

**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: May 24, 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.

Roll Call: Elizabeth Marsian-Boucher, Antonella Raschilla, Gordon Smith, Superintendent of Schools, Greg Thompson, Sarah Truoiolo, William Fonseca, Pamela Blair, Asst. Superintendent for Business, Kathy Celetti, Recording Secretary (Remote)

Approval of Minutes

2.1 Approval of the May 10, 2021 executive session meeting minutes.

Elizabeth moved to approve the May 10, 2021 executive session meeting minutes, Sarah seconded the motion.
Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

2.2 Approval of the May 10, 2021 regular session meeting minutes.

William moved to approve the May 10, 2021 regular session meeting minutes, Sarah seconded the motion.
Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

2.3 Approval of the May 17, 2021 executive session meeting minutes

Sarah moved to approve the May 17, 2021 executive session meeting minutes, William seconded the motion.
Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

2.4 Approval of the May 17, 2021 regular session meeting minutes.

Antonella moved to approve the May 17, 2021 regular session meeting minutes, Elizabeth seconded the motion.
Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

Opportunities for Visitors to Address the Committee:

Committee/Sub-committee Communications :

Sarah: I want to thank the individuals who put out the signs for the seniors. Driving around town it's beautiful to see that reminder that we have seniors graduating this year and that they were able to get sponsorship for the signs. To be able to drive around town to celebrate our seniors this year, especially given the year that they have had. I attended an event alongside the superintendent at Mountain View School this past Friday. Some of our students were able to talk about the district goal of social emotional learning and how to regulate one's emotions. They put us through a very rigorous PowerPoint and then engaged all of us in a competition using Kahoot which also showed off some of the instructional technology that they have been able to access over the past year. It was a really nice opportunity to see the students in action in the building and also an opportunity to engage with some of the teachers around some really great learning that the kids are having. A good way to spend a Friday morning.

Mr. Smith: Ms. Truoiolo is a whiz on Kahoot. She took the first round I believe incredible fast.

Sarah: They were excellent teachers, those students with the PowerPoint. Nice way to spend a Friday, so thank you for the invitation.

Antonella: I attended an ELEE meeting this past week. They wanted to make sure that teachers were reminded to fill out those applications for the grants. The applications are due on June 1st.

Elizabeth: I have gone to a couple of the track meets and it's nice to see the kids outside. Just doing what they are supposed to be doing at this age and enjoying themselves. You could see the lacrosse out there, they are all out there today. Nice to see.

Gregory: Certainly sports a little more normal, no masks for the players which is great. The coaches are still wearing masks, so nice to start to move back tonight.

Antonella: I attended a volleyball game this past week and it was nice to see everyone was following all guidelines, social distancing and great sportsmanship.

Gregory: Just a quick reminder that tomorrow is the budget hearing for the Town. It's scheduled for 7:00 p.m. through the Town Council meeting which actually begins at 6:00 p.m. But the official Town Public Hearing is at 7:00 p.m. We will be represented tomorrow and we have that on our agenda further for discussion. I just wanted to make that note.

Presentations

Superintendent 's Report

Assistant Superintendent of Business Report:

5.2.1 ELHS gift donation from Ohiopyle Prints was presented by Ms. Blair

Elizabeth moved to accept the check for \$46.59 from Ohiopyle Prints , Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

5.2.2 Project Lead the Way Sustainability Grant for Mapleshade was presented by Ms. Blair

William moved to approve the PLTW Sustainability Grant for Mapleshade in the amount of \$1,229 , Sarah seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion?

Elizabeth: I want to say that the PLTW at the high school, if you take the class you get within certain parameters, you can actually get college credits towards Rochester Technically. Not sure if people were aware of that. I was surprised, my kid got it.

A motion has been made and seconded, all those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

Old Business:

6.1 Discussion of End of Year FY21 budget and the development of the FY22 budget.

Chair: A quick recap of where we are in terms of FY22 budget development. Tomorrow, Town Budget Hearing, the Town Council is the authority for the budget, the approval authority. They will hear from the Finance Oversight Committee, the Chair said that we would be able to speak to address our budget. The President of the council and I assume the Town Manager will be there. We met collectively with the Town Manager and Town Council a couple of months ago,

we talked about a level services budget, the target for the town. We decided as a group to go collectively with the level services budget. Although there were things we had foregone last year in terms of (5) positions we gave up including an Asst. Principal at the high school as well as other valuable positions. We submitted a level services budget and the Finance Subcommittee has met multiple times and discussed cutting that level services budget by over \$400,000. The discussion tomorrow will be two options for the council. Ms. Truololo and I are scheduled to speak at the beginning of their meeting to address some of our concerns and some of the impact that a cut to level services would in terms of staffing. There will also be an opportunity during the open forum for us to have some input as well. So, between those two situations we have an opportunity to present our case. Some of the things I would like to address this evening are: the Finance Oversight Committee recommended and increase to our School Committee stipend. As an elected official, we do receive compensation from the town. They collectively agreed to increase that by just over \$2,000. About \$400 for each member. IN lieu of the Finance Oversight Committee I would like to give that back. If they are going to look to cut our budget, I don't think its right. Even though it's only \$8/month for us, we are appreciative of anything, but for us to take some sort of salary increase. With that, if the committee is in favor, I would like, if we could move to offer to not request an increase in the School Committee stipend pending discussion by Town Council tomorrow if they recommend a decrease from level services. We would request that our compensation not be increased. We are going to work with the Town Council. I would like a motion to offer that return pending tomorrow's discussion

William moved to withdraw the request for increase in School Committee stipend pending the discussion tomorrow with Town Council, Elizabeth seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

Chair: I will convey that to the Town Council President so that he is aware of that ahead of time.

Chair: The other part of the discussion for tomorrow is we did commit because of the change in format to the education process this. We realized the savings, we were not all in the buildings, we had some extended leaves, and we didn't use the sub pay, we used the ESSER to pay for the extended subs/long-term subs. We didn't have many short-term subs, so we have some savings there. We have already committed to the Finance Oversight Committee and Town Council to potentially return up to \$200,000. Since the difference of the FOC from our level services budget is \$404,000, I would like to recommend, working with our Assistant Superintendent for Business collectively come up with a way to return up to \$400,000 so that we can offer an olive branch to fill that gap for this year so that we don't have to realize cuts to staff this year and collectively work with the Town Council to make this process more streamlined, more understandable and more predictable for all of us instead of us learning of a potential, almost a \$400,000 cut two weeks before we are supposed to have the budget hearing. Speaking with the Council President today, I mentioned that we would discuss this tonight. I don't know what effects it will have, certainly he as one member of the whole council, there is no guarantees. If we at least commit to offering that back, and we would have to do that in the use of our federal grant as well. We will have to be more useful of that in terms of our budgeting to have that dollar amount left. It was a strange year, we didn't have all our staff in and we have some money from the federal government. We did discuss that we could potentially do up to the \$400,000 for this year. It would not be something we could do every year. But because of the circumstances this year with staffing, with us being out remote and the availability of the ESSER Grant we could potentially supplement for this year, the \$400,000 and maintain our level services budget. The impact would not impact the mill rate. Because if we fund that gap it won't increase the mill rate. It will be a discussion for next year. The one thing I would say is the ESSER Grant is a two year grant. It's sizeable, but we have big plans for it in terms of summer school programming, we want to do catching up for students. That's really what that funding is made for the next two years for us collectively decide how to best support our students. I am hesitant to offer any of that ESSER because it's going to become in handy and we don't know what next year or the year after looks like. With that said, with the Asst. Superintendent and Superintendent we collectively feel that we can do the \$400,000, commit to returning that so that we can say to the Council, we are working collectively together if we can just do the level services this year, discuss the budget process going forward next year so that we are not caught off guard at that meeting where we meet with the Town Council and Town Manager, has some meaning in terms of when you say level services that should mean something.

William: Let's face it, its one pool of money for the entire town. We don't know what precipitated this \$400,000 reduction. So to extend it out with an olive branch, using your term Greg I think is a goodwill gesture on our part. Realizing that the discussion does have to take place next year early on to get a clear definition of either level funding or level services and what that means in the budget development process.

Antonella: I understand, but I'm hesitant, we don't know what it's going to be like when all of our kids come back. We don't know what their needs are going to be when they do come back. We need to get them acclimated back to the way things were so I do understand what you are saying, but I'm hesitant about giving up some of that money. I feel like we need it for our kids.

Chair: There will be loss in learning just because of the nature of the pandemic and education of this year. I would rather say that we can fund our staff fully and not have to look to cut up to (6) positions this year, so that we have our full staff to deal with these issues. More staff we take away, the less we are going to be able to deal with those issues.

Antonella: I'm talking more about the social emotional issues. Some of these kids haven't been back all year. We don't know what's going on or how they are feeling, whether it's anxiety or what. I feel like the number one thing is to make sure that our kids are socially and emotionally fine, and then look towards the learning gaps. It cost money.

Chair: Even the tents cost money, we spent about \$100,000 in tent rentals, and so that's 5% of ESSER III. That's the point of ESSER, we want to be able to use that to catch up and move forward.

William: The fear of unknown right now, the challenges ahead of us. Everybody need to understand that this is a one-time deal. That we are not going to keep doing it this way.

Chair: We won't have ESSER, we won't have remote learning with less staff in the buildings.

Elizabeth: To Antonella's point, we know actively that our guidance and our social emotional adjustment counselors are actively working on things on any given day. It's not like it hasn't hit yet, it's already there. We will see what we get come fall.

Chair: We are already working on some things, summer school offerings will be more than they have been, and also looking forward to next year to getting we back to where we were.

Ms. Blair: 20% of the ESSER III Grant has to go directly to learning. This grant does extend through to September 2024. The intention is not do a quick spend it all in one year, but to mindful and thoughtful and partner with how best to strategize what's best for our students. Since my 3rd quarterly report in March, the kids have come back. There has been nothing normal about this year, so our spending has been different this year. I am confident that there are budget lines that may have funds remaining.

- Contracted Services: due to online learning some of the typical contact services were reduced (legal services/transportation)
- Academic Instructional Software: due to remote instructional model with which the school year began, the District had to spend differently for some of our instructional software. These expenditures were covered by the CVRF and ESSER Grant. 20% of the ESSER III Grant has to go to learning.
- Salary Line Items: Unpaid LOA; Resignations (paras); ESSER Grant covered Long-term Subs since it was COVID related; Noon-aides weren't needed (3/4 of the year); Paraprofessional Extra Duties weren't need (3/4 of the year); Substitutes (Perm Building Subs) covered under the ESSER Grant; Medical Asssts. weren't needed as some Special Ed students chose to remain remote. FOR ALL OF THESE REASONS I FORESEE FUNDS REMAINING IN THE SALARY ACCOUNTS.
- Individual Professional Development: Typically these funds are spent throughout the year by individual Unit A staff members utilizing the \$650 outlined in the contract. This individual PD just didn't happen like it normally does. I DO FORESEE FUNDS REMAINING IN THESE ACCOUNTS.
- Supply Account: Many of the custodial supplies needed such as disinfectants and hand sanitizer qualified for CVRF and ESSER Grant funding. We utilized that funding source instead of the operational budget. Other items such as copier paper and classroom supplies have been different this year. Since we weren't in school, YOU WILL SEE FUNDS REMAINING IN THESE ACCOUNTS.
- Equipment/Repair Account: These accounts were not utilized to degree they typically are. Equipment was not being used while remote learning. I DO FORESEE FUNDS REMAINING IN THESE ACCOUNTS

Sarah: I think Mr. Thompson and the committee here are trying to offer a creative short-term solution to what is a long-term concern. We are trying to repurpose funds that are meant to benefit children to support the town as a whole. That's not something that should be taken lightly nor should the situation that we are all

currently. The way Pam described it, trying to avoid this financial cliff is really important for people to understand. We need to ensure that we are safeguarding taxpayers and the town's money, but at the same time working to support the educational opportunities our students have afforded to them and that those are equally important. Trying to get creative and think of ways that we can stop from getting any further than it needs to get with a short-term solution is great. To Antonella's point, we need to think about long-term and how we ensure that our kids are receiving the financial support they need, so they can continue to receive the educational opportunities they deserve.

Chair: The other issues I want to address, in the discussion with the Finance Oversight Committee, I'm sure may come up with Town Council tomorrow is enrollment in the district. Because of COVID we are down 170 students. Families decided because we were remote, they put their kids in private schools or parochial schools and be in full-person. With our enrollment being low, our Chapter 70 (state aid money) dropped. Since then, we have had 63 students either re-enroll or new enrollments. Families have until the first day of school to enroll. Also Chapter 70 formula changed this year because of the Student Opportunity Act. East Longmeadow received the minimum increase versus other towns that received larger than the minimum increase. Never in my time have the town correlated or related Chapter 70 percentage increase or decrease to town increase or decrease. In fact we have a chart that shows there is no correlation between the two. So to say that our Chapter 70 has gone down this year, we should cut the budget because we are down 170 students and now it's 107. Next year Chapter 70 will start to come up again. It's never been directly related to Chapter 70. If we related to the town side to Chapter 70 none of us would be here for this process. We could just apply that percentage to the town budget, we would be done. I just wanted to clear up those two issues. I will try to convey that with the Council President today. Those two points increase the mill rate or the Chapter 70 related to the town contribution and the mill rate calculation from the Finance Oversight Committee is actually down .5¢ in their projection instead of increasing. The operating budget as proposed actually will drop the mill rate. We are hopeful that we will come out of there with level services. The Town Department that came in level are staying level. Some departments that made requests, other departments within the town for additional staffing are being recommended. So it can't be a town financial town thing because some budgets are getting an increase and we are getting a decrease in level services. We are hopeful with the olive branch of \$400,000 will bridge the gap to get us the same mill rate we would have anyway. We are fighting for the kids and staff we are still in this. I am convinced with these two measures, hopefully we get a little closer. Tomorrow is the Budget Hearing, if parents want to give their concerns, we would certainly be open to that. Town Council meeting at 6pm, 7pm is the hearing. Log in through the zoom meeting on the town website, Town Council agenda, you will see the zoom link, raise your hand.

New Business:

7.1 The Rotary Summer Concert Series was discussed.

William moved to approve the Rotary Summer Concert Series as presented, Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

7.2 Rotary Club Foundation request for use of ELHS grounds for Independence day Fireworks from June 28th - July 3, 2021 was presented

William moved to approve the Rotary Club Foundation request for use of ELHS grounds for the Independence Day Fireworks, Elizabeth seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

7.4 Request for use of ELHS parking lot for "Coffee with a Cop" Car Seat Safety on June 5, 2021

Elizabeth moved to approve the use of ELHS parking lot "Coffee with a Cop" Car Seat Safety on June 5th, with the exception of HS graduation rain date on June 5th, Coffee with a Cop " will be allowed at Meadow Brook, Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

7.3 Rotary Club Foundation request to affix a sponsorship banner on the fencing around the Tennis Courts and exterior fence of the turf field from July 3-5th. 2021 was presented.

Elizabeth moved to allow the banner to be attached on the fencing around the Tennis Courts and exterior fence, Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor say aye (5), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (5-0)

William moved to adjourn at 6:50PM, Elizabeth seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, 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 (ELCAT)

Minutes Recorded by: Kathy Celetti

Respectfully submitted by: Superintendent Smith