



## East Greenwich School Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 1, 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 6:27 pm); Mr. William Hangan, Ms. Melissa Larsen, Mr. Tim Munoz; Mr. Kevin Wright

**Additional Attendees:** Mrs. Alexis Meyer, Interim Superintendent; Assistant Superintendent; Attorney Aubrey Lombardo; Mrs. Amy Healey, School Committee Clerk; Mrs. Maggie Baker, Director of Administration

#### I. Call to Order

Ms. Powell called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

#### II. Pledge of Allegiance

#### III. Public Comment

*Ms. Jaclyn Boichat, Ms. Stephanie Elevado, Ms. Courtney Curtin - EG Residents*

A petition was presented which called for the resignation of School Committee Chair Alyson Powell. It was asserted that Ms. Powell violated provisions of Rhode Island law.

1. Failure to properly evaluate superintendent performance
2. Failure to accept and encourage community input
3. Failure to establish procedures for complaints

They said that if Ms. Powell does not resign, the other School Committee members should remove her as Chair.

#### IV. Approval of Minutes

- A. Executive and Regular Session Minutes of March 18, 2025
- B. Special Meeting - Budget Workshop Minutes of March 27, 2025

*On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Ms. Larsen, the Committee voted 5-0-1 to approve both sets of minutes from March 18, 2025. Mr. Hangan abstained from the vote. Ms. Cecil-Karb was not present for the vote.*

*On a motion by Dr. Quinn, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 3-0-3 on the minutes of March 27, 2025. Mr. Hangan, Ms. Larsen and Mr. Munoz abstained from the vote. The vote failed. Ms. Cecil-Karb was not present for the vote.*

**V. Action Items (Discussion and Possible Action)**

- A. School Committee Approval of SY 2025-2026 School Calendar
- B. School Committee Approval of NEIT Early College MOU
- C. School Committee Approval of bid award to Royal Flush Plumbing for \$47,300, epoxy lining to high school's sanitation line
- D. School Committee Approval of Sargent Center Consulting Contract - Student Services

Mrs. Meyer explained the proposed school calendar.

Ms. Larsen said that parents have contacted her asking to begin the school year after Labor Day. Mrs. Meyer explained that by starting after Labor Day and observing holidays, the potential exists that school would extend well into the last week of June.

Ms. Powell explained that a community survey was conducted last year and the majority indicated a preference to start before Labor Day rather than go further into June.

Public Comment

*Dana Polikoff, EGPS Parent*

Ms. Polikoff suggested moving the August school days to the end of the school year. She asserted that it does not make sense to begin before Labor Day and have the last day of school be a Monday.

Mr. Wright inquired whether the expenses being approved for the NEIT agreement are budgeted. Dr. Page replied that this agreement was entered into last year. There are four students in the program. This agreement is a total increase of \$250 and it is budgeted.

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

**VI. FY 26 Budget (Discussion and Possible Action)**

- A. FY 26 Budget Adoption

Mrs. Meyer and Mrs. Baker presented the budget. Mrs. Meyer reviewed the budget process to date and explained that the process continues after the School Committee votes on the budget.

## Revenue Changes

- \$90,000 added in from fund balance
- Additional tuition income from out of district students
- Additional breakage from teacher retirements

## Line Items Restored

- Cole Athletics
- High School Swim Team
- COA
- One Library Media Specialist position

The only potential layoff is an art teacher at the high school due to programmatic changes. The reduction of a Kindergarten teacher, a Pre-K teacher and paraprofessionals are due to anticipated reduced enrollment. The Assistant Special Education Director position, funded for FY 25 but not filled, has been removed from FY 26. A speech language pathologist position has been increased by 0.3 FTE.

Mr. Munoz asked about the grant funds for the MTSS Coordinator position. Mrs. Meyer replied that federal grant funds will be used. Mr. Munoz said that this position is a strategic investment in early intervention and spoke of the position's value.

Ms. Larsen inquired about the budget for web based programs and asked whether they could be consolidated. Mrs. Meyer said that they were examined during the budget process.

Mr. Munoz asked what changes in the art program will lead to a reduction of an art teacher. Mrs. Meyer replied that the offerings will be absorbed into CTE pathways programming. Dr Page added that the teacher was hired in a unified arts position. The school will focus on programs that can be reimbursed with CTE dollars; programs that directly align with CTE programs or graduation requirements. This teacher's graduation requirement classes will be shifted to other teachers.

Mr. Munoz said that a library media specialist should not be reduced. Mrs. Meyer said that the decision was made due to the difficult budget and that the reduction of a library position would likely come with the planned reduction of an elementary school. Mr.

Munoz said that there are costs on the school side that should be on the town's side of the budget. He also spoke against reducing paraprofessionals.

Mrs. Larsen asked whether the reduction of a library media specialist will result in the library not being open all day.

Ms. Cecil-Karb said that it is difficult to lose a library position. She rhetorically asked what do we get rid of. The Town cares about the schools and should help pay for the associated expenses.

Ms. Powell said that ideally nothing on this list would be reduced. There are no easy decisions.

#### Strategic Plan: Priorities and Initiatives 2021-2026

Priority 1 - Excellence in Learning

Priority 2 - Distinguished Teaching and Talented Staff

Priority 3 - Efficient and Innovative Systems

Priority 4 - Engaged Community

#### EGPS: Vision of a Graduate

Knowledgeable

Skilled

Connected

Reflective

#### EGPS: At a Glance

Meadowbrook, PK-Grade 2: 290 students, 25 teachers

Frenchtown, K- Grade 2: 277 students, 28 teachers

Eldredge, Grades 3-5: 309 students, 22 teachers

Hanaford, Grades 3-5: 270 students, 23 teachers

Cole, Grades 6-8: 586 students, 51 teachers, 2 guidance counselors

EGHS, Grades 9-12: 739 students, 65 teachers, 5 guidance counselors

#### EGPS Budget Process

## Sources of Revenue for SY 22-26

FY 25 v FY 26 -\$6,386

## Proposed Reduction of Expenses for FY 26

### Proposed Reduction of Expenses for FY 26

Description	Amount		Description	Amount
Capital Improvements	\$334,000		Professional Dev.: Admin 50%	\$17,500
Technology Hardware	\$125,000		Public Relations	\$16,000
Field Trips	\$121,340		HS Athletics - Swim withdrawn (\$15,000)	\$0
Outside Contract Support	\$75,000		COA Donation withdrawn (\$12,000)	\$0
Furniture - Districtwide	\$65,950		Equipment - Districtwide	\$10,000
Solar Credits: Electricity	\$50,000		Playground Repairs	\$10,000
Athletics - Cole withdrawn (\$32,760)	\$0		Catering	\$5,000
Legal Expense Reduction	\$30,000		Athletics Travel	\$1,000
Supplies (reduction)	\$32,099		Graduation Supplies - Cole	\$1,000
			<b>Total</b>	<b>-\$893,889.00</b>

Modifications from Previous Meeting:

**Restore** Cole Athletics, HS Athletics Swim Team and COA Donation - \$59,760.00

## Proposed Changes to Personnel for FY 26

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Description	Proposed changes FTE to Local Budget	Cost (including Benefits)	Comments
New hires at lower step due to retirements	3.0 FTE	-\$157,131	
Reduce (Teacher) Library Media Specialist	1.0 FTE	-\$122,022	Due to retirement
Reduce Art Teacher EGHS	1.0 FTE	-\$133,691	Reduction due to Programmatic Changes
K-Teacher	1.0 FTE	-\$129,568	Reduced Enrollment
PK Teacher	1.0 FTE	-\$115,895	Reduced Enrollment
Reduce Districtwide Paras	4.0 FTE	-\$192,392	Enrollment
Remove Assistant Director Special Education	1.0 FTE	-\$134,769	Do not fill
MTSS Coordinator	0.3 FTE	-\$47,196	Grant funding
Increase .7 Speech Therapist to a 1.0 FTE	0.3 FTE	\$34,725	Due to increase in students needs
<b>Total</b>		<b>-\$997,939</b>	

Modifications from Previous Meeting:

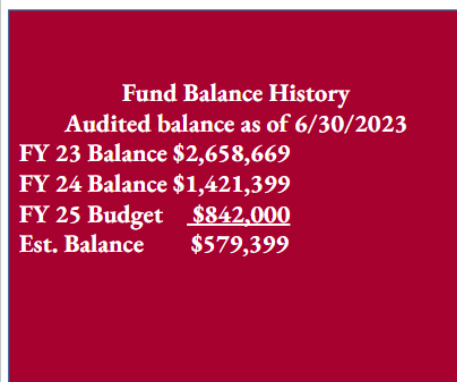
**Restore** 1.0 FTE Library Media Specialist - \$111,878 and move 0.3 FTE MTSS Coordinator - \$47,196 to a grant for funding

## FY 26 Final Budget Expense Totals

\$49,975,330 (decrease of \$6,386 from FY 25)

## EGPS Fund Balance

These amounts are reflective of totals before \$90,000 of fund balance is put into the FY 26 budget.



A red rectangular box containing white text. The text is centered and reads: 'Fund Balance History', 'Audited balance as of 6/30/2023', 'FY 23 Balance \$2,658,669', 'FY 24 Balance \$1,421,399', 'FY 25 Budget \$842,000', and 'Est. Balance \$579,399'.

Fund Balance History	
Audited balance as of 6/30/2023	
FY 23 Balance	\$2,658,669
FY 24 Balance	\$1,421,399
FY 25 Budget	<u>\$842,000</u>
Est. Balance	\$579,399

## Federal Grants to Supplement Our Educational Programs in FY 26

Title I	\$92,671.41
Title II	\$99,089.73
IDEA Part B	\$688,529.18
IDEA PK	\$15,114.13
CTE	\$42,030

## Personnel Budget FY 26 Overview

- ★ Proposed budget FY 26 Salaries – \$28,159,313 benefits - \$10,587,432
- ★ EGEA Teachers - step rolls 1-9
  - ◆ Step increase Salaries: \$362,459, Benefits: \$69,411
  - ◆ Step 10 increase Salaries: \$169,137 Benefits: \$32,390 projected minimum
  - ◆ EGEA ESP NEARI 3% Salaries: \$74,635, Benefits: \$10,322
  - ◆ EG Custodians/Maintenance NEARI 3% Salaries: \$28,152, Benefits: \$3,893
  - ◆ Administration and Support Staff 1% plus contractual - Salaries: \$37,610 benefits increase \$5,828
  - ◆ Pension rate ERS: FY 25 - 15.54 % to FY 26 - 15.10%
  - ◆ Pension rate MERS: FY 25 - 4.90% to FY 26 - 5.18%
  - ◆ Health Insurance - 11.04.% increase
  - ◆ Dental Insurance - 3.94 % decrease
- ★ Approved budget FY 25 Salaries – \$28,459,857 and Benefits \$10,072,577

- ★ FY 25 to FY 26 decrease/increase – Salaries: -\$300,544 Benefits: \$514,855

### Public Comment

*Mr. Mark Schwager, Town Council President*

Mr. Schwager said that the budget is challenged with the reduction in state aid which weighs heavily on school committee members.

*Mr. Andrew Nota, Town Manager*

Mr. Nota said that he intends to recommend a 4% increase in the school budget to the Town Council.

- Mr. Nota pointed out that communities that are spending more per pupil than East Greenwich are getting much of their funding from the state, not from their community.
- Mr. Nota said that it is important to follow the process and negotiate in private. It is up to the School Committee to then interact with the Town on the budget.
- As the Town Council finishes the budget process, there will still be unanswered questions regarding state funding.
- Sustainable solutions are a challenge due to variability.
- The average increase to the schools over six years is \$1 million. With additional revenues, that increase is \$1.7 million.
- In addition to the 4% increase to the school's operating budget, the Town is committing \$2 million for debt service for the school construction bond. A debt service reserve has been created to try to offset the cost to the taxpayers.
- There is \$800,000 in the Town budget that are direct school expenses.

Ms. Larsen said that despite East Greenwich's low per pupil spending, it is still a stellar district due to our teachers.

Ms. Cecil-Karb pointed out that the schools are part of the town. They should be viewed as one, not two and the Town needs to do more to support the schools.

Dr. Quinn addressed the expenses paid by the Town which are not captured in UCOA. RIDE has requested a list of items that should be captured in UCOA which would lead to a better reflection of true cost.

## Public Comment

*Ms. Lisa Offlier, Cole Art Teacher*

Ms. Offlier addressed the potential program cuts to art and library. She and her students discuss the importance of reading. Ms. Offlier shared reflections from her students about the importance of art and reading. Art programs assist in social-emotional health.

*Ms. Donna McPhee, EGPS Teacher & EGEA President*

Ms. McPhee urged the School Committee and the community to push back on the Town Council's consistent underfunding of schools. She asserted that school districts are supposed to be funded locally. The deficits created by the Town over the years have not been made up. She urged the Town Council to work on local solutions.

- Increase the 4% cap and send a waiver request to the General Assembly
- Use town fund balance to make up the revenue reductions in state aid
- School committees have been forced to spend down fund balance

*Mr. Chris Boie, Cole Teacher*

Mr. Boie said that despite the promise of a 4% increase from the Town, there is still 20 years of underfunding. Despite the changes in the budget shown tonight, there are still things that need to be brought back into the budget. Mr. Boie asked that EG teachers be paid the same as the average RI teacher. The District's test scores and students are well above average.

*Ms. Terri Garno, EGPS Teacher*

Ms. Garno urged the School Committee to rebuke the Town Council's pattern of underfunding our schools. Schools are forced to do more with less every year. The Town Council has the power to exceed the 4% cap with a request to the General Assembly. Our students deserve fully funded schools.

*Ms. Allie Bryer, EGPS Teacher*

Ms. Bryer urged the School Committee to push back against the Town's underfunding of the schools. The Town should use its fund balance to manage the gap in state aid. This is a time for all to work together through these challenging times. Long term solutions for fully funding schools should be found



*Ms Beth Gorter, Hanaford Library Media Specialist*

Ms. Gorter urged that the School Committee ask the Town to fully fund the schools. “All Means All” means that we are fully committed to funding all students. That means no more cuts to essential programs or asking teachers to do more with few resources. The Town Council has the ability to fully fund the schools.

*Ms. Caryn Corenthel, Town Council Member*

Ms. Corenthel stated that budgets need to align with core curriculum in order to enhance the education of students. Actual numbers identify when spending falls below or exceeds the budget. Last year the Town provided a 4% increase. The previous year the Town gave a 3% increase and urged the school to use its fund balance. The Town is going to the General Assembly to exceed the 4% cap in order to start paying the school construction bond.

*Mr. Greg DeCubellis, EGPS Teacher*

Mr. DeCubellis said that there is an immediate opportunity for the Town to take action by asking for a tax increase waiver from the General Assembly. This will ensure that the schools receive the resources needed.

*Ms. JoAnne Leach, EGPS Teacher*

Ms. Leach said that there are budget struggles year after year. While she appreciates the School Committee’s efforts, good choices are necessary. She said that a budget should not be approved that doesn’t fund teachers and programs.

*Ms. Lisa Reed, Cole Teacher*

Ms. Reed responded to Mr. Nota’s instruction to teachers to “stay in their lane”. Most of society does not truly know about the profession of teaching. They may only have surface level knowledge. Students receive tiers of support. Ms. Reed shared the increased expectations of teachers. Teachers know how to make a difference but need help.

*Ms. Kat Felkner, EGPS Occupational Therapist*

Ms. Felkner thanked the School Committee for accepting the challenge of their post. She also thanked Mrs. Meyer and Mr. Marcaccio for their dedication. Ms. Felkner spoke of the importance of early intervention and offered that a more direct use of funds would be the hiring of interventionists. She cautioned that 15 students in a Pre-K class is potentially too many. The needs of the students should be considered instead of the number of students. She asked for clarification on the cuts of the number of paraprofessionals.

*Ms. Cailin Healey, Eldredge & Hanaford Art Teacher*

Ms. Healey thanked teachers and parents for their support of her. The proposed cut to the high school art position would be a big loss to the high school. Ms. Healey is of the belief that a cut of a high school art teacher would lead to her being laid off. She discussed the relationship she has with her students.

*Ms. Maura Cotoia, EGPS Teacher*

Ms. Cotoia said that she is concerned about the cuts to the paraprofessional positions. Those cuts most affect special education students who need support. More falls on the teachers. Ms. Cotoia stated that the special education audit said that there was a need for more paraprofessionals. She cautioned that teachers will leave this district if they are not appreciated or paid more.

*Mr. Paul Dembinski, EGPS Parent via Zoom*

Mr. Dembinski inquired about the amount paid for out of district services. This amount represents a sizable majority of the budget gap. He asked for an analysis of these “other services” and what can be done to service students in the district.

Mrs. Baker replied that these “other services” include tuitions for

- \*CTE
- \*Out of district special education students
- \*Out of district transition programs
- \*Charter schools
- \*Dual enrollment programs at CCRI and NEIT

Attorney Lombardo explained that the District is required by state law to pay a per pupil fee for East Greenwich students who attend out of district charter schools and CTE

programs. Additionally, the District must pay for the educational portion of a residential placement by DCFY.

Attorney Lombardo further explained that in the case of students in out of district placements, the District may be unable to provide a free and appropriate education. Statistically, East Greenwich has a low percentage of students in this category. However the number of students needing services has increased astronomically post covid, the costs of programs have increased significantly and the variety of student needs across the state and country have really gone up. There may not be enough students with the same profile to create a whole class and it is determined that an out of district placement is better for the student and more cost efficient. Out of district placement decisions are carefully made by the team in accordance with federal law. Students are to be placed in the least restrictive environment.

Dr. Quinn pointed out that the RIDE 2023 Fiscal Accountability Report shows that East Greenwich has amongst the lowest cost in the state for these services.

#### Public Comment

*Ms. Leslie Lee, EGHS Teacher*

Ms. Lee said that Ms. Healey's art classes bring light and creativity to the schools. She worries about the children of East Greenwich who will lose such an inspirational teacher.

*Ms. Emma Giannelli, EGPS Paraprofessional*

Ms. Giannelli spoke about the program started by Ms. Healey and her special attention to the needs of special education students.

*Hanaford Paraprofessional*

Ms. Healey was born to teach. She is enthusiastic and devoted to her job.

*Ms. Lisa Rego, EGPS Teacher*

Ms. Rego said that Ms. Healey has brought artwork into Hanaford. Students who may struggle in reading, writing and math, shine in art class. Art has a place in our schools and should be funded. Ms. Rego also spoke about the importance of paraprofessionals.

*Ms. Mary Samareno, EGPS Parent*

Ms. Samareno spoke in favor of Ms. Healey. As a parent and taxpayer, she expressed her appreciation for the work done on the budget. These cuts will have lasting consequences. The community is failing to allocate its resources properly. Ms. Samareno advocated for the Town to fully fund the schools.

*Ms. Niza Vinas, EG News*

Ms. Vinas inquired about the Interim Superintendent's contract.

Ms. Powell said that she feels there is additional work to be done on the budget. There is work being done collaboratively with the Town Council. She is looking to schedule an additional meeting next Tuesday. Ms. Powell would like to hold off on voting on the budget until next week. Negotiations just began with the teachers union and the school committee has to be updated.

Ms. Cecil-Karb said that it makes sense to keep working on the budget.

Mr. Wright said that revenue uncertainty will linger beyond the submission of the budget.

Mr. Hangan asked about the increase to the electric budget line item. Mrs. Baker said that this is due to a solar credit agreement that has not yet come online. The company is paying a penalty until the program comes online.

Mr. Munoz thanked the teachers who came and spoke this evening. They are assets to the Town. The Town Council has the ability to close this relatively small gap.

Dr. Quinn said that it is a good idea to wait on the budget vote. He thanked the Town Manager and Town Council members for attending this evening. Dr. Quinn reiterated that people move to East Greenwich for the schools.

Ms. Cecil-Karb pointed out that things were taken out of the budget that have not yet been discussed for restoration. The facilities budget continues to be cut to the detriment of the buildings.

Mr. Wright also complimented the strong working relationship with the Town Council. The Town has pledged additional funds to the schools while the state has decreased its funding.

Attorney Lombardo explained that the Town is asking for a waiver from the General Assembly on the 4% cap for the town tax levy. There would need to be an additional waiver in order for the schools to receive more than a 4% increase.

Ms. Powell said that any request over 4% from the School Committee would also require a waiver. She asserted that a drastic decrease in state funding meets the criteria for a waiver.

Attorney Lombardo explained that specific one time expenditures can be paid by the Town and not count towards the maintenance of effort.

## **VII. Policies (Second Read)**

### **A. Policy # 2200 Brand Asset Protection (new)**

*On a motion by Mr. Munoz, seconded by Ms. Larsen, the Committee voted 7-0 to approve the policy.*

## **VI. Adjournment**

*On a motion by Mr. Hangan, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Committee voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 pm.*

Respectfully submitted,

Amy J. Healey  
School Committee Clerk

*Approved 4-8-25*