



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 11, 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. 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

Absent: Mr. Kevin Murphy

I. Call to Order

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

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. District Teacher of the Year Recognition

Dr. Ricca introduced the District Teacher of the Year, Mrs. Patricia Rakovic, Speech and Language Pathologist at Frenchtown Elementary. He shared remarks about Mrs. Rakovic and her 45 year career. Dr. Ricca explained that her selection began with a nomination by her Frenchtown peers then a final selection by the District Leadership Team.

Mrs. Rakovic addressed the audience and expressed her gratitude for the honor and for the East Greenwich community. She spoke of coming to EGPS to be a part of a transformation in special education happening at the time and has stayed as education has evolved.

Ms. Bucka spoke of her personal appreciation of Mrs. Rakovic who taught both of her children.

IV. Public Comment

Jeanette Bradley, EGPS Parent

As a parent of a transgender student, Ms. Bradley spoke favorably of the District's support of all of its students and the embodiment of "All Means All".

Kaz Bradley, EGPS Student

Kaz, a transgender student, expressed appreciation for the support of the EGPS community who is accepting of everyone.

Caryn Corenthal, EG Town Council Member

Ms. Corenthal, speaking as a special education teacher and resident, congratulated Mrs. Rakovic. She spoke about what diversity means to her and the benefits of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

Robert Chiaradio, Westerly, Rhode Island Resident

Mr. Chiaradio shared that he is speaking to every school committee in the state. He stated that no district is obligated to comply with RIDE's transgender guidance which is not law. He advocated that any student uncomfortable with using the bathroom of their birth gender, be allowed to utilize a gender neutral bathroom. Mr. Chiaradio objected to the District's transgender policy and warned that the District is vulnerable to legal action.

Isabel Guastella

Isabel stated that Mr. Chiaradio was more of a danger than transgender people are. She spoke of her support for RIDE's transgender guidance and impressed upon the need for support of transgender individuals.

Sean Hackler, Cranston, Rhode Island Resident

Mr. Heckler spoke about the relationship between power and empathy.

Andrea Shapiro, East Greenwich Resident

Ms. Shapiro offered her appreciation of the individuals who spoke before her. Last week Ms. Shapiro learned of the layoff of one of the District's teachers and spoke of that teacher's strengths. She expressed disappointment that such a great teacher was laid off due to a decrease in enrollment. Ms. Shapiro noted that we are headed into a busy enrollment season in a sought after community. She said that enrollment and funding numbers do not necessitate any layoffs. Ms. Shapiro outlined the costs involved with changing teaching grade levels.

Michael Zarrella, EG Town Council Member

Mr. Zarrella thanked the School Committee for its support of transgender students. He criticized speaker Robert Chiaradio for his point of view.

Becky Karb, EGPS Parent (via Zoom)

Ms. Karb said that the East Greenwich community loves and supports its transgender students.

Erin Lopes, East Greenwich Resident (via Zoom)

Ms. Lopes expressed concerns about the class sizes for next year, the closing of a classroom and the known increase in coming enrollment. She cautioned that good educators would be lost.

Sabrina Weiss, East Greenwich Resident

Ms. Weiss shared her appreciation of the work done by the School Committee and congratulated Mrs. Rakovic. Ms. Weiss expressed her opposition to the staffing changes at Meadowbrook. As one of the only towns with a growing student population, Ms. Weiss believes that the school district and town council should do more to promote kindergarten enrollment.

Cate McDevitt, EGPS Teacher (via Zoom)

Ms. McDevitt spoke of the value of smaller class sizes and of the benefits to teachers working together for many years.

V. Approval of Minutes

- A. Executive Session Minutes of May 28, 2024
- B. Regular Meeting Minutes of May 28, 2024
- C. Executive Session Minutes of May 30, 2024
- D. Regular Meeting Minutes of May 30, 2024

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve both sets of minutes from May 28, 2024.

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 4-0-2 to approve both sets of minutes from May 30, 2024. Mr. Hangan and Dr. Quinn abstained from the vote.

VI. Action Items

- A. School Committee Approval of Out of State Field Trip - EGHS Cross Country, Thetford, Vermont

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the cross country team field trip.

B. School Committee Approval of Out of State Field Trip - EGHS Field Hockey, Conshohocken, Pennsylvania

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the field hockey team field trip.

C. School Committee Approval of Food Service Contract - Aramark

Ms. Bucka made a motion to approve the contract. Dr. Quinn seconded the motion. After a discussion, the Committee approved the contract 6-0 vote.

Mr. Munoz asked Mrs. Baker for additional time to review a proposal such as this which is 300+ pages. He also asked why the District stays with Aramark.

Mrs. Baker explained that procurement procedures were followed during a six month process. Another vendor inquired but did not bid. Single vendor bids affect the longevity of companies in the District.

Mr. Munoz said that Aramark claims to consult with students and provide healthy food education but that he sees no evidence of that assertion.

Dr. Ricca replied that he sees the Aramark operations first hand in each school.

Ms. Cecil-Karb said that she too has seen first hand how Aramark works to educate students on good nutrition.

Ms. Weiss, EGPS Parent

Ms. Weiss spoke highly of the work done by Aramark and its employees.

D. School Committee Approval of Actuarial Consulting Services Bid Award - Nyhart

On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Ms. Bucka, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the bid award.

Dr. Quinn noted that an associate was used for the work. Mr. Munoz asked whether the District participated in the bid process. Mrs. Baker replied that it was a joint bidding process and that she reviewed and commented on the bids.

E. School Committee Approval of RIDE MOA - School Construction

Mr. Munoz made a motion to approve the MOA. Ms. Cecil-Karb seconded the motion. After a discussion, the Committee approved the MOA with a 6-0 vote.

Ms. Powell explained that RIDE approves school construction projects and the reimbursement funding. The MOA is a signed agreement between the School Committee and RIDE. The scope of the project and costs amounts are outlined and any changes would need to be amended with RIDE.

Major Projects: New Construction/Renovation and Additions

a. Frenchtown Elementary School	\$56,138,650
b. East Greenwich High School	\$48,405,907
c. Hanaford Elementary School	\$47,870,033

Renovations and Repairs

a. Districtwide Physical Education Improvements	\$12,895,786
b. Meadowbrook Farms Elementary School	\$ 4,892,826
c. Archie R. Cole Middle School	\$1,766,923
d. James H. Eldredge Elementary School	\$122,665

Total expenditures not to exceed \$172,092,790

Dr. Ricca explained that RIDE approves projects beyond those in the \$150 million bond. By including these additional facility needs, the projects are eligible for reimbursement at the higher 55% rate.

F. School Committee Approval of EGEA MOA - Department Chairs

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the EGEA MOA - Department Chairs.

Ms. Bucka expressed her appreciation for the progress towards providing additional leadership in student services.

Dr. Ricca thanked the union leadership for their cooperation and partner in problem solving.

VII. Discussion and Possible Action

A. FY 25 Budget

Dr. Ricca explained that on May 28, 2024 the Town Council passed their budget. Within 30 days the School Committee needs to take action on that budget. At this time, final state aid funding is not known. Dr. Ricca said that the Town provided a 4% increase. With Title fund changes, a social worker will be able to be funded. Additional positions

are dependent on final state aid appropriations. The School Committee needs to approve the town council allocation.

A discussion was held on the possibility of state aid greater than that proposed by the Governor. Dr. Ricca explained that once state aid funding is finalized, a discussion will be held on the allocation of any additional funding.

Ms. Powell requested that when the budget is reviewed again, that budget changes include specifics.

Dr. Quinn pointed out that an increase in state aid helps the District make up for years of limited funding from the Town.

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the amended FY 25 budget in the amount of \$49,773,562.

VIII. Superintendent and Staff Reports

A. Strategic Plan Update - Metrics

Mr. Podraza began by stating that the information presented tonight is not the most recent information due to an embargo of the *SurveyWorks* data by RIDE. SIT teams have been allowed to review the embargoed data. Mr. Podraza reviewed the areas of growth and decline over the last year.

If we...

- I. Genuinely know, support & celebrate each student
- II. Share collective responsibility to educate all children in the community
- III. Engage community
- IV. Ensure a high quality education system that provides continuous access for all

Then...

- V. All students will be prepared to successfully pursue academics, work and life after graduation

Mr. Munoz asked Mr. Podraza about the national assessment for educational data. He said that although this is federal data, some of the numbers are incorrect. Why is EG lagging in national data? Dr. Ricca responded that that data would need to be looked at and reported back at a later date. Mr. Podraza did say that this is random data.

Ms. Cecil-Karb inquired about the *SurveyWorks* data and its rollout. Mr. Podraza replied that windows were aligned among all schools initially and then it was reopened in a focused push.

Ms. Bucka expressed frustration of the non alignment of data and spoke of looking forward to being able to tie actions taken into metrics.

B. EGPS Annual Report 2024

Dr. Ricca introduced the printed copy of the first EGPS Annual Report. He spoke of improvements and additional information which will be included in next year's report. Dr. Ricca shared the process that Mr. Ben Merrill uses to put together the report. Principals and directors spoke with Mr. Merill and their individual voices came through. A discussion should be had about how to include fiscal information if the report is still produced at this time of year.

School Committee members praised the report and offered additional ways to approach the report and the production timetable. Mr. Munoz said that this is a celebration of the schools and should not morph into a financial document. Ms. Bucka said that she sees it more of a report to the taxpayers on where their funding of the District goes. Ms. Cecil-Karb asked whether two separate reports should be produced with different focuses.

IX. Subcommittees

A. Health & Wellness

Ms. Bucka inquired about the RI Youth Risk Behavior Data results. Dr. Ricca responded that he would look into obtaining the data.

B. Personnel

X. Recess Open Session and Convene Executive Session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1) Job Performance, Superintendent Evaluation - Individual has been notified, including his right to have any discussion held in open session

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to recess open session and convene executive session at 8:04 pm.

X. Adjourn Executive Session and Reconvene Open Session

On a motion by Ms. Bucka seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn executive session and reconvene open session at 10:25 pm.

XI. Seal Executive Session minutes of June 11, 2024 and Disclosure of Executive Session votes of June 11, 2024.

On a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to seal the Executive Session minutes of June 11, 2024.

Ms. Powell disclosed that no votes were taken in Executive Session.

XII. Adjournment

At 10:32 pm, on a motion by Ms. Bucka, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey
School Committee Clerk

Approved 7-16-24