

EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EASTON, MA

EASTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Monday, July 11, 2022

Minutes of the Virtual School Committee Meeting, July 11, 2022, Virtual Meeting via Zoom convened at 4:01 p.m. Present by roll call: Michelle Durrance, Jacqueline Weisman, Nancy De Luca, Caroline O'Neill, and Jennifer Starr.

Also in Attendance:

Lynn Souza, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Cabral and School Committee Secretary; and Joe Boerman, ECAT.

Call Meeting to Order:

Chair Durrance called the meeting to order by stating that in keeping with an act relative to extending certain Covid-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency, signed into law by Governor Baker on February 12, 2022, the meeting will be conducted remotely over Zoom. Attendance by Board members will be remote and remote attendance shall count toward quorum. The meeting will be broadcast live on FaceBook and recorded on ECAT. To use zoom you will need to download the Zoom application or use the link on the agenda.

Discussion and Vote to Approve Policy Public Comment at School Committee Meetings File BEDH (second reading):

Ms. Weisman said she spoke with the Attorney and shared the information the Attorney provided for the Policy File BEDH. She suggested going over each paragraph of the policy. The Committee reviewed each paragraph and the following are the changes.

Beginning with the first paragraph she noted that no changes were made. In the second paragraph the word "to" was changed to "so" to read: *"The School Committee desires citizens of the district to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of the Easton Public Schools."* The third paragraph was changed from "wish" to "would like" to read: *"In order that all citizens who would like to be heard before the Committee have a chance to do so and to ensure the ability of the Committee to conduct the district's business in an orderly manner, the following following rules and procedures are adopted."* The Committee discussed the rules and procedures. Ms. Weisman said that the Attorney wanted to remind everyone of a few things. She noted that by law, the School Committee does not have to have a Public Comment or take questions at School Committee meetings; however, Public Comment is to give the public an opportunity to be heard on matters within the purview of the School Committee but not necessarily for the Committee to respond or get into a debate with people. She continued that the only person who can answer a question is the Superintendent because most likely that question is going to be on operational matters. In addition, the School Committee speaks as a group and not one of them can make a decision without a vote from all of them and that the School Committee can only speak to matters that they have to vote on. She noted that the Chair of the School Committee can remind the person who made the comment or question that any questions or comments pertaining to operational matters that are not within the purview of the School Committee and can be addressed to the Administration during business hours. She said that the Committee can continue to run the meetings as they have with questions going to Dr. Cabral and Ms. Pruitt; however, the Attorney just wanted to remind the Committee of those facts and that the School Committee meetings are to do the business of the School Committee. Ms. Weisman said that the Attorney also thought it would be a good idea to set a time limit for the Public Commrny especially if they expect that a certain topic may have a larger

than normal attendance. She also noted that it would be a good idea to let the public know at the onset of the meeting either by listing it on the agenda or stating at the beginning of the meeting the maximum time limit for Public Comment and at the end of the time limit there would be an opportunity for Public Comment at the next scheduled School Committee meeting. It was discussed what would happen if not everyone was able to speak during the allotted time of Public Comment so that if it was an operational matter they could contact the administration or email the School Committee. The Committee continued to review the rules and procedures. Ms. Weisman read number 3 and said the suggestion was to remove the sentence *“The Chair may permit extension of this time limit.”* Ms. Weisman referenced the change in the last sentence of number 3: *“Speakers must notify the School Committee Chair through Central Office via telephone or email at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting if they wish to request an extension of time for one of these reasons.”* She noted that the change was *“through Central Office via telephone or email”*. Ms. Weisman reviewed number 5 regarding discussion of staff members or students during Public Comment and suggested the following: *“Names of individuals are not relevant to policy development, which is what is within the jurisdiction of the School Committee. Specifics should be addressed to the administration. This meeting is just to discuss the business of the School Committee.”* She noted that a person could potentially stand up and talk about a staff member or a student and the School Committee can’t prevent people from saying names and the School Committee members cannot say the names, but just try to curtail it by repeating the jurisdiction of the School Committee. Chair Durrance had asked if she could say a statement in the beginning of the meeting conveying the message that it is a School Committee meeting to discuss the business of the School Committee and list the items that the School Committee has jurisdiction over. Ms. Weisman noted that the Attorney said that the School Committee meetings are not an open forum, the main focus for the School Committee is to get their work done and they want people to come and listen and have a voice when they have something to say. It was suggested that if a major issue came up the Committee could hold a Public Forum and it would just focus on the item of concern. The Committee suggested having the policy posted publicly. Chair Durrance said she could post the link to this meeting on Social Meeting.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee approved the Public Comment at School Committee Meetings policy BEDH with noted edits.

Adjournment:

On a motion by Ms. Weisman, seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Minutes Recorded by,
Lynn Souza

Respectfully submitted,

Chair Michelle Durrance
Secretary