

A Regular Meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, March 29, 2023, in the Ellington High School Library Media Center, 37 Maple Street, Ellington, CT 06029.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 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

ABSENT Steve Viens, Board Member

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

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Ellington High School Level 3 American Sign Language Student, Megan Audet (Pre-recorded)

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SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Drop the Bass Performance

Mr. Richard Diamond, Director of Choral Music

Ellington High School vocal performance by Drop the Bass, directed by Richard Diamond performed *Bye Bye Blues* by the Barbertones and *Man in the Mirror* by Michael Jackson for Board Appreciation Month.

Watch [HERE](#)

Education in Ellington Video - Special Board Appreciation Edition

"Do You Know What Board Members Do?" - Board Appreciation Month 2023

Watch [HERE](#)

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

Chair Dzen addressed the community and viewers. Chair Dzen thanked members for the time and energy that they put in. She shared that it does not go unnoticed by herself and the community.

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Chair Dzen also mentioned that the Winter Sports Awards took place. She congratulated all of the athletes for their amazing work. She shared that Mr. Rawlins did an excellent job coordinating the evening.

Lastly, she spoke about the budget season and that there is still shifting to do and she welcomes suggestions and opportunities to share creative and budget solutions.

CITIZEN & STAFF FORUM

Jim Maitlan, 31 Charter Road, Ellington
Jeff Catlett, 11 Quarry Street, Ellington

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CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting, February 22, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, February 24, 2023, 9:00 a.m.
3. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, March 6, 2023, 9:00 a.m.
4. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, March 6, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
5. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, March 17, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

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6. 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

Dr. Young shared about a pilot internship program at the High School. [Desco Manufacturing](#) (professional builders) was contacted to pilot an internship program to help students practice interviewing, resume writing, and career pathways. The program will begin with one senior and two juniors and provide paid work up to 3 hours/day. There is initially no cost for this program. There is potential for future employment and future internships like this.

Secondly, Dr. Young shared that Mr. Guidry reviewed the process for proposing new high school courses, which starts with surveying teachers for courses they would love to teach. Students were also surveyed. Four courses were selected to move forward: Basic Home & Auto Maintenance, Criminal Minds & Modalities, Musical Theater, and Interior Home Design.

Dr. Young also discussed High School elective course options, there are 119 in total. Courses are open to all students. Mr. Barton shared that they wanted to highlight the spread of classes that were available for EHS students from all academic backgrounds and those including practical components.

Finally, Dr. Young shared a reading program update from the State mandated suggestions that were discussed in previous meetings. Based on the analysis in developing the waiver and investigating the new options, the District may lean toward adopting one or two of the eight State recommended programs. The Board may have to think about what this may mean to adopt a new program, costs, training, and timeline. Mr. Barton shared more detailed information on the reading programs and the impact they may have. He shared there is a team of ten teachers and literacy specialists who are involved in the review, planning, and implementation of the new programs. The District is still waiting on a response from the State on the status of the waiver.

Finance

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Ms. Nord called Mr. Greenleaf to explain the hard freeze. Mr. Greenleaf explained that the budget is tight so a hard freeze was put in place on March 1, one month earlier than in the past. Specifically, utilities are affecting this decision. Essential functions and purchasing are being allowed to support programs and non-essential purchases are eliminated at this time.

Ms. Nord shared that the committee reviewed the hiring of teachers and the steps the newly hired are coming in on. Dr. Nicol shared that Ellington is an equal-opportunity employer when it comes to hiring practices. Ms. Underwood requested to have the subjects and salaries shared in the hiring report. Dr. Nicol shared that Ellington has been able to come in under what is budgeted for hiring and can add to future budget presentations for more information on this topic.

Next, the Chromebook lease program (four-year cycle) is coming to an end. Purchasing power has decreased due to interest cost and Chromebook pricing. Aaron Fliss, the Director of Technology and IT team has come up with a plan to purchase hardware instead of a new lease. There will be lower purchasing power next year and slowly over the years the district will build up to \$25k in purchasing power with no additional cost to the board.

Communications

Ms. Mullin shared that the quarterly meeting was in February. The [latest edition of Communications Corner](#) was released on March 20th. In year one, over 12k views on the newsletters so they will continue into year two. Readers are utilizing the Google forms in the newsletter and the committee is using the responses to supplement the content. Ms. Mullin also shared that Facebook and Instagram numbers are up. The next meeting is May 8th at 5 p.m. and the committee will discuss strategies for next year including Social Media posts, and ways to continue to increase numbers. Ms. Mullin asked that those on social media share the Board's posts for even further reach.

Policy

Ms. Moser shared that the 1000, 2000, and 3000 series regulations were reviewed at the last meeting. Ms. Moser shared that the next meeting is scheduled for April 4 to review the 4000 series regulations. Dr. Nicol added that the 5000 series is anticipated soon.

Operations – No meeting

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

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Dr. Nicol began by sharing that Divija Adhikary, a student requested to meet ahead of the meeting to interview Dr. Nicol. Divija was well-prepared, official, and engaging. The interview prompt was, "What Does The Superintendent Do?" Divija shared that her troop is an all-girls group under the Boys Scouts of America. She shared that she also enjoys classical dance and would like to see an elective for dance in middle school as well as sought suggestions to bring a troop to Ellington. She would like to encourage her peers and classmates to join scouting and will consider holding information sessions to share. Dr. Nicol shared that we are very proud of the work Divija is doing.

Mr. Greenleaf shared that the Windermere Project completed the Design Development phase. The project figures are still coming in high. The Town Boards will decide on sending this difference back to referendum for residents to vote on. The new total cost is still coming in less than the original amount that was passed in the last referendum. The net cost for the taxpayer would be just under \$25 million. The district is committed to return to the taxpayer as much as possible.

Directors' Reports

Monthly Financial Report

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Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations

The current balance on the budget of \$43,006,229 is \$129,168.58. This includes all encumbrances, pre-encumbrances, accounts payable, and payroll through March 28, 2023. It does not include anticipated credits to accounts which will increase the overall balance. The district put in place a "hard" freeze on March 1, 2023. It is anticipated that we will be returning approximately \$5,200 to the Town's general fund budget. The administration is working to preserve essential purchasing to allow programs and activities to continue uninterrupted. Ms. Dzen asked for clarifications on retirement accounts, non-certified salaries, and non-certified substitutes. Ms. Underwood inquired about the funding to purchase the new reading program. Mr. Greenleaf will work with Oliver Barton on how to purchase the program, including looking at the pilot program cost.

BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

Student Liaison Report

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Student Liaison Rik Roy gave his report to the Board.

- Opening Knights Players: Presented Radium Girls at CDA State Competition and placed first.
- Red Cross Club: held a blood drive on March 9th. Many students were able to donate blood.
- Vocal and Instrumental Groups performed at the Good Music, Good Cause concert on March 16th.
- Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), sent 15 students to the state conference. 11 of the 15 placed top 5 in their respective events, and many placed on the podium.
- Boys' Basketball played in the state championship at Mohegan Sun on the 19th and took 2nd place.
- Winter sports Awards and swimming banquet were held.
- SAT day went well.
- This week is UKNIGHTED Week - many clubs held events. Always a fun week!
- Green Earth Club at EHS is holding a plant sale.
- Q4 starts on March 30th

Permanent Building Committee

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Mr. Blanchette shared that the HVAC application is still on hold at the State level. Mr. Greenleaf added that the district will update as soon as we hear.

Center School

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Ms. Kupferschmid shared that Center School is celebrating Unified Week, planning fun field trips for all grades, and a school-wide celebration to honor Mr. Neil, head custodian, who is retiring on 4/28. The class placement process has also begun. The PTO is planning a fundraising gala for families.

Ellington Middle School

Watch [HERE](#)

Ms. Socha shared how proud she is of the students who attended the FBLA conference and for all the work they put into the preparation for this event. It was amazing. She was very proud of how professional and respectful the students were. The middle school Drama Club is preparing for their Spring play, Finding Nemo. Track has begun and a new volleyball club has had a lot of interest. It is a great way to introduce the sport and will feed into the high school program. The Spring Dance with the theme, Starry Night is coming up.

Board of Finance

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Ms. Nord shared that at the town's budget meeting, it was shared that the town is in a difficult economic condition with wage increases and cost of goods and services. If the budget wasn't trimmed there could be a 2.8 mill increase. The approved budget now is at \$63,696,991 and \$68,616,403 is proposed. Ms. Nord shared that we all have to work hard to bring this number down.

Wellness Committee

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Ms. Underwood shared that the Wellness Committee met and discussed plans for the all-staff Spring raffle. She shared that in February there was a district activity challenge with the Walker Tracker app. Prizes were awarded to the building staff with the most steps logged - BASES won! Food Service Director, Lindsay Stellar is conducting presentations about the Harvest of the Month in all the Elementary schools. The committee chose a logo that will be debuted at the start of the school year with surprises. The next meeting will be held in June to plan the annual report to present.

Crystal Lake School

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Ms. Underwood shared that there will be a gravel walking path added to the Crystal Lake field adjacent to the baseball field. This project is funded by the PTO with monies raised from the color run and is set to begin in

April. The path will be a huge value to the students and the community. Lastly, Ms. Underwood shared that the Running Club is accepting sign-ups.

CREC

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Ms. Underwood reported that CREC is requesting letters in support of HB5003 from area Board Members. Dr. Nicol added that the Ellington Board of Education has already sent [correspondence in support of HB 5003](#).

Ellington High School

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Ms. Moser gave a shout-out to the Good Music, Good Cause Concert. Ms. Moser also shared that it was great to see all the students in attendance and be recognized for all the work they put in during the Winter Awards banquet. The Ellington High School schedule is in the works. Curriculum re-writing work is also underway as part of the NEASC work.

ACTION ITEMS

Watch [HERE](#)

Approval of the retirement of Neil Ducharme, Head Custodian at Center School, effective April 28, 2023

MOTION

First: J. Mullin

Second: M. Kupferschmid

To approve the retirement of Neil Ducharme, Head Custodian at Center School, effective April 28, 2023

Motion unanimously carried.

Approval of EPS Healthy Food Certification (HFC) for SY 2023-2024

MOTION

First: L. Nord

Second: M. Underwood

Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Ellington Board of Education certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

Motion unanimously carried.

Approval of HFC – Food and Beverage Exemption

MOTION

First: L. Nord

Second: M. Underwood

The Ellington Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.

Motion unanimously carried.

Approval of Ellington High School 23-24 Program of Studies with the addition of four (4) new courses.

MOTION

First: K. Socha

Second: J. Mullin

To approve Ellington High School 23-24 Program of Studies with the addition of four (4) new Courses: Basic Home and Automotive Maintenance, Criminal Minds and Modalities, Exploration of Musical Theatre, and Interior Design

Motion unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS/CORRESPONDENCE – None

ROUNDTABLE

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Board Secretary, Jenn Mullin

Ms. Mullin has been approached by students who wish to remove the student fees to attend home games. Student ticket purchases are done through an app that requires a credit card. Students want to go “Fee-Less for Students”. Students would go to more events if the student fee was waived. Advocating for free student admission. An idea was that maybe fundraising or sponsorships can go towards waiving the ticket fees for students.

Ms. Mullin also shared that she would like to see a seasonal summary by Mr. Rawlins with the accomplishments of our student-athletes after each season to the Board and the public. Ms. Mullin gave a shout-out to JRegos, Hometown, Dunkin, and Zahner Construction who sponsored student tickets and support to the teams. Dr. Nicol added that in the future perhaps an annual report can be added. Many communications go out and the district is always working on ways to share information.

Board Member Kerry Socha

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Ms. Socha shared that as chair of the Operations Committee, she focuses on the safety of our schools. She asked to read the names of the victims of the Covenant School shooting in remembrance. Ms. Socha shared that there have been 42 school shootings since Uvalde, TX. Ms. Socha made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the safety of Ellington Public Schools. Liz Nord seconded. A friendly amendment was made to the motion inviting Dr. Scott Nicol and Mr. Brian Greenleaf into the session, Liz Nord accepted the friendly amendment and seconded it.

First: K. Socha

Second: L. Nord

To enter into Executive Session to discuss the safety of Ellington Public Schools inviting Dr. Scott Nicol and Mr. Brian Greenleaf into the session.

Motion passed unanimously.

8:23 p.m. Executive Session began.

8:55 p.m. Executive Session ended.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

First: K. Socha

Second: J. Mullin

To adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board (8:56 p.m.)

Motion unanimously carried.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Jennifer Mullin, Board Secretary



Approved