



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 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; 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: Mr. Tim Munoz

I. Call to Order

Ms. Powell called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- A. February 27, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. March 11, 2024 Executive Session Minutes
- C. March 11, 2024 Special Session Minutes
- D. March 19, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 5-0-1 to approve the minutes of February 27, 2024 and March 19, 2023. Ms. Powell abstained from the vote.

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 4-0-2 to approve both sets of minutes from March 11, 2024. Mr. Murphy and Dr. Quinn abstained from the vote.

V. Action Items

A. School Committee approval to activate by-laws working group

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve activating the by-laws working group.

B. School Committee approval of “Get The Foam Out” application

Ms. Powell explained that this application aligns with an initiative to remove styrofoam from our schools and move towards more reusable kitchenware and composting. Dr. Ricca said that Aramark District Supervisor, Alison O’Rourke, is in support of this initiative.

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the application.

Public comment

Donna Fish, EGPS Employee and EG Resident

Ms. Fish asked whether a dishwasher will be installed at Hanaford and if so, will it be integrated into the new building after the renovations. She also inquired whether this program will be implemented at Eldredge and District-wide.

Dr. Ricca explained that the initiative would begin at Hanaford where there currently is no dishwasher and that hopefully any new equipment will be used in the new building.

C. School Committee approval of East Greenwich Association of Educational Support Personnel MOA - Deductible, Make-Up Days, and Student Informational Systems Technician

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

Ms. Powell noted that MOAs such as this are part of continuing the work of aligning the para educator union contract with other union contracts.

D. School Committee approval of East Greenwich Association of Educational Support Personnel MOA - School Improvement Team Participation and Compensation

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the MOA.

Attorney Lombardo and Dr. Ricca praised the improved communication between the administration and the union. Dr. Ricca highlighted that Maria Collins, Unit Leader, has been a true partner.

E. School Committee approval of EGHS Golf Team Out of State Field Trip to Fisher Island, NY

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the field trip.

VI. Discussion and Possible Action

A. Discussion and Approval of FY 25 Budget

Dr. Ricca explained that this year the District is short the following positions: school psychologist, floater custodian, part-time custodian, 7.8 paraprofessionals. While short people, he is reluctant to eliminate any positions of current personnel where there is still a need for these areas.

Assumptions and Changes:

2023-2024 Approved Budget \$47,430,060

2024-2025 Proposed Budget \$49,773,562

Assumptions:

Health Insurance (4.43%), Dental Insurance (5.34%), Transportation (3.50%)

Changes:

Pension ERA (14.44%), Pension M.E.R.S. (4.49%), Teacher Contract Increase (2.25% for Step 10, Step 1-9 roll to new step, .75% stipend of FY 24 salary), Administrator Increase, EGEA ESP (contractual, varies), Custodian (to be negotiated)

FY 25 Considerations: New Personnel Requests

Included in Budget:

- (2) Elementary Math Specialists
- (1) High School Guidance Counselor
- (2) Paraprofessionals & (2) RBT Certified Paras
- .40 Facilities Clerk moved to 1.0

Total included in budget \$583,910

Unbudgeted Requested Positions:

- (1) Social Worker 1.0
- (1) Middle School Guidance Counselor 1.0
- (1) High School Spanish Teacher 1.0
- (1) High School Math Teacher j1.0
- (1) Custodian Supervisor (Districtwide) 1.0

Total unbudgeted personnel request \$585,032

The only change in a current position is the increase of the Facilities Clerk from .4 to 1.0. There is a critical need for this position as the Master Plan is implemented.

Mr. Hangan asked if cuts are made to the positions included in the budget, would that open the District to liability to pay for out of district placements. Dr. Ricca explained that if the 4 paraprofessionals hired for this year were eliminated, it would put services at risk. Attorney Lombardo added that the RBT positions are critical in keeping students with behavioral issues in the district.

Dr. Quinn pointed out that there is usually breakage where there are unfilled positions. However, these needs have to be met through the use of outside agencies. Ms. Baker pointed out that the breakage from people being out is offset by substitute costs. Breakage from unfilled positions is taken up by outside services.

Dr. Ricca said that there is a need to hire the unbudgeted positions. He explained the risk and reward of each position. There is strain on existing staff and uneven coverage amongst the schools.

Ms. Bucka reviewed the new positions included in the budget and those that are unbudgeted. Dr. Ricca explained that if money becomes available, the approval of the positions would come to the School Committee. The positions are listed in order of priority. Any change or addition to the budget would come to the School Committee.

Ms. Powell asked about a position asked for last year but not this year - Student Services Part-time Assistant Director. Dr. Ricca explained that the position was eclipsed by other needed positions. This is not a budget of needs or wants but is a budget of a 4% increase.

Ms. Cecil-Karb cautioned that there is a risk to our current personnel being stretched too thin.

Public Comment

Alexandra Szabo, EGPS Parent

As a licensed mental health professional, Ms. Szabo suggested utilizing community professionals and billing through private insurance. Ms. Lombardo said that an agreement would have to be made with the union. Ms. Bucka said that there is a lot to work out in order to implement this type of relationship. Ms. Powell and Attorney Lombardo cautioned that the District does not want to end up in a position of reliance on volunteer professionals rather than being sufficiently funded and staffed.

Molly Fridley, EGPS/SEAC Parent

Ms. Fridley spoke in support of an additional social worker and the importance of that position.

FY 25 Proposed Budget

\$49,773,562 (4.94% increase)

This will require a 4% increase from the town tax appropriation, for a total Town revenue of \$41,312,372.

Dr. Ricca highlighted the adjustments made to the budget request, especially to the Facilities budget. We will be faced with a decision between personnel and buildings. He said that we will have to look differently at building a budget. Important factors to consider:

- uncertain state aid
- utilizing \$842,000 in fund balance in FY 25 leaves only \$671,000. There would be no fund balance in FY 27 and beyond.

Dr. Quinn expressed concern with the year after year cut to the facilities budget. In the long term history of the Town's property taxes, there is a consistent \$ increase, not a consistent % increase.

Attorney Lombardo pointed out increasing unfunded mandates:

- New federal regulations around 504s
- New regulations around Multi Language Learners
- Expansion of Title IX

Ms. Bucka expressed the need to communicate to the Town that the District has already made budget cuts, especially to facilities.

Ms. Powell clarified that the Town's levy cap is 4%, however that does not mean there is a 4% cap on increased school funding.

Sources of Revenue for FY 22-25

EGSD Fund Balance: Purpose and History

Dr. Ricca asked for a motion to approve the FY 25 proposed budget as it has been presented tonight - \$49,773,562 which will require an appropriation from the Town of \$41,312,372

Ms. Bucka made the motion to approve the budget as presented with the move of the guidance counselor position to unbudgeted and replace it with the social worker position. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion.

Discussion

Ms. Bucka said that it is necessary to fund the needs of the "have not" students whose needs are not being met. She feels the social worker position is a higher priority than the guidance counselor position.

Ms. Powell said that she did not want to replace one mental health support with another. She proposed adding the social worker position into the proposed budget. Dr. Quinn offered his support of Ms. Powell's suggestion; to ask for the additional position sends a message that we need a bit more. Dr. Quinn said that the addition of a social worker would result in a median increase of \$24/year per property.

Ms. Bucka, while supporting an ask for both positions, asked that the social worker position be a higher priority than the guidance counselor position.

Mr. Hangan and Ms. Powell advocated asking for the money necessary to address facility needs.

The Committee discussed possible additions to the budget. There was discussion to name what the need is and why it is needed.

Amended motion:

Add to the budget:

Furniture \$25,221

Social worker \$127,784

Facilities \$398,399

Additional ask \$551,404

Town ask \$41,863,776

Total budget \$50,324,966

Ms. Bucka amended her motion to accept the Superintendent's budget as presented with the addition of furniture, full facilities funding and the social worker position for a total budget of \$50,324,966 which includes a tax appropriation from the Town of \$41,863,776. Ms. Powell seconded the amended motion which was approved by the Committee with a 6-0 vote. The Committee voted 6-0 to approve the budget.

VII. Policies (second read)

A. Policy 2180, Student Residency

There was a second read of the policy. A third read will be scheduled.

VIII. Sub-Committees

A. Building

B. Facilities

C. Health and Wellness

D. Special Education Advisory Committee

IX. Adjournment

At 8:35 pm, on a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Mr. Murphy, the Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey
School Committee Clerk

Approved 4-30-24