

APROVED MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 18, 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 Julie Knight, Member Jen Jacoby, Member Robin O'Day, Superintendent Furbush, Student Carly Sanborn, and Student Jacob Twombly.

Absent: Business Administrator Christine Vayda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

SCHEDULED TOPICS

a. Project Search Presentation, Student Representative Carly Sanborn

Carly explained that Project Search is a group of selected Juniors and Seniors from multiple schools who make regular trips to UNH to attend talks about specific topics. She said that the first trip for this year was to the Dover ropes course and was an opportunity to meet their groups for the year. She also gave an overview on each of the presentations that the group attended. The last meeting was a trip to Boda Borg, an escape room complex in Malden, MA.

Julie asked what the overall purpose of Project Search was. Carly explained that it is to experience and discuss topics outside of the curriculum with a group of students.

Heather asked if students are able to participate as both a Junior and Senior. Carly explained that the spots are offered to the top 20 students in the Senior class first and are then offered to the top 10 in the Junior class.

Superintendent Furbush asked Carly what she gained from the experience and if she would recommend it to other students. She said that she would recommend it to other students. She also said it helped her to discover and explore interesting topics that she had an interest in.

Ben asked if the speakers related their topics to classes that could be taken in high school and college. Carly said that most explained how they got where they are today. She also said that each group had either a professor or student from UNH with them that helped connect courses related to the topic.

b. Senior Trip, EMHS Senior Class Advisor Stephanie Limperis

Stephanie gave a brief overview of the details of the trip. The dates of the trip are June 4th-5th at Indian Head Resort. The cost is \$89 per student but will be paid using class funds.

Heather asked if meals were included as part of the cost. Stephanie said that the cost includes dinner the night they get there and breakfast the morning of their departure. She also added that there is extra money from fundraising that could be used to pay for additional meals on the way to the resort and on the way back if needed.

Member Robin O'Day made a motion to accept the Senior Class Trip to Indian Head Resort from June 4th-5th with the additional permission to spend additional class funds on meals as needed. Seconded by Member Julie Knight. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

c. New Hampshire State Representative for Rockingham County Michael Vose

Mr. Vose spoke about an upcoming trip for the Science, Technology and Energy Committee to Berlin, NH to visit the Burgess BioPower Plant. They will also visit Q Hydrogen in Colebrook, NH. He asked the Board for questions they had to help guide the conversation.

Robin asked Mr. Vose how he thinks he could help get the state to pay more attention to education funding than they are currently. Mr. Vose spoke about how the topic of education is a contentious issue every year. He also mentioned that the Education Committee sees a very large number of bills. Robin stated that her concern is that it seems to be all talk and no action. She stated that NH pays the lowest amount per student yet has some of the highest taxation in the country. She also spoke about the challenges created by moving funds out of the education trust and into the general fund. She also talked about rising costs of special education and the burden being put onto taxpayers. Mr. Vose spoke about how there is a lot of competition for state and public dollars. He also spoke about how NH has one of the lowest tax burdens in the country and how it is valued by many who live here. He noted that while property taxes are high there are other taxes that we do not have at all such as sales tax and income tax. He also talked about the rising education spending despite decreasing enrollment in public schools. Robin and Heather talked about how a majority of the increased spending is due to government mandates and the retirement system now being funded primarily by the towns. Mr. Vose agreed with Heather and explained why the changes to the retirement funding were made. Heather also spoke about the frustration caused by the voucher system's lack of oversight and how public schools are responsible for picking up the cost of special education in charter schools. Mr. Vose spoke about the Education Freedom Accounts and how it is a newer program that is being adjusted as problems are encountered. He spoke about the importance of the program and the choices it allows parents to make. Superintendent Furbush clarified that he and the Board have no issues with allowing the choice, but they have issues with some of the rules of the program. Heather asked when the Board should work with Mr. Vose and Mr. Vallone to draft a bill that includes the changes they would like to see. Mr. Vose said the deadline is November 3rd. Heather asked what the Board would need to provide in order to work together to create a draft bill. Mr. Vose said that they will need to provide data supporting any changes and the attorneys at the Office of Legislative Services will help with writing the actual bill.

Jon Scully asked if the Board knew the number of students who were attending other schools and receiving special education services paid for by Epping. Heather said that she was just using the scenario as an example, but they could look into the numbers and provide them at a later date. He also noted that while Epping is paying for students that they don't receive state funds for, there are residents who pay taxes that support the Epping schools even if they don't have children who go there. Robin said that those residents have the choice to move to a town with a lower school tax rate. Ben stated that there are other taxes that don't directly benefit the taxpayer. He gave the example of the gas tax funding road construction in other towns that some people may never visit. Jon also asked if the Board had any data on the cost to educate a student in NH versus in another state. Ben said he didn't have it off the top of his head, but the numbers are available online.

Robin stated that while the legislators try to keep spending to a minimum to avoid increasing residents' tax burden, they are implementing mandates that force schools to spend more money without any increase in government funding. Mr. Vose said that unfunded mandates violate the NH Constitution, and this issue can be taken to court. Ben said that while that may be a course of action, going to court is not free. He also said that if they are aware these unfunded mandates are unconstitutional why do they continue to pass them. Mr. Vose said that they are very careful not to pass unfunded mandates. He asked if the Board could provide specific examples. Superintendent Furbush listed the cursive handwriting, multiplication tables, and civics test as recent examples. He also spoke about the lack of communication coming from the Board of Education. Mr. Vose recalled the mandate for cursive writing and explained that in the legislature, it was viewed as a change in policy. He said the assumption was made that cursive writing could be substituted into the curriculum in place of another topic. There was a discussion about how these mandates could create a need to spend additional funds and about the importance of communication. There was also a discussion about the public hearing process.

Robert Hodgman spoke about the need to communicate ideas for possible solutions to the problems being seen. He also spoke about politics and how Epping is currently operating below capacity. He mentioned it would be ideal if both Representatives were present at the same meeting, and everyone could discuss some ideas. There was a discussion about the best method to start creating changes.

Heather spoke about meeting with Mr. Vose and Mr. Vallone to draft a bill. There was a discussion about the steps for drafting a bill. Heather said that they will work on ideas for a bill during their summer retreat. Ben asked if the Board presented a bill in September how quickly things would move from there. Mr. Vose explained that any bill requiring a large financial commitment may need to wait for the next budget cycle. He also said that if a bill required a small amount of money, they could potentially fund it with a budget surplus. Robin spoke about previous discussions with other "under capacity" schools to potentially have them send students to Epping and increase enrollment. Robert Hodgman recalled similar discussions about this topic. Mr. Vose asked the Board to consider separating the SAU budget to its own article on the school warrant. He said this will allow Epping residents to see exactly where their tax dollars are

being spent. He thanked the Board for inviting him to attend and also for a productive conversation. The Board thanked Mr. Vose and is looking forward to continuing to work with both Representatives.

POLICY

a. DAF - Administration of Federal Grant Funds, 2nd/3rd Read

Superintendent Furbush noted there were no proposed changes to the policy. Jen mentioned Heather's previous request to have this policy match the formatting of other policies. Superintendent Furbush said that they did do a spelling and grammar check on the policy. There was a discussion about the grammar and formatting. Superintendent Furbush said he will take another look at it and bring it back at the next meeting.

b. DAF-P - Employee Time and Effort Reporting, 2nd/3rd Read

There was a discussion about the grammar and formatting. Superintendent Furbush said he will take another look at it and bring it back at the next meeting.

c. DJ - Purchasing and Bidding Guidelines, 2nd/3rd Read

Member Robin O'Day made a motion to approve Policy DJ - Purchasing and Bidding Guidelines as presented. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

PERSONNEL

a. Nomination of EMHS English Language Arts Teacher, Robin Small

Member Robin O'Day made a motion to accept the nomination of EMHS English Language Arts Teacher Robin Small. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. Resignation of EES STEAM Teacher, Andrea Cole

Member Robin O'Day made a motion to accept the resignation of EES STEAM Teacher Andrea Cole with regret. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

REPORTS

a. Student Reports

Carly and Jacob highlighted some of the recent and upcoming academic and extracurricular activities. They also talked about the ongoing class representative elections. Superintendent Furbush and Heather asked how Prom went. Both students said that Prom went well and that they have heard a lot of positive feedback. Jacob talked about how he liked that the

venue was big enough to fit everyone but not too big that it felt separated and everyone was able to talk and feel more like a community. There was a discussion about how they could improve Homecoming to have it feel the same way.

b. Superintendent Report

Nature's Classroom

Superintendent Furbush asked the Board to make an official motion on the Nature's Classroom trip that was discussed at the previous meeting. Robin asked what the price per student is going to be. Heather said it is \$390 per student. Robin said she would like to donate \$400 towards the trip. Julie said that she thinks it would be worth it to get a quote from the bus company to see if it is something the District could cover the cost of. This would make the overall cost of the trip more affordable.

Member Julie Knight made a motion to approve the 2024 Nature's Classroom trip. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

Epping Paraprofessional Request to Negotiate

Superintendent Furbush said that they received their letter from the Epping Paraprofessionals Association requesting for negotiations. He is currently working to get some dates lined up for this summer to begin negotiations.

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept the request to negotiate from the Epping Paraprofessionals Association. Seconded by Member Robin O'Day. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

School Board Calendar 23-24

Superintendent Furbush spoke briefly about the 2023-2024 School Board Calendar. He also said he would like to pick some dates for the summer retreat. Heather stated that the School Board will meet the first and third Thursday of each month except for the first Thursday of July, and the first February meeting is the Deliberative Session.

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept the School Board Calendar for 2023-2024 as presented. Seconded by Member Robin O'Day. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

Superintendent Furbush said for the summer retreat he would like to schedule it for one full day. There was a discussion about dates for the retreat. The Board agreed on July 28th as the date for the summer retreat. Ben asked about the date for the end-of-year cookout. Superintendent Furbush said it will be on June 16th.

FINANCIAL BUSINESS & DISTRICT SERVICES

a. Financial Report

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Non-Public Minutes of May 4, 2023

Member Robin O’Day made a motion to approve the Non-Public Minutes of the May 4, 2023 meeting as written. Seconded by Member Jen Jacoby. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. Public Minutes of May 4, 2023

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to approve the Public Minutes of the May 4, 2023 meeting as written. Seconded by Member Robin O’Day. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

MANIFEST

None

BOARD COMMENTS/OTHER

Robin recognized Christine for the award she received. She also said how proud they are of her. There was a discussion about the award, and Heather mentioned adding an announcement to the website for the public to see.

Jen said she attended the recent New School Board Members webinar and appreciated the opportunity. After the webinar, she started looking at the files and folders and in particular Policy JQ which addresses student fees, fines, and other financial obligations. Jen wanted to put this policy on Robin’s radar since she is on the Policy Committee. Jen also noted a section in the Policy which discusses Kindergarten tuition which she believes is no longer applicable. Jen said she was glad to be able to attend the webinar. Heather mentioned that if there are other webinars that anyone is interested in but can’t attend, they should be available as recordings.

Ben mentioned that the PTO is busy this time of year, and elections will be held soon. He also spoke about the volunteer efforts regarding the gaga pit and playground cleanup. He also mentioned that they are looking for volunteers to help with the snack cart if anyone is interested. Julie asked how they typically communicate that they are looking for volunteers. Ben said they post on the Facebook page. Julie mentioned the use of ParentSquare and emails to send out requests for volunteers. Ben also said that the ice cream social will be coming back, but he doesn’t have all of the details at this point.

Julie applauded everything that they heard about tonight that has been going on in both schools. She also brought up the topic of moving the tables. She also mentioned that she received a phone call from a teacher with a compliment, and she highlighted the value of a phone call like that instead of an email.

Robin showed the Board a book that features some past Epping students and focuses on the topic of literacy. She also noted her first Budget Committee meeting is coming up, and she is

hoping to develop a clearer picture of the actual cost per student. There was also a discussion about the process for determining the placement of students in special education.

NEXT MEETING TO BE SCHEDULED

a. June 1, 2023 regular meeting

NONPUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3, II Non-Public Meeting **is scheduled** for May 18, 2023 after the public meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to enter a non-public meeting and to adjourn thereafter at 9:08 pm. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Wilkins

School Board Secretary