

Board of Education Ellington, Connecticut

October 27, 2021

A regular meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, October 27, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the Ellington High School Library Media Center, 37 Maple Street, Ellington, CT.

Present were: Mr. Blanchette and Young; Ms. Dzen, Kupferschmid, Picard-Wambolt, Moser, Nord, Mullin, Socha, and Underwood, and Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools.

Administration present were: Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations; Mr. Greg Kliman, Director of Facilities and Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services.

Also in attendance: Mr. Aaron Fliss, Director of Information and Technology; Ms. Lindsey Stellar, Food Service Director; Dr. Linda Robinson; Library Media Specialist, Ellington Middle School; Ms. Gomanthi Ramachandran, Instructional Technology Specialist for Grades 5 & 6; and Madeleine (Maddie) Willett, Appointed Board of Education Student Representative.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Ms. Dzen, Chairwoman. (00:05:22)

Pledge of Allegiance (00:05:35)

SPECIAL RECOGNITION (00:06:11)

Mr. Guidry presented to the Board of Education the special recognition of Ellington High School teacher Ms. Kim LaDuke who submitted a next generation personal finance grant for the sum of ten thousand dollars to improve programming at Ellington High School. Ms. LaDuke was in attendance and addressed the Board.

Mr. Greenleaf and Ms. Stellar presented to the Board of Education the special recognition of Ellington Public School Food Service Staff. The staff was recognized for significantly increasing the volume of breakfasts and lunches while maintaining the quality of the meals.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT (00:16:47)

Ms. Dzen opened her report announcing the completion of the teacher contract negotiations and thanked the teachers for the productive process; she looks forward to continuing working with them.

The Windermere Building Project is ramping up again, there will be additional information on that in the Operations Committee report. It is an important project as the school is in need of extensive repairs.

The high school is offering a new science trip called the Grand Circle Adventure to the Grand Canyon April 7-13 of 2022, there are still a few seats available.

If you have not watched Season 3, Episode 4 of Education in Ellington (EIE), you are encouraged to do so. It is an uplifting eight and a half minutes that includes Unity Day at Center School, the High School's Red, White and Blue Day as well as the Windermere Color Run.

A huge thank you and honoring of outgoing BOE member Kris Picard-Wambolt took place, she has served as a BOE member for twelve years, chaired the Policy Committee as well as served on the Curriculum and Communications Committees, as well as served as the board liaison to CREC. Her service to the students, staff, administration and families of Ellington were significant and will be missed.

CITIZENS AND STAFF FORUM (00:22:07)

Ms. Nicole Roy addressed the Board of Education with the topic of masking policies at the high school with regard to discipline and mask breaks. Ms. Roy expressed displeasure with the current policy and suggested the policy be changed and more in line with other school districts.

Mr. Jason Josephiak addressed the Board of Education with the topic of unmasking school children in Ellington Public Schools. Mr. Josephiak opposed the current masking guidelines implemented in Ellington Public Schools. Mr. Josephiak presented research that contradicted data which discussed the current mask and vaccination mandate in the State of Connecticut and offered to discuss the information presented with Board of

Education members and the Ellington community. Mr. Josephiak wished all candidates running in the upcoming elections well.

Ms. Beverly Russo addressed the Board of Education with the topic of unmasking school children in Ellington Public Schools. Ms. Russo opposed the current masking guidelines implemented in Ellington Public Schools and reiterated her view that any mask or vaccination decisions should be made by families of students in Ellington Public Schools. Ms. Russo presented questions to the Board of Education that she requested be reviewed and responded to in the near future.

Ms. Dzen thanked all citizens for their comments.

CONSENT AGENDA (00:37:18)

1. Approval of the minutes from the September 22, 2021 Regular BOE meeting.
2. Approval of the minutes from the October 21, 2021 Special BOE meeting.
3. Acceptance of the resignation of Ilsa Graf as a Cafeteria/Recess Aide at Windermere School, effective September 21, 2021.
4. Approval of the employment of Michael Dixon as a Building Substitute at Ellington Middle School, effective September 22, 2021.
5. Approval of the employment of Joshua Mozzicato as an Administrative Assistant at Ellington High School, effective September 27, 2021.
6. Approval of the employment of Nicole Royster as a Cafeteria/Recess Aide at Windermere School, effective September 27, 2021.
7. Approval of the employment of Samantha Morales as an Academic Tutor at Ellington Middle School, effective September 29, 2021.
8. Acceptance of the resignation of Isaiah Caceres as a Special Education Aide at Crystal Lake School, effective October 4, 2021.
9. Approval of the employment of William Forst as a Kindergarten Aide at Crystal Lake School, effective October 4, 2021.

10. Approval of the employment of Shane Schiller as a Technology Technician, effective October 4, 2021.
11. Acceptance of the resignation of Elizabeth Ferolano as a part-time Special Education Aide at Windermere School, effective October 5, 2021.
12. Acceptance of the resignation of Emily Davis as a part-time Administrative Assistant at Center School, effective October 8, 2021.
13. Acceptance of the resignation of Hannah Yoo as Food Service Administrative Assistant, effective October 8, 2021.
14. Approval of the employment of Marc Levine as the Database Coordinator, effective October 12, 2021.
15. Approval of the employment of Gregory Lunski as a Physical Education Teacher at Ellington High School, effective October 18, 2021.
16. Approval of the employment of John Bassilakis as a Building Substitute at Ellington High School, effective October 25, 2021.
17. Approval of the employment of Tracy Mercier as a Library/Media Specialist at Crystal Lake School, effective October 25, 2021.
18. Approval of the employment of Robin Johnson as a Physical Education Teacher at Ellington High School, effective October 29, 2021.
19. Acceptance of the resignation of Pramila Nawale as a Special Education Aide at Crystal Lake Aide, effective October 29, 2021.
20. Approval of the employment of Kristin Foss-Young as a Building Substitute at Crystal Lake School, effective November 1, 2021.

Ms. Dzen asked if anyone wished to remove any item from the Consent Agenda.

Ms. Dzen announced that hearing none, the Consent Agenda is accepted as written.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS (00:37:24)

Special Reports

October 1, 2021 Annual Enrollment Report - Mr. Greenleaf, Director Finance and Operations (00:37:42)

Mr. Greenleaf reported the current enrollment update for October 1, 2021. Mr. Greenleaf explained that the enrollment reporting was done throughout the year on a monthly basis. The October Enrollment Report included enrollment projections for the whole district (i.e. upcoming Windermere School Project), an updated enrollment study within the budget each year, the Open Choice declaration and the district's total enrollment. Mr. Greenleaf continued his report with data that between 2015-2019 there was an increase in enrollment with an accelerated decrease just prior and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The K-6 elementary enrollment decreased last year (2020-2021) whereas secondary school enrollment increased during that period. However the current enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year showed an increase in elementary enrollment by forty seven students and decrease in secondary enrollment by fifty five students.

Ms. Mullin inquired if there was a breakdown of the number of high school students who chose alternative local programs/schools (i.e Rockville VOAG program, East Catholic High School, Cheney Technical High School, CREC schools. etc). Mr. Greenleaf responded that the data was received earlier, the data would be communicated once reviewed and an addendum would be filed. Ms. Mullin stated that once the information was received, what the district could do to increase retention in Ellington.

Mr. Greenleaf reported that the class enrollment data collected would be monitored to track class size as enrollment in certain classes was larger than anticipated. Mr. Greenleaf presented the enrollment data for all Ellington public schools and specifically the current ninth grade class at the high school had decreased enrollment. Out-migration of students in the district would be analyzed and that data would be available for review. Ms. Socha inquired what the impact (i.e. loss of funding) was if students chose to attend a private school. It was explained that the district didn't lose funding for students attending private schools.

Mr. Greenleaf discussed the current preschool program and the possible reconfiguration of existing classes to add typical peers to increase the tuition base.

Ms. Underwood inquired if children enrolled in the birth to three program have referrals and if so would that information be coordinated with the three to five years old program. Mr. Greenleaf responded that typically birth to three students would have referrals, but

this year an increase of parent referrals have been requested who were unaware of how to receive birth to three services during the pandemic.

Ms. Moser asked whether the data from 2016 and the present still had students classified to receive special education services to which Mr. Greenleaf responded that caseworkers and interventionists have identified students who qualify for special services although the in-migration of students from other communities had increased enrollment specifically in preschool referrals.

Ms. Underwood questioned if the current preschool enrollment would be taken into account for the upcoming budget for kindergarten in the elementary schools. Mr. Greenleaf replied that the budget would reflect the future needs in kindergarten, however, it would be over a two year period based on the three year olds preschool enrollment. Ms. Underwood stated that an increased need currently in preschool would carry over to the kindergarten program in the next school year.

Dr. Young inquired that if student enrollment was increasing, would the cost per pupil also increase in specialized populations, or would remain at the same cost that the district was currently serving for the specialized populations. Mr. Greenleaf stated that much had been accomplished in the specialized population with the current staff employment. However, based on the increased enrollment, a discussion of the long term budgetary implications would be forthcoming.

Mr. Greenleaf presented the Open Choice enrollment to which in February 2021 there were eighty six students enrolled at that time, with a target range enrollment between ninety two and ninety seven. The district declared forty-seven seats taking into account both out and in attrition. Ninety-four students were enrolled for Open Choice this school year across all schools and all grades.

Anticipated Board Action: Windermere Building Project - Mr. Greenleaf, Director Finance and Operations (00:58:48)

Mr. Greenleaf reported that two presentations had taken place over a two week period; the first at the Operations Committee meeting held on October 13, 2021, where information from Tecton Architects and a new enrollment consultant about the trajectory of enrollment in the district. Enrollment at the elementary school was projected to continue to grow, which necessitated the construction of a building for

Windermere School that could accommodate seven hundred forty students. An additional meeting was held on October 20, 2021, where a presentation illustrated the total increased project costs by twelve percent (an increase from \$55,000,000.00 to \$61,000,000.00) to which the bottom line did not increase substantially due to the state reimbursement of half of the total cost. The town would be responsible for approximately \$29,990,000.00. With the approval of the Windermere Building Project by the Board of Education, it would be submitted to the town Boards for approval with an ultimate referendum.

A motion was made that the Board of Education approve moving forward to the town a renovate as new project at Windermere Elementary School with total estimated cost of \$61,639,357.00 and authorizes the administration to work with the town in order to bring this project for grant submission to the State of Connecticut by June 30, 2022, with 55.36% anticipated reimbursement to be received in a grant from the State of Connecticut.

1st. K. Socha 2nd. L. Nord

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Regular Board Committee Reports (01:02:10)

Curriculum

Committee Chair Young began his report with two agenda items. The first was a report on the efforts to integrate technology and technology support with library media and elements of the STEM program. There was overlap of both the technology integration staff instruction and library media specialist instruction, therefore, it was collaborated to strategically reorganize the avoidance of duplicating effort and build on one another's skills in a more efficient manner.

Mr. Barton added that the team of Dr. Robinson and Ms. Ramachandran along with the other library media specialists has been successful in creating a new vision for the libraries moving forward including a focus on inquiry and high levels of student engagement.

Dr. Robinson addressed the Board of Education by commending the team approach towards the combined effort of technology and traditional media offerings. One example provided was the introduction of self-check opportunities for middle school students to

have the ability to check in and check out materials from the media center independently.

Ms. Ramachandran stated that additional technology offerings for preschool to sixth grade students. First, kindergarten to second grade students were able to have tablet and Chromebook lessons working on LEXIA (phonological awareness) which was a storyboard of blended learning. Second, Library Media Specialists and Technology Integration have been working on the hour of code activity scheduled for December 6, 2021, led by Windermere School Library Media Specialist Ms. Beth Palasek.

Ms. Palasek has been coordinating that effort to have the hour of code across all three elementary schools.

Committee Chair Young reported the second agenda item was inquiry of instruction for students required to quarantine. Mr. Barton elaborated on that in current cases, the vast majority of students are in person with a few students remote. Therefore, the focus was for teachers to interact with students who were in-person and support remote students to the best of their ability. The safeguards in place were as follows: at the elementary school level communication would be necessary for the family on a regular frequent basis; including asynchronous instruction assignments and lessons and instructions provided through Google classroom with live instruction for core subjects (i.e literacy and math). At the middle and high school levels, communication would be provided for students directly with live instruction or video lessons, along with asynchronous work.

Ms. Moser asked for clarification for students who receive tier two intervention at the elementary level would have access to live video instruction to support the students needs. Mr. Barton confirmed that students who required intervention or special education services would continue to receive those services either with live instruction or video.

Ms. Socha inquired if the current quarantine guidelines differed for students who were vaccinated versus those who were not vaccinated. Mr. Barton responded that the protocols of contact tracing have different standards based on whether a student was vaccinated due to the health protocols sent to the district by the State of Connecticut. The length of time a student would be required to quarantine would be the same, however, the vaccination status would affect the decision on whether or not a student would be required to quarantine.

Dr. Nicol added that the current quarantine guidelines were anticipated to change. Currently, the quarantine guidelines state that if a student was vaccinated, asymptomatic and wore a mask, there would be no requirement to quarantine. Mr. Greenleaf confirmed the current guidelines for vaccinated students. For unvaccinated students, (i.e elementary students) the six foot/fifteen minute rule applied with the exception of the classroom setting only of three feet if students were wearing a mask.

Mr. Greenleaf continued that there was a decrease of quarantine students per case within the schools this school year compared to last year.

Ms. Socha expressed concern that there would be a disparity of which students were required to quarantine based on individual medical status, which would not fall in line with the Seeds of Civility in the Ellington School district. Ms. Socha continued that students should not be penalized for a parent's choice of whether or not to vaccinate their student.

Mr. Barton clarified that in the scenario of a teacher having the vast majority of students in-person and few students remote, the teacher would primarily interact with in-person students. The remote student would have the opportunity for asynchronous work with video instruction. The teacher would have the flexibility to connect with a remote student if a question arose, via phone call or video chat at a later time. If there were updates and clarifications from the State of Connecticut regarding required quarantines and the instruction requirements, the district would respond appropriately in addressing that concern.

Dr. Nicol added that anticipated changes to quarantine guidelines from the State of Connecticut. The approval in writing from the Department of Public Health and Governor were forthcoming and once the changes were confirmed it would be communicated to the Board of Education and the Ellington community.

Ms. Picard-Wambolt inquired about how many students required to quarantine became positive in contracting Covid-19 by in-school transmission. Dr. Nicol responded that the percentage was low and similar to past numbers.

Ms. Underwood stated that a schedule was developed on the process of opening schools at the August Board of Education meeting which would be revisited at the

December Board of Education meeting. Ms Underwood inquired if discussions could occur prior to December 30, 2021, due to the fluidity of forthcoming Covid-19 guidelines. Dr. Nicol responded that updates received from the State of Connecticut regarding current guidelines could be discussed at a later date. Mr. Greenleaf added that the December date was correlated with the federal ARP ESSER grant which dictated a review every six months. The first review was June 2021, with an interim revision in August 2021. An additional interim revision in November 2021 would be possible, however, the December 2021 review would be required to follow the process.

Ms. Nord asked Mr. Greenleaf how many quarantined students the district had currently. Mr. Greenleaf did not have an exact number of students, however per case those students required to quarantine decreased under the new guidance. At the elementary level, the number of quarantine students was between ten and fifteen students, whereas the secondary level was between three and five students.

Ms. Mullin thanked the Library Media Specialists and Technology Integrationists for the development of new innovative ideas for middle school students.

Ms. Picard-Wambolt asked Mr. Greenleaf whether any staff was required to quarantine because of contact tracing within the school. Mr. Greenleaf replied that possibly one or two staff members partially based on a high rate of vaccinations among staff members.

Operations

Committee Chair Socha thanked the Board of Education for the unanimous support in moving forward on the Windermere Building Project.

Finance

No updates at this time

Policy

Committee Chair Picard-Wambolt reported that the meeting was cancelled, however, one aspect of the dress code policy was planned to be discussed. The entire dress code policy was currently under review by high school administration. Upon completion of the review, the dress code policy would be revised. Administration would

communicate and reinforce that the Crown Act would be adhered to across the district and no student will be disciplined in any form for a head wrap or hairstyle that is protected by the Connecticut Crown Act and language in that regard would be added to the dress code policy following the complete review and revision which should be completed and in place prior to the beginning of the next school year.

Communications

No updates at this time.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS (01:33:00)

Superintendent's Report- Superintendent's Goals 2021-2022

Dr. Nicol stated that there was a positive process between the Superintendent and Board of Education, in addition to input from teachers, faculty and the administrative team at the central office in developing the Superintendent's Goals. The process included examining the district improvement plan, receiving input and then developing school improvement plans. Dr. Nicol presented the Superintendent's Goals for 2021-2022 in the Board of Education packet provided for Board members.

A motion was made that the Board of Education approve the Superintendent's Goals for 2021-2022 as presented by the Superintendent of Schools.

1st. J. Mullin

2nd. M. Kupferschmid

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Dr. Nicol thanked Ms. Picard-Wambolt for her service as a board member on the Ellington Board of Education and wished her well on her future endeavors.

Directors' Reports

Monthly Financial Report - Mr. Greenleaf, Director Finance & Operations (01:38:29)

Mr. Greenleaf began his report regarding fiscal year 2021 numbers as reported to the Finance Committee with an action item to consider. For 2021-2022, Mr. Greenleaf

reported a healthy balance with an area of focus being the encumbrances in the salary line items which would be reviewed to check for accuracy.

Mr. Greenleaf also reported that a motion was for consideration for a \$30,000.00 anonymous donation for the COVID Testing Program that had been in place since the executive order of 13G by Governor Lamont.

Mr. Greenleaf also mentioned that in addition to thanking the Food Service Staff in Ellington Public Schools, a wellness raffle would be available for all staff members to participate in to win donated prizes and thanked all donors.

Ms. Mullin inquired if a vaccine booster clinic would be available for staff members to which Mr. Greenleaf replied not at this time due to the availability of vaccines.

Ms. Nord inquired if the donation was specifically for the COVID testing program to which Mr. Greenleaf responded that currently those funds would be used for testing, however, any remaining funds would be available for other use.

Ms. Picard-Wambolt inquired if any staff member refused vaccination or testing. Mr. Greenleaf responded that all staff members were in compliance with the requirements.

Board Liaison Report (01:44:10)

Wellness Committee Liaison Underwood stated that a meeting was scheduled on November 4, 2021, and was looking forward to discussing the raffle.

Center School Liaison Kupferschmid reported that Center School students would participate in the Harvest Parade on Friday, October 29, 2021.

CREC Liaison Blanchard reported that a virtual meeting was held and some members of the CREC council were leaving to take other employment opportunities.

Appointed Board of Education Student Representative Willett reported that PSAT/SAT prep was available for students, Homecoming Week was a success as well as Spirit Week which led to an outdoor pep rally. The annual election day bake sale would be available on Tuesday, November 2, 2021, held by the junior and senior officers.

ACTION ITEMS

(01:47:37)

1. Move that the Board of Education accept an anonymous donation of \$30,000.00 to be applied towards the COVID vaccine testing program and other uses deemed necessary by the administration.

1st. M. Young

2nd. M. Kupferschmid

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

2. Move that the Board of Education approve the unpaid extended child rearing leave request of Christina Marcotte, School Psychologist at Ellington High School, to commence on the completion of her FMLA November 24, 2021, and to conclude January 24, 2022.

1st. J. Mullin

2nd. A. Moser

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

3. Move that the Board of Education ratify the contract between the Ellington Education Association and the Ellington Board of Education for the period of July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2025 as negotiated.

1st. M. Young

2nd. M. Underwood

Discussion: Dr. Young thanked all those involved on the Board and the teachers for a successful negotiation.

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

NONE

CORRESPONDENCE

NONE

ROUNDTABLE

Ms. Socha inquired about public comments made by Ms. Roy regarding mask infractions at the high school level. Dr. Nicol responded that some students at the high school have had numerous conferences with high school administration to discuss the appropriate way to wear a mask while at school. These conferences would not be filed under a student's record. However, students with repeat violations (between four and five students) have been sent home. Dr Nicol equated it to a sweatshirt hood being worn or pants that are not fitting appropriately. Ms. Socha felt that those comparisons were not equal and had instructed her own children to lower their masks if the feeling of lightheadedness or dizziness should occur. Dr. Nicol stated that he had not been notified by administration of a situation where a student had been penalized for needing an additional mask break, that overall high school students are utilizing a mask break in a respectful manner. A small percentage of students were repeatedly defiant when addressed by a teacher or administrator. Ms. Socha understood the frustration of students where in certain public areas, mask mandates are not required to enter buildings.

Ms. Socha continued by addressing a comment about the Board of Education not being responsive to political mandates. Ms. Socha suggested additional communication with the public and what position the Board of Education must maintain with executive orders and required mandates.

Ms. Mullin reiterated a previous comment made that if a Board of Education were to defy an executive order, the district could lose necessary funding.

Dr. Nicol commented that as a Board of Education member, although public comment may not be addressed within a Board of Education meeting, conversations with the public and how the Board member feels could be conducted in the community on an individual basis.

Ms. Dzen requested clarification that if a member of the community speaks at a Board of Education meeting, their questions and concerns would be addressed by administration. Dr. Nicol confirmed, when warranted, conversations have occurred by administration.

Ms. Moser requested that at the high school level, teachers may acknowledge students who may not initiate the request for a mask break and allow additional times throughout the day for mask breaks.

Ms. Underwood expressed her appreciation for further discussions based on conversations brought to the Boards attention during the meeting.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

1st. M. Young

2nd. J. Mullin

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Picard-Wambolt
Secretary