

EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
EASTON, MA

EASTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, March 23, 2023

**Minutes of the Virtual School Committee Meeting, March 23, 2023** Virtual Meeting via Zoom convened at 5:01 p.m. Present: Michelle Durrance, Jennifer Starr, Caroline O'Neill, Nancy De Luca, and Jacqueline Weisman.

Also in Attendance:

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

Absent: Dr. Lisha Cabral, Superintendent

**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.

Ms. Starr entered the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

**Vote to Approve Minutes: 3/9/2023; Executive 3/9/2023**

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 minutes of 3/9/2023.

On a motion by Ms. Weisman, 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 Executive Session minutes of 3/9/2023 but not to be released.

**Discussion and Possible Vote on New Student Advisory Plan:**

Chair Durrance said that she and Ms. Kelly Cavanaugh, Principal of Oliver Ames High School, have been working on the student advisory plan. She noted that previously she had been approached to have a student advisor on the School Committee. Chair Durrance said that she and Ms. Cavanaugh reviewed the law governing student advisors on School Committees, sought guidance from School Committees in other districts, and spoke with legal counsel.

Ms. Cavanaugh referred to the Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 71, Section 38M of Student Advisory Committees and stated that it would be a 5 member Advisory Committee selected via an election and 1 person would be elected as a non voting member of the School Committee. This person would meet with the Committee prior to the School Committee meeting and provide the School Committee with feedback on what is going on in the schools and some student experience.

Chair Durrance suggested having the other 4 members of the Student Advisory Committee be assigned to a school to get feedback of students' events to bring before the School Committee.

The timeline for the Student Advisory Committee was reviewed:

- April 14 - Announce the formation of the Advisory Council and timeline for elections
- April 24 - Make announcement again and ask for nominations by April 27

- May 1 - Candidate speeches due
- May 3-5 - Students running can campaign and post their speeches online
- May 5 - OA students vote for the 5 representatives
- May 8 - Announce those elected to the Student Advisory Committee
- May 11 - Introduce Student Advisory Committee at the School Committee meeting
- By June 1st - Student Advisory Committee votes for student representative to the School Committee
- June 9 - Introduce student representative elected at the School Committee meeting

A discussion took place.

On a motion by Chair Durrance, 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 Committee approved the new student advisory plan as presented tonight with the timeline in the packet.

**CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) Presentation:**

Kelly Reed, Easton Wings of Hope Project Coordinator at the YMCA; Melissa MacWilliam, Nurse at Easton Middle School and Richardson Olmsted School; Lisa St. Mary, Adjustment Counselor at Oliver Ames High School; students Ryan Duffy, Lily Curtin, Mia Zachos, Rosie Sedita, Madeline Maczko, Anna Sierra, Marvel Nemr, and Vy Huynh presented. They provided an introduction of the Easton Wings of Hope and CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America) along with a presentation of the trip they took to the CADCA National Forum in January. They provided information on what they learned and how they planned to get the message out to students and the district.

**Discussion and Possible Vote to Approve Bench at Oliver Ames High School:**

Ms. Pruitt said that a few months ago the district lost a beloved staff member and Joanne Coffman, Kelly Cavanaugh, and Matt Auger are in attendance to present their proposal for a bench at Oliver Ames High School in memory of Mary Romans.

A slide show was presented showing the materials, measurement, and placement of the proposed bench.

Ms. Coffman thanked everyone, Best Buddies, Math Department, and the whole staff who have offered to build and fund the cost of the supplies for the bench and that the DPW (Department of Public Works) has offered to donate their labor to install the bench. She proposed having the bench across from the pond behind the tennis courts and against the trees which she said they found peaceful. Ms. Coffman noted that Mary often enjoyed walking and running along the path. The inscription on the bench would read:

*"In Memory of Mary Romans (1968-2022) "Be. Be present, grateful, positive. Let go.""*

She noted that it was a poem written by Mary Oliver.

A question was asked if items of such needed to go before the School Committee or the Naming Subcommittee.

Ms. Pruitt noted that because this particular item is a structure, not a donation, being placed on school property, it needed to come before the School Committee for a vote to accept.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, 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 Committee accepted the bench in honor of Mary Romans.

**Update and Possible Vote on Capital Plan:**

David Twombly, Director of Operations presented some updates to the FY24 Capital Plan that Dr. Cabral had previously presented. He said he met with Town Administrator, Connor Read and David Field to discuss security upgrades. One change was a security system and he explained that they will have to hire a designer and architect, and an Owner's Project Manager. He noted that it will go out for bid and is estimated at \$750,000. The second change would be a security update of phones and that they could potentially upgrade

all the schools which have an estimated \$1,214,834. Mr. Twombly said they would be what they have at the Blanche Ames Elementary School so that the same system would be across all schools.

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 amended Capital Plan in the amount of \$2,739,834.

**Vote to Approve Computer Specialist Contract:**

David Twombly and John Sousa, Director of Technology presented the state contract for Computer Specialist.

Mr. Twombly noted that the company is on the state bid list and part of the E-Rate Program.

Mr. Sousa said that this was the only quote he received back and it is a local company, out of Rhode Island, on the state bid list, they provided a good price and it is at 40% off. Mr. Sousa noted that this company helped Whitman Hanson when they had the cyber breach.

Ms. O'Neill expressed her gratitude to Mr. Sousa and she said that he has been phenomenal as the district's Technology Director.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, 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 Committee approved the Computer Specialist contract.

**Vote to Approve BICO (Bi-County) Collaborative Agreement:**

Ms. Pruitt stated that Bi-County Collaborative has made some amendments to their Collaborative Agreement and requires signatures from each member district as well as the Commissioner of the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE). She reviewed the following changes:

- Addition of Seekonk Public Schools (page 1, section I, O)
- Each Board Member shall be entitled to one vote on behalf of each appointing member district represented (page 3, section V, A)
- Upon receipt of a member district request to initiate proceedings to terminate the Agreement, the Board must abide by 603 CMR 50.11, DESE Education Collaborative Closing Guidance, and the terms of the Agreement to ensure an orderly closing (page 14, section XI, B)

On a motion by Ms. Weisman, 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 Committee approved the BI-County Collaborative Agreement.

**Vote to Approve Pep Rallies for the Wise Contract:**

Ms. Pruitt said that as Dr. Cabral mentioned at the last meeting, 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 to speak to the high school and middle schools students especially student athletes about the dangers of vaping. Previously a list of questions was provided to Dr. Cabral to address because she was unable to attend the meeting. These questions along with Dr. Cabral's answers were provided in the packet.

Ms. Weisman stated her appreciation for the answers to the questions and asked if the contract price for the speaker encompasses all costs or are there potentially additional fees.

Ms. Pruitt noted that she had not been involved in the detailed planning and that her understanding was that additional fees for airfare, hotel, t-shirts and some banners would be additional. It was noted that the cost for the speaker would be coming from ESSER III (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund) funds which expire September of 2024. Ms. Pruitt noted that the grant cannot be used for personnel and that it has to be directly related to student learning costs, contractual services, professional development, supplies, materials, instructional professional staff. The total amount of the grant was \$1,081,867.

A discussion ensued.

Committee members expressed their concern of the cost for the speaker and that upon some research some members were unable to find information regarding the speaker's program and if it had been effective.

Ms. O'Neill requested that the Committee hold off on making a decision and schedule another meeting to provide Dr. Cabral an opportunity to speak more about the speaker and the program he will bring to the district.

On a motion by Ms. Starr, seconded by Ms. O'Neill, with a roll call vote of 3-2, *O'Neill-yes, Durrance-no, De Luca-no, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes*, the Committee tabled the vote on the Pep Rallies for the Wise contract to hold a workshop with Dr. Cabral for more information.

**2023-2024 School Committee Meetings (first reading):**

The Committee reviewed the first draft reading of the 2023-2024 Schedule of School Committee Meetings. Chair Durrance questioned the date for the Professional Teaching Status reception. It was mentioned that it typically takes place at the first meeting in October.

A discussion took place around having 1 meeting in July and 1 meeting in August. It was noted that should they need additional meetings, they can always add a meeting.

The second reading with a potential vote will take place at the April 6th meeting.

**Public Comment:**

*Katie Judge Duffy, 56 Seaver St. North Easton - "Thank you to Easton Wings of Hope and the School committee for approving this opportunity for our students. My daughter had an incredible and eye awakening experience."*

**Superintendent Notes:**

None

**Assistant Superintendent Notes:**

Ms. Pruitt said that she, Ann Weintrob and about 10 staff members went to Pentucket School District on Monday to watch the new Literacy Program, Wit and Wisdom in action. They visited a 2nd grade, kindergarten, and 2 5th grade classrooms and gave a shout out to Brent Conway, Assistant Superintendent at Pentucket and the staff. She thanked Pentucket and said it was a great experience for our teachers to see in person. Ms. Pruitt said that yesterday afternoon she attended the WELN (Women's Educational Leadership Network) conference with keynote speaker Darnisa Amante-Jackson who is a leader in the REDI (Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) that the district is involved in and it was wonderful and she is looking forward to sharing the information with the administrators. She said she had a Title I informational coffee hour and that she will be adding her slides to the district website from the meeting.

**School Committee Notes:**

Ms. O'Neill said that she and Ms. Starr attended the OA Hall of Fame Dedication for the new digital display. She said the display is in the atrium and has information on the people who have been inducted into the Hall of Fame and people can search for individuals by sport, year of induction, year of graduation, and name of person. She gave kudos to Joanne Faust for a wonderful job as she demonstrated all the mechanisms and that several Hall of Fame members attended along with the Athletic Director and current and former coaches. She noted that the 3 major donors for the display were North Easton Savings Bank, Bank of Easton, and an anonymous donor. Ms. O'Neill said that the SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council) had a meeting last night and Kristin Kennedy, Director of Health and Community Services of Easton along with Tim Vamosi from the Easton Fire Department, works in conjunction with Ms. Kennedy to provide community resources to address individuals who are challenged with mental health issues and that a new Mental Health Liaison will be working with the Fire and Police Departments.

Ms. Starr said that she was unable to attend the Art Exhibit at Patriot's Place although friends attended and photos were shared on Twitter by Ms. Shea and she noted that the students are talented and their works are incredible. She said that she attended the musical, Footloose and the kids, cast, and crew members put on a great show. She added that spring sports have begun and that the OA Hockey players won the team award for Sportsmanship from MIAA and the Boston Bruins and their team representative, Matt Lawson was able to go to a Bruins game to accept the award on behalf of the team and was photographed with Cam Neeley. Sophomore Bailey Mooers, who played for OA and Mansfield Girls Ice Hockey collaborative team won an individual sportsmanship award and she was photographed with Linus Ullmark. Ms. Starr said she attended the MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) District 3 meet and greet and that it was a great opportunity to meet in person with local districts and the MASC's legislative leaders to sit and chat without an agenda. She said it was reassuring to hear that issues that have been brought up particularly transportation and increasing the minimum aid from \$30.00 to \$100.00 are being heard.

Chair Durrance said the OA Jazz Band was 1 of 2 bands that received an Outstanding Band in Class A at the UNH Clark Terry Jazz Festival and that they also went to the Northeast MAJE in Reading, on the 11th was the Junior District Concert where the Orchestra and Concert Band played in an audition type program. Mr. Benson's students from the Junior District consisted of middle school and some 9th graders and they had the opportunity to audition for a part with schools from all around and only a certain number of students get in. She said it is similar to the Baystate where they have all day Friday and half a day on Saturday then it is the first time they play together in concert then play together as a group. She noted that there is a Senior, meaning high school age, festival on March 18th. The Jazz Band was invited to the MAJE state finals on March 25th, Robotics had their first competition last weekend in Reading Massachusetts and they came in at 24th of 40 which was an improvement from last year's tournament and they won the Judges Creative Award for one of their design features on their robot. The Robotics have another competition coming up next weekend in Revere.

Ms. Starr added that the Show Choir will be having their performance before the next School Committee meeting.

Chair Durrance announced that the next meeting will be April 6th.

**Executive Session: Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(f), (g) To Comply With, or Act Under the Authority of, Any General or Special Law or Federal Grant-In-Aid Requirements, Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 7 To Review and Approve Amended Executive Session Minutes of 4/29/21, 8/23/21, 9/1/21, 9/30/21, 1/13/22, 1/27/22, and 2/17/22 and Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 3 To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining for Unit A, Paraprofessionals, and SPEA (Custodian, Secretarial/Clerical and Food Service Units):**

Chair Durrance made a motion to enter into the Executive Session and will not return to Open Session for the To Comply With, or Act Under the Authority of, Any General or Special Law or Federal Grant-In-Aid Requirements, Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(f), (g), To Review and Approve Amended Executive Session Minutes of 4/29/21, 8/23/21, 9/1/21, 9/30/21, 1/13/22, 1/27/22, and 2/17/22, Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 7 and To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining for Unit A, Paraprofessionals, and SPEA (Custodian, Secretarial/Clerical and Food Service Units) and Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 3 and stated that, in her opinion, having this discussion in public would be detrimental to the bargaining position of the School Committee. Ms. Wesiman 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 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Souza  
Secretary

Documents:

Minutes 3/9/2023; Executive 3/9/2023

Student Advisory Committee Schedule

MA General Law, Part I, Title XII, Chapter 71, Section 38M

FY24 Updated Capital Request

Computer Specialist Contract

BI-County Collaborative Amendment to the Collaborative Agreement

Pep Rallies for the Wise Contract

2023-2024 Schedule of School Committee Meetings

Revised Executive Session Minutes 4/29/2021, 8/23/2021, 9/1/2021, 9/30/2021, 1/13/2022, 1/27/2022,  
2/17/2022