



## East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, March 11, 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 (arrived at 6:10 pm); Ms. Melissa Larsen; Mr. Tim Munoz; Mr. Kevin Wright

**Absent:** Mr. William Hangan

**Additional Attendees:** Mrs. Alexis Meyer, Interim Superintendent; Ms. Sarah Courtemanche-O'Brien, Assistant Superintendent; Attorney Aubrey Lombardo; Mrs. Amy Healey, School Committee Clerk

#### I. Call to Order

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

#### II. Pledge of Allegiance

#### III. Public Comment

*Ms. Caryn Corenthal, Town Council Member*

Ms. Corenthal said that she shares the goals of the bond. It will be important to stay on budget with the school construction. While taxes will increase, it is important to recognize the benefits of new and improved schools. She also noted that the voters supported the construction bond 70% vs 30%.

With the significant reduction of state aid and potential changes to federal funding, the District faces challenges. It is necessary to acknowledge that schools need to be extremely lean without reliance on fund balance.

Ms. Corenthal said that it is important to look at qualified local candidates for the superintendent position; someone who lives a reasonable distance away and who is not allowed to work remotely.

#### IV. Discussion and Possible Action

A. School Committee Approval of Interim Superintendent's Contract

*On a motion by Ms. Larsen, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 5-0 to approve the Interim Superintendent's contract. Ms. Cecil-Karb was not present for the vote.*

#### B. Superintendent Job Posting/Search

Ms. Powell said that while it is a little late in the process, a search for a new superintendent should begin now in the hopes of having a new superintendent before the start of the next school year. Ms. Cecil-Karb asked what the timeline is for a superintendent search. Ms. Powell said that while it is a lengthy process, she feels that there is enough time to attract quality candidates. The search process will take a few months, will involve a large group of stakeholders and hopefully include an overlap between the interim superintendent and new superintendent.

Ms. Larsen and Mr. Wright expressed support for starting the search immediately. Ms. Cecil-Karb said that the community is excited to have Mrs. Meyer return and cautioned against too much change.

When asked by Ms. Cecil-Karb, Mrs. Meyer said that while it is a little late in the process, she felt that there's still time to conduct a search for a new superintendent..

Ms. Powell said that the personnel subcommittee will begin the search process with a review of the Superintendent's job description. Any changes would come before the School Committee.

#### C. School Committee Approval of Transportation Resolution

Ms. Powell explained that the agenda packet includes resolutions from other districts on private school and categorical transportation aid. A resolution for the East Greenwich School Committee is being developed and will be modeled on these using East Greenwich specific data.

*On a motion by Ms. Larsen, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 6-0 to approve the two transportation resolutions.*

#### D. Budget Discussion

Ms. Powell explained that representatives from the town and school have been meeting weekly to discuss the FY 26 budget. The anticipated reduction in state aid creates a dire budget.

Ms. Baker explained that work is being done to balance the FY 26 budget. Factors include:

- A 4% increase expected from the Town
- A \$1.7 million shortfall between the submitted budgets and anticipated revenue
- \$1,029,000 in savings have been identified; all reductions affect education but are not directly related to students

#### 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.

<u>Positions acquired from Perkins and BCSA Grant - end of funding</u>	
.30 MTSS Coordinator (includes benefits)	\$47,196
.29 CTE Performing Arts (includes benefits )	\$32,600

#### FY 26 Proposed Budget

##### Possible Adjustments

- Retiree savings
- Health & dental rates are not finalized
- COA, Catering, Legal, public relations, professional development
- Field trip transportation in supplies; solar/electricity credits
- Building improvements, furniture, playground repair, IT hardware, equipment
- Field trips

Ms. Powell requested a line item budget which shows what expenses are legally or contractually required, what has already been reduced and what has been eliminated. Ms. Baker said that the next budget presentation will include more specifics.

#### Public Comment

*Caryn Corenthal, Town Council Member*

Ms. Corenthal inquired about revenue estimates for medicaid and facility rentals. She expressed concerns that these revenue estimates have been over budgeted in the last two years.

Ms. Cecil-Karb pointed out that while field trips are slated to be eliminated, there is no reduction in athletic fees. She said that field trips are a highlight for elementary students.

Mr. Wright spoke of needing to get creative in generating additional revenue.

Attorney Lombardo said that significant changes to IDEA and Title IX have brought about a lot of investigations resulting in significant legal costs. These investigations are a detailed and procedurally specific process, with reliance on experienced attorneys. .

Dr. Quinn pointed out that state aid has increased 400% since 2008 and that reliance on that aid is not sustainable.

#### Public Comment

*Ms. Caryn Corenthal, Town Council Member*

Ms. Corenthal pointed out that a 4% increase from the town would not cover the budget gap.

Attorney Lombardo said that there is a potential waiver process to exceed the 4% cap.

Dr. Quinn noted that there has been a 1.7% average increase from the Town over the last 17 years

*Mr. Andrew Nota, Town Manager*

Mr. Nota spoke about the need to submit for an exemption due to the upcoming school construction. Before construction begins, the Town will have to begin borrowing and make interest payments. An increase of 4% to the schools, combined with debt costs, will require an exemption in order to impose a 6.8% levy increase.

*Ms. Renee Haskins, Meadowbrook Teacher*

Ms. Haskins said that she was here on behalf of the teachers. Representatives from the school community have been to the state house to advocate for changes to state aid funding. Teachers are planning on testifying on legislation at a hearing next Tuesday night. She invited the School Committee to attend the hearing or submit written testimony.

Ms. Powell said that the School Committee has a meeting that evening and can not attend the hearing but will certainly provide written testimony.

*Linda Gaskill, EGPS Teacher*

Ms. Gaskill asked for clarification on the 4% tax increase cap. It is her understanding that the schools are not capped at 4% but that the overall tax increase is capped at 4%.

Attorney Lombardo said that there is a law that says a school district can not get more than 104% of the current budget. It is a 4% cap on maintenance of effort.

Mr. Nota said that the tax levy is capped at a 4% increase.

Ms. Cecil-Karb pointed out that other town departments can increase more than 4%.

Dr. Quinn pointed out that the reduction in state aid represents 2% of the overall budget. The 4% cap does not take into account any growth in population. East Greenwich has had a 10% population increase.

Ms. Powell said that there will be a lot more detail in next week's budget presentation.

Ms. Cecil-Karb brought up that there is a freeze on the purchase of supplies.

Attorney Lombardo said that some other districts routinely receive donations from their community of items such as furniture and supplies.

## **V. Adjournment**

*On a motion by Ms. Larsen, seconded by Dr. Quinn, the Committee voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 pm.*

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey  
School Committee Clerk

*Approved 3-18-25*