

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, January 19, 2023, 7:00 PM
EPPING SCHOOL BOARD
Epping Town Hall/ Epping TV Channel 22/Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Heather Clark called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm with the pledge of allegiance.

In attendance: Chair Heather Clark, Vice Chair Ben Leavitt, Member Robin O’Day, Member Julie Knight, Member Jen Jacoby, Superintendent Furbush, Business Administrator Christine Vayda, Student Carly Sanborn, and Student Jacob Twombly.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

SCHEDULED TOPICS

a. Mid Year Update, Superintendent Bill Furbush

Superintendent Furbush spoke about the District goals for this year. One of those goals was to do some team-building with the Administrative team and the School Board. A few events (the Summer Retreats and the Board Retreat) helped to continue to build relationships, increase collaboration, and make progress on this goal. Another team-building goal he spoke about was to develop leaders. This goal was centered around building trust and relationships between the Administrative team and the community as a whole in order to avoid burnout and build longevity. Initial feedback from the new leadership model at EES has been extremely positive, and Principal Mazzone’s transition to the new leadership role at EMHS has been very successful as well. Superintendent Furbush also mentioned that the Administrative team has done a great job of communicating and knowing when to ask for support.

Another goal for the year was to establish a comprehensive plan to raise student achievement. Work has been started on this goal and a plan has been drafted. Currently, the plan is being presented to leadership teams and staff for feedback.

The next goal he spoke about was for further emergency response training, planning and updating. Superintendent Furbush noted that he feels this is the goal where they have made the most progress. They have completed all of the Department of Homeland Security updates; the Department of Homeland Security conducted a 3-4 hour walkthrough of each building and then developed a report to offer guidance and recommendations. Some items from the report were already being worked on, such as upgrading the doors at the SAU office and the preschool, adding “pass-through” windows to the vestibule areas, and upgrading the camera system memory to 30 days. They have also made significant progress with updating the reunification plan. They are currently in the process of finalizing the updated plan and will be rolling that out to staff first. Other items that have been updated include the phones and flip charts.

Superintendent Furbush thanked his team for all of their work during this process. He also mentioned that the students are taking the Avoid, Deny, Defend training this year and that has been going very well.

The last goal he talked about was focused on culture and climate. They have implemented a new mentor program where experienced staff members are paired with newer staff members to help with support and getting them up to speed. This program has allowed for building administration to become aware of the newer staff members needs much more quickly due to the experienced staff acting as advocates for those newer staff members. Another piece of the culture and climate goal was to increase student and parent ownership and decision making. A recent example of the progress with this goal was the student-made decision with the cap and gowns. The last piece of this goal was to build strong relationships with the Board and work collaboratively on desired school outcomes. The progress made with this has been mainly attributed to continued collaboration and honest conversations.

Ben asked if the update to the phone systems would remove the need to dial 9 before any phone number. Superintendent Furbush said that they will still need to dial 9 before the desired phone number but that they have labeled every phone to make this clear in the event of an emergency. Ben mentioned a law which requires all multi-line phone systems to have the ability to directly dial 9-1-1. Superintendent Furbush will look more into whether or not their current system does have that ability and will make sure that their system is in compliance with the law.

Robin asked what the outcome of the culture and climate surveys would be. Superintendent Furbush said that the culture and climate goals that were developed were based on the results and feedback from the survey.

There was some general discussion about implementing a rubric to evaluate whether or not goals are being met. This option is currently being pursued.

POLICY

a. JCA - Change of Class or School Assignment Best Interest and Manifest Hardship - 2nd/3rd Read

Julie voiced concerns about the policy not being representative of the options available in the District. Superintendent Furbush stated that this policy allows parents to appeal a decision that they are unhappy with. The example given was if a Principal saw a need to move a student to a different class and the parents were unhappy, they could then appeal that decision with the Superintendent.

Member Robin O'Day made a motion to accept Policy JCA - Change of Class or School Assignment Best Interest and Manifest Hardship as presented. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. IGE - Parental Objections to Specific Course Materials or Requirements - 1st Read

Superintendent Furbush explained that this is an existing policy that has been updated to reflect the current practices. This policy does not allow for assignments to be skipped, but it instead allows the option for alternative assignments to be agreed upon.

This was moved to a 2nd/3rd read at the next meeting.

PERSONNEL

None

REPORTS

a. Student Reports

Carly and Jacob discussed what some of the different classes are working on. The Senior Class has been deliberating on a trip to Acadia National Park and Bar Harbor, Maine for their senior trip. They also gave an update on the recent and upcoming winter sports games. Rivalry Week is well underway, and both schools have been participating so far.

Heather asked a question about what the “Winter Informal” event was. Carly explained that she thought it was going to be a movie night with hot cocoa and games.

There was a brief discussion about inclement weather days. They discussed different aspects of these days including notifications and transportation.

b. Principal Reports

The reports were written this week.

c. Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Furbush addressed the topic of drinking water at the schools. He explained how recently the requirements for drinking water changed and that limits for contaminants have become more strict. The water filling stations and fountains at EMHS have their own separate filters and the water from them meets all requirements. The fountains at EES do not have separate filters which has created a need to identify which fountains are not meeting the new requirements. They are currently looking at completely new systems for both buildings.

Christine spoke about a grant they have applied for to help cover half the cost of the new systems. Part of the grant was to have the water tested by NH Department of Environmental Services. As a result of this testing, certain areas were either shut down or labeled as hand-washing only due to the water in these areas not meeting the new requirements. The grant also requires a water sample to be taken every six months and to have three consecutive samples taken to be considered for the grant.

Heather mentioned that these new requirements are federal requirements and that they also impact the Water and Sewer Department. She suggested talking to them to see if they were currently working on the issue as well.

There was a brief discussion about remote days versus snow days and the process for deciding which it will be.

FINANCIAL BUSINESS & DISTRICT SERVICES

a. Financial Report - Year to Date Report

Christine mentioned that quarter two recently ended. There is approximately \$525,902 remaining in expenditures, and she still anticipates revenue coming in at approximately \$374,000 higher than expected.

b. Renew America Grant Update

Christine explained that this is an energy related grant that can help cover some of the costs of current projects like the LED and boiler projects, and also future projects like the air handlers. They requested \$1.5 million, and they are waiting to hear back.

c. Warrant Article Votes - Petitioned (3)

Heather read Article 6 - Town Zoning Ordinances aloud. There was discussion about the meaning of the Article. Superintendent Furbush explained that all of the signs have been reviewed by the Town, and they were issued a letter stating that they were in compliance with the current ordinances. There was discussion over the intent of the Article.

Robert Hodgman spoke about how he felt this should not be read into too much and that the hope is the Board will vote to continue to follow the rules in the future.

VOTE: 5-0.

Heather read Article 7 - Consistent Grading Systems aloud. There was discussion about how this should be a decision made by the Superintendent and other school staff.

Robert Hodgman voiced concerns over a typo. The correction was made to the document. He also discussed previous grading systems and the concerns brought by parents about the current system. He noted that some scholarships require transcripts to be submitted and mixed transcripts are sometimes not accepted by the entity offering the scholarship.

There was general discussion among the Board and Robert about how students are graded and how grades are taken into account for classes taken via VLACS or SST.

There was also general discussion regarding the different grading systems.

Robert Hodgman spoke about his experience and how he feels the teachers should be able to set their own syllabus.

Ben spoke about how he felt neither the current or the old system is perfect. He also felt that the stakeholders' opinions need to be taken into account. He also feels that a much longer conversation needs to be had in order to make any changes.

Julie spoke about how she feels that they need to look at what currently works and what doesn't. This will help guide them to change what doesn't work with the current system.

Robert Hodgman spoke about how he wants to improve student learning, and he feels that a different system is the way to do it.

Julie noted that there are inconsistencies in every grading system and that is something that also needs to be addressed.

Robert Hodgman told a personal story about how non-traditional grading systems can impact a student's ability to get into a college or to get a scholarship.

VOTE: 0-1-4.

Heather read Article 8 - Percent of Grade for Homework aloud.

VOTE: 0-1-4.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Public Minutes of January 5, 2023

Member Julie Knight made a motion to approve the Public Minutes of the January 5, 2023 meeting with the addition of a last name. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

MANIFEST

a. Payroll deposited on January 6, 2023

Member Julie Knight made a motion to accept Payroll deposited on January 6, 2023 in the amount of \$338,568.96. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. Payroll deposited on January 13, 2023

Member Julie Knight made a motion to accept Payroll deposited on January 13, 2023 in the amount of \$464,425.18. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. Accounts Payable deposited on January 13, 2023

Member Julie Knight made a motion to accept Accounts Payable deposited on January 13, 2023 in the amount of \$213,379.33. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

BOARD COMMENTS/OTHER

Jen reiterated that she believes everyone on the Board wants what is best for the students. She also believes that going forward they will work more closely with the teachers to find a system that works.

Ben agreed with Jen and wanted to let everyone know that the PTO has a community night at the Community Oven and a portion of the proceeds will benefit the Elementary School PTO.

Julie spoke about how she felt an explanation was deserved for all of the parents who thought a second recess was needed. She thinks the parents would like an explanation of why it isn't possible. She also stated the EYAA basketball season is underway, and it has been very challenging with the Elementary School gym floor being so slippery.

Robin mentioned to the Board that other Districts have School Board Member goals and that she thinks it is a great idea to start doing them.

Heather wanted to let whoever brought the potholes to the attention of the Board know that they are in the process of being repaired. She also encouraged everyone to reach out if they notice an issue with anything. She also talked to the State Representatives to schedule a time to discuss recently passed or upcoming bills. She also mentioned that she voted no to the Warrant Articles because she believes that the discussion needs to take place elsewhere.

Superintendent Furbush said he felt tonight's meeting was very productive and a lot of good discussions were started. He also welcomes the discussion around grading systems but wants to ensure that a plan is put in place to make the change.

There was a general discussion about reshaping the Wall of Fame at EMHS to recognize everyone no matter what they are doing after graduation.

Christine mentioned that there is a video in the making to be shown at the deliberative session, and she is very excited to see it all come together.

NEXT MEETING TO BE SCHEDULED

a. February 2, 2023 regular meeting

NONPUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3, II Non-Public Meeting **is not scheduled** for January 19, 2023 after the public meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Jen Jacoby made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 pm. Seconded by Member Julie Knight. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Wilkins

School Board Secretary

Statement from Jen Jacoby regarding Petition Warrant Article 7 - Consistent Grading Systems

I am not part of this Board with any sort of agenda or to make sweeping changes or break down structures; however, I do have a duty and desire to make decisions that are presented to me which are first and foremost in the best interest of students and with other involved parties in mind, namely school staff and parents. As these articles of petition regarding the grading practices have been submitted, I intend to address the articles and share some of my own insight. I want you all to know I fully believe that everyone present on this Board and administration wants what they each believe is best for students but of course we will have differences of opinion and I respectfully submit mine.

I know the recent history of Epping's grading practice - as a teacher in the district for 6 years and a parent of 3 Epping students (a graduate, a high school senior, and a 4th grader). I understand the complexity of competency based education and co-wrote all the rubrics and vertical alignment documents for the world language department at Epping High School. I am currently in my 19th year of teaching in a neighboring district which uses a more traditional grading system which is guided by a competency based educational model. I have taught in multiple states across the US and internationally in schools ranging from a few hundred to more than 4,000 students. I say that without the intention of attempting to impress anyone, but solely to illustrate that I have been fortunate to have had a wide range of various types of educational experiences.

CBE is an amazing concept in theory and while some of its practices are good, some parts are not practical for many students. In my experience, it has hindered more than helped provide an accurate reporting of skills and knowledge and has often fostered bad habits and apathy among students. While CBE is best for some, I personally don't feel it is best for most. Additionally, I do not endorse a single system of grading across the district that everyone must adhere to. I would endorse departmental policies at the high school level where students are earning credits toward graduation. I would put a cap on the number of reassessments a student is permitted to take within each course. I would argue that if a student is in need of reassessment multiple times, then the student is either misplaced according to his skills or has a lack of motivation.

While I am not in full support of these petition warrant articles as they are written, I do feel that what we currently use is not what is best for most students and am interested in having further discussions and especially considering the input of other stakeholders - which is critical in decision-making as all too often School Boards and administrative units make decisions having spent limited time in a classroom and often too far in the past. I hope that sharing these thoughts will lead to further discourse and modifications to the current system.