

A Special Meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 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 Kerry Socha, Secretary Jennifer Mullin, Gary Blanchette, Marcia Kupferschmid, Angela Moser, Miriam Underwood, Steve Viens (virtual), Dr. Lenora Williams, Mike Young (virtual)

ALSO PRESENT Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Ms. Jennifer Brown, Coordinator of Human Resources
Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations
Mr. Aaron Fliss, Director of Information Technology
Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services
Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent of Schools

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Watch [HERE](#)

Rylan Fisher, EHS Senior, Play Director - Introduced by Mr. John Guidry, EHS Principal

Mr. Guidry introduced Rylan to the Board and community as our Special Recognition. Rylan wrote and directed a play, The Eyes of Evil, that will be presented at Ellington High School and will be recognized and presented at the Connecticut Drama Festival in March. Rylan also said a few words about his experience and other plays. Congratulations Rylan!

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

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During the Legislative Breakfast hosted by CABE, there was an honest and open discussion from the legislative level about the concerns of the education system that will be presented to the state legislators and representatives. This is an ongoing conversation, but it provided a great opportunity for the Board of Education to participate. Chair Dzen also shared that the Board is in the midst of budget season. The Board had its fourth meeting and this season can be challenging. Chair Dzen acknowledged Alisha Carpino, Director of Operations and Finance, for her patience and work on the budget process.

CITIZEN & STAFF FORUM - None

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, December 13, 2023, 5:45 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting, December 13, 2023, 6:00 p.m.
3. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, December 19, 2023, 9:00 a.m.
4. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, January 10, 2024, 5:45 p.m.
5. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, January 17, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
6. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, January 17, 2024, 5:45 p.m.
7. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, January 19, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
8. Approval of Minutes: Special Meeting, January 20, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
9. 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

Watch [HERE](#)

Discussion and Possible Board Action on Proposed Budget 2024-2025

Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations

Jen Dzen shared that in the Finance Committee meeting and the discussion with Brown & Brown, the Board did not feel comfortable reducing 11%. Additional cuts were discussed and proposed with a total of approximately 90K. The Board voted unanimously to adopt a budget with 4.05% or a net increase after the ECS funding of 2.83%. This included funding for athletic transportation (underfunded by 70%), three athletic teams: boys' swimming, girls' gymnastics, and the ice hockey team, the right-sizing of nineteen facilities accounts that had been underfunded, and a board certified behavioral analyst for special education programming.

2024-2025 Budget Approval

MOTION:

First: J. Mullin

Second: M. Kupferschmid

Move that the Board of Education adopt a budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year of \$46,910,160 an increase of 4.05% over the current year, for submission to the Town of Ellington per Town Charter Section 1102.

Discussion: Miriam Underwood requested to include the net increase. A friendly amendment was made and the motion was re-stated.

MOTION:

First: J. Mullin

Second: M. Underwood

Move that the Board of Education adopt a budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year of \$46,910,160 an increase of 4.05% over the current year with a net increase of 2.83%, for submission to the Town of Ellington per Town Charter Section 1102.

Motion unanimously carried.

EHS Spain and Portugal Field Trip – Mr. John Guidry, Principal, EHS

Watch [HERE](#)

Mr. John Guidry introduced Ms. Rosemary Stoner, Mr. Jose Rivera, and Gregg Wachtelhausen from Grand Classroom to discuss the Spain and Portugal Adventure 2025. The purpose of the trip is to provide EHS students with a real-world meaningful learning and immersive travel experience designed around EHS class curricula, ACTFL standards, and district values, to create a travel environment that is accessible to all interested students. This trip will provide students with an opportunity to experience cultures and communities outside of Ellington in an authentic and meaningful way by exposure to elements of Spanish-speaking and Lusophone cultures, such as food, music, excursions to World Heritage sites, and architecture. Also by experiencing languages that are offered at EHS in an authentic and immersive setting. The trip is planned for Spring break week 2025.

To approve Ellington High School trip to Spain and Portugal (April Vacation 2025)

MOTION:

First: K. Socha

Second: M. Kupferschmid

To approve the Ellington High School field trip to Spain and Portugal during April vacation, 2025 as presented, subject to conditions as outlined in Board Policy #5150.

Motion unanimously carried.

REGULAR BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Watch [HERE](#)

Policy - No Report

Curriculum

Dr. Young shared two items: CKLA Science of Reading and new courses at the high school that were discussed at the Curriculum Committee meeting. Dr. Young and Mr. Barton shared that the pilot program worked well with positive indicators of success. These are early results. One grade level per school was asked to pilot the program this fall and feedback was collected; teachers reported positive results. There is a shift to a greater focus on phonic and phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Beyond the trial phase, grade four is planned

to be included, with efforts to consider grades five and six. Mr. Barton added seeing success in the classrooms that are piloting. Dr. Nicol added that there was a lot of work from Mr. Barton and the team to do what is best for Ellington. The Curriculum Committee did a great job as well.

The next item discussed was new high school courses. New courses designed by teachers, based on student interest included Criminal Law, Intro to Entrepreneurship, Woodworking II, Comedy in Literature, Leadership in Today's World, Henna Practices Through Ceramics, Advanced Interior Design, Latin IV- Pre AP. Jenn Mullin inquired about the addition of a Firefighter course. The committee will discuss this further at a future meeting.

Operations

Miriam Underwood shared that the committee will meet on February 14, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Finance Committee - No Report

Communications

Committee Chair Jenn Mullin shared that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 5, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS

Watch [HERE](#)

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Scott V. Nicol, Superintendent

Dr. Nicol shared that pre-pandemic, Human Resources and the Superintendent's Assistant were a combined position and Jenn Brown was willing to take on both roles. Ms. Brown established the new human resource position and she is taking the next steps in her career. He shared his gratitude and that we are proud of her and will miss her. Chair Dzen shared her thanks and appreciation and noted that getting the Human Resources position off the ground was no small feat. Dr. Nicol reported that the posting has over 25 applications in the queue and hopes in the next 2-6 weeks we can fill the role. He also shared that one of our School Security Officers has accepted a position so we will be looking to fill that soon.

Dr. Nicol also shared that he meets with members of the community and on Monday, he will speak at the Apostolic Christian (Swiss) church to share the message of Seeds of Civility and Ellington Unplugged. Dr. Nicol invites the community to contact him and invite him to their events to speak.

Legislative Agenda 2024

Watch [HERE](#)

Dr. Nicol shared that this year's agenda will address a legal issue with student records, the law unintentionally created legal issues concerning SSO reporting and student records. The Superintendent worked with the Ellington delegation to propose the agenda: [Ellington Board of Education Lobbies for Improvements to School Resource Officer \(SRO\) Statutorily Required Reporting Processes](#)

Approval of the Ellington Board of Education Legislative Platform 2024

MOTION:

First: A. Moser

Second: J. Mullin

To approve the Ellington Board of Education 2024 Legislative Platform:

Ellington Board of Education Lobbies for Improvements to School Resource Officer (SRO) Statutorily Required Reporting Processes and authorizes the Superintendent, Dr. Scott Nicol to advocate its position on behalf of the Ellington Board of Education.

Motion unanimously carried.

Director's Report

Monthly Financial Report

Watch [HERE](#)

Ms. Alisha Carpino, Director of Finance and Operations

The current balance on the budget of \$45,083,347 is \$487,194.86. This includes all encumbrances, pre-encumbrances, accounts payable, and payroll through January 24, 2024. Ms. Carpino shared that the

non-certified salaries and group insurance are still being evaluated. The remaining budget balance is under further review to determine if a budget freeze is necessary and will report back to the Board at a later date.

Human Resources Mid-Year Report

Watch [HERE](#)

Ms. Jennifer Brown, Coordinator of Human Resources

Ms. Brown shared that retention is up and the district saw a lower hiring rate this year. Even with an increase in new positions for this year (School Security, Registered Behavior Tech, BCBA, and Paraeducators) we still have a decrease in hire numbers, which shows the improvement in retention. We are still showing a trend of part-time internal staff members accepting full-time positions with the district. Substitute numbers are up across the board, custodial subs are still needed across the district.

Kindergarten Entry Age

Watch [HERE](#)

Mr. Oliver Barton, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Mr. Barton shared information about the Connecticut legislature's passing of PA 23-208 which adjusts the minimum age for entering kindergarten. Under the new law, a child must turn five years old on or before September 1st of the academic year for which the child is being registered. With this change, we are looking at a fluctuation in numbers that could create a bubble in a grade level. The Ellington Public Schools (EPS) does encourage families to register their children as prescribed by the law. Should families wish to consider an exception involving an assessment process conducted by certified Ellington educators, they should inform the school district by March 31st by beginning the EPS' Kindergarten Registration Process to be eligible for April orientation and assessments. **You can read the letter to families [HERE](#).**

BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

Watch [HERE](#)

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

1. Midterms took place from January 18–January 23, 2024
2. CMEA Music Festival was on January 6 for talented musicians at the high school, auditions were required.
3. All State Music Auditions are being held on Saturday, February 3, 2024
4. Link Crew - Truth About Hate Program is being held on February 13, 2024, for the high school freshman class.
5. A New Cell Phone Policy is in place at the high school and has been an adjustment, benefits noted however:
 - a. More face-to-face conversations are being observed
 - b. Attention rate has skyrocketed
 - c. Nice break from electronics
 - d. Students are more productive, more learning is being observed
 - e. Suggestions: to reconsider allowing the use of phones when work is finished early...in electives. Option to have phones in bookbags rather than the phone holders for comfort purposes.

Jenn Mullin noted that, as a parent, she is in favor of having the phones on the student's person rather than in a box.

Permanent Building Committee

Liaison Gary Blanchette shared no report at this time. The next meeting is scheduled for February 13, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Center School

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Kupferschmid shared that the Someone Special Dance, class parties, and no school on the 19th and 20th for professional development are on this month's calendar. Ms. Kupferschmid also shared that the PTO website has a lot of information about events coming up to benefit Center School.

Ellington High School

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Moser shared that the second semester has started. She has received feedback and heard more conversations and talking about the new Cell Phone Policy, mostly positive. Liaison Moser shared that she finds it fascinating that the teachers come up with the new courses themselves based on student interests and the work

put in. The teachers are always looking for new creative ways to help our kids and it's great to have these opportunities such as Criminal Law, for our students.

BASES

Watch [HERE](#)

New liaison, Jenn Mullin, shared that the students had a New England Tech visit, and a group of students went to Asnuntuck Community College for a visit. Finals have also been completed ahead of the second semester. A gardening project is planned in the spring and Ms. Mullin looks forward to being involved with that. The tech program is working on a business plan to incorporate a coffee/latte delivery service to faculty and staff promoting entrepreneurship learning. The program also had three mid-year graduates... Congratulations students!

Shared Services

Watch [HERE](#)

Chair Dzen shared that the topic discussed was the attempt to put ambulance, fire department, and police services in one building. There is more information to follow but the conversation has started and it is positive to hear that departments are working together to find a good solution for the Town. Volunteerism in town for these services is low so it is good that the Town is looking forward with this initial conversation.

Board of Selectmen

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Kerry Socha, shared that the lack of volunteers for the fire and ambulance will affect us all if we need to start hiring for those positions. It will also impact the budget.

Windermere School

Watch [HERE](#)

New Liaison, Dr. Williams, shared about her introductory visit to Windermere School to explore classrooms. Dr. Williams spoke with Principal Hill about challenges experienced at the school such as behavioral issues, cultural competency, and how to include the choice students more in extracurriculars. Today, Liaison Williams visited multiple classrooms across the grade levels and saw sample furniture in the running for the new building which is very exciting.

Crystal Lake School

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Underwood shared that Crystal Lake is prepping for the SweetHeart Shuffle on February 9, 2024. She spoke with Principal Powell to set a time to look at the reading program. Liaison Underwood also would like to see the math program and is hoping to get those on schedule.

CREC

Liaison Underwood shared that the Legislative Breakfast is being held on February 21, 2024, in Hartford, CT.

Ellington Middle School

Watch [HERE](#)

Liaison Steve Viens shared that EMS is having a dance on February 9, 2024. He was able to attend a Meet and Greet with the principals. They shared that they were very happy with the new SSO Richie Amera. He has made a big difference in the school atmosphere and the new data visualization tools through Infinite Campus are producing good data. Spirit Week is February 5-9th and focuses on students being confident, respectful, successful, and valued. They are also looking into a cell phone initiative and are always looking for volunteers as there is no longer a PTO at EMS to hold very beneficial fundraising events such as the craft fair.

ACTION ITEMS

Watch [HERE](#)

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

MOTION

First: A. Moser

Second: J. Mullin

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

Discussion was held regarding the statutory language in the policy.

Nays: M. Underwood, G. Blanchette, L. Williams

Ayes: M. Kupferschmid, A. Moser, J. Mullin, K. Socha, S. Viens, M. Young

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 and adoption of revisions to Policy 5430, Physical Activity and Student Discipline.

G. Blanchette abstained from the vote.

Motion unanimously carried.

To approve EHS Field Trip to the New England Music Festival, 3/21/24-3/23/24

MOTION

First: M. Kupferschmid

Second: A. Moser

To approve the Ellington High School field trip to The New England Music Festival in Foxborough, MA, from March 21, 2024 - March 23, 2024, subject to conditions as outlined in Board Policy #5150.

Motion unanimously carried.

To approve EHS Field Trip to CMEA All-State Festival and In-Service Convention, 4/4/24-4/6/24

MOTION

First: J. Mullin

Second: M. Kupferschmid

To approve the Ellington High School field trip to The CMEA All-State Festival and In-Service Convention in Hartford, CT, from April 4, 2024 - April 6, 2024, subject to conditions as outlined in Board Policy #5150.

Motion unanimously carried.

To accept the retirement of Laura Santos, CLS Special Education Teacher, effective June 30, 2024

MOTION

First: M. Kupferschmid

Second: K. Socha

To accept, with regret and best wishes, the retirement request of Laura Santos, Special Education Teacher, at Crystal Lake School, effective June 30, 2024.

Motion unanimously carried.

To accept the retirement of Leslie Wolfenden, Occupational Therapist, effective March 1, 2024

MOTION

First: J. Mullin

Second: K. Socha

To accept, with regret and best wishes, the retirement request of Leslie Wolfenden, Occupational Therapist, effective March 1, 2024.

Motion unanimously carried.

To accept the medical retirement of Katharine D'Addona, Teacher, Center School, effective October 1, 2023

MOTION

First: A. Moser

Second: M. Kupferschmid

To accept, with regret and best wishes, the medical retirement request of Katharine D'Addona, Teacher, effective October 1, 2023.

Motion unanimously carried.

To approve the extended maternity leave for JoAnna Schmidt, Asst. Principal, Windermere School

MOTION

First: J. Mullin

Second: A. Moser

To approve the requested unpaid extended child-rearing leave of JoAnna Schmidt, Windermere Assistant Principal, to commence on the completion of her FMLA, approximately November 20, 2024, to January 2, 2025.

Motion unanimously carried.

CORRESPONDENCE/ROUNDTABLE

Watch [HERE](#)

Secretary Jennifer Mullin shared a proposal to remove student fees for athletic events. She would like to propose increasing the pay to pay for athletes and in turn providing free admission to games and events. She added that this is so students can be able to support their fellow classmates and the cost can be expensive to attend a game. It was noted that season passes are available to assist with this. A board discussion continued. The app GoFans was also discussed its use, and the cost/concerns. Dr. Nicol shared that he would work with Anderson Rawlins to gather data and information to look at the financials and provide a proposal/recommendations for the Board's review for consideration for next year.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

First: L. Williams

Second: M. Young

To adjourn the Special Meeting of the Board (8:23 p.m.)

Motion unanimously carried.