

A Regular Meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 22, 2023, in the Ellington High School Library Media Center, 37 Maple Street, Ellington, CT 06029.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Chair Jennifer Dzen.

PRESENT Chair Jennifer Dzen, Vice-Chair Mike Young (virtual), Treasurer Liz Nord, Gary Blanchette, Marcia Kupferschmid, Angela Moser, Miriam Underwood, Steve Viens

ABSENT Secretary Jennifer Mullin, Kerry Socha

ALSO PRESENT Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations
Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services
Mr. Aaron Fliss, Director of Technology
Mr. Rik Roy, Board of Education Student Representative

NATIONAL ANTHEM

EHS Treble Chorus directed by Richard Diamond, Director of Vocal Music

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SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Ellington High School Color Guard, Winter Guard Team

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Mr. Matthew Delassus, Director of Instrumental Music

Mr. Delassus introduced the EHS Winter Guard team and Coach Liz Lamonte '16. Coach Liz shared the group was awarded 1st place at their first competition. In her time as coach, she has split the group into two, a JV and Varsity (Performance Team and Competition Team). The performance team allows 8th graders to join and perform at events. The group performs choreographed routines with various props. The team has grown over the past few years and has a strong group of students and leaders. Congratulations to the EHS Winter Guard!

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

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Chair Dzen addressed the community and viewers. Chair Dzen shared that she and Dr. Nicol testified at the Capital in support of House Bill 5003, a bipartisan bill. She stated that this is an opportunity for us to see more aggressive movement on the ECS grant and the State working to figure out how to fund programs to take off the local towns and to put back at the State level.

CITIZEN & STAFF FORUM – None

CONSENT AGENDA

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1. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, January 31, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, February 13, 2023, 11:30 a.m.
3. Human Resources Monthly Report

Ms. Dzen asked if anyone wished to remove any item(s) from the Consent Agenda. Ms. Dzen announced that with hearing none, the Consent Agenda is accepted as written.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

SPECIAL REPORTS - None

REGULAR BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

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Curriculum

Mike Young share that there were two items discussed at the meeting. First, the committee discussed the State mandate to adopt one of eight chosen K-3 literacy curricula and request a waiver. We have selected to request a waiver and are seeking approval for our combination of reading curricula. The review and determination by CSDE is anticipated to be completed prior to Summer 2023. Mr. Barton shared that as per the CSDE requirements, our waiver request reviews how well our reading program as currently designed is succeeding. Our ELA performance is in the top 20% within the State, suggesting by grade 4, our students are reading at a very competitive level.

Secondly, Chair Young shared that the committee reviewed a preliminary report of the 2022-23 Mid-year Climate Survey results. The mid-year survey was completed by three groups, Students, Parents, and Staff. Student results showed that students feel safe and have options in school. While over 60% agree, issues of school lunch and respect for one another are areas we can continue to target. Family/Parent results were also positive, showing families felt welcome and safe. At the high school level, the featured meal portion size was discussed and for the lower grades, healthy versus tasty options were discussed. Staff results also suggested we are doing well in most climate areas including teacher growth, safety and access to data. The committee discussed how a recent attack on school wifi (denial of service) was the likely explanation for concerns with technology reliability.

Communications

Ms. Deptula shared the committee report in Chair Mullin's absence. The [23-24 District Calendar](#), Social Media update, and the next Communications Corner edition were topics of discussion. The 23-24 calendar has been set with special attention to professional development days, holidays, and the April vacation week. Social media use up, as well as reach and engagement from followers on both [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). The next [Communications Corner](#) is set to release on March 20th featuring a new segment, "You asked, We Listened", in direct response to community feedback.

Policy

Chair Moser shared that 1000, 2000, 3000, and 9000 policy series are posted on our [website](#). The remaining series remain in the formatting stage and will post as soon as they are available. An index for the 4000, 5000, and 6000 series is online to reference. The timing to post has taken a little longer than expected as we are working closely with the attorneys to ensure compliance while the policies are being formatted. All policies are in place, however, should questions arise, you may reach out to the Superintendent's office for more information.

Operations

Mr. Greenleaf shared in Kerry Socha's absence, that the committee meeting covered the Windermere Project, the budget, and the process moving forward. A Community Forum is planned for February 28th at 6:00 p.m. Additional items discussed were the HS track replacement, Capital Improvement status, and the HVAC grants which we are still waiting on notification from the State in regard to the status.

Finance – No Meeting

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

Watch [HERE](#)

Dr. Nicol shared his report to the Board. Dr. Nicol shared that the "About Us" section of the website was revamped and encouraged the Board to review it. We plan on updating that section often. Dr. Nicol also shared that it was a fun and unique experience to testify about HB5003 at the Capitol. Dzen added that she wanted to publicly thank Representative Jaime Foster for her assistance that day. The House Bill next goes

forward to the Appropriations Committee. Dr. Nicol submitted a written testimony to be considered during that budget review. Ellington has been a positive contributor to this bill and Dr. Nicol shared his appreciation to the Board for their support. The office that runs CMERS does an actuary analysis, and the rate projection changed. Increasing to 19.57 from 18.2 and an additional \$75,000 above what we have currently in our budget. Our budget was based on historical CMERS projections. Mr. Greenleaf further explained the new rate increase.

Directors' Reports

Monthly Financial Report

Watch [HERE](#)

Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations

The current balance on the budget of \$43,006,229 is \$80,647.53. This includes all encumbrances, pre-encumbrances, accounts payable, and payroll through February 17, 2023. It does not include anticipated credits to accounts which will increase the overall balance. As part of the budget submission process, a comprehensive projection was done for each object and account. This shows a very tight budget year, anticipated at a \$5,200 balance at the end of the year. Unused balances are returned to the Town's unassigned fund balance. The district is currently in a "soft freeze" and will continue to examine this strategy moving forward.

Declaration of Open Choice Seats

Watch [HERE](#)

Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. Greenleaf shared that the approach for this year's declaration is consistent with past years in which the administration recommended declaring a higher number of seats. This takes advantage of expanded financial incentives and the Early Beginnings grant. It also opens 10-13 additional slots for Ellington students in full-day Pre-K. Declaring these extra seats will hopefully allow students to continue in their educational journeys' from Pre-K through 12th grade with Ellington Public Schools. We are recommending opening 48 seats in this year's process, solely located in grades in PK-2. However, the district may open additional seats through the lottery process based on the context of siblings applying to the program. By October 1, 2023, with both the filling of seats and natural attrition, we expect the total enrollment across the district to be between 95 and 107 students. A discussion about the preschool program continued, Dr. LaPorte contributed to this discussion to answer questions from the Board.

BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

Student Liaison Report

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Student Liaison Rik Roy gave his report to the Board.

- Truth About Hate Program - a great way for Freshman to reflect on types of hate that they may experience.
- Boy's Basketball - Senior night had an amazing turnout and fans were having fun and were well-behaved, the night ended with a win.
- Opening Knight Players (OKP) - Presents Radium Girls, March 2nd and 3rd at 7:30 p.m. in the Ellington High School Auditorium.
- 3rd Quarter wrap-up; students are looking forward to end-of-year events.
- March 11th - Snow Ball at Ellington High School

Permanent Building Committee

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Liaison Blanchette shared that there is a Windermere Community Forum on the 28th at 5:30 p.m. The community is encouraged to share comments and questions to apply to the plans. The next PBC meeting is on March 14th. A Commissioning Agent was hired for the Windermere project. The Commissioning Agent will test the mechanical systems of the project. Trying to get the plans completed for May so they can be put out to bid for the summer.

Center School

Liaison Kupferschmid shared that Center school had 250 people in attendance at the Someone Special Dance on February 10th. A Spring Gala to raise money for school enhancements will be held, put on by the PTO. There will be a PTO raffle volunteering teacher experiences. At Ellington High School, the Bakers Guild held pop-up bakery shop with “funny money” for the faculty to use. It was a huge success.

Board of Finance

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Liaison Nord shared the BOF spent alot of time on Capital Improvements, and vehicle and equipment replacements. Mr. Greenleaf added that \$230,000 is requested for Capital Improvements. Health insurance and the ARP Act funds are to be used at the senior center for a fitness room. Tax relief for seniors is still sitting on the board, a committee is being put together. Board member Underwood volunteered to sit on the committee. The BOE budget will be presented on March 8th.

Shared Services

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Liaison Dzen shared that shared services between Town and School systems were discussed. The Town has been working with Mr. Fliss and the IT department; they have been doing a great job. The committee will continue to look for additional savings for the Board and the Town.

Windermere School

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Viens shared that the Windermere PTO meeting was a great experience, the parents work hard to put forth several projects. BINGO is back on March 3rd. The PTO is Looking for volunteer help at events. Liaison Viens plans to visit classrooms at Windermere this week.

Crystal Lake School

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Underwood shared that Crystal Lake School had their Sweetheart Dance on February 10th and she volunteered with concessions. The kids were “all dolled up” and had so much fun! March 8-10 Scholastic Book Fair and the PTO it hosting a Munson’s Chocolate Fundraiser.

CREC

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Liaison Underwood shared that on February 16th she, Steve Viens, and Liz Nord attended the CREC Legislative Forum. Dr. Nicol was also in attendance. Representative Jaime Foster also attended and assisted the Board with the delivery of letters regarding HB5003 to Senators Jeff Gordon, Saud Anwar, and Kissell’s offices. Liaison Underwood stated it is important to lobby face-to-face.

Ellington High School

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Moser shared that EHS students have looked at the possible new courses for the year with Mr. Guidry. There are four courses EHS hopes to add to the curriculum next year: Home and Automotive, Criminal Minds and Modalities, Musical Theater, and Interior Design. Additionally, EHS and EMS met recently on a department-by-department basis to work on aligning, teaching and learning, and policy and procedures to prepare incoming 9th graders and set teacher expectations. Lastly, Board member Moser shared that she has been in talks with the Athletic Director on how to better promote games and student attendance. There has been a discussion with Ellington Boosters and the possibility of local business sponsors to offset the costs of tickets for students.

ACTION ITEMS

Watch [HERE](#)

Approval of Ellington Public Schools 2023-2024 District Calendar

MOTION

First: M. Kupferschmid

Second: A. Moser

To approve the Ellington Public Schools 2023-2024 District Calendar.

Motion unanimously carried.

Approval of the 2023-2024 Hartford School Choice Seat Declarations

MOTION First: A. Moser
Second: M. Kupferschmid
To approve the 2023-2024 Hartford School Choice Seat Declarations, as presented.
Motion unanimously carried.
Miriam Underwood requested an amendment and withdrew it after discussion.

Approval of Ellington Middle School Field Trip to Washington D.C., May 30, 2023 - June 2, 2023

MOTION First: L. Nord
Second: M. Underwood
To approve of Ellington Middle School Field Trip to Washington D.C., May 30, 2023 through June 2, 2023 subject to conditions as outlined in Board Policy.
Motion unanimously carried.

Approval of Paraeducator Contract 2022-2026

MOTION First: L. Nord
Second: M. Kupferschmid
To approve the Paraeducator Contract 2022-2026, as negotiated.
Motion unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS – None

CORRESPONDENCE – None

ROUNDTABLE

Miriam Underwood shared an update from the Curriculum Committee meeting. She proposed that the Curriculum Committee review all the electives available at the High School and review the prerequisites required for certain courses. Additionally to clarify the difference between College Prep (CP), Advanced Placement (AP), and Honors for parents and perhaps change the description in the course catalog to make it more user-friendly to parents.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION First: A. Moser
Second: M. Underwood
To adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board (8:16 p.m.)
Motion unanimously carried.