

EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EASTON, MA

EASTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, January 19, 2023

Minutes of the Virtual School Committee Meeting, January 19, 2023 Virtual Meeting via Zoom convened at 5:00 p.m. Present by roll call: Michelle Durrance, Jennifer Starr, Caroline O'Neill, Jacqueline Weisman, and Nancy De Luca.

Also in Attendance:

Dr. Lisha Cabral, Superintendent; 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. The meeting was open to the public and the Committee will take questions by the chat feature; full name and address is needed. The Committee will not read questions that have already been answered. To use zoom you will need to download the Zoom application or use the link on the agenda.

Minutes: 12/15/2022, Executive 12/15/2022:

On a motion by Ms. Starr, seconded by Ms. De Luca, with a roll call vote of 4-0, *O'Neill - yes, Durrance - yes, De Luca - yes, Starr - yes*, the Committee approved the minutes of 12/15/2022.

On a motion by Ms. Starr, seconded by Ms. O'Neill, with a roll call vote of 4-0, *O'Neill - yes, Durrance - yes, De Luca - yes, Starr - yes*, the Committee approved the Executive Session minutes of 12/15/2022 but not to be released.

Vote to Approve Out of State Trip:

Dr. Cabral introduced Matthew Huberman, Math Teacher and Drama Club Advisor at Oliver Ames High School.

Mr. Huberman presented his proposal to take students grade levels 9 through 12 to the Providence Performing Arts Center in Providence Rhode Island on March 24, 2023 to view a performance of "Hadestown". He noted that the cost of the trip for students would be \$125.00.

Ms. O'Neill asked if there were any options for students who were not able to afford the cost.

Mr. Huberman responded that when he budgeted the trip, he set up dues for students and throughout the course of the year the students had the opportunity to fundraise the entire amount. He said every student had the ability, some had car washes or sold candy.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 4-0, *O'Neill - yes, Durrance - yes, De Luca - yes, Starr - yes*, the Committee approved the out of state trip to see Hadestown on March 24, 2023 at the Providence Performing Arts Center in Providence Rhode Island.

Personnel Change - Retirement: Special Education Teacher RO:

Dr. Cabral announced the retirement of RO Special Education Teacher, Rosemarie Valante effective June 30, 2023. She wished Ms. Valante well and that her leaving is a loss to the district.

Chair Durrance read Ms. Valente's retirement letter.

Ms. De Luca said she had the privilege of working with Rose when she was a teacher herself and that Rose has a perfect temperament to work with the students and that she is a wonderful woman. She wished her good luck and said she will be missed.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 4-0, *O'Neill - yes, Durrance - yes, De Luca - yes, Starr - yes*, the Committee accepted the retirement of Rosemarie Valante with regret.

Annual Honey Dew Donuts "Dew Gooder Award":

Dr. Cabral announced that Marilyn "Mal" Cunha, Grade 4 Teacher at Richardson Olmsted School has been awarded the Honey Dew Donuts "Dew Gooder Award." Dr. Cabral said that there is a nice quote in the School Committee's packet from the parent who nominated Ms. Cunha. She noted that Ms. Cunha was 1 of 5 recipients to receive this award. Each recipient received \$2,500 along with an additional \$2,500 to their charity of choice. Dr. Cabral added that Ms. Cunha has been very involved working with the kindness initiative as well as with the Menard Family and many others. She wanted to recognize this important accomplishment for Ms. Cunha and that Ms. Cunha is tremendously humble and was not in attendance.

Ms. De Luca said that her whole family spent the week voting and they all got the word out to family and friends. She said Mal definitely deserves this and she is so proud of her. She noted the love that Mal had for Linley and the Menard family. She added that Mal is an amazing sister and that it was so great that she was one of the winners.

Jacqueline Weisman joined the meeting at 5:14 p.m.

Ms. O'Neill said that she has known Marilyn Cunha for many years and from a distance and she's been able to observe her and always thought she was one of the warmest, most thoughtful teachers and she was really delighted to be able to vote for her. She extended her congratulations

Move to BA Update:

Dr. Cabral said that the move is ongoing. She spoke of some of the quirks that go along with opening a new building, especially a state of the arts facility. She said there have been times when the lights shut off every 15 minutes and you have to get up to turn them back on. She noted that the lights are programmed by a computer to save energy. She said that the district is exceedingly grateful, excited and thrilled and that the staff has been tremendous. She noted that they continue to put in a ton of time getting their classrooms ready. Dr. Cabral said that the completion of the fields and parking lot is expected to be in April and that the project is on time and under budget. The next phase is the demolition of the Parkview School then the fields. She noted that the fields need to have 2 complete growing seasons before they can be used. She spoke of the traffic challenges specifically around student pick up.

Ms. O'Neill said that a parent expressed concern to her about how she was not allowed to get out of her car to help her kindergartener get out at drop off.

Ms. Pruitt noted that she actually observed parents assisting their children this week getting out of the vehicles at drop off and suggested the parent reach out to the building principal.

Dr. Cabral added that it is not true that parents are not allowed to get out of their vehicle to help their children.

Ms. Weisman said that she is working with ECAT to make a videotape of the new school to send out to people to get a sense of where we are at and what is left to get done.

Ms. Pruitt expressed her gratitude to the community for allowing the Central Office to be included in the new school building. She said it has been incredibly rewarding to be in a school building and seeing the children.

January 1st Enrollment:

Dr. Cabral provided an update on the enrollment figures from January 1, 2023. She noted that this is a mid year report similar to the state required October 1st report that is provided to the Committee in October. The figures can capture students who begin the school year at a vocational or private school but decide to switch back to Easton. She noted that it shows an increase of about 20 students from October to January. She added that the PreSchool students are eligible as soon as they turn 3 years old; therefore, they can age into the program at any time of the year.

2023-2024 School Calendar - First Reading:

Ms. Pruitt presented 3 different versions for the 2023-2024 School Calendar.

- Draft 1
 - First day for staff - August 29th
 - First day for grades 1-12 - August 30th
 - First day for kindergarten - September 1st
 - First day for PreSchool - September 6th
 - Last day for school for Kindergarten and PK - June 5th
 - Last day for school - June 11th (June 18th with 5 snow days)
 - 2 full day Professional Development - October 6th and January 12th
- Draft 2
 - First day for staff - August 30th
 - First day for grades 1-12 - August 31st
 - First day for kindergarten - September 5th
 - First day for PreSchool - September 7th
 - Last day for school for Kindergarten and PK - June 6th
 - Last day for school - June 12th (June 20th with 5 snow days)
 - 2 full day Professional Development - October 6th and January 12th
- Draft 3
 - First day for staff - September 1st
 - First day for grades 1-12 - September 5th
 - First day for kindergarten - September 7th
 - First day for PreSchool - September 11th
 - Last day for school for Kindergarten and PK - June 10th
 - Last day for school - June 14th (June 24th with 5 snow days)
 - 2 full day Professional Development - October 6th and January 12th

A discussion took place and the Committee agreed to put Draft 1 and Draft 2 forward to the next meeting for a second reading and potential vote.

Public Comment:

Anne Sullivan, 65 Summer Street, "As one of the walkers who goes to BA every day, there has not been a crossing guard there yet. Crossing in front of the buses entering and cars leaving is so dangerous. Can we exit at the gym instead until the sidewalk in front of administration is done?"

Dr. Cabral responded that she had seen a crossing guard there yesterday and that walkers should be leaving at the same time. She said that she saw him walk everyone over so she was not sure why that would happen and suggested the parent reach out to the principal to make sure that all the children are leaving at the same time. She noted that they can't leave from the gymnasium because they have several hundred children there and don't have anyone to walk and to be with the children there. She said that the crossing guard actually goes to Sheridan. She said he starts at the school and walks over to Sheridan with the families.

Anne Sullivan, 65 Summer Street, "There is a guard at Sheridan. He was not at the school today."

Ms. Pruitt said that they will look into what happened.

Superintendent Notes:

Dr. Cabral said that she has been having weekly meetings with School Resource Officer Aker and that they are going well and having his role as a liaison to let them know what has been happening in the community has been wonderful. She spoke about the CPA (Community Preservation Act) application to the CPC (Community Preservation Committee) for the 2 projects, the RO playground and the tennis courts. She said she worked with the team to prioritize those and the tennis courts take priority as it affects the district's ability to practice and to hold MIAA contests in the Hockomock league. She noted that the design incorporates pickle ball courts and they anticipate they would be used extensively by the community. The 3rd and 4th priorities would be the 2 stages of the north and south RO playgrounds. Dr. Cabral said the north playground bid came in at \$2.4 million and the south playground came in at \$2.1 million. She noted that the district did ask for 1 million from the CPA for the north playground and were able to get a grant for \$200,000 in earmarked funds that Senator Timilty advocated for Easton on our behalf, \$50,000, and the RO PAC has committed to \$35,000; therefore, the district will be about \$1 million short for the north playground. The project will be going out to bid in the next couple of weeks and hopes to work on some kind of fundraising to go towards the project. Dr. Cabral said that the courts came in at \$1.2 million and now has increased to \$1.6 million and was able to get a \$200,000 grant; however, she was advised to apply for the full \$1.6 million and due to the time when it was sent in, it hadn't been approved. She said a meeting with the CPC was scheduled but had to get rescheduled because looking at their agenda they would not have been able to get to the schools.

Ms. Weisman asked for the Committee to be informed of the date of the rescheduled meeting with the CPC.

Assistant Superintendent Notes:

Ms. Pruitt said over the past year they have been in search of a new literacy program and that Reading Street, which the district has used for the past 8 to 10 years, is no longer being published. She said they began the search with a Literacy Adoption Committee which consisted of 20 volunteers in grades k through 6 including teachers, special education educators, reading specialists, reading coaches, and administrators. They were able to look and vet out programs and came up with 2 programs to pilot; EL by Open Up Resources and Wit and Wisdom by Great Minds. She noted that there is a component to Great Minds called Geodes which is a compliment to the foundational reading skills that the district already has called Foundations. Foundations were adopted a few years ago and they didn't want to part with that. Ms. Pruitt reminded everyone that throughout

the process they had a lot of professional development with the Literacy Adoption Committee as well as the Literacy Pilot Committee which consisted of another 20 staff members who volunteered on the science of reading. She said they took the pros and cons of both programs and labeled the programs A and B so that they were not being judged by name and it was voted that Wit and Wisdom would be the new literacy program along with Geodes, which goes with the program. She gave kudos to Ann Weintrob, Director of Curriculum for doing a phenomenal job. Ms. Pruitt said that to prepare for full implementation next school year; unfortunately, teachers will be getting pulled out of classrooms for professional development on the program. She noted that they had to look at kindergarten differently as they are committed to the importance of play and learning through play and that there wasn't enough of that in either of the programs for that grade level; therefore, Ann Weintrob, the kindergarten pilot teachers, Sam Cederbaum, Erin Finn, and herself will be looking into that to ensure that it runs smoothly for the kindergarten teachers. Lastly 6th grade has confinements with scheduling, and Wit and Wisdom is written for 90 minute blocks and 6th grade middle school schedule does not have 90 minutes for that type of instruction; however, after speaking with her colleagues in the Commonwealth some have implemented Wit and Wisdom at the middle school level so they will be drawing from them. She commended the team for their thoughtfulness, their seriousness, and the dedication to choose what is best for all students.

Ms. Starr thanked Ms. Pruitt for all her work and suggested that it may be of interest to present the new program to the SEPAC at one of their meetings.

Ms. Pruitt asked if the Committee could schedule a quick workshop next week as she would like to present the contract for the purchase of the materials for the remainder of the year to the Committee for their vote as the cost will be a little under \$75,000.

Dr. Cabral noted that grant funds have already been put aside for this purchase.

The Committee decided to schedule a workshop on Tuesday, January 24th at 4:00 p.m.

School Committee Notes:

Ms. O'Neill thanked Ms. Starr for mentioning that it was important for the SEPAC to be aware of the new literacy program and its advantages. She also said that Ms. Pruitt is one of the most enthusiastic, uplifting people and that the district was lucky to have her as she presents these new initiatives with incredible enthusiasm.

Ms. De Luca thanked everyone who worked on getting Blanche Ames open and thanked Dr. Cabral for the update. She thanked everyone who voted for Mal and said that she was so happy she won. She added that tomorrow is the last day for midterms and she hoped everyone did well.

Ms. Starr said that the Show Choir competed in their first big competition of the year, The Mill City Show Choir Competition and they took home a silver medal. She congratulated them on a great performance. The Special Education PAC has their next support group meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 1st, more information can be found on the SEPAC FaceBook page. She noted that any parent who has children that receive special education services or are curious about them, they do welcome folks to that page and it is a great way to ask questions and get resources. Ms. Starr said that they share a lot of programs that are available locally, adaptive sports, art camps, workshops through the Brockton Arc on housing, health insurance, trusts and all kinds of serious and fun stuff.

The FaceBook page is Easton MA SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council).

Ms. Weisman added that it is an incredibly supportive, kind, wonderful group and that they are there to help navigate parents to great resources.

Dr. Cabral added that Theresa Skinner, Director of Special Services attends the meetings and works in collaboration with the SEPAC.

Chair Durrance gave a quick reminder of the workshop scheduled for Tuesday, January 24th just for the contract approval and the next regular meeting will take place on Thursday, February 2nd at 5:00 p.m.

Executive Session RE: Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a) 3 To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining for Paraprofessional Unit and SPEA Units (Custodial, Secretarial/Clerical, and Food Service):

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 for the Paraprofessional Unit and SPEA Units (Custodial, Secretarial/Clerical, and Food Service) and stated that, in her opinion, having this discussion in public would be detrimental to the bargaining position of the School Committee. Ms. Weisman seconded the motion, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill - yes, Durrance - yes, De Luca - yes, Weisman - yes, Starr - yes*, the Committee adjourned to enter into Executive Session at 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Souza
Secretary

Documents:

Minutes

Out of State Trip Request Form

Rosemarie Valente Retirement Letter

Excerpt from 12/15/2022 ROar

January 1, 2023 Enrollment

3 Drafts of 2023-2024 School Calendar