schedule
- Create and post mini tutorials on social media
- Conduct special meeting workshops

B. FY 25 Budget Introduction

Ms. Powell explained that as a way of improving the budget process, Dr. Quinn has put together a presentation on the enrollment history.

Dr. Quinn shared his presentation. He pointed out the importance of looking for a reliable method of funding schools. In the past there have been unreliable enrollment predictions.

- Enrollment History 1949-2023 - Historical and Forecast Enrollment FY 1949 - FY 2032
- Cohort Survival Ratio Projections - Enrollment History and Forecasts, takes birth rates into account
- Cohort Component Method - Cohort Component Method Forecast, takes into account census data
- Recent Appropriation History - School Appropriation FY 1998 - FY 2024, 90% of funding comes from local dollars
- Tax Transfer in Another District - Barrington School Appropriation FY 1998 - FY 2022, Town and School collaborate on joint budget forecasts
- State Formula Aid - State Formula Aid FY 1998 - FY 2024
- Long Term State Aid
- Core Instruction Amount, Core \$s are dedicated per student and continue to grow about 4%. This is a benchmark on what the District should be spending.
- Percent of Core Funding Covered - Percent of Core Instructional Funding Covered (2021-22)
- What's in Core Amount - Core Instructional & Non Core
- Students per Capita - FY 2022 Public School Students (RADM) per Capita, East Greenwich has a higher average of students per capita.
- School Appropriation - 2009 to 2010 Changes by LEA, East Greenwich had a 6.5% reduction in school appropriation from the Town. It was one of only 4 districts in the state to have reductions. 15 years later, the cumulative damage is \$30 million.

Mr. Munoz said that the Barrington joint forecasting model is superior. EGPS attempted to engage the Town two years ago to adopt this process.

Ms. Bucka noted that Rhode Island is one of only 3 states whose funding formula does not add additional money for students with disabilities. This disproportionately affects districts such as East Greenwich.

Ms. Powell said that this presentation gives a historical picture of the budget history. The District hopes to work on forecasting and prioritizing allocations.

Dr. Quinn said that East Greenwich does a good job providing education for the money that is spent. In the last 26 years, \$850 million was spent on education. The District runs on an extremely lean operation.

Ms. Bucka pointed out that unfunded mandates and no funding for special education are not included in this look at budgeting. The community raises a lot of money for education through groups such as PTGs and EGEA. She asked for a more cohesive approach for using these funds for a community purpose.

Mr. Munoz said that PTGs are very successful with targeted initiatives.

Ms. Cecil-Karb praised Dr. Quinn's explanation of enrollment and forecasting.

VII. Policies

A. Revised Policies (First Read)

1. Policy # 2180 Student Residency

B. Repeal of Policies (First Read)

1. Policy # 5120 School Department Acknowledgement of Service
2. Policy # 5125 Staff Attendance
3. Policy # 5210 Teacher Evaluation Process

Ms. Bucka commented on Policy 2180 Student Residency. She suggested the removal of "attendance officer" and "investigate" because both words represent policing. She offered the inclusion of objective criteria. Ms. Bucka said that social profiling should be avoided during the inquiry into residency.

Ms. Lombardo said that a tremendous amount of documentation is required to bring a successful residency case to RIDE.

Mr. Munoz said that a review of the proposed language would be done by the Policy Subcommittee. He did note that there are instances of fraud that require an investigation.

VIII. Sub-Committee Reports

A. Building

IX. Adjournment

At 8:46 pm, on a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey
School Committee Clerk

Approved 1-23-24