

**EAST LONGMEADOW SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**



**District Mission**

"Our mission in the East Longmeadow Public Schools is to promote achievement and accountability in all endeavors as we educate today for the challenges of tomorrow"

**DATE:** January 19, 2021  
**TIME:** 6:00 P.M.  
**WHERE:** Superintendent's Conference Room

**Meeting called to Order by :** Gregory Thompson, Chair  
THIS MEETING IS BEING HELD REMOTELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS' MARCH 12, 2020 ORDER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN MEETING LAW MA G.L.c. 30A, SECTION 20.

PER THE GOVERNORS' ORDER THE PUBLIC WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PHYSICALLY ACCESS THIS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC CAN ACCESS THE MEETING VIA LIVE STREAM AT:

As a preliminary matter, this is Gregory Thompson, School Committee Chair. Permit me to confirm that all members and persons anticipated on the agenda are present and can hear me. Members, when I call your name, please respond in the affirmative

Sarah Truoiolo - here  
William Fonseca - here  
Antonella Raschilla - here  
Elizabeth Marsian-Boucher - here  
Gregory Thompson - here  
Gordon Smith, Superintendent - here  
Pamela Blair, Asst. Supt for Business - here  
Kathy Celetti, Recording Secretary - here  
Heather Brown, Dir. of Curriculum - here

**William moved to take a (5) minute recess at 6:10, Elizabeth seconded the motion**

**Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose (0), motion carries (5-0)**

Chair: We are back from our recess. Thank you for your patience. Unfortunately, this evening we are not able to live-stream via Facebook. We currently have the Planning Board who is now live-streaming through Facebook and we can only as a Town have one stream. I apologize for all those trying to log in tonight. If anybody out there want to let any of their friends or neighbors know that, that they have to come through the zoom meeting to see us tonight. That would be much appreciated.

**Approval of Minutes**

**Opportunities for Visitors to Address the Committee:**

The following parents and ELPS staff addressed their concerns.

Cindy Knowles  
Maya Knowles  
Bruce Goldman  
Jennifer Hutchinson  
Kate Dugan  
Paula Burke

**Committee/Sub-committee Communications :**

**Elizabeth :** My daughter is Cohort A; she was able to attend high school today. She was nervous over the past few weeks, sometimes it's scary, and we as parents make things scarier and we shouldn't. We were very positive about her going in. She's a little trepidation. She had a really wonderful day. I give that credit to all the teachers at the high school. It goes across the board. They made it a wonderful experience. She was also surprised that the technology was working well. She was concerned about the kids that were remote, were they going to get booted off. She had a great time, I saw a smile on her face, that I too haven't seen. Thank you!

**Chair:** I want to remind families of what we are looking for. Certainly the safety of our staff and students is priority number one. If everybody can envision that they are in their own household pod, those are your direct contacts. As we move into in-person learning, we wear masks, maintain social distancing and hand wash, we don't necessarily move into another pod, we are moving out into the public. If you are with other people and you are unmasked, you are now part of their pod. So what that does, is it expands our contact with other people, so I would like to ask families that we think about how large our pods are as we move forward so that we can all make a concerted effort to try to keep the numbers down in East Longmeadow. And try to keep our students and staff as safe as possible.

**Presentations**

**Superintendent 's Report**

5.1.1 Mr. Smith and the Leadership Team gave an update on the Instructional Model. Mr. Smith said that today was our first day in the Hybrid Instructional Model and operations and instruction went well. It was great to see the students. Transportation went well, we need to iron out a few things. We average for attendance around 98%. Meadow Brook (97.6%); Mapleshade (98.5%); Mountain View was close to 100%; Birchland (97.3%); and the high school (98%). Our students showed up both in hybrid and remote learning.

**Ms. Brown :** On January 12, our presentation was put together by Conor Martin showing staff the basics of setting up equipment. The 15<sup>th</sup> we let the principals decide if they want live presentation or structure something else into their day. I presented at Meadow Brook and provided modules for all teachers at the other schools around models of teaching concurrently so it's manageable, so we can optimize time we give to both the kids in front of us and at home, on ways to keep them engaged.

**Mr. Smith :** The first slide is Meadow Brook's car line. Ms. Dakin and her staff passed out car cards to help organize future car lines. This car line took a little bit longer. From road to building, it took about 15 minutes. We will continue to work on making it more efficient. The students were happy getting out of the cars.

**Mrs. Dakin :** We are doing a staggered dismissal. We have three different color transportation cards and asked the parents the grade their child was in, as staff was handing them out. Staff was available as students entered the building so that they could escort them to their classrooms. We had only one student who forgot their mask. The kids did really good with their masks. Seeing the kids was the highlight of the teacher's day. I did get to speak with teachers at different grade levels, and Renee and I were filling in some gaps with certain duties. One second grade teacher said that at the end of the day, she had all the students do a breakout together. And what they did was share their weekend news, pictures and stories with one another. The teacher did say, the one thing that she needs to keep in the back of her mind, is that we are so used to focusing on either the kids on our screen or the kids right in front of us. This is day one, there

is a shift, a learning curve with it. Teachers are doing small group instructions, and some teachers have the video right up on the screens so they can see the kids.

It does look a little different in the classrooms, and that is something that we really need to be mindful of. It is a shift in thinking and teaching.

**Dr. Allen:** I think part of the shift is they are used to teaching remote. The challenge at the middle level is getting back into the vibe of teaching in the classroom, having the kids in front of you, after teaching the past ten months in front of the computer screen. I think that the remote kids are going to get a lot of attention, especially as we start to figure out how to teach hybrid.

**Mr. Fredette:** We had really good protocols in place, staff did a nice job ensuring the students could follow those protocols. How to enter the building in a timely manner; teachers ready to go at 8:05. When the kids came out of their cars, they were greeted by their teachers, they entered their rooms, and the teachers took care of the rest. The teachers went through all the protocols, spacing, hand hygiene and mask wearing. They did their best to keep students in front of them engaged with the students at home simultaneously. There are a few things we need to adjust, but overall sentiment of everybody is, seeing the students was really great. Improve our model as we go forward.

**Ms. Santaniello:** The best part of the day was seeing the kids in person. Ms. Bongiovanni gave me the best review of the day, she said that Physical Ed went much more smoothly than she thought it would. Last week she came in and taped off the floors to make sure everyone had their own space. We do have a few glitch things that we need to work on in terms of our routines. I was more nervous about the morning car line and that went so smoothly, that the afternoon car line disappointed me, but we will keep working on it. Teachers working really hard, the kids were great about wearing their masks. The teachers said they are doing the best for all the kids. We will work on all of the issues we had today and hopefully it will get smoother as we go.

**Dr. Allen:** BP had a great day, we had 177 in the building, that's 30% of our 583 kids right now. I can't really say enough about the staff, no matter how they were feeling, they welcomed the kids with open arms, they were positive, optimistic, adhered to all safety protocols and they were even more organized than I could hope for. We are escorting kids on every transition. So many new routines and procedures and the staff, they were amazing, they hit it out of the park. More importantly, they made the kids feel good and safe. We do have to work on our PM car line. Overall, it was just a great day. Great to see the kids. It was a credit to all the staff because they were amazing.

**Mr. Paige:** Today was just awesome. We had a blast from before the first bell rang and after that last bell for the day rang. First time in a long time the building felt like school. That's a credit to all of our staff, all the planning they put in and implemented and got us ready for today. Everything went smoothly between the classes, transition time, lunches, it was hard to find something that didn't go well. In terms of in-person learning, technology worked for our teachers. The teachers were able to engage both with the kids in front of them and making sure those kids were getting what they needed, also with the remote kids as well. I had a conversation with a student who stopped by the office, she has practice in the afternoon, been remote all day and I asked her what was it like learning remotely today? She said that it was the exact same, there was no difference between what she got last week and getting now. That's a credit to our staff, the hard work they are doing, they are experts in this environment right now. They hit the ground running, it was phenomenal to see across the board. I was surprised at how excited I was throughout the day. Big thank you to you guys and our staff and all of the EL community for pulling this off today and making it work.

**Chair:** As a father, I'm excited for my two girls to go back next week. They experienced today in remote standpoint, and noticed things going on in the classroom and the value on the remote side. As we continue forward, I know the staff will work hard to make sure it's successful for our students. Hopefully by next fall, latest winter we are all back to some sense of normalcy. Appreciate all your work and the staff for all the work they have done moving us into the next phase of more in-person learning.

**Mr. Smith:** Two highlights, greeting students and staff at the beginning of the day. Before the school committee meeting, I was in the hallway here at the high school and there were three high school students working on the backdrop for Spartanum. That was exceptional, that made this feel like we are getting back to school as we know it. They were upbeat, wearing their masks, getting Spartanum ready. Thank you all, thank to our students and families.

5.1.2 Mr. Smith and Mr. Paige, HS Principal gave an update on the Winter Athletic Fees

Winter sports began on January 11<sup>th</sup> and will run through to February 28<sup>th</sup>. We are off to a great start. All safety protocols in place.

Mr. Paige said that the user fee will increase from what we had in the fall because we are providing transportation. We are looking at \$125 instead of the \$149 athletic user fees. All teams will be provided with transportation.

**William moved to accept the recommended \$125 athletic fee for winter sports season as presented, Antonella seconded the motion.**

**Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose (0), motion carries (5-0)**

#### **Assistant Superintendent of Business Report:**

##### **Old Business:**

6.1 Revision of the ELPS 2020-2021 School Year Calendar was presented by Mr. Smith

On our school calendar we are recognizing many different holidays and events throughout the year. This is our continued work with our Diversity and Equity Committee. On our calendar we recognize Juneteenth or June 19<sup>th</sup>, it's a holiday that commemorates the ending of slavery in the US. Governor Baker voted this summer for it to be a state recognized holiday. We did have it on our calendar recognizing Juneteenth which falls on a Saturday. Recently the Town put out their recognized observance schedule and they are recognizing Juneteenth on Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup>. It makes sense that we as a school district also recognize it on that Friday. Our recommendation is to recognize Juneteenth on that on Friday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, with no school on that day for ELPS.

**Elizabeth:** Is it the Town that picked that date, or was that the state.

**Mr. Smith:** The state has recognized Juneteenth (June 19<sup>th</sup>) as a state holiday. The state has not directed us to recognize it on that Friday. Other state holidays, if they fall on a Saturday are observed on that Friday, if it falls on a Sunday, it's observed on that Monday. The Town is recognizing it.

**Elizabeth:** Since it's so close to the end of the school year, perhaps in the future if it falls on the weekend, we observe it on the following Monday. I'm afraid of losing students on that last day.

**Chair:** This is just a discussion, in the future, if the day should fall on a Saturday, potentially we would put it on a Monday so as not to affect the last day of school. We have had two snows days, so our last day of school is Monday, June 21<sup>st</sup>.

**William:** The other thing to look at is the bargaining and collective bargaining units.

Mr. Smith said that this is the right decision. This is a big step forward and it supports the work that our Diversity and Equity Committee accomplishing.

**Elizabeth: I move to accept the calendar with the update showing June 18<sup>th</sup> as the date we observe Juneteenth, Antonella seconded the motion.**

**Chair: Any further discussion?**

**Elizabeth: That's fine, but I think we should contact the Town and have a discussion with them, so that we are prepared in the future and maybe bring it back.**

**Chair: That makes sense, when we look at our calendar for next year, we can potentially modify a beginning and end date. Look at it holistically to your point Beth.**

**Chair: All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose (0), motion carries (5-0)**

##### **New Business:**

7.1 Budget Development Process for FY22 was presented by Mr. Smith

January 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>:

- Meeting with the Leadership Team to discuss positions unfilled or eliminated in the budget reduction; identify urgent needs and areas of potential growth; to finalize discussion on identified urgent needs and lost positions; identify and discuss areas for growth
- Review recommendations and guidance received from the School Committee, Town Manager and Town Council

January and February Building School Council Meetings

- Discuss FY22 budget development and building needs

January and February Dept. Heads and Faculty Meetings

- Discuss budget development process and building needs with staff

School Committee Budget Development Meetings

- January 19<sup>th</sup> - Overview of process and timelines
- February 1<sup>st</sup> - Review positions lost in FY21 and identify urgent needs, and areas for possible growth
- February 22<sup>nd</sup> - Prioritize requests in FY22 for discussion with Town Manager and Town Finance Dir. and schedule meetings

Town Manager sends a proposed budget to the Town Council on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Town Council adopts final budget on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Smith said that our Capital plans have been shared with Mr. Fenney, Superintendent of DPW. In November, we had prioritized our projects, my understanding is that Mary McNally, Town Manager is looking for a cover letter, with our five-year plan and prioritize plan and what Mr. Fenney is trying to do is pull everything into one large town plan. We will submit that information this week.

7.1 The ELPS Social Media Policy was discussed. There have been some questions on this policy, it does need some updating. We will work collectively with Unit A, bring it to the Policy Sub-committee and then back to the committee for approval.

**William moved to adjourn at 7:25 PM, Elizabeth seconded the motion.**

**Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose (0), motion carries (5-0)**

**For a more detailed version of this meeting , go to: [www.eastlongmeadowma.gov](http://www.eastlongmeadowma.gov) (ELCAT)**

Minutes Recorded by: Kathy Celetti

Respectfully submitted by: Superintendent Smith

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Signature