

EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EASTON, MA

EASTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 11, 2023

Minutes of the Virtual School Committee Meeting, May 11, 2023 Virtual Meeting via Zoom convened at 5:00 p.m. Present: Jennifer Starr, Nancy De Luca, Jacqueline Weisman, and Lauren Loomis.

Also in Attendance:

Dr. Lisha Cabral, Superintendent; Lynn Souza, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Cabral and School Committee Secretary; and Joe Boerman, ECAT (Easton Community Access Television).

Absence: Crissy Pruitt, Assistant Superintendent and Michelle Durrance, Vice Chair.

Call Meeting to Order:

Chair Starr called the meeting to order and stated the meeting will be conducted remotely over Zoom. Attendance by Board/Commission members will be remote and remote attendance shall count toward quorum. The meeting will be broadcast live and recorded on ECAT. The meeting will be open to the public, and questions will be taken via the chat feature. Full name and address must be included with the question and questions that have already been answered will not be read.

On a motion by Chair Starr, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee moved "Introduction of Oliver Ames High School Student Advisory Committee" item #4 to item #3.

Vote to Approve Out of State Trip:

Sam Cederbaum, Principal of Blanche Ames Elementary School proposed an out of state trip for the kindergarten classes to Roger Williams Zoo in Rhode Island on May 23rd and May 24th as an extension of their Science Curriculum on the study of living and nonliving things. The cost of the buses and admission will be \$20.00 per student thanks to the \$9.00 subsidy by the PAC (Parent Advisory Council). Each chaperone will be paying \$18.95.

Ms. De Luca asked if a student has financial difficulties paying the fee, are options available.

Mr. Cederbaum assured the Committee that if a family has a financial hardship they can reach out to him confidentially and the PAC has agreed to cover any costs for those families.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee approved the out of state trip to Roger Williams Zoo.

Introduction of Oliver Ames High School Student Advisory Committee:

Kelly Cavanaugh, Principal of Oliver Ames High School stated they had over twenty students apply for the Student Advisory Committee and the following 5 were elected by the student body. Ms. Cavanaugh introduced the Oliver Ames High School Student Advisory Committee:

- Franklin Chen, Braelyn Graham, Marvel Nemr, Class of 2025
- Annabell Juste and Alyssa Kenney, Class of 2024

Each student had a chance to provide some information about themselves and why they wanted to run for the Committee.

The Committee members and Dr. Cabral congratulated the students and expressed their gratitude to the students for willingness to invest time and their service to their peers.

Quebec Trip Presentation:

Rebecca Michael, French Teacher at Easton Middle School and Amy Gemmiti, Paraprofessional at Blanche Ames Elementary School and parent to Nina; who both attended the trip shared their experiences.

Ms. Michael presented a slideshow presentation of the trip.

Ms. Michael thanked the Committee for their support with the foreign travel program.

Executive Session: Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 (a) 7 - To Comply with Open Meeting Law to Review Minutes of Prior Executive Session 9/15/2022, 10/06/2022, 10/20/2022, 11/03/2022,11/17/2022, 12/01/2022, 12/15/2022, 2/2/2023, 2/16/2023, 3/9/2023 and Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 3 To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining for SPEA (Southeastern Public Employees Association) Secretarial/Clerical, Custodian, and Food Service Units:

Chair Starr made a motion to enter into the Executive Session and will return to Open Session, Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 (a) 7 to be in compliance of the Open Meeting Law to review minutes of prior Executive Session 9/15/2022, 10/06/2022, 10/20/2022, 11/03/2022,11/17/2022, 12/01/2022, 12/15/2022, 2/2/2023, 2/16/2023, 3/9/2023 and and Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining for SPEA (Southeastern Public Employees Association) Secretarial Clerical, Custodian, and Food Service Units 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 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes* the Committee adjourned to enter into Executive Session at 5:32 p.m.

Return to Open Session:

The Committee returned to Open Session at 6: 04 p.m.

Possible Vote to Release Executive Session Minutes: 9/15/2022, 10/06/2022, 10/20/2022, 11/03/2022,11/17/2022, 12/01/2022, 12/15/2022, 2/2/2023, 2/16/2023, 3/9/2023:

On a motion by Chair Starr, seconded by De Luca, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee approved the 9/15/2022, 11/3/2022, 2/2/2023 Executive Session minutes to be released.

Vote on Minutes: 4/27/2023; Executive Session 4/27/2023:

On a motion by Chair Starr, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee approved the minutes of 4/27/2023.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Chair Starr, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee approved the Executive Session minutes of 4/27/2023 to be released.

PUBLIC HEARING: School Choice for 2023-2024 School Year:

Dr. Cabral stated that annually the School Committee is required by DESE (Department of Secondary and Elementary Education) to decide if the district will participate in the School Choice Program. She noted that the Committee can open seats in the district in full or by grade levels of any configuration; however, once the district accepts those students they remain through graduation. Dr. Cabral said as far as she is aware, the

district has never participated in School Choice due to space constraints. The sending district pays a nominal fee that typically does not cover the cost to educate a student in Easton.

A discussion ensued.

Discussion and Vote on School Choice for 2023-2024:

On a motion by Chair Starr, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee voted in favor of not participating in School Choice for the 2023-2024 School Year.

Discussion and Vote on Animal Assisted Therapy Policy File IMG A (Second Reading):

Dr. Cabral said that the district has had a therapy dog in the district for several years and it has been a successful program. She recommended some language changes to the policy at the last meeting. Dr. Cabral asked the Committee if they wanted to consider stating that any proposal for an assisted animal should go before the Committee for their approval or before the Superintendent.

Ms. Weisman noted that some changes that were made at the last reading were to remove “speech language pathologist” and make it more general. She noted that she didn’t think it was necessary for approval to come from the School Committee unless others disagree. She said it made more sense to have approval come from building administration or central administration.

Ms. Loomis asked what the protocols were if someone, especially little children, were afraid of dogs and didn’t want to interact with the dog.

Dr. Cabral responded that it has been addressed in the policy that the dog has to have a particular temperament and that the dog cannot run freely around the school with the handler. She added typically the children will go to the dog opposed to the dog going into a classroom. Dr. Cabral referred to the policy and the 3rd bullet under “AAT Interaction Logistics and Requirements” that read *“Therapy animal will be limited to specific classroom or area of a building.”*

The Committee members agreed that proposals for an animal assisted therapy dog will go before the Superintendent for approval. The following sentence was added to the first paragraph of the policy, *“Any therapist must submit all documentation to Central Office and permission must be granted by the Superintendent or the designee before the animal is approved for this program.”*

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee accepted the changes to the Animal Assisted Therapy Policy File IMG A with amendments discussed.

Discussion and Possible Vote on Enrollment of Students Based on Residency Policy File JF-E-3 (Second Reading):

Dr. Cabral noted that another policy was brought to the Committee’s attention at the last meeting as there had been some confusion around residency in the district. She noted that the suggested changes are in the Committee’s packets and that it was the second reading of the policy; therefore, the Committee can vote or postpone voting.

Chair Starr asked if it was the intention to strike item 6 “End of the School Year” as it seemed to be a reasonable exception to the residency policy.

Dr. Cabral responded that she felt wording in policy “Assignment of Students to Schools” Policy File JCA covered item 6.

The Committee worked on the wording for item 6 and decided to schedule a vote on the next agenda to remove policy file JCA and to add School Admissions Policy File JF for discussion on the next agenda.

On a motion by Chair Starr, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee tabled the vote on the policy “Enrollment of Students Based on Residency” Policy file JF-E-3.

Vote to Approve Superintendent on Bi-County Collaborative Board of Directors for 2023-2024:

Every year the School Committee votes to approve a representative to sit on the Bi-County Collaborative Board of Directors. Typically the representative has been the Superintendent.

Dr. Cabral explained the benefits of serving on the Bi-County Collaborative Board of Directors.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee appointed Dr. Cabral to serve on the Bi-County Collaborative Board of Directors for 2023-2024 as the School Committee’s representative.

Public Comment:

None.

Superintendent Notes:

Dr. Cabral suggested to the Committee to hold a May 31st Executive Session meeting to discuss the scholarship recipients. She noted that many of the scholarships are based on GPA (Grade Point Average) and those are not calculated just yet and that Class Night, which is the night where scholarships are awarded, will take place on June 1st.

A brief discussion took place regarding times for the meeting and it was decided that a hybrid meeting, in person at the Central Office Conference Room and virtually will take place on May 31st at 11:00.

Dr. Cabral said that it is that time of year for her public evaluation and she is hoping to have her narrative ready for the Committee at the May 25th meeting. Dr. Cabral noted that when they went through her progress, updates have been made into links on the chart and she would like to provide a narrative of each of the goals and the status. Dr. Cabral said that it is due in June and the School Committee provides grades in addition to narratives that need to be submitted to the DESE (Department of Secondary and Elementary Education) in order for Karen Mileika to do the roll over to the new July 1st fiscal year. Dr. Cabral suggested having the final review and vote at the June 22nd meeting.

Chair Starr noted that she looked up the last time the process was done and said that having the final review and voting on the 22nd was realistic and the process could be the same where Lynn Souza shared out all of the items and the documents and the Committee collectively decided on when it comes back and how long it will take to put it all together.

Dr. Cabral reminded the audience that Monday, May 15th is the Town Meeting which will have the district budget that the School Committee voted on and that the Finance Committee and Select Board have recommended along with the CPA (Community Preservation Act) which approved 2 big projects for the district, allocated the funds for them, and the Finance Committee and Select Board have recommended the projects and will go before the town for a vote to approve.

Dr. Cabral said the search for a new Director of Special Services is ongoing and that the wonderful search Committee has been putting in a lot of work and that they are actually a week ahead of schedule. They have narrowed it down to 2 finalists that Ms. Pruitt talked about at the last meeting. Dr. Cabral said that site visits took place this week in Easton and next week the search committee will go to the candidates’ districts. She said that she is scheduled to have final interviews with the candidates next week and in preparation for the May 25th meeting for the School Committee’s consideration. Dr. Cabral announced the resignation of John

Sousa, Director of Technology. She stated that he was offered a wonderful opportunity in a private sector and unfortunately will be leaving the district very soon; therefore, they are putting together a job description for a Systems Administrator and an Instructional Technology Director.

Dr. Cabral said that they continue to have lingering traffic concerns and had Officer Aker and another officer out at the schools asking parents to cooperate with having children cross the streets and in their opinion, it is extremely dangerous. She asked parents to get in the que line and that none of the dismissals at any of the schools take longer than 15 minutes and encouraged parents to come right before dismissal.

Dr. Cabral noted that the annual STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Night is back after COVID from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. at the Richardson Olmsted School tomorrow evening. She said it is very interactive and fun; built as a PK to grade 2 but have had students up to 6th grade attend. She noted that it is a free event.

Assistant Superintendent Notes:

None.

School Committee Notes:

Ms. De Luca reminded everyone to attend the Town Meeting on May 15th. She thanked Dr. Cabral for including the School Committee members to sit with the 2 Director of Special Services candidates.

Ms. Weisman echoed about attending Town Meeting and to attend the STEAM Night.

Chair Starr noted that quite a few teams are entering into the end of the season and there are quite a few participating in playoffs. She said many attended the DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) presentation that was put on by Dr. Cabral, Ms. Pruitt, and RMK (Raising Multicultural Kids) last Wednesday and thanked everyone who attended. She said it was a very worthwhile evening with wonderful conversation and that it is another step on the path for good conversation and engagement. She added that Oliver Ames High School held their Art Show last Friday night and it was so great and well attended. Last night the Family Consumer Science, Business and Industrial Arts Program had their expo event of their students' work and it was incredible what the kids can create with their minds and hands. The Special Olympics was last Friday and she said that is the best day of the year for her. She congratulated all of the athletes and all the educators who helped the students participate. There were tons of volunteers and acknowledged the district's great partnership with the YMCA. She thanked Theresa Skinner and her staff for organizing the event and the wonderful SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council) for all their help. She said that the Junior Southeastern MAJE (Massachusetts Association for Jazz Education) which is a jazz workshop and the Junior SEMSBA (Southeastern Massachusetts School Bandmasters Association) took place last week and tonight is the Oliver Ames Spring Concert. Last night was the Tri M Recital which is the Honor Society for Music. Chair Starr said that on Thursday the Jazz Band performed at the Hatch Shell in the MAJE Gold Medal Showcase.

Ms. Loomis said that she and Chair Starr had the honor and privilege to attend MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) Day on the Hill at the State House. She said they met with legislators and lobbied for district priorities that the schools need. She said that it was something she never pictured herself doing, it was fun and such an honor.

Chair Starr thanked Representative Carol Doherty who made herself available and Senator Timilty and one of his staff members who provided quite a bit of time with the both of them; about an hour each. She said that Representative Cassidy was not at the State House that day but invited them to reach out and schedule time with him. She noted that Representative Doherty and Senator Timilty were very responsive to some of the specific legislative items that they brought to their attention and that it was a long day with amazing food from the vocational technical schools.

Chair Starr noted the next meeting has been scheduled for May 25th at 5:00 p.m.

Adjournment:

On a motion by Ms. Weisman, seconded by Ms. De Luca, with a roll call vote 4-0, *De Luca-yes, Weisman-yes, Starr-yes, Loomis-yes*, the Committee adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Souza
Secretary

Documents:

Out of State Trip Proposal

Executive Session Minutes: 9/15/2022, 10/06/2022, 10/20/2022, 11/03/2022, 11/17/2022, 12/01/2022, 12/15/2022, 2/2/2023, 2/16/2023, 3/9/2023

Minutes: 4/27/2023; Executive Session Minutes: 4/27/2023

School Choice Documents from Department of Secondary and Elementary Education

Animal Assisted Therapy Policy File IMGA

Enrollment of Students Based on Residency Policy File JF-E-3

Assignment of Students to Schools Policy File JCA (information only)

Bi-County Collaborative Board of Directors Appointment