

A Regular Meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, in the Ellington High School Library Media Center, 37 Maple Street, Ellington, CT 06029.

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chair Jennifer Dzen.

PRESENT Chair Jennifer Dzen, Vice-Chair Kerry Socha, Secretary Jennifer Mullin, Gary Blanchette, Marcia Kupferschmid, Angela Moser, Miriam Underwood, Steve Viens, Dr. Lenora Williams, Mike Young (Virtual)

ALSO PRESENT Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations

NATIONAL ANTHEM

American Sign Language Students, Ellington High School

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SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

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Exploring By The Seat of Your Pants JWST Art Contest Winners - Windermere School

Mr. Oliver Barton presented on behalf of Gomathi Ramachandran, District STEM Specialist to recognize two students whose posters were the winners of the James Webb Space Telescope Art Contest. Windermere students Aubrey Ericson and Allison Montanari were the artists of the winning posters. The winners were presented with a Space Encyclopedia and two photos from the James Webb Telescope.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

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Chair Jennifer Dzen began by sharing congratulations to the members of the town boards and committees. Ms. Dzen shared that on behalf of the Board of Education, they look forward to working productively with everyone in this coming year. Ms. Dzen also reminded Board members that with the budget season coming up, to review the current budget and look for creative cost-effective solutions that add academic value and success for Ellington students; one of the most important roles of a Board of Education member is adopting and overseeing the district budget. Finally, Ms. Dzen wished everyone a happy and healthy holiday season.

CITIZEN & STAFF FORUM - None

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, November 15, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
2. Human Resources Monthly Report

Chair Dzen asked if anyone wished to remove any item(s) from the consent agenda. Chair Dzen announced that the Consent Agenda stands.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

SPECIAL REPORTS

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Discussion and Possible Action on Part-Time Paraeducator Compensation

Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations

Currently, full-time paraeducators who are assigned to a student whose individual education programs (IEPs) require significant behavioral interventions and/or support in daily living and/or hygiene needs regularly receive a stipend of \$750 for the 2023-24 school year. Due to the shortage of full-time paraeducators available to perform these functions, part-time educators have been completing these duties and are currently not receiving compensation. Since this is being looked at for part-time paraeducators, the stipend would be approximately \$350. The amount would be prorated based on hire and paid at the end of the completed school year. Due to a shortage of paraeducators, paying the stipend at the end of the school year also addresses retention. Steve Viens, the newly appointed Chair of the Finance Committee, was receptive to this and added that he is grateful for the

paraeducators. Mr. Viens shared that he has had personal experience with paraeducators and that they are appreciated by the families they work with. He stated he is pleased that Ellington has come through on this stipend and certainly supports moving to approve.

MOTION

First: S. Viens

Second: M. Kupferschmid

Move that the Board of Education approve compensation for part-time paraprofessionals completing hygiene/behavioral stipend duties in the amount of \$350 per part-time paraeducator or a lower prorated amount based on the start date and to be paid in June of the completed school year.

Motion carried unanimously.

Budget 2024-2025 Process Update

Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations

As we progress through the budget preparation, there will be targeted press releases to keep people informed. With this, we are also exploring the addition of targeted press releases with the town to increase transparency and knowledge throughout the process. The first event related to the 2024-2025 budget will be the BOE Budget Workshop with faculty, staff, and administration on January, 10th at 5:45 p.m., and will cover the following topics: athletics (exploring swim, gymnastics, and hockey), student needs (Special Education- specifically, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, their importance and challenges faced with finding qualified individuals for these positions), and subscriptions. Additionally, as part of the process this year, there will be presentations for instructional staff in February at all five schools.

REGULAR BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

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Curriculum

Dr. Young shared three topics discussed with the Curriculum Committee. First, the committee reviewed the K-3 Reading Program Waiver and an update for the pilot program. The waiver was submitted in April 2023 and in September 2023 EPS presented its case in a virtual meeting. CSDE has determined that EPS met two of five criteria but cannot be granted a full waiver from the requirements. EPS specifically in Fluency, Comprehension, and Vocabulary did not meet the State standard. Mr. Barton updated the committee on the work of the existing Literacy Specialists' review of six programs and selections of the Amplify Core Knowledge (ACK). The ACK program is being piloted in several classes with an anticipated report to the Curriculum Committee in January 2024.

The committee also reviewed nine EDUinnovate Grants that were awarded. Dr. Young asked that the motion to approve the grants be moved up out of order. Ms. Dzen was in favor.

Approval of EDUinnovate 2023 Fall Grant Cycle

MOTION

First: A. Moser

Second: M. Young

To approve the EDUinnovate 2023 Fall Grant Cycle as recommended by the Curriculum Committee in the amount of \$26,233.

Motion unanimously carried.

The third item discussed was the national trend of which males are falling behind on high-stakes test performance compared to females. In reading, there is a trend for more males to be deficient in fluency. On SBAC ELA fewer males are proficient, as well as in Math (grades 3 to 8). In NGSS science tests in grades 5, 8 & 11, the male student performance drops even more steeply across grades. In School Day SAT, there was a shift in the success of female students' performance from the 2022 results to the 2023 results. However, this snapshot of EPS results may be more influenced by cohorts than by overall gender trends. Mr. Young stated that we will keep an eye on this data and continue to look at the curriculum to provide options for students.

Policy

Angie Moser shared that the Policy Committee received the 9000 Series Policies - Bylaws, as recommended by the Superintendent to review. The committee will review for a month before meeting in January to discuss further.

Operations

Miriam Underwood shared that the committee met and discussed the HVAC estimates, the committee's role with the Permanent Building Committee, and updates on the Windermere project with work to begin in January. Ms. Underwood shared that she went to the PBC meeting and noted a change in the exterior plans. The exterior of the new school will be brick, glass, and board and batten instead of clapboard.

Ms. Underwood referred to Alisha Carpino to share an update on the exterior lighting update at Ellington High School; the parking lots are now brighter and safer with new bulbs added throughout. Kudos to the facilities team for getting this project done. Dr. Nicol added that our electrician should be commended for his work on the project. Jennifer Dzen mentioned that the partnership with the town for assistance with using the lift was appreciated.

The final item shared was the EHS school bell system and the request for music to be played through the system. Director of Facilities, Greg Kliman is looking into this as an option.

Finance Committee

No committee meeting this month. Finance Committee Chair Steve Viens attended the Town meeting and shared that they discussed the AARPA funding. Alisha Carpino added that Ellington was awarded the funding for the minibus purchase. This will be very beneficial to the district. Jennifer Dzen shared a thank you to the Board of Finance.

Communications

Committee Chair Jenn Mullin shared that the December Edition of Communications Corner is planned to be released on Monday, December 18th. Ms. Mullin also shared X (Twitter) data. The platform is used as a superintendent account (@supernicol) and is trending positively. The next Communications Committee meeting is on February 5th at 5:00 p.m.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

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Superintendent's Report

Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent

Dr. Nicol shared that he received a thank you note and a donation from Ellington Cheerleading and Roadrunners in the amount of \$250 which will go toward the Football program. Roadrunners uses EPS facilities to host practices.

Dr. Nicol also shared the 2024 Legislative Platform proposal with the Board. This proposal's focus will be on improving School Resource Officer (SRO) statutorily required reporting processes, the legal implications, and recommendations for statutory improvement.

Director's Report

Monthly Financial Report

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Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations

Ms. Carpino shared that the non-certified salaries and group insurance are still being evaluated. Tuition doesn't include excess cost grant and covers the overage. The current balance on the budget of \$45,083,347 is \$952,791.86. This includes all encumbrances, pre-encumbrances, accounts payable, and payroll through December 8, 2023. Ms. Dzen inquired about the Administrative Services and Retirement lines that are over budget. Mr. Viens requested that the Human Resources report include an additional line item with more detailed salary information.

BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

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Student Liaison, Noelle Krawsynski's report included the following points:

1. Q2 Mid-Point was on 12/5

2. Fall Sports Recognition was held on 12/5. Congratulations to the athletes.
3. Opening Knights Players had their holiday play, Christmas Lights, written by Mr. Prenetta. Great job by all.
4. The National Honor Society held a silent auction in support of the Jacob Rodger Poulin Foundation. Winners will be notified this week.
5. EHS held a successful Red Cross Blood Drive with 30 people donating.
6. The vocal concert is this week and the instrumental concert is on 12/21

Permanent Building Committee

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Liaison Gary Blanchette shared that discussions for furnishings are underway. Mr. Blanchette that if the Board has input they can share it with the principal. He also added to Ms. Underwood's report about the facade of the new building, and that the brick shouldn't affect the overall look.

Center School

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Liaison Kupferschmid shared that Ellington Winterfest was held and the 4th-6th grades sang at the gazebo. The Holiday Shop, Hour of Code, and PJ Day were all a hit. Thank you to PTO and families for supporting all these experiences. The chorus concert is on 12/18 at Ellington High School. On the 22nd there will be a school sing-along. Winter break is from 12/25 to 1/1 and the Winter Band concert is on January 16th.

Ellington High School

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Liaison Moser shared that the teachers are looking and deciding on the new courses for next year and midterms are January 16, 2024 - January 22, 2024.

BASES

Watch [HERE](#)

New liaison, Jenn Mullin, shared that some of our BASES students visited Lincoln Tech, some students attended "A Christmas Carol" at Hartford Stage, and others went on a shopping trip to shop for their families. Students also started volunteering at the IVY Assisted Living Community and will receive credit for it. We have three students volunteering as teacher assistants at Center School. The program is growing with three new students attending, two from East Windsor, one from Somers, and two new referrals from Manchester for the Elementary BASES program. Ms. Mullin will attend the Holiday Brunch and schedule monthly visits, working with Dr. LaPorte for times and dates.

Board of Selectman

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New liaison, Kerry Socha shared that the BOS discussed a police accountability service. Ms. Socha wasn't sure how this would affect BOE but thought it was something to note. Ms. Socha shared that it was approved to upgrade the town security cameras to improve safety.

Ellington Middle School

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New liaison Steve Viens, shared that the EMS Band Concert is on 12/19 and the Chorus Concert is on 1/9. Winter athletic and activities season is underway and students have the opportunity to participate in Basketball, Cheer, Ski Club, Zone, and Math activities. Mr. Viens also shared that the principals were very pleased with the response by students and staff for the evacuations last week and thanked all involved for their support.

Windermere School

Watch [HERE](#)

New Liaison, Dr. Williams, shared that she plans to visit Windermere on Wednesday morning and looks forward to going back to visit.

Crystal Lake School

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Underwood shared that Crystal Lake held its Holiday Bazaar. Spirit Week is next week. There are fun activities planned all week including a Door Decorating Contest which she will judge and the annual Pancake Breakfast.

ACTION ITEMS

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Second read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 4040, Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexual Assault Reporting

MOTION

First: A. Moser

Second: J. Mullin

To approve the second read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 4040, Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexual Assault Reporting.

Discussion: Miriam Underwood asked for clarification of statutory and mandated reporters.

Motion unanimously carried.

Second read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 5330, Improve Completion Rates of FAFSA

MOTION

First: A. Moser

Second: J. Mullin

To approve the second read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 5330, Improve Completion Rates of FAFSA.

Motion unanimously carried.

Second read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 5430, Physical Activity and Student Discipline

MOTION

First: A. Moser

Second: J. Mullin

To approve the second read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 5430, Physical Activity and Student Discipline.

Discussion: Miriam Underwood and Jennifer Dzen shared questions regarding the policy language and its clarity. Requested further review and clarification. Dr. Nicol will review and make recommendations.

Angie Moser withdrew the motion to approve the second read of Policy 5430.

MOTION

First: M. Underwood

Second: G. Blanchette

To table the second read of Policy 5430 until further review.

Motion unanimously carried.

Second read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 6157, Parental Access to Instructional Material

MOTION

First: A. Moser

Second: J. Mullin

To approve the second read to approve the adoption of revisions to Policy 6157, Parental Access to Instructional Material.

Motion unanimously carried.

Approval of the appointment of Board Members to Town Liaison Positions

MOTION

First: J. Mullin

Second: A. Moser

To approve the appointment of Board Members to Town Liaison Positions:

Gary Blanchette - Permanent Building Committee, Steve Viens - Insurance Advisory Board and Board of Finance, Jennifer Dzen - Shared Services Committee, Kerry Socha - Board of Selectman.

Motion unanimously carried.

Approval of Board of Education Legal Counsel

MOTION

First: S. Viens

Second: M. Kuperschmid

To approve the recommendation to the Board of Selectmen to approve the firms of Chini & Associates LLC, Ford Harrison LLP, Keinan, Escalera & McHale PC, Pullman & Comley LLC, and

Shipman & Goodwin LLP to represent the Ellington Board of Education for collective bargaining/negotiations, labor relations/personnel issues, Special Education and other educational issues for the period of 2024-2026.
Motion unanimously carried.

CORRESPONDENCE/ROUNDTABLE

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Steve Viens inquired about adding a line for Old/New Business to the agenda. Chair Dzen and Dr. Nicol added to the discussion and will maintain the current agenda set up. Mr. Viens also shared that three Board members and Dr. Nicol attended the Board Member Orientation meeting at CABE. He thought it was a good event. Mr. Viens attended a breakout session where there was an open discussion about divisive times and how other boards handled them. He felt based on the discussions, that Ellington did very well handling themselves. Mr. Viens also attended an AI break-out session where a student presented. The message was that the art of critical thinking needs to be taught and thinking ethically about how to use AI, can be a learning experience if used appropriately. Jenn Mullin added that AI has its benefits. Dr. Williams shared that she welcomed the opportunity to attend as well. It was time well spent, and she has a better understanding of her role as a BOE member. Ms. Moser added that it was amazing to see all the new board members and that many people were interested in learning about the role.

Miriam Underwood requested to add a “clean up” comment. After the elections were held she read the Board Bylaws and stated that we did not specify that they chose not to fill the treasurer position but it it listed as an option in the bylaws as a position. She asked to make a motion knowing that the position wouldn’t be filled for the record.

MOTION

First: M. Underwood
Second: G. Blanchette
To fill the Treasurer position as an officer.
Vote: 2 Ayes, 8 Nays
Motion did not carry, the position of Treasurer will not be filled.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

First: M. Underwood
Second: K. Socha
To adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board (7:49 p.m.)
Motion unanimously carried.