



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, October 17, 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. William Hangan; Mr. Kevin Murphy; Mr. Tim Munoz; Dr. Eugene Quinn

Additional Attendees: Dr. Brian Ricca, Superintendent (via Zoom); Mr. Michael Podraza, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. Neil Marcaccio, Director of Student Services; Mrs. Maggie Baker, Director of Administration; Ms. Melissa Ferreira, Acting School Committee Clerk; Attorney Aubrey Lombardo

I. Call to Order

Ms. Powell called the meeting to order at 6:02PM

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

- A. October 3, 2023 - Executive Session Minutes
- B. October 3, 2023 - Regular Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0-1 to approve both sets of minutes from October 3, 2023. Mr. Hangan abstained from the vote.

V. Action Items

- A. SC Approval of COVID Days MOA - EGEA

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve COVID Days MOA. No discussion.

- B. SC Approval of COVID Coordinator MOA - EGEA

On a motion by Ms. Bucks, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve COVID Coordinator MOA- EGEA. No discussion.

C. SC Approval of Superintendent's SY 23-24 Goals

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve Superintendent's SY 23-24 Goals. No discussion.

D. SC Approval of Student Participation with School Committee

Ms. Bucka inquired if subcommittees should reach out to students, Mr. Munoz mentioned the subcommittees should develop a plan of what the student involvement should look like. Ms. Powell thanked Mr. Munoz for putting this together. Mr. Murphy mentioned receiving interest in participation from a student while he was out in the community. Ms. Bucka mentioned the need for diverse student groups.

On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 the approval of student participation with School Committee.

VI. Superintendent & Staff Report

A. Financial Report

Ms. Baker - 6:10pm First financial report of the year. Expenditures in Facilities are ahead of schedule. Grants - 5,000 ake foundation. Capital reserve account - impact fees new line it will be Collier fees. Ms. Baker asked if there were questions, none.

VII. Discussion

A. Special Education Audit Report

Representative from PLACE, LLC - the independent audit company, unable to attend. Ms. Powell asked if Mr. Marcaccio could give some information about the report. Mr. Marcaccio recommended waiting for a representative from PLACE, LLC to give the report. Ms. Powell agreed since it is an independent audit, thought it was best for the independent audit to be presented by them. Ms. Powell asked if this report will be able to be presented at the next meeting. Mr. Marcaccio stated a full copy of the report went to families today.

Given extenuating circumstances, on a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Mr. Munoz, the Committee voted 7-0 to postpone the presentation.

VIII. Policies

Revised Policies (Second Read)

1. Policy 2110 Superintendent Responsibilities

Ms. Powell asked if discussion could be done with each due to this being the second read. Questions/concerns, none.

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve Policy 2110 Superintendent Responsibilities.

2. Policy 2115 Fire Safety Drills

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Ms. Cecil Karb, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve Policy 2115 Fire Safety Drills. No questions.

3. Policy 4140 Immunization & Testing for Communicable Diseases

On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve Policy 4140 Immunization & Testing for Communicable Diseases. No questions/discussion.

4. Policy 8315 Alcohol / Breathalyzer Use

Mr. Murphy mentioned community questions he received. Alert and state for the record that he was approached. Give a moment for raise of hands from viewers. Ms. Powell mentioned if someone has questions to direct them to the policy itself, then to the School Committee. Ms. Bucka was also approached by community members. Discussion of universal testing and what about testing for drugs. Mr. Munoz spoke of questions possibly arising regarding implementation. Policy facilitates the process. Protect the safety and privacy of all students - the policy.

Dr. Ricca - thanked the policy committee. Why not going further with this policy? - don't overreact, or underreact after the incident last spring. Trust them until proven otherwise - reasoning to not do universal testing. Policy gives anyone at a function to note that someone is acting in a way that would warrant it.

Ms. Cecil-Karb- balanced policy needed and testing for drugs is not an immediate result. Appropriate level of trust. Mr. Murphy inquired if public comment was an option, Ms. Powell said yes if the discussion between the School Committee was done. Reducing subjectivity of school administrators of singling out for testing.

Ms. Powell asked if anyone in public would like to ask a question or comment on Policy 8135.

Mr. Tom O'Brien of 23 Boxwood Dr., a local resident and attorney who has students attending school within the district. Wanted to note of the 3 grounds that one could choose, as someone who has practiced in the area of criminal law both as a prosecutor and defense attorney for past 25 years, he appreciates reasonable suspicion as the greatest of the grounds as a school matter. Ensuring the students who are an obvious

issue are pulled out. Suggesting that a Breathalyzer not be necessarily needed for those that are an obvious issue.

As relating to the policy - randomization and a universal approach would both be publicized so that parents would know , this is paramount as a way to be most effective.

Wanted to talk about one particular aspect that was of greatest concern to him. He graduated a senior last year. Not just an interest as a person who has done this for 25 years, but someone who dealt with this last spring. His focal point in looking at the policy is the multiple references to respect for student privacy.

Referred to the rationale in the separate document attached to the policy which references empirical data in well publicized incidents. That was particular note to Mr. O'Brien. Spoke of the incident being known at the schools, it was noteworthy to the town due to its size & the publication of it. A substance abuse coordinator shared his concerns in an open letter that was shared with social media and when it was, it was shared multiple times. Which then led to what social media always does, led to gossip, public shaming, personal grudges within the community. Actions of sharing that in social media drove the public discussion in multiple things. He would suggest that the discipline that was imposed thereafter was in large part meant to appease the public's perception that the school department played in putting it out there. Mr. O'Brien appreciates the work done on behalf of the students. Thanked for their time

Dr. Quinn wanted to ask a question, Attorney Lombardo said we needed to be careful about responding to things not on the agenda. Attorney Lombardo did say that since she is not a member of the committee, she can say to her knowledge the School Committee and the School Department did not in any way share any information and/or authorize any statements on social media. Previous incidents not on the agenda for discussion.

Dr. Quinn - asked what would you suggest as a modification to the policy. Mr. O'Brien- the letter that was shared on the town website even though it was well intended, but no thought in a meaningful way of sharing it in a small town. What it generated was very unfortunate. Reasonable suspicion is the best way to go with this policy.

Ms. Bucka raised the question of communication of this policy. Mr. Podraza stated all students were notified of the Breathalyzer policy during class blocks at the school level as well as the potential for the policy to change. Dr. Page will also be sending out communication tomorrow to all parents once/if the policy is approved.

Recruiting chaperones for events is on the faculty agenda. Dr. Page - Faculty training with SRO on Friday. School counseling office to address the anxiety this could create. Dr. Ricca monthly newsletter this Friday will discuss the new policies.

On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 the approval of Policy 8315 Alcohol/Breathalyzer Use.

B. Repeal of Policies (Second Read)

1. Policy 1130 Guide to RI Laws on OMA
2. Policy 1131 Remote Participation in Open Meetings
3. Policy 2715 Video/Audio Recording of School Committee Meetings

On a motion by Mr. Murphy, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the repeal of policies:

1. *Policy 1130 Guide to RI Laws on OMA*
2. *Policy 1131 Remote Participation in Open Meetings*
3. *Policy 2715 Video/Audio Recording of School Committee Meetings*

IX. Sub-Committee Reports

A. Building

27 different - staff, community, variety of people who did PR videos for bond. Architect timeline.

Ms. Bucka - SEAC Sub-Committee report not yet ready.

X. Recess Open Session and Convene Executive Session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under RIGL 42-26-4 and RIIGL 42-46-5(a)(4) - Investigations

At 6:54 pm, on a motion by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Dr. Quinn the Committee voted 7-0 to Recess Open Session and Convene Executive Session.

XI. Adjourn Executive Session and Reconvene Open Session

At 7:55 pm, on a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to Recess Executive Session and Reconvene Open Session.

XII. Seal Executive Session Minutes of October 17, 2023 and disclosure of Executive Session votes.

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 7-0 to Seal the Executive Session minutes of October 17, 2023.

XIII. Adjournment

At 7:55pm, on a motion by Dr.Quinn, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Ferreira
Acting School Committee Clerk

Approved 11-14-23