



## East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, November 14, 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; Mr. Kevin Murphy; Mr. Tim Munoz; Dr. Eugene Quinn

**Absent:** Ms. Clare Cecil-Karb; Mr. William Hangan

**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

#### I. Call to Order

Ms. Powell called the meeting to order at 6:27 PM

#### II. Pledge of Allegiance

**III. 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) - Employee Job Performance - Individual has been notified including their right to have discussion held in open session.

No Executive Session was held.

#### IV. Adjourn Executive Session and Reconvene Open Session - 6:25 pm

No Executive Session was held.

#### V. Seal Executive Session Minutes of November 14, 2023 and disclosure of Executive Session votes

No Executive Session was held.

## **VI. Public Comment**

*Ms. Joanne Leach, EGPS Teacher & EG Resident*

Ms. Leach offered her congratulations on the passage of the school bond. As a neighbor of Frenchtown School, she expressed concern for her home and property value with the forthcoming construction. She asked for assurances that neighbors would be taken into consideration as the process progresses.

Attorney Lombardo thanked Ms. Leach for her comments and assured her that the Committee will be reaching out to neighbors.

*Ms. Jessica Procopio, Meadowbrook Parent*

Ms. Procopio asked whether there would be public comment regarding the Special Education Audit.

Ms. Powell replied that public comment would be allowed.

## **VII. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings**

A. October 17, 2023 - Executive Session Minutes

B. October 17, 2023 - Regular Meeting Minutes

*On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve both sets of minutes of October 17, 2023.*

C. October 26, 2023 - Regular Meeting Minutes

*On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 4-0-1 to approve the minutes of October 26, 2023. Ms. Powell abstained from the vote.*

## **VIII. Action Items**

A. School Committee Approval of EGHS Model UN Overnight Field Trip, Boston MA

*On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the Model UN field trip to Boston.*

B. School Committee Approval of Homeschool Request

On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the Homeschool request.

C. School Committee Approval of RIDE MOA - *Learning Inside Out Initiative*,  
SBA Capital Fund Grant for \$200,000

Ms. Bucka spoke in favor of many aspects of the bond and inquired whether it includes fencing at Meadowbrook Farms Elementary.

Dr. Ricca replied in the affirmative.

*On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the grant.*

D. School Committee Approval of Mental Health Supports Contract - Thrive Behavioral Health, Inc.

Mr. Murphy inquired about the expected usage/cost of the contract. Mr. Marcaccio said that he expected 5-6 hours a week with a possibility of Town support that could increase the hours to 7-8 a week. Mr. Marcaccio said that it is to supplement services. *Thrive's* services will be integrated with mental health support professionals at the high school in a structured and formal manner. It will work in conjunction with Mr. Houtaling's work.

Ms. Bucka asked whether Social Emotional Learning (SEL) screening is taking place for the most vulnerable students at the high school. How will student needs be prioritized? Mr. Marcaccio said there is a process in place. Ms. Bucka asked how these services will be advertised to parents, staff and students. Mr. Marcaccio said that information will go out about the services.

*On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the contract with Thrive Behavioral Health, Inc.*

E. School Committee Approval of 2024 School Committee Meeting Calendar

*Mr. Murphy made a motion to approve the School Committee meeting calendar. Dr. Quinn seconded the motion.*

Ms. Bucka expressed concern that there are 4 months in which there is only one school committee meeting scheduled. She advocated for the inclusion of a summer strategic planning session.

Ms. Powell said that while there has been work towards making meetings more efficient, some members have raised concerns about fewer meetings.

Mr. Munoz suggested separate dates for the Joint Meetings and School Committee meetings in February and December.

Dr. Ricca explained that he was the one who recommended combining these meetings due to scheduling limitations; December being the holiday season, February's school vacation and the complications of scheduling in April. He noted that the Joint Meetings had hard stop times.

Dr. Quinn pointed out that most of the Committee's work happens outside of the meetings and in sub-committees. He expressed support of the calendar as proposed.

Ms. Bucka stated that she would not approve this calendar and said that it is contrary to the Committee's desire to improve communication. She supported more planning sessions.

Dr. Ricca agreed that a summer planning session should be scheduled.

*Ms. Powell made a motion to approve the 2024 School Committee Meeting Calendar with the addition of a floating meeting to be scheduled in Summer 2024. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion. The Committee voted 5-0 to approve the calendar as amended.*

#### F. School Committee Approval of School Improvement Teams (SIT)

Ms. Powell explained that the School Committee's role is to approve the membership with the understanding that the membership meets the requirements of the team's composition.

Mr. Munoz said that recent changes in the School Improvement Teams policy made certain that a SEAC parent or a parent of a student with special needs along with representatives from diverse racial, ethnic and economic groups be included in the SIT membership. The process of developing these teams has been through. He noted however that the new policy states that the School Committee shall select the community members.

Ms. Powell noted that the policy change was just made last month and the teams had already begun to be formed. Going forward the Committee will be brought in to select community members.

Ms. Bucka said that it is a step forward to have a family member of a special needs student on all of the teams. SEAC meetings provide a good opportunity for recruiting SIT members.

*On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the School Improvement Teams.*

## G. School Committee Approval of Termination of Non-Certified Probationary Employee

*On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 5-0 to remove this item from the agenda.*

## H. School Committee Approval of Amendment of Colliers Contract

*On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 5-0 to table this item until the next meeting.*

Ms. Powell explained that the contract could not be turned around in time for the meeting's posting deadline.

## **IX. Discussion**

### A. Special Education Audit Report

Ms. Bucka explained that the audit being shared today is a piece of a larger process which began with a family survey. The areas of concern identified from the survey were developed into an RFP for a Special Education Audit. The audit built upon a 300 person survey which extended to staff and more parents. This work is part of the District's "All Means All" Strategic Plan. Ms. Bucka noted that the audit focused only on K-5 math because the secondary math curriculum was being redeveloped.

Mr. Munoz inquired about the balance between interviews and focus groups. Ms. Marx replied that it was about 50-50. There was a structured protocol used in the focus groups. Feedback was also accepted via email.

Dr. Teri Marx of Place, LLC gave a presentation of the Special Education Audit that her company conducted.

### Audit Purpose

- Child Find & MTSS
- K-5 Mathematics Instruction
- IEP Development and Implementation
- Staffing

### Data Sources

- Extant Document Analysis
- Staff Survey & Interviews/Focus Groups
- Parent Interviews/Focus Groups
- Classroom Visits

## Limitations

- Sample size
- Staff participation and completion of survey
- Classroom visits limited to mathematics at elementary level
- Limited review of IEPs
- Limited classroom visits at the secondary level

## Findings

- Child Find
- Multi-tiered System of Supports

## Findings

- IEP Development and Implementation
  - Grounding Terminology
  - FAPE Requirements
    - IEP Development
    - IEP Implementation

## Findings

- K-5 Mathematics Instruction
  - K-5 Math Instruction

## Findings

- Personnel and Staffing Recommendations
  - School Social Workers - 6 new positions
  - School Psychologists - 1 new position
  - Guidance Counselors - 1.5 new positions
  - School Nurses - Appropriately allocated
  - Occupation and Physical Therapists - 4 OT and 1 PT districtwide
  - Speech-Language Pathologists & Audiologists - 1 SLP

Special Education Teacher caseloads are appropriate

- Type of Instruction: One Adult v More than One Adult
  - Teacher Led Instruction is strongest

## Recommendations

- Across Areas
  - IEP Development
  - IEP Implementation
  - Child Find
  - Multi-tiered System of Supports
  - K-5 Math Instruction

## Questions

Dr. Quinn noted that the audit's staffing recommendations are positions that have been cut and reduced over the years.

Ms. Powell said that this was a comprehensive study but asked when will there be a report addressing staffing and personnel.

Dr. Marx said that a draft supplemental report was given to Mr. Marcaccio today. Additional paraprofessional supports are sought by parents.

Ms. Powell inquired about work load v. case load. Dr. Marx said that she would recommend a work load analysis.

Mr. Munoz said that there is a review being conducted in the curriculum policy. He asked about specially designed instruction and whether Dr. Marx had a recommendation on making more progress. Dr. Marx responded that adapting content makes a modified curriculum. She cautioned against modifications because high standards need to be maintained. Adapting methodology is most effective. She offered her support of Unified Classes.

Ms. Bucka inquired how we make this continually actionable since much of this is administrative and asked whether the recommendations be turned into an action plan.

Dr. Marx encouraged the sharing of this audit with educators. Recommendations should be combined with professional development albeit with awareness of budgetary constraints.

Ms. Bucka raised concerns about professional learning around roles. Dr. Marx said that it seemed as though people were clear on their roles. Some roles may not have been the most effective use of time.

Ms. Bucka asked how we move forward. She requested that the recommendations be turned into a google sheet and have someone assigned to update progress on each recommendation.

Ms. Powell said that tonight is to review the audit and ask questions. Work will continue beyond this meeting. She said that there is inconsistency around the role of MTSS. Dr. Marx concurred that there is inconsistency among staff in their understanding of MTSS. There is however a strong understanding of Tier 1 instruction in the district.

## Public Comment

*Molly Fridley*

Ms. Fridley inquired about viewing tonight's presentation materials.

It was explained that the presentation is in the public agenda packet.

*Matthew Murray, Parent*

Mr. Murray inquired about using this report as a basis for future reports and tracking the implementation of recommendations. He recognized that implementation will take time.

Dr. Marx replied that an examination of recommendations and action items should look to where we are going to find the biggest bang for the buck with implementation, asking where should efforts be invested. She also supported the idea of an action plan and the increase of professional development. A stronger foundation of understanding is needed. Dr. Marx stressed the importance of assessing the growth of students. She noted the national shortage of special education teachers.

## **X. Superintendent & Staff Report**

### **A. Financial Report**

Mrs. Baker reported:

- Revenue remains constant from last month
- There continues to be breakage in personnel
- Transportation costs have risen; specifically *Statewide's* transportation of out of district students
- Grants and capital reserves are running about the same

## **XII. Sub-Committee Reports**

### **A. Building**

### **B. SEAC**

## **XIII. Adjournment**

*At 8:53 pm, on a motion by Dr.Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn.*

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey, School Committee Clerk

*Approved 12-12-23*