

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 4, 2023, 7:00 PM
EPPING SCHOOL BOARD
Epping Town Hall/Epping TV Channel 22/Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt 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, Business Administrator Christine Vayda, and Student Carly Sanborn.

Absent: Student Jacob Twombly.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jordenne Sargent and Thomas Bonias spoke about the resignation of ELA Teacher Cameron Slack. They gave examples of how Mr. Slack has increased student interest in ELA and students’ confidence in their reading and writing abilities. They presented a petition and also thanked Mr. Slack for the patience he has shown with students and for all that he has done for students this year.

Ben said that he understands the impact that losing a teacher can have. He thanked Jordenne and Thomas for sharing their thoughts.

SCHEDULED TOPICS

a. New Hampshire State Representative for Rockingham County Mark Vallone

Mr. Vallone gave a brief overview of his position. He spoke about recent and upcoming efforts to improve school safety. He mentioned the possibility of using federal infrastructure funds to add more safety features at school entrances.

Superintendent Furbush stated that no amount of added safety features will stop people from legally being able to carry firearms in New Hampshire. He also spoke about the challenges created by NH laws regarding firearms.

Mr. Vallone agreed with Superintendent Furbush. He also said that he feels it is important to take these steps to increase school safety while still making progress on long-term solutions and getting laws passed.

Chris Mazzone stated that he finds it discouraging that many supporters of the 2nd amendment also support decreased spending on schools and cutting taxes. He also stated that if firearms are able to be carried on school grounds but not on the grounds of the House of Representatives then there is a fundamental problem with the system.

Mr. Vallone talked about the need to shift mindsets and gave the shift away from smoking and tobacco use as an example. He stated that he is looking to find common ground in order to

start making this change by implementing regulations such as red flag laws which were defeated this past session. He also stated that he will continue to fight for these changes as well as for federal funding to make schools more secure.

Christine spoke about federal grants and how the requirements can sometimes limit what schools are able to get accomplished. She said that many times schools are not able to change what the grant money would fund even if they have identified a higher priority need.

Mr. Vallone agreed and said he feels that the Department of Homeland Security should be making things less restrictive and also increase the amount of grant funding. He also gave an overview about other aspects of funding. He spoke briefly about the educational trust and the general fund, and also about the potential expansion to the educational hardship law.

Robin spoke about her concerns with money being moved from the educational trust to the general fund and also with the education costs that are being forced onto taxpayers.

Chris Mazzone spoke about the challenges presented by the shuffling of funds between the trust and the general fund.

There was a discussion about the process for testifying on bills and the need for increasing public awareness of upcoming bills. Ben spoke about the potential for New Hampshire to be proactive and make changes before a tragedy occurs. He said the opportunity to be proactive applies to both gun laws and education funding.

Mr. Vallone agreed and talked about the importance of upcoming elections since many bills are decided by only a handful of votes. Ben asked if there was anything offered by the State House to notify the general public of upcoming bills. Mr. Vallone said there are two non-profit organizations which send notices about upcoming education bills: Reaching Higher New Hampshire (<https://reachinghighernh.org>) and the NH School Funding Fairness Project (<https://fairfundingnh.org>). All upcoming bills can be found via the search function on the NH General Court website (<https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/>).

There was a discussion about the law requiring calendar conformity between sending schools and CTE schools. The Board discussed the challenges faced when attempting to align the calendars of multiple sending schools.

Superintendent Furbush brought up the topic of educational freedom accounts. He explained that in the current proposed budget these accounts have increased approximately 580%. He also explained that the accounts are monitored by an organization that has no oversight and is paid a percentage based on the amount of money they award. He said this means less money going to public schools which makes it difficult to meet the needs of students. Mr. Vallone explained that there was a recent bill which proposed that the oversight of that organization be the responsibility of the NH Department of Education, but it was defeated. Robin discussed the issue of a voucher-receiving school being able to assess for special education needs and the public school being financially responsible for 100% of the costs. The Board thanked Mr. Vallone for coming, and they hope to have him back in the future.

b. Presentations of EOY Review of Accomplishments and Projections for the 23 -24 School Year, Chris Mazzone, EMHS Principal, Jill Lizier and Mandy Murphy, Co-Principals EES
EMHS

Principal Mazzone talked about the loyalty and hard work displayed by the building leadership team and also the importance of teamwork to get things accomplished. He spoke about the changes to the master schedule to make sure students are able to make the most of their opportunities. He also talked about the changes to the course selection process and the importance of meeting the needs of students.

Julie asked what the students who don't need extra academic help are usually doing during the flex time. Mr. Mazzone said they are doing an enrichment activity. He gave examples of SAT prep, cooking, music, languages, etc. He also talked about how students may now need to make a choice between being on student council or being on the student athletic leadership team. Heather liked that this will allow more students to be able to take on leadership roles which helps them when applying to colleges.

Mr. Mazzone talked about how he and Mr. Nekton will be mapping out all fundraising for all classes for the year in order to provide oversight and help increase efficiency. He also spoke about the ongoing discussion regarding grading and reporting and stated that they are continuing to work on a solution. He emphasized that changes won't be implemented instantly and that decisions will be thought out and based on data. He talked about how the focus for next year is going to be on strengthening instruction practices. Mr. Mazzone also spoke about the excellent progress that has been made on this year's goals. He also mentioned upcoming changes to the positive action lessons to deliver more age appropriate content to the older students. He recognized the faculty, students, and families for their effort and support in making these changes happen.

Robin asked if there has been any discussion on having class dues. Principal Mazzone said that they have discussed it, but he would like to take a closer look at how much money is required for each student to cover "hidden" costs. He also talked about the importance of making activities affordable and accessible for all students. There was a general discussion about fundraising. Robin talked about connecting the positive action lessons to the recent US Surgeon General videos that discuss depression and the "Greet, Connect, Listen and Serve" philosophy.

Ben stated that he is excited to see all of the steps forward and feels that it is important for the community to see them as well.

EES

Principal Murphy and Principal Lizier spoke about some of the highlights from throughout the year. Highlights from the fall included the implementation of the first school wide morning meetings, offering after school tutoring by utilizing ESSER funds, and the EES long-term literacy work with Marianne Nice and strategic planning.

Ben asked if the tutoring would continue next year. Principal Murphy and Principal Lizier said they feel the need is still there, so they would like to offer it again; however, they would need to discuss the funding since the ESSER funds are not available next year.

Principal Murphy and Principal Lizier also highlighted some winter achievements which included the continued staff and student training in the Avoid, Deny, Defend method, the development of the literacy improvement plan, LETRS training, and shifting the focus of collaborative team time to literacy and math. The spring achievements included the Student Led Conferences, the Recycled Percussion District Wide Event, and the team leader master schedule planning for the 2023-2024 school year.

They also talked about the goals that were set at the beginning of the year. They spoke about the progress that has been made for each goal. They mentioned how recognizing student growth in work study practices at the school wide meetings helped students and staff to recognize, utilize, and reflect on those practices. They noted that the student led conferences were very successful and all grade levels had very high participation rates. They also spoke about the shift to utilize the structure of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) by dedicating the 4th Thursday of each month to collaborative team time to focus on an essential question of a PLC. They discussed some of the goals that are in mind for next year and also highlighted some of the proposed changes to the 2023-24 Master Schedule.

Julie asked if the 90-120 minute ELA block was scheduled for every day. Principal Murphy and Principal Lizier said that it is every day and is staggered 30 minutes across all grade levels so that Title 1 can support students without any conflicts with instruction. They also said that the ELA block is spread throughout the day. Julie also stated that she does not like the idea of having students eating in the classrooms. There was a discussion about recess, classes spending time outdoors, and incorporating physical activity throughout the day.

Ben appreciated that changes are being implemented when the data shows they have a positive impact. He also stated the importance of learning being viewed as a partnership between the schools and everyone at home.

c. 2023-2024 7th Grade Nature's Classroom Trip

Susan explained that she is seeking approval for the overnight trip to attend Nature's Classroom at Camp Cody in Freedom, NH. She said the dates for the trip are October 31st through November 2nd. The price is \$390 per student (\$341 for Nature's Classroom and \$49 for transportation). Last year the trip was \$375 per student.

Julie noted that this year the decision was made to attend Nature's Classroom in the spring to see how it would go, but the trip has not happened yet. Principal Mazzone explained that he made the decision to move the trip to the spring for this year when he first started. He did so because he did not feel comfortable asking parents to come up with the money in a short period of time. Heather asked if the 6th grade students were made aware that their fundraising efforts would provide funds for the trip. Susan said that they were made aware. Heather also asked if the payment would be required before the end of the school year or if it is due at the

beginning of next year. Susan said they are working on payment plan options, but they would like a deposit by the end of this year for planning purposes. Julie asked why the transportation is not paid for by the school district. Superintendent Furbush explained that there is currently no line item in the budget for field trips, so the transportation is not covered. Julie asked if in the future it could be considered to have the school district cover transportation costs to make educational trips more affordable.

Jordenne Sargent thanked Susan for all the hard work she puts into planning the trips and also said that the students appreciate it. She asked what the cost of the trip will be, and Susan said that this year's spring trip is \$375 and the fall trip next year is \$390. Jordenne also said that another reason for delaying this year's trip to the spring was because the team of teachers was new at the time. The Board will hold a vote at the next meeting.

POLICY

a. DAF - Administration of Federal Grant Funds, 1st Read

Christine highlighted the major changes to the policy which included the removal of language referring to minority groups and womens' groups. The changes also include the addition of a section regarding subrecipients and subcontractors. There were also changes made to the time and effort reporting requirements. This policy was moved to a 2nd/3rd read at the next meeting.

b. DAF-P - Employee Time and Effort Reporting, 1st Read

Christine highlighted the major changes to the policy which included updates to the time and effort reporting requirements. This policy was moved to a 2nd/3rd read at the next meeting.

c. DJ - Purchasing and Bidding Guidelines, 1st Read

Christine said the only major change was changing the dollar amount for small purchases from \$1,000 to \$10,000. This change makes the policy consistent with what is written in other policies. This policy was moved to a 2nd/3rd read at the next meeting.

Heather mentioned that the formatting of DAF-P should be changed so that it is consistent with other policies. She also asked that the grammar and spelling be checked.

PERSONNEL

a. Resignation of EMHS Language Art Teacher, Cameron Slack

Superintendent Furbush thanked Cameron Slack for his service and wished him the best going forward.

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept the resignation of EES Language Art Teacher Cameron Slack with regret. Seconded by Member Robin O'Day.

VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. Resignation of EMHS Social Studies Teacher, Karen Malsbenden

Superintendent Furbush thanked Karen Malsbenden for her service and wished her the best going forward.

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept the resignation of EMHS Social Studies Teacher Karen Malsbenden with regret. Seconded by Member Julie Knight. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

c. Nomination of EMHS Music and Band Teacher Erin Wentworth

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept the nomination of EMHS Music and Band Teacher Erin Wentworth. Seconded by Member Julie Knight. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

REPORTS

a. Student Reports

Carly highlighted some of the recent and upcoming academic and extracurricular activities. She spoke about the recent World Culture Fair, the upcoming Band and Chorus trip to Westfield College, upcoming SST graduation, and Prom.

Heather reminded everyone to submit photos to Carly for the senior slideshow.

b. Principal Reports

EES

Principal Lizier and Principal Murphy spoke about the upcoming National School Lunch Hero Day and recognized the food service staff for their kindness and compassion when interacting with students. They also gave shout outs to multiple staff members for stepping up when needed, being supportive, and always being willing to help out. They also gave a shout out to the EES PTO for all of their hard work in planning and organizing so many great events throughout the year. They also mentioned that there was no whole school meeting due to the Recycled Percussion event. The work-study practice nominations are listed in the Principal Report along with some photos and videos from Recycled Percussion.

Heather asked if the letters included in the report could be made larger. Principal Murphy said she will make that change.

Principal Murphy also said they are accepting information/concerns from parents regarding the placement of students and that the placement process is currently ongoing.

Heather also asked when students will know who their teacher is next year. Principal Murphy said that information will be on the student achievement report on the last day of school.

Ben stated that he feels like including the letter about the expectations for the placement process was a great idea and that it will help answer many of the questions that parents have.

c. Superintendent Report

Superintendent Furbush said that SAS testing is currently happening. He thanked the PTO for putting together snack bags and water bottles for the students to have during testing. He also thanked everyone for their help with the District Wide Event, and he said that it went very smoothly thanks to those who put the time and effort into planning it. He also spoke about how proud he was to see older students escorting younger students and that it was truly a community event.

FINANCIAL BUSINESS & DISTRICT SERVICES

a. Financial Report

Christine spoke about the remaining expenditures budget and also the expected revenue through the end of the year. She also said that everything looks like it will remain on track.

Heather gave kudos to the Administrators and Department Heads for their accuracy with estimating and also for keeping expenditures on track.

Julie asked about the negative balances for Special Education, Vocational Program, Curriculum, Tech and Media, and Operations of Building. Christine explained that Special Education is always a moving target, so this was expected. She said the negative balance for the Vocational Program was due to more students attending SST than expected, and the negative Curriculum balance was from moving a position from Curriculum to Salaries. Christine also explained that the Tech and Media and Operations of Building balances will see some movement because they had to book a lot of expenses to them for the Safety Grant.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Public Minutes of March 30, 2023

b. Public Minutes of April 6, 2023

c. Public Minutes of April 20, 2023

Member Jen Jacoby made a motion to approve the Public Minutes of the March 30, April 6, and April 20, 2023 meetings as written. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. Non-Public Minutes of April 20, 2023

Heather noted that she had added wording to indicate that Superintendent Furbush was absent.

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to approve the Non-Public Minutes of the April 20, 2023 meetings as amended. Seconded by Member Jen Jacoby. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

MANIFEST

a. Accounts Payable Deposited April 21st, 2023

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept Accounts Payable deposited on April 21, 2023 in the amount of \$40,785.84. Seconded by Member Jen Jacoby. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

b. Payroll Deposited April 14th, 2023

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept Payroll deposited on April 14, 2023 in the amount of \$368,095.59. Seconded by Member Jen Jacoby. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

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.

Christine relayed a message from Principal Murphy stating that the family of Sandra Landis donated \$1,000 to EES for the support of mathematics and student needs. Christine and the Board thanked the Landis family for their donation.

NEXT MEETING TO BE SCHEDULED

a. May 18, 2023 regular meeting

NONPUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3, II Non-Public Meeting **is scheduled** for May 4, 2023 after the public meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to enter a non-public meeting and to adjourn thereafter at 10:36 pm. VOTE: 5-0. Motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Wilkins

School Board Secretary