

EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
EASTON, MA

EASTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, September 1, 2022

**Minutes of the Virtual School Committee Meeting, September 1, 2022**, Virtual Meeting via Zoom convened at 5:01 p.m. Present by roll call: Michelle Durrance, Jennifer Starr, Jacqueline Weisman, Nancy De Luca, and Caroline O'Neill.

Also in Attendance:

Crissy Pruitt, Assistant Superintendent; 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, 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. The meeting will be open to the public and will take questions

**Executive Session: Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a) 3 To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining for Unit B and Paraprofessional Unit and Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 (a) 7 - To Comply with Open Meeting Law to Review Minutes of Prior Executive Session 5/12/2022, 6/23/2022:**

Chair Durrance made a motion to enter into the Executive Session and will return to Open Session for the purpose of discussion of strategy with respect to Bargaining with Unit B and the Paraprofessional Unit and to comply with Open Meeting Law to review minutes of prior Executive Session and stated that, in her opinion, having this discussion in public would be detrimental to the bargaining position of the School Committee. Ms. Starr seconded the motion, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee entered into the Executive Session at 5:03 p.m.

**Return to Open Session:**

The Committee returned to Open Session at 5:22 p.m.

**Minutes: Executive Session 5/12/2022, 6/23/2022:**

On a motion by Chair Durrance seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee tabled the Executive Session minutes of 5/12/2022 and 6/23/2022 pending review by counsel.

**Vote to Appoint School Committee Representative for the Finance Director Interviews:**

Ms. Pruitt stated that the Business Director, Marilyn Gordon has submitted her intent to retire in October and the district is looking to hire someone as soon as possible. She asked for a representative of the Committee to attend the interviews for a new Finance Director.

A discussion ensued and Ms. Starr agreed to be the School Committee's representative and Ms. O'Neill as the alternate.

On a motion by Chair Durrance, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote of 5-0 the Committee nominated Jen Starr as the School Committee representative for the Finance Director interviews with Caroline O'Neill as the alternate.

**Update on Resource Officer:**

On a motion by Chair Durrance, seconded by Ms. De Luca, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee tabled the Update on Resource Officer agenda item to the next meeting.

**Personnel Changes: Retirement - Administrative Assistant to the Director of Operations:**

Ms. Pruitt announced that Jodi Allen, Administrative Assistant to the Director of Operations, retired effective July 21, 2022 after 20 years in the district. She said Ms. Allen was hired in 2002 to work in the Business Office at Central Administration as an Accounts Payable/Receivable clerk; in 2013 she transferred to fill the role of Administrative Assistant to the Director of Operations. Over the years Ms. Allen also served as the Administrative Assistant to the Board of Directors for FEEE (Foundation for Excellence in Education in Easton). She said that Ms. Allen was like sunshine as you entered the office at Central Administration and that she will be greatly missed.

Chair Durrance read Ms. Allen's retirement letter.

Committee members expressed their appreciation for Ms. Allen. They thanked her for her service to the district and said she will be missed.

On a motion by Ms. O'Neill, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee accepted Jodi Allen's retirement letter with very sincere regret.

**COVID Update:**

Ms. Pruitt said that she didn't have an update and asked if COVID Update should be kept on the agendas. A member suggested keeping it on the agenda as there has been an increase in COVID cases seen at colleges.

**Public Comment:**

None.

**Superintendent's Notes:**

None.

**Assistant Superintendent's Notes:**

Ms. Pruitt shared some news about the opening of school. She said the staff returned on Tuesday and students on Wednesday and that it was a wonderful opening. She said she was at the middle school first thing in the morning due to the change in traffic flow. She said everyone was smiling and it was nice to see the collaboration between the parents understanding the students trying to find their way through the parking lot as well as the staff helping and that the crossing guards were amazing. Ms. Pruitt shared a specific request from the middle school asking parents not to come to school too early because it will cause a backup for people getting in and out of the parking lot. She asked families to be patient with the traffic changes due to the building project. She said she walked through the schools and it was fun to see the kids back and said in talking with someone recently, they said that it seemed like things were getting back to "normal" but acknowledged what the district went through due to COVID and that it was a new normal. She said a lot was learned through the process over the past few years and moving forward, she felt that the district gained experience and a great outlook on things. She said the students have definitely learned to persevere and commended the staff, families, and students for a great day. Ms. Pruitt discussed the changes with food service and purchasing meals. She said Massachusetts is one of the few states that have passed free meals for students this school year; however, last year it was a federally funded program and almost everything was

at no cost. She said communication will be going out to families regarding the change, but provided an overview of what to expect. Ms. Pruitt noted that if a student purchases a meal with milk, the milk is free but if the student purchases just a milk it will be \$.65 cents. She said they will encourage students to take 3 things that are considered a meal such as an apple, bag of carrots, along with a milk and that only 1 meal is free, 1 breakfast meal and 1 lunch meal. If the student goes back up for a second meal they will have to pay.

Ms. Pruitt said that Chris Getchell and Bryan Aries presented at the Mass School Administrators Association (MSAA) over the summer to their colleagues. They submitted a proposal that was accepted about creating a school constitution and followed up with positive behavioral support strategies. She said she was able to attend and that she was so proud of them. They shared their practices at Richardson Olmsted School and how they align to the district vision and core values. The audience was very engaged and Mr. Getchell and Mr. Aries now has a network of colleagues. Ms. Pruitt added that other teachers in the district will be presenting at other conferences and it is nice to hear that the district's experts are going out to share their experiences in Easton.

### **School Committee Notes:**

Ms. O'Neill expressed her appreciation for School Committee members being invited to district wide portions of the opening day activities and that this year she felt particularly uplifted. She said seeing the enormous energy and enthusiasm of all the teachers in one room together and the warmth and genuine joy with which everyone seemed to be greeting each other. She noted that Dr. Cabral did a very comprehensive review of the new initiatives and other things going on in the district and her biggest take away was the feeling of being completely uplifted by the energy.

Ms. Pruitt added that Theresa Skinner, Director of Student Services spearheaded "operation backpack." She said that Cory Ahonen, Deputy Director of Health and Community Services in Easton was instrumental in getting the backpacks and in collaboration with Mr. Ahonen and Ms. Skinner, an email went out to all families and they have handed out over 100 free backpacks with supplies to families in Easton. She gave kudos to Ms. Skinner and her team and thanked Mr. Ahonen for his support.

Ms. De Luca said that opening day was great and she echoed Ms. O'Neill's views and added that Ms. Starr did a great job with her speech. She said the District Newsletter was very informative and listed places to go for information. She reminded everyone that Tuesday is the state primary day to go vote at Oliver Ames High School. Ms. De Luca passed along a message from Hazel Varella and that the community calendars will be available in about 2 weeks and that the topic this year will be Easton and Easton Public Schools. The cover will be the Blanche A. Ames Elementary School and surrounding the picture of the new school will be all the current and previous schools in town. She added that she and Ms. O'Neill had requested to write articles for the calendar by Hazel Varella. She thanked everyone at Easton Public Schools and added that it is a great place to work and attend school.

Ms. Starr said that opening day was great and echoed Ms. O'Neill and Ms. De Luca's comments about the energy in the room and seeing the people outside hugging, high-fiving, and laughing was nice to see and reflected on the strong sense of community that the district has amongst the staff. She said that voting will be from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm and noted that the parking lots will have some restrictions and for students who will typically drive to school may want to be dropped off, carpool if allowed to have passengers in their car, or take the bus if they are eligible. She added that she attended training to be a poll worker and so far there have been 1,000 votes already cast by mail.

Chair Durrance said that she has had some people reach out to her stating that they did not receive the District Newsletter and who should they contact.

Ms. Pruitt responded that they should contact the schools and confirm their email address is correct with the schools.

Ms. O'Neill noted that it has been mentioned a number of times that sometimes the emails go into the Spam folder and that the district has tried to remind parents to check their Spam.

Chair Durrance said the next scheduled meeting will take place on September 15, 2022 at 5:00.

**Adjournment:**

On a motion by Chair Durrance, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Souza  
Secretary