

EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
EASTON, MA

EASTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, March 9, 2023

**Minutes of the Virtual School Committee Meeting, March 9, 2023** Virtual Meeting via Zoom convened at 7:01 p.m. Present: Michelle Durrance, Jennifer Starr, Caroline O'Neill, Nancy De Luca, and Jacqueline Weisman.

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.

**Personnel Change - Retirements: English Teacher at Oliver Ames High School, Grade 6 Teacher at Easton Middle School, and Paraprofessional at Richardson Olmsted:**

Dr. Cabral announced the retirement of Joanne Coffman, English Teacher at Oliver Ames High School effective June 30, 2023.

Chair Durrance read Joanne Coffman's retirement letter.

Committee members expressed their gratitude and appreciation for her service to the district.

On a motion by Chair Durrance, seconded by Ms.De Luca, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-yes, De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee accepted the retirement with regret.

Dr. Cabral announced the retirement of Sharon Stearns, Grade 6 Teacher at Easton Middle School effective June 30,2023.

Chair Durrance read Sharon Stearns' retirement letter.

Committee members expressed their gratitude and appreciation for her service to the district.

On a motion by Chair Durrance, seconded by Ms. O'Neil, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-yes, De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee accepted the retirement with regret.

Dr. Cabral announced the retirement of Catherine Papargiris, Paraprofessional at Richardson Olmsted School effective June 30, 2023.

Chair Durrance read Catherine Papargiris' retirement letter.

On a motion by Chair Durrance, seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-yes, De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee accepted the retirement with regret.

**Vote to Approve Easton Middle School Student Handbook for 2022-2023:**

Luke Carroll, Principal of Easton Middle School presented the changes to the Easton Middle School Parent/Student Handbook for 2022-2023 that included:

- On page 11, Dress Code:
  - changed language to “inappropriate dress”
  - Section E changed language as suggested by the Committee
- On page 17-18, Obligations Policy:
  - Changed language to read “Superintendent or designee may refer a student to law enforcement in the event of an act of vandalism, destruction of property, breaking and entering, or other criminal acts.”
- On page 22, Accelerated Math:
  - Cleaned up some language and laid out exactly what the criteria was and added some language about the program in grade 7 and grade 8

Mr. Carroll said he updated the new address and phone number for the Central Administration Office in the handbook.

Ms. Starr asked if changes were made to the medication section.

Mr. Carroll confirmed that changes were made to the medication section.

Dr. Cabral referred to page 38, pertaining to 37H, regulations on the possession of drugs, weapons, or assault and that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has recently provided some updated guidance. Dr. Cabral noted modification to the paragraph regarding short term suspension pending a hearing. Dr. Cabral said that legal counsel will be sending Mr. Carroll updated legal legislature information for that introductory paragraph. She added that once Mr. Carroll receives the language that he will need to update any template letters.

On a motion by Chair Durrance, seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-yes, De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee accepted the Easton Middle School Student Handbook 2022-2023 with noted language coming for page 38.

**Blanche A. Ames Elementary School Solar Update:**

Dr. Cabral said that one of the design considerations for the new elementary school was to make sure the roof was designed to be solar ready. She said solar arrays were not added immediately because the town had reached its limit for solar credits. She said this was recently reviewed and with the help of the Town Administrator, the Town Accountant, and the Director of Finance, Ondrea Starzhevskiy, they had a meeting and determined that they are eligible for solar and will be moving forward. They met with a solar advisor to have solar arrays installed on the roof of Blanche Ames Elementary School and they are collecting information. She noted that there have been great advances since adding solar panels to the high school and middle school and that the district will not own the solar arrays, the company will own the arrays, the district will be leasing the real estate on the top of the building to the companies who will own, install, maintain, and repair all of the arrays. She added that there will be a screen inside the school to teach children about the conservation of energy as well as using natural energy and how the solar arrays generate energy for the building.

**Public Comment:**

None.

**Superintendent Notes:**

Dr. Cabral confirmed that a speaker, Darrell Green, a former professional NFL football player, hall of famer, a Super Bowl winner, and known as the fastest man in the NFL will be coming to the district on April 24th and 25th. She said as the district is still facing the challenges of student vaping, Mr. Green has committed his retirement to stopping vaping especially in student athletes. Fortunately, in Massachusetts consumers aren't able to purchase flavored vape any longer. She said students are getting addicted to nicotine and the district is trying to find any methods they can to help educate the community, parents and students. She noted that there was a slight increase in vaping use each year and that this is one of the reasons the health behavior survey that the district does with students in grades 7 to 12 is so important. Dr. Cabral said that the district has done great work with the 84 student group who has presented to the Committee and legislators. She noted that the district has done a lot of work inside school, outside school, and that what they are learning and hearing from things like the survey is that vaping is prevalent among athletes as well. Mr. Green will be speaking with the students at the high school on the 24th where he will present to the kids, spend time with them during lunch, and meet with the athletes after school about the dangers of vaping, and how it can affect performance in one's life. He will repeat the day to the middle school on the 25th with the exception of the after school component. Dr. Cabral added that Mr. Green's program is usually a day long but the district will have him for 2 days along with the after school component. She said that Easton is the first in Massachusetts that Mr. Green will be presenting his program. He has presented in Virginia and other southern states.

Dr. Cabral noted that Ms. Starr joined her at the legislative breakfast of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS). She said that they are now thick into the budget season and the news from the Governor's office came out and it is disappointing. There has been a lot of growth in the state in the last 4 to 6 years, 38% growth in the state yet the unrestricted government aid is hovering at 2%. She noted that if she adds the percent the district is receiving, subtract the assessments from the town and include the minimum aid contribution they get for schools, it is \$30 per student. She said they have a net increase this year from the state of \$129,000, for the town. She said she presented along with 2 of her colleagues from Massachusetts to talk about some of their legislative priorities and in ways that they feel there is legislative action that can directly benefit the educator of our students whether it is through the full payment of circuit break support or charter school payments. She said they discussed the fact that the Operational Services Division (OSD) set an increase of out of district special education services of 14% and the average increase from OSD has been hovering around 2% over the last several years. In the last decade the increase has been just over 15% every year combined and this year in fiscal year 2024 it is going up 14%. She noted that out of district expenditures, even though it is a small number of students, can be very costly and for FY23 Easton's out of district represents 9% of the entire 45 million dollar budget; therefore, 9% of the budget will increase next year by 14%. Dr. Cabral also noted the increases in transportation costs, level service needs that are going to be costly, and because we have an increase in enrollment for PK and Kindergarten, that means we will have to open up more classrooms. She noted the increase of multilingual learners in the district. Dr. Cabral said when she came to the district there were less than 60 students who were multilingual learners, this week the district has over 105 and because this has been an underfunded area and the district doesn't have enough educators. She said they provided documentation data and statistics to the legislators and appreciated the representatives and Senators who took the time out of their day to meet. She noted that the narrative in the press and newspapers online is that the schools are all set and don't need to benefit from the fair share tax or benefit in other ways from the growth in the state because we have the Student Opportunity Act but Easton is a minimum aid district. Minimum aid was set at \$60 last year and at \$30 this year and that is insufficient. She thanked the representatives and Senators and that she is hoping that the minimum aid from \$30 per student gets moved to \$100 per student and that the wage adjustment factor formula is changed as these things would make a difference for Easton.

Ms. O'Neill asked what special education transportation costs.

Dr. Cabral responded that special education transportation is just under 1 million dollars and circuit breaker last year was 1.4 million dollars and she said that she is hoping that circuit breaker reimbursement is increased. She said every year they hope it will be 75% but that isn't always the case, they are asking for 90% reimbursement on circuit breaker. She spoke of outplaced costs and why circuit breaker reimbursement is very important, as outplaced tuition per student can cost up to \$250,00 per year.

**Assistant Superintendent Notes:**

Ms. Pruitt acknowledges the fact that Dr. Cabral stepped forward at the legislative breakfast to speak out on our behalf in front of the Round Table community and the legislators and she presented Easton amazingly. She said Dr. Cabral was dynamic and remarkable the way she is able to articulate and share all of the concerns. Ms. Pruitt mentioned the robust Mentor Program in the district led by Kristin Marani and helping Ms. Marani will be Alexa Murray from the elementary level. She noted that Ms. Mariani does a phenomenal job supporting our new teachers and works really hard matching them with mentor teachers. Ms. Marani also teaches a mentor course. Ms. Pruitt said that the Literacy Leadership Team will be meeting next week to create an actual action plan moving forward with implementation. She added that Jeanne Baxter, Reading and Literacy Specialist at the middle school will be providing professional development to all teachers at Blanche Ames Elementary School around the Science of Reading. Cindy Olson, Reading Specialist at Blanche Ames Elementary School and Karen Daly, Literacy Coach at Richardson Olmsted School will also be providing professional development for the PreSchool through grade 5 Paraprofessionals so that they understand the Science of Reading. Ms. Pruitt said a parent had sent her a video of a new documentary that is called "The Right to Read" and said it was about the injustices around reading instruction in our history and how kids are taught to read. Ms. Pruitt noted that she just had a planning meeting with New Solutions, who is reviewing the schedules of the middle school and high school. She said the meeting was on prioritizing what we want the focus to be on in the future. She said in the next couple of years changes will be occurring and brought before the Committee for their approval. Ms. Pruitt said the Director of Curriculum / EL (English Learners); and mentioned that they are trying to change the terminology from English Learners to Multi Language Learns, and that Ann Weintrob has been doing a remarkable job and really bringing a sense of urgency around our multi language learners throughout the district. She noted Dr. Cabral's mention of how the district has increased to over 100 multi language learners and that Easton is no longer a low incident district and Ms. Weintrob has done a remarkable job educating our Cabinet team around the sense of urgency on this issue and that the services providing our students are lacking in quantity. Ms. Pruitt said when she was invited to go to Panama she connected with an organization called World Savvy which sparked her interest in global competency and how to ensure that our students are graduating with becoming globally confident learners. She was invited to attend a series of professional development called "Leadership for Complex Times". She said she had her first session and she is collaborating with educators throughout the country from Colorado, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Arizona and they are helping each other navigate during this difficult time in history. They are receiving professional learning by using toolkits of resources looking at research and data and creating templates for presentations to empower our districts and our students. The group is being facilitated by KK Nelmann who is the Director of Professional Learning at World Savvy and also Dr. William Gaudelli, Dean of the College of Education at Lehigh University. Ms. Pruitt said she has already started using the data and some of the conversations she has had with people and it sparked wonderful conversations. She said as they get further along, they will start talking about what they are going to do with this information and how it can be applied to the work in Easton. Lastly, she said the district will be organizing a Committee to review bullying procedures within the district and that this is something that they need to do every 3 years. The Committee will be composed of educators, students, families, and community members; more information will

be coming soon. She added that she plans to have the Committee organized within the next couple of months and along with that, she said she has been speaking with the Assistant Principals on creating a workshop around bullying for families. She said the workshop could be videotaped and added to the district website as a resource for families. Ms. Pruitt said there have been a lot of questions around bullying and what constitutes bullying legally and what doesn't.

Ms. Weisman asked if information will be sent out to parents when she is ready to form the Committee.

Ms. Pruitt responded that she will be emailing parents and will make sure they are updated on the process and if they cannot participate on the Committee resources will be shared through the workshops.

### **School Committee Notes:**

Ms. O'Neill, none.

Ms. Weisman, none.

Ms. De Luca noted that the National Junior Honor Society had their induction ceremony for the 8th graders from Easton Middle School and that it is quite an accomplishment as it entails a lot of work to get inducted. She said that the Oliver Ames High School Hall of Fame will have their unveiling ceremony of the new display on March 14th at 6:00 p.m. She said that the members of the Hall of Fame who had plaques up will be in attendance and will be able to take their plaques home. The Naming Subcommittee met Wednesday and they now have new members along who will be joining Chair Durrance, Ms. O'Neill, and herself on the Committee; Ondrea Starzhevskiy, Arthur DiPena, and Elizabeth Starr. She noted that they have room for more members. The next meeting will be on May 3rd. The Policy Subcommittee just received some updates and changes from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC); she and Ms. Weisman, who serves on the subcommittee, will be reviewing those updates. The Day of KindNess, in honor of Devin Ness, will be held on April 27th and it is such a wonderful day for the seniors and the Ness family.

Ms. Starr said that over the next few weeks there will be a lot of opportunities for the district's student musicians and ensembles to compete in the festivals. The Oliver Ames High School Jazz bands competed last week in the MAJE festivals and 1 of the bands placed silver, another placed gold and will now move onto a state final later this month. The Show Choir has their musical, Footloose coming up on March 17th, 18th, and 19th. The Art Department will have their art displayed at Patriot Place and can be viewed Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Tryouts for spring sports will take place later in the month. The winter sports season is done and wrapped up a very successful winter season. The Wrestling team made it to the D2 State Tournament and senior Jaden Hinton placed 8th in the state in his weight class, which is quite an accomplishment, Chris Gaskell from the Ski team made it to the MIAA Berkshire East Alpine Championships, winter Cheer team had a Hockomock League competition, Indoor Track had so many athletes and relay teams competing and placing, Easton did have 1 student place 4th in the state in the 1 mile, and 1 of the girls relay team finished 3rd in the state and some students moved onto the All New England meet as well. The Gymnastics team won the Hockomock Team Championship and competed in the South Sectional Finals and 1 of the gymnasts made it to the State Individual Meet, Girls Basketball and Boys Hockey both made it to the 1st round of the playoffs then wrapped up their season. Ms. Starr said that Katie Greer spoke to the high school students last week as she had done with the middle school earlier in the year. There was also a parent presentation in the evening, which she attended and was thankful for having this opportunity in the district as it is valuable information. She said next week Easton Middle School will have its Night of the Arts on Thursday, March 16th the same day as the Kindergarten Orientation meeting, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Blanche Ames Elementary School. Lastly, she noted that MASC will have its Division 3 Meet and Greet later this month which she plans to attend and meet some colleagues from the area and that it is an opportunity to go and continue the work of advocating at the state level for the district's priorities. Ms. Starr added that Ms. Weisman attended the MASC Lunch and Learn last week in which they went over the legislative priorities and that MASC represents a large and diverse group

of districts. She said what gets advocated for the State at the State level may not necessarily be what the district needs; therefore, it is important working together with local colleagues from other towns in the area and with our legislative delegations on advancing legislation that will benefit the district. She said it was great to attend the legislative breakfast and see Dr. Cabral's leadership in action. She said clearly she is very well respected among her peers and she represented Easton well.

**Executive Session: Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a) 3 To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining for Unit A, and Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 (a) 7 - To Comply with Open Meeting Law to Review Minutes of Prior Executive Session 2/2/2023:**

Chair Durrance made a motion to enter into the Executive Session and will return to Open Session for the purpose and to discuss strategy with respect to bargaining for the Unit A and Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 (a) 7 - To Comply with Open Meeting Law to Review Minutes of Prior Executive Session 2/2/2023 and stated that, in her opinion, having this discussion in public would be detrimental to the bargaining position of the School Committee. Ms.O'Neill seconded the motion, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes, De Luca-yes, Durrance-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee adjourned to enter into Executive Session at 8:19 p.m.

**Return to Open Session:**

The Committee returned to Open Session at 8:48 p.m.

**Vote on Minutes: Revised 1/19/2023, Regular 2/16/2023; Executive Session 2/2/2023, 2/16/2023:**

On a motion by O'Neill, seconded by Ms. De Luca, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-yes, De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee approved the revised minutes of 1/19/2023.

On a motion by zMs. Starr, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes,, Durrance-yes, De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee approved the minutes of 2/16/2023 with noted edits.

On a motion by Ms. Weisman, seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-yes, De Luca-yes, , Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee approved the Executive Session minutes of 2/2/2023 with noted edits but not to be released.

On a motion by Ms. Weisman, seconded by Ms. O'Neill, with a roll call vote of 4-0, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-yes, De Luca-abstained, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee approved the Executive Session minutes of 2/16/2023 but not to be released.

Chair Durrance noted that the next meeting is March 23rd at 5:00 p.m.

**Adjournment:**

On a motion by Ms. Starr, seconded by Ms.O'Neill, with a roll call vote of 5-0, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-yes, De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the School Committee adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Souza  
Secretary

3/9/2023

Documents:

Minutes

3 Retirement Letters

Easton Middle School Parent/Student Handbook 2022-2023