

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, August 17, 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 Robin O'Day, Superintendent Furbush, and Business Administrator Christine Vayda

Absent: Member Jen Jacoby

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

SCHEDULED TOPICS

a. SELT Presentation - Cathy Zylinski & Lizzy Francschini

Cathy and Lizzy gave a presentation on the All-Terrain Learning Adventures (ATLAS) Program to be offered at the Epping Middle School. They gave an overview of the program which will feature one Wednesday a month where each grade level visits SELT's Burley Farms to work on student-directed problem solving, exploration, relationship building, and learning. These sessions will be led by nature-based educators and UNH interns. Transportation costs for the program will be covered by SELT and use of approved SELT property is free. SELT will fund the pilot program for three years. Heather asked how long each session will be. Lizzy said the plan is for three hour sessions. Ben asked how much it costs to run the program. He mentioned if the program was successful and SELT did not have the funds to continue it in the future, they may be able to explore fundraising options. Lizzy said that the program budget is about \$60,000. Heather asked if SELT will be accepting donations for student gear. Lizzy said they are currently working with their corporate partners to secure brand new gear and equipment for students who may need it. Julie asked how the success of the program will be measured at the end of the three year period. Lizzy said they will be evaluating whether or not each partner's goals are being met to determine the success of the program. Robin asked for more information about the Friday programs that are offered to the public. Lizzy said they have a storytime program and an outdoor exploration program; more information about the programs can be found on SELT's website.

Member Robin O'Day made a motion to accept the three year contract with SELT's ATLAS Program. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

b. EES Student & Parent Handbook 23-24 - EMHS Building Administrator Mandy Murphy
Principal Murphy and Principal Souza spoke about some of the changes that were made to the handbooks. Some of the changes include the reformatting of the “compass”, the introduction of the community standards, and updated language and formatting. Heather asked if the open house date can be added to the handbook when it is set. Mandy said they are meeting soon to set the date and will add it to the handbook. Heather also had some minor suggestions for changes to the handbook.

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept the EES Student Parent Handbook for 2023-24. Seconded by Member Robin O’Day. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

c. EMHS Student & Parent Handbook 23-24 - EMHS Principal Chris Mazzone

They spoke about the importance of incorporating student voices into the development of the handbooks and about how the handbooks can be used to address issues that have been brought to their attention. They gave an overview of the changes that were made to the handbook. There was a discussion about the timing of SST departures/arrivals and the amount of credits awarded for first-year and second-year programs. They also discussed the change to the language regarding cell phones. The new language allows cell phone use only for bonafide educational purposes. They talked about the update to the dress code which no longer permits students to wear slippers, slides, or flip flops. Heather asked if these types of shoes are permitted for students coming in for athletics. Principal Mazzone said that they are permitted in that scenario. There was also a discussion about food no longer being allowed in classrooms unless it is a sanctioned event. Heather clarified that food and drinks, except for water, are not allowed in either the O’Day or Allen gymnasiums. They discussed updates to the in-school suspension protocol and how they hope to make that time more productive. They spoke about the new expectations regarding students being tardy. They clarified that school starts at 7:25am. Julie asked if home visits are conducted in extreme cases of tardiness/absences. The team said that they do have to do them occasionally and do so with the help of the SRO. Language was added to the handbook asking parents to not contact students via cell phone during the school day.

Principal Mazzone outlined the changes made to the grading and reporting procedures. He explained there is a renewed focus on consistency with regards to reporting. He noted the proposed change to the weighting of class competency grades and graded formative assessments. Previously, these weights were 90% and 10% of a final course grade, respectively. In the new handbook, they would be 80% and 20%. There was a discussion about increasing the accountability of students and putting the focus back on learning. There was a discussion about the updates made to language and expectations regarding assessment frequency and late assignments. There was a clarification made that the 80/20 weighting applies to grades 6-12. Ben asked if late assignments will at some point incur a penalty. Principal Mazzone said that there are penalties, but the focus is on getting the student the support they need to complete the assignment. Heather asked if there are any guidelines for teachers regarding the timing of

grading an assignment from a student who was in IWS status. Principal Mazzone explained that teachers will not be expected to drop what they are currently doing in order to grade late assignments. The team discussed the updates to the relearning and reassessment section of the handbook. The process is focused on teaching students important life skills such as self-advocating. Heather asked if there is any communication with parents when a student requests to relearn and reassess. Principal Mazzone said that for middle school students the teachers will include parents in the conversation, but at the high school level that choice is up to the students. Heather also asked if the reassessment form can be updated to allow students to add a parent's email. The team said they will look into whether or not the system will accept outside emails. Julie asked if student emails are not able to email anyone outside of the school system. Principal Mazzone said he is unsure but knows there are definitely limitations. There was a discussion about how this may be impacting students and ways to solve the issue. There was further discussion regarding the changes made to the relearning and reassessment section. Superintendent Furbush said he appreciated all of the effort that has gone into incorporating feedback into the handbook. He also said that feedback will continue to be collected and used to improve the processes outlined in the handbook. Robin said that she has heard from the community that offering students multiple chances to get better grades sets them up for failure in college. Heather asked for clarification and made suggestions on multiple items in the handbook.

Member Julie Knight made a motion to accept the EMHS Student Parent Handbook for 2023-24 as amended. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

d. Employee Handbook 23-24 - Superintendent Bill Furbush

Superintendent Furbush gave a brief overview of the revisions to the Employee Handbook. Heather said a few recommended changes.

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept the Employee Handbook for 2023-24 as amended. Seconded by Member Robin O'Day. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

POLICY

a. JFABE Education of Children in Foster Care - 1st Read

Superintendent Furbush explained that this is an entirely new policy. This policy was moved to a 2nd/3rd read at the next meeting.

The decision about Policies EF and EFE was postponed/tabled until the September 7th meeting.

PERSONNEL

a. Nomination of EES STEAM Teacher Justin Svirsky

Member Robin O’Day made a motion to accept the nomination of EES STEAM Teacher Justin Svirsky. Seconded by Vice Chair Ben Leavitt. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

b. Nomination of EMHS English Language Arts Sue Foley-Vadeboncoeur

Heather asked what grade level she will be teaching at. Principal Mazzone said they still need to discuss this with the English Department. Julie noted that she is qualified to teach middle school English and asked if she was also qualified to teach high school English. Principal Mazzone said that she is qualified to teach at both levels.

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept the nomination of EMHS English Language Arts Teacher Sue Foley-Vadeboncoeur. Seconded by Member Robin O’Day. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

c. Nomination of EMHS Special Education Teacher Kaleigh Donelan

Julie voiced concerns about doing what is right to support families and students. She stated that she doesn’t feel good about the decision and is concerned. There was a discussion about how to best serve the students and families. Principal Mazzone spoke to the qualifications of Kaleigh and said training and mentorship would be put in place. There was further discussion about the qualifications of the candidate. There was a discussion about what the best course of action would be in this scenario.

Heather asked if there were current staff members who were not currently certified. Superintendent Furbush said that there are some staff members currently working toward certifications.

Superintendent Furbush respectfully withdrew his nomination. Heather supports the direction that Superintendent Furbush is heading and also supports the concerns brought up by Julie.

REPORTS

a. Student Reports

None

b. Principal Reports

EES

Principal Murphy and Principal Souza shared that they have coordinated a Kindergarten meetup with the PTO. This will be a time for parents and children to meet others and have a chance to play on the playground together before school starts. They also talked about the drop-in open house that they will be hosting the day before school starts. They gave kudos to the maintenance

staff for all of their hard work that went into making the school look like a whole new place. They spoke about the upcoming new teacher orientation and gave an update on current staffing. They also gave an update on student numbers and said they are looking forward to the start of the new year. There was a general discussion about the drop-in open house and the parents walking students into class on the first day.

EMHS

Principal Mazzone said fall sports are starting up; facilities are looking awesome, and the open house is coming up in September. He also said he is looking forward to the start of the school year.

c. Superintendent Reports

Superintendent Furbush said he is looking forward to the start of the school year. He also mentioned how great the facilities look. He also noted that conversations are still ongoing for outsourcing the Tech Director position.

FINANCIAL BUSINESS & DISTRICT SERVICES

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Public Meeting Minutes August 3, 2023

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to approve the Public Minutes of the August 3, 2023 meeting as written. Seconded by Member Julie Knight. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

MANIFEST

a. Payroll deposited on August 4th, 2023

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept Payroll deposited on August 4, 2023 in the amount of \$183,164.82. Seconded by Member Julie Knight. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

b. Payroll deposited on August 11th, 2023

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept Payroll deposited on August 11th, 2023 in the amount of \$373,854.25. Seconded by Member Robin O'Day. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

c. Accounts Payable deposited on August 4th, 2023

Vice Chair Ben Leavitt made a motion to accept Accounts Payable deposited on August 4th, 2023 in the amount of \$225,948.60. Seconded by Member Robin O'Day. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

BOARD COMMENTS/OTHER

Ben said he thinks the conversations with all of the building administrators have been productive even if some of those conversations have been tougher to have.

Julie echoed Ben's comments and said she appreciates Heather's diligence when going through the handbooks. She also said she is looking forward to the walk-throughs.

Robin said the New Hampshire School Board Association recently sent an update on all of the recent bills. She is going to present the Board with any bills that may impact them.

Superintendent Furbush thanked his Administrators for all of their work on the handbooks. He also urged everyone to go visit Burley Farms if they have the opportunity.

Christine said the facilities are looking great and the high school kitchen floors have been poured.

Heather thanked the Administrators and Superintendent Furbush for all of the work done on the handbooks. She appreciates the changes being proposed to help motivate and support students.

NEXT MEETING TO BE SCHEDULED

a. September 7, 2023

NONPUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3, II Non-Public Meeting **is scheduled** for August 17, 2023 after the public meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn at 10:46 pm. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Wilkins

School Board Secretary