



East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 4, 2025

6:00 pm

Archie R. Cole Middle School, 100 Cedar Avenue, EG

Minutes

Those in attendance

School Committee: Ms. Alyson Powell, Chair; Dr. Eugene Quinn, Vice-Chair; Ms. Clare Cecil-Karb; Mr. William Hangan; Ms. Melissa Larsen (arrived at 6:05pm, departed at 9:58pm); Mr. Tim Munoz; Mr. Kevin Wright

Additional Attendees: Attorney Aubrey Lombardo; Mrs. Amy Healey, School Committee Clerk; Ms. Sarah Courtemanche-O'Brien, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Alexis Meyer, Interim Superintendent (joined at 7:10 pm)

I. Call to Order

Ms. Powell called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

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 - Superintendent & Assistant Superintendent. Individuals have been notified, including their right to have any discussion held in open session

At 6:01 pm, on a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Munoz, the Committee voted 6-0 to recess open session and convene executive session. Ms. Larsen was not present for the vote.

IV. 7:00 pm Recess Executive Session and Reconvene Open Session

At 6:54 pm, on a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to recess executive session and reconvene open session.

Ms. Powell called open session back to order at 7:04 pm.

V. Personnel Action (Discussion and Possible Action)

A. Superintendent's Separation Agreement

On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Mr. Hangan, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the Superintendent's Separation Agreement.

B. Interim Superintendent Appointment

Ms. Powell said that it was important to ensure continuous leadership in the District. She called for a motion to appoint Alexis Meyer as the interim superintendent.

On a motion by Mr. Hangan, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 7-0 to appoint Mrs. Alexis Meyer as Interim Superintendent.

Mrs. Meyer said that she was pleased to assume this role and assist the District through this transition. She expressed appreciation for the confidence in her ability to assist and gratitude for the support offered.

C. Administrator Search Update - EGHS Principal

Ms. Powell explained that at the last meeting, the personnel subcommittee was charged with beginning the search for a new high school principal. The search has moved quicker than anticipated since Dr. Pat Page has agreed to stay on as principal.

On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 7-0 to rescind Dr. Page's resignation from her position as high school principal.

VI. Public Comment

Ms. Powell thanked everyone for their patience and continued engagement when this meeting was postponed last week. The rules for meeting as a public body can be frustrating.

Ms. Donna McPhee, EGEA President & Frenchtown Teacher

Ms. McPhee read a statement on behalf of EGPS teachers and EGEA officers

Statement to the School Committee

On behalf of the East Greenwich Education Association - we are here tonight to address serious concerns regarding district leadership which has led to some of the decisions at tonight's meeting. Despite many challenges, we remain steadfast in our commitment to creating positive change—change that will benefit not only our students and teachers, but our entire town.

Our teachers are deeply dedicated to the success of our students and schools. We bring invaluable insight, expertise, and a tireless commitment to the classroom. Yet, our voices

have not been heard and valued as challenges surfaced in our schools. These issues must be addressed, as they directly impact our ability to deliver the high-quality education our students deserve. When districts and schools have positive and dynamic leaders, students are the ultimate beneficiaries. Teachers thrive and grow under great leaders, and, in turn, instruction for students is strengthened.

We are encouraged by the first steps taken toward addressing the issues we have shared, recognizing that this will be a long process. Meaningful change takes time, and while we are hopeful, we also urge caution. It is critical that the momentum and commitment toward improvement is maintained.

Moving forward, we expect to continue seeing concerns raised by our teachers addressed in a meaningful way. We want to focus on what matters most: providing our students with the excellent education they deserve. Together, we can build a stronger, more supportive, and more effective educational experience for our students and a more inclusive and respectful district for all.

The best outcomes happen when we work together. Teachers in East Greenwich are not just part of the system—they are the backbone of it. By including our voices and insights in the decision-making process, we ensure that the choices made truly reflect the needs of our students. When teachers lead, students succeed.

Ms. Lisa Reed, Cole Middle School Teacher

Ms. Reed said that following the vote of no confidence in the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, their response to teachers was frustrating and disheartening. The assertion that teachers are not open to change or adaptable is dismissive and condescending. Teachers are adaptable to change however there is concern about changes that negatively impact the district. An assurance of no layoffs was not assuring. It is not the responsibility of teachers to tell administrators how to do their job effectively. Leadership requires proactive engagement.

Ms. Caitlin Wotherspoon, Cole Middle School Math Teacher

Ms. Wotherspoon stated that creating a strong school system is a collaborative effort. It is felt that there has been a long time shift in the wrong direction. For 20 years the school system has been underfunded and budget reserves have been drained. The district has seen a high turnover of administrators and teaching staffing shortages. While navigating difficult times, the Superintendent has been absent. Decisions made by leadership have negatively affected morale. Professional independence is needed while holding teachers accountable. Ms. Wotherspoon offered hope for collaboration from the new curriculum subcommittee

Ms. Cate McDevitt, Elementary Teacher representative, ELA (curriculum)

Ms. McDevitt said that elementary teachers are dedicated to fostering growth, critical thinking and engagement. The teachers have areas of concern about the

implementation of the EL education curriculum. While the curriculum is well intentioned, it does not meet the diverse needs of all students. Ms. McDevitt asked for a reevaluation of the EL and other High Quality Curriculum Materials and a dialogue between teachers and administrators. Requests include:

- A curriculum council for oversight
- A process to identify green lit HQCM and EL curriculum
- Identify 2-3 best curriculum options
- Literacy curriculum coaches
- Regular feedback from teachers for future improvements
- Professional Development t

Ms. Melissa Fallow, EGHS ELA Teacher representatives (curriculum)

Representing secondary ELA teachers, Ms. Fallow said that they share the goal of developing a learning environment that creates skilled learners. After using McGraw Hill's *StudySync* for 4 years, concerns about the curriculum have been identified. Teachers were assured of autonomy which had been allowed for years and had high success. Ms. Fallow asserted that Ms. Courtemanche-O'Brien has implemented a switch which is not good and that RIDE mandates have been misconstrued and miscommunicated with a disregard for educators' voices.

Ms. Molly D'Angelo, Cole MS ELA Teacher representative (curriculum)

Ms. D'Angelo said that work has been done during the past three years with the ELA curriculum and its alignment with requirements. Teachers are alarmed by an abrupt shift to top down decisions. This sudden change undermines teaching practices. The best interest of unique learners is to include teachers. Requests include:

- Restoration of collaborative processes
- Clean, accurate communication of district goals
- Opportunities for reevaluation of other approved HQCM programs
- Choice of curriculum implementation
- Formation of a curriculum council

Ms. Maura Cotoia, EGHS Special Education Teacher Representative (curriculum)

Ms. Cotoia advocated for increased special education staffing, better professional development and reevaluation of the secondary online platforms. Special educators are experts about their students' needs. After using *StudySync* for several years, problems have been identified including difficulty with student accessibility of the program's features. Requests for improvements have not been met. Teacher modifications are intentional and effective for their students. Multiple platforms for math are used which is difficult for students to navigate. Consistent collaborative planning for teachers is imperative.

Ms. Mary Madden, EG Resident & Former Educator

Ms. Madden discussed her years in public education and expressed great respect for all members of the public education community. Ms. Madden asked that everyone, representing all groups, to treat everyone with respect - in person, in writing, on social media and in social settings.

Mr. Christopher Lamendola, EG Resident

Mr. Lamendola called for Ms. Powell to step down. He cited the recent renewal of the Superintendent's contract when it was known that there were problems. Mr. Lamendola discussed the troubles stemming from damage to his house during the construction of Cole Middle School. He asserted that Ms. Powell refused to listen to his concerns.

Ms. Denise Lopez, EGPS Teacher

Ms. Lopez asserted that the community is happy to hear that Dr. Ricca is stepping down but is also looking for more accountability from the School Committee. The community has concerns about where the District goes from here with the building plan and the curriculum..

Ms. Abigail Marcaccio, EGPS Parent

Ms. Marcaccio spoke at a previous school committee meeting and stated that the school department is in a crisis. She is deeply concerned with the ELA curriculum and the possibility of books being removed from the curriculum. Damage has been done and repair work is needed by working together. She advocated the continuation of reading books in their entirety.

VII. Approval of Minutes

A. Joint School - Town Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2025

On a motion by Mr. Hangan, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 5-0-2 to approve the minutes of February 10, 2025. Ms. Larsen and Mr. Munoz abstained from the vote.

B. Regular Session / Budget Workshop Minutes of February 11, 2025

C. Executive and Regular Session Minutes of February 18, 2025

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the minutes of February 11, 2025 and both sets of minutes from February 18, 2025.

VIII. Action Items

A. School Committee Approval of receipt of Social & Emotional Learning (SEL) external funds, \$7500 from National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

- B. School Committee Approval of University of Vermont Affiliation Agreement - Food Service Intern
- C. School Committee Approval of MOA - EG Custodian/Maintenance Employee
- D. School Committee Approval of Youth Risk Behavior Survey - Cole Middle School
- E. School Committee Approval of Homeschool Request

On a motion by Mr. Hangan, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve Action Items A-E.

IX. Discussion (Discussion and Possible Action)

- A. School Committee Establishment of a Curriculum Subcommittee and Approval of Charge

Mr. Munoz said that he was pleased to move forward with this subcommittee. As stated in the charge, one of the duties of the School Committee is curriculum oversight. There will be an examination of the ELA curriculum. There was a statutory obligation to try StudySync but after 3 years, it is not working and needs to be reexamined. There will be a review of the ELA and Math high quality curriculum already in place and the yet to be implemented social studies and science curriculums.

Public Comment

Ms. Ashley Graham, EG Resident

Ms. Graham asked whether the public will be able to speak on the curriculum subcommittee. She advocated for special education representation.

Mr. Munoz explained that Mr. Marcaccio, Director of Student Services, will attend these meetings. In addition, input would be sought from SEAC and the community.

Ms. Powell explained that these subcommittee meetings are open to the public.

Ms. Cecil-Karb said that the voices of the special education population are sometimes lost. As the School Committee liaison to SEAC, she promised that thoser voice will be heard. Ms. Powell added that SEAC is the only subcommittee that allows for members to participate remotely.

Public Comment

Ms. Maura Cotoia said that the special education teachers were ready to be a part of this committee

Mr. Munoz made a motion to amend the charge and the committee's composition:

- 1) *Add the Director of Student Services or a special education teacher*

- 2) *Replaces 2 building admins with 3 elementary teacher leaders*
- 3) *Expand the number of community members from 2 to 3*

Mr. Hangan seconded the amendment which was approved by the Committee 7-0.

On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Ms. Cecil-Karb, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the establishment of a curriculum subcommittee and approval of its charge as amended. .

B. School Committee Approval of Curriculum Subcommittee Chair - Mr. Tim Munoz

On a motion by Mr. Hangan, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve Mr. Munoz as the Curriculum Subcommittee Chair.

Ms. Powell appointed Ms. Cecil-Karb to serve on the curriculum subcommittee.

C. School Committee Establishment of a Legislative Subcommittee and Approval of Charge

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the establishment of the legislative subcommittee and to approve the subcommittee's amended charge.

Ms. Powell explained that this would allow the School Committee to be more responsive to legislative matters.

Ms. Cecil-Karb pointed out the challenges of coordinating people to testify and promote those opportunities.

D. School Committee Approval of Legislative Subcommittee Chair - Ms. Alyson Powell

On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 7-0 to appoint Ms. Powell as the Legislative Subcommittee Chair.

Ms. Powell appointed Mr. Wright to serve on the Legislative Subcommittee.

X. Budget Workshop - Personnel, Administration, Student Services, Facilities

Student Services

Student Services - Strategic Plan Alignment

- P1 - Excellence in Learning

- P2 - Distinguished Teaching and Talented Staff
- P3 - Efficient and Innovative Systems
- P4 - Engaged Community

FY 25 Successes

- Co-teaching Pilot
- Unified Programming-build out
- Targeted work w/ families
- Mental health pathways
- 504 Updates - Tier 2 focus
- Embedded Clinical Supports - THRIVE Behavioral Health, year 2
- Curriculum - Unique Learning and ACE
- Ongoing SEL curriculum implementation
- IEP - microlearnings
- Transition program - EGHS
- Paraprofessional Mentor Program
- Staffing

FY 26 Priorities

- Pathways, programs and access
- Professional Learning - Co-teaching
- MLL Pathways
- Alternative Pathways
- RBT program
- Expand Unified Program
- Parent guidance / engagement
- Access to evidence based interventions
- Transitions
- Increased focus on MTSS diagnostics, interventions, progress monitoring tools
- MRSS alignment
- Systems and structures and implementation

FY 26 Overview

- Proposed budget FY 26 \$3,043,800
- Approved budget FY 25 \$2,935,398
- Increase FY 25 → FY 26 3.69%
- Reasons for increase
 - Tuitions
 - Contract Staff
 - Inflationary factors

Ms. Larsen asked how out-of district tuition can be reduced. Mr. Marcaccio said that it is challenging to do so. It would require building programs at the schools to educate those

students. It also would require grouping together students in a grade level band that the District currently does not have.

Attorney Lombardo said that the District can not remove students placed in out of district residential placements by DCFY.

Dr. Quinn pointed out that East Greenwich ranks near the bottom of districts with out of district students.

Mr. Munoz inquired about the number of students receiving services and out of district placements.

Mr. Wright inquired about the increasing costs of personal care attendants. Attorney Lombardo explained that a lot of these costs are required by state law such as having a nurse available to administer medications.

Ms. Caryn Corenthal, Town Council Member

Ms. Corenthal asked about the costs of testing materials and periodicals. She also said that RIDE provides money for tutoring services.

Mr. Marcaccio replied that the District is required to cover the costs of testing. The tutoring services provided by RIDE do not meet the needs of the students.

Ms. Corenthal said that the federal government has promised to pay for special education which is very expensive. Neither federal nor state funding has come through. Those costs are a large part of the District's budget. It is necessary to advocate for more money for special education from the state and federal government.

Ms. Powell said that will be a major focus of the legislative subcommittee.

Ms. Cecil-Karb and Mr. Marcaccio discussed the benefits of co-teaching.

Dr. Quinn asked Mr. Marcaccio to explain how co-teaching can pay for itself. Mr. Marcaccio said that students moving vertically through co-teaching classrooms perform better and close gaps that would otherwise require additional support and resources.

Facilities

Facilities - Strategic Plan Alignment

- P1 - Excellence in Learning
- P2 - Distinguished Teaching and Talented Staff
- P3 - Efficient and Innovative Systems
- P4 - Engaged Community

FY 26 Overview - Buildings

- 460,000 sf
- 120 individual offices
- 6 libraries
- 6 kitchens
- 1 auditorium
- 180 individual classrooms
- 95 bathrooms
- 6 cafeterias
- 7 gymnasiums
- 1.5 miles of corridor and connecting spaces
- 300 individual pieces of HVAC equipment
- 15 boilers
- 300 plumbing fixtures
- 400 pieces of electrical switchgear
- Miles of piping and conduit
- Thousands of fittings and valves

FY 26 Overview - Personnel

- 1 Director
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- 1 Maintenance Supervisor (working)
- 3 Maintenance Workers
- 22 Custodians (2 part-time, 1 floater)
 - 6 Full-time and 1 part-time positions are currently unfilled
- 1 Mail Carrier (part-time)
- 13 Substitute Custodians (as needed)

FY 26 Overview - Budget

- Proposed budget FY 26 \$2,642,410
- Approved budget FY 25 \$2,108,970
- Actual budget FY 24 \$2,146,910
- Percent increase 25/26 - 25.29%
- Cost/sf
 - FY 24 actual \$4.66
 - FY 25 budget \$4.58
 - FY 26 proposed \$6.74

FY 26 Overview - Costs

- 20% Purchased services \$924,725
- 8% Supplies and materials \$364,983
- 8% Building Improvements \$334,000
- Continuing bond projects

FY 25 Unbudgeted Expenditures

- High School Plumbing Repair \$130k (P3)
- Eldredge Hot Water Tank Replacement \$6k (P3)
- Cole Condensing Boiler Replacement 1 & 2 \$150k (P3)
- Temporary Custodial Staff \$13k (P3)
- Mold Remediation At Frenchtown, Meadowbrook, EGHS \$30k (P3)
- EGHS Elevator Door Operator \$72K (P3)

FY 2025 Successes

- Custodial Masterplan advancements (P1, P2, P3)
- New cafeteria furniture for high school (P3) April break
- Meadowbrook PreK playground
- Hanaford Outdoor Learning Area
- Cole Hot Water Heater Replacement
- EGHS Hammer Cage Replacement
- Cole Backstop Repairs

FY 26 Considerations

- Facility / Recreation MOA (P1, P2, P3)
- Continue project and vendor collaboration with DPW and Recreation
- Begin renting field space to defray cost of replacement (P3)
- Pursue energy efficiency grants for renewables and efficiencies (P3)
- Explore further autonomous clearing to offset personnel costs (P1 & P3)
- Strategic custodial services improvements to reach APPA 2.5 (P1 & P3)
- RIDE Asset Protection Minimum Requirements FY 25
- Budget Maintenance Expenditure

Mr. Wright inquired about the budgeting of capital improvements.

Mr. Wilmarth addressed questions from the audience about the pipe repairs at the highschool, the specifics of the lining process, the custodian vacancies and cleaning scores.

A gentleman from the audience asked about the access to the high school bathrooms. Mr. Wilmarth said that all bathrooms are operational and that he does not control access. There were additional questions about vape sensors.

Dr. Page explained the approaches to addressing the vaping issue.

- Engineering solutions
- Vape detectors that need to be integrated into the existing security system
- Education and prevention

- Bathrooms are all functioning. Sometimes they are temporarily closed due to students flushing rolls of toilet paper
- Smart track system shows students which bathrooms are open

Ms. Melissa Fallow, EGHS English Teacher

Ms. Fallow made a plea to not cut the furniture and fixture line. There is a need to replace desks that have sharp edges and are not safe.

Administration and Finance, Personnel FY 26

Fiscal Year 2025 Successes

- Multiple updates to MUNIS to streamline operations
- Monthly projections to School Committee
- My School Bucks set up to take payments
- Zero findings FY 24 audited financial statements

Administration and Finance Budget FY 26 Overview

- Proposed budget FY 26 \$4,552,429
- Increase in expenses from FY 25 budget
- Approved budget FY 25 \$4,522,920

Personnel Budget FY 26 Overview

- Proposed budget FY 26 Salaries \$28,743,984 and Benefits \$10,362,716
- Approved budget FY 25 Salaries \$28,459,857 and Benefits \$9,731,178
- FY 25 to FY 26 increase Salaries \$284,127 and Benefits \$631,538
- FY 25 current staffing FTE, funding changes, and new positions: included in FY 26 budget
 - Positions acquired from Perkins and BCSA Grant - end of funding
 - .30 MTSS Coordinator (including benefits) \$47,196
 - .29 CTE Performing Arts (including benefits) \$32,600

Ms. Powell explained that the entire budget continues to be worked on. These workshops are an opportunity for directors to present and explain their budgets. The budget needs to be approved by the School Committee and delivered to the Town Council by April 15th.

XI. **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

- A) RIGL 42-46-5(a)(9) Certified Employee Grievance Hearing. Individual has been notified, including their right to have any discussion held in open session

At 9:43 pm, on a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 7-0 to recess open session and reconvene executive session. Ms. Larsen departed the meeting at that time.

XII. Adjourn Executive Session and Reconvene Open Session

At 12:11 am Wednesday, March 5, 2025, on a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn executive session and reconvene open session.

XIII. Seal Executive Session Minutes of March 4, 2025 and Disclosure of Executive Session votes of March 4, 2025

On a motion by Ms. Cecil-Karb, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 6-0 to seal the executive session minutes of March 4, 2025.

Ms. Powell disclosed that no votes were taken during executive session.

XIV. Hearing

- A. Certified Employee Grievance
- B. School Committee Action on Certified Employee Grievance

Ms. Cecil-Karb made a motion to amend the Superintendent's decision and to reduce the written warning to a verbal warning. The written warning will be removed from the teacher's file. Mr. Wright seconded the motion that passed 6-0.

X. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Dr. Quinn the Committee voted 6-0, to adjourn the meeting at 12:17 am Wednesday, March 5, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey
School Committee Clerk

Approved 3-18-25