

# 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:** October 5, 2020

**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:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/98803574707?pwd=dmVJRjZhc3VmaWAwYm42RWRvSmlaZz09> Passcode: 406250

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

### Approval of Minutes-None

2.1 Approval of the September 21, 2020 regular session meeting minutes.

**William moved to approve the September 21, 2020 regular session meeting minutes, 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)**

### Opportunities for Visitors to Address the Committee:

**Lisa Dagnoli:** I am a resident of EL for forty years plus, I have kids in three different schools and I have been a business owner in town for over twenty years. First and foremost, I want to thank you guys, the Superintendent, School Committee, principals and teachers. I do have to say from speaking to people we are very impressed this far with EL planning implementation on the organization of the remote program. So far his fall has been absolutely wonderful. So than you to all of you for putting that together. The other thing I would like to say, you know as a resident I don't agree or disagree with your vote to go fully remote. I think you made the best decision at the time. We all have opinions. I definitely respect yours and I just hope you can respect mine and those that maybe don't fully agree. I know there is no right call, there is no one fits all solution, so I'll support whatever direction you guys move forward in. I hope the resident's voices and concerns are incorporated into what that will look like. So that being said, I just hope that we can look at the planning for the schools in either direction, whether remote, hybrid or full-in person, just earlier. I get it that you guys made a decision, you are moving forward, but can't we look at the data. Look at the direction earlier, just to kind of get the ball rolling. So can we assess the situation month to month. I guess my question is, is the ultimate goal to get the kids back into school full time in-person and if so, what triggers or quote data points are you relaying on to initiate that transition. And when all we quote ready? What data are you using to define what ready is? I know you are meeting in December and that's the plan, so I guess like I said, just giving my input. Realistically, with the kids and teachers having a timeline of January 15<sup>th</sup> for a possible transition, I'm asking you is that a tight timeline. Is it going to give you enough time to pivot if we are going to hybrid, full in-person. It just seems like meeting in December and then January 15<sup>th</sup>, there are families that have to plan. You know what am I going to do with my kids, am I going back to work. So these are just some things I want to throw out there for you guys to think about. Most importantly to me is my kids miss their teachers, they miss friends, miss seeing human beings. I just feel like they are very isolated and I'm worried not about my kids, but all the kids out there. They are just home in front of a computer. They don't have social connections. I know it's the way it is, but it's un-natural this long to just be stuck in your home and I guess it's hard to ask questions. The remote learning has been as you guys experienced, but the internet connections goes on and off, the microphone is on and off, there's poor stream quality. The kids are afraid to speak, there is too much speaking at once. The quality of education remotely is just not the same to me and this is just my opinion. There is just not replacement for in-person learning. I know 2/3 of Massachusetts schools are in-person in one form or another. Adults are allowed to go out, we go out with friends, go out to dinner, we go to work. The casinos are open, obviously, with safety precautions. Why can't our kids go to school with safety measures? They can play sports, but they can't go to school. I don't know what message we are sending these kids about school priority and grit. Again, those are my thoughts. I will support whatever direction we go, but I just ask the School Committee, Gordon, everybody to please reconsider looking at our current education model earlier than December. And please do whatever is possible to work towards the ultimate end goal of getting our kids physically back into the schools as soon as possible. Like my son's first grade teacher says every day, "we've got grit, we don't quit". Thank you

**Chair:** As we go further into the agenda, we will be discussing a lot these things. We do have our health experts joining us this evening. We will be talking about some of the parameters that we will be looking for in order to get our students back in the buildings. Some of the benchmarks and I just want to re-emphasize that we continue to work on plans to either go hybrid or full in on an ongoing basis. Our goal yes, is to get our students back in the building. We fully recognize that this is not an ideal situation, specifically for the youngest of families of young students. We know there are struggles with this, as we have said before, the best we can offer would be allow for a two day a week hybrid model. We will continue to monitor, we will discuss further in tonight's agenda, and we will keep moving forward.

### Committee/Sub-committee Communications

**Elizabeth:** I just want to share that Mapleshade actually has a really great fundraiser going on right now for \$25. If you make a donation, you can find it through their PTO, through their website and obviously on Facebook. They will paint a Spartan head with EL underneath for a \$25 donation. I thought that was really kind of a cool thing and I just wanted to spread the word past Mapleshade that, that is something they are doing. So we are going to get one for in front of the Central Office, because that is pretty cool. We hope that you all will consider that.

### **Superintendent's Report:**

5.1.1 Discussion of Local Health Data presented by Amy Petrosky, Ms. McAdoo, Dr. Clarke, and Kelly LaBombard

Amy: We have two possible minors, five quarantined. We are at this time in the yellow metrics. It's taking five to seven days for test results. We had seven new cases within thirty hours.

Dr. Clarke: Testing is available, 48 hours for results. There are walk-in sites as well as drive through sites.

Mr. Smith: Should we advise staff to contact their primary care first.

Dr. Clarke: Yes, they should start there. Some sites won't take kids under 8 years old.

Sarah: Yellow in two weeks, how many cases before we are in the red?

Amy: 19 cases would put us in the red metrics, currently we are at 16 cases.

Elizabeth: ARM at Eastfield Mall, get your results within 24 hours. You stay in your car, easy access.

Students need to get their flu shot by December 31<sup>st</sup>, exemptions are medical/religion.

Dr. McAdoo: Doing testing in the community, quick turnaround. Moving forward, understanding exposer.

Gregory: Re-opening benchmarks: will monitor on when or how availability to test, result time, community transmission.

Amy: How to slow down the transmission: stay 6 feet away, outside, wear your mask, feeling ill stay home, get tested.

Dr. McAdoo: Cover your nose, wear your mask correctly.

5.1.2 Opening of School Update presented by Mr. Smith, Ms. Brown and Dr. Welch

Ms. Brown: Collaborative effort with ELEA, optional workshops run by our staff.

Mr. Smith: Follow-up on Friday with ½ PD and full PD on November 3. We've had two departments, incredible support from IT Department, thank you Ryan Quimby. Also, ELPS Food Service Department, Lori Pahl. We invented the Grab and Go Meals. Congratulation Lori and to your staff, impressive.

Ms. Pahl: We are serving approximately 800 lunches and 800 breakfast. We have three working kitchens, and we are working in shifts from 7AM - 6PM. We get our numbers from Google Survey. This helps with sign-ups. We are utilizing all five school's refrigerators. This is grant funded until December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Smith: Key Club is meeting, in-person projects. Complex needs students, Dr. Welch is making this all happen.

Dr. Welch: I Echo what everyone said. The support from Administration, Central Office and teachers for their support with our students with significant complex need. Program already in progress. Next, working at the building levels to check in with students who are having a difficult time with the remote learning.

Mr. Smith: Our attendance across the district is at 98.5%.

5.1.3 Fall Athletic Update presented by Mr. Paige, ELHS Principal

Mr. Smith: We have been operating on the guidance that was provided to us earlier in the summer, late August. Operating under the idea of outdoor groups at a capacity of 50 people. That is how we initially set up some policies around spectators. Friday night that has changed, the expansion for communities who are low-risk communities (yellow) can go to a maximum of 100 spectators, excluding the teams, coaches and officials.

Mr. Paige: The current guidance around red, you have to go three weeks without being in the red in order to stay in phase 3, step 2. So it's basically three weeks of yellow, green or gray.

Gregory: Are we sure that the yellow fits in that same category, it has to be red to leave the low risk community.

Mr. Paige: That's the new guidance that came out on Friday.

Gregory: Maybe you can check with Amy on that going forward.

Mr. Paige: The guidance came out Friday evening. I did reach out right way to Mr. Smith and Mr. Magee when the guidance, saying that we should probably bring this for discussion, which we are going to have tonight. To add a curveball, we were already trying to modify when it came to the guidelines around spectators. With that guidance of expanding from 50 spectators to 100. Also removing the language around the numbers of spectators per athlete ratio that they had in the guidance prior. It does force the communities around us to reopen their discussion on how they are going to allow spectators. Based on conversations this morning, PVIAC wants to take a slower approach on this. One is because sports had only just started on Thursday, and two they are still trying to figure out the logistical stuff in terms of staffing and meeting the needs of their local communities. They want to take a step back, see how this week plays out in terms of their recommendations for home spectators only. The Athletic Directors are meeting on Wednesday to discuss how things are going at their level. On Friday, we are reconvening as an executive board to see how this week played out with home spectators only. I did make a motion on behalf of East Longmeadow and pushed to open the door for the potential of visiting spectators attending games. They did want to get through this week to see how things played out before they changed their recommendations for the whole conference. For the next four days, they are recommending that we only allow in home spectators. The one thing they did want to discuss today and expand on, I think this is something you might want to discuss as a School Committee us allowing one home visitor to attend indoor volleyball matches.

Mr. Smith: One home spectator.

Gregory: What is the indoor capacity for our gymnasium?

Mr. Paige: It's approximately about 700 and change.

Gregory: Guidelines are 40 percent or 50 percent.

Mr. Paige: It is 40 to 50 percent. The guidance still says for indoor athletic events for any sports under the age of 21, that it's still a one to one ratio for athlete to spectator.

Gregory: One to one home and visitor in terms of those guidelines.

Mr. Paige: Yes

Gregory: They are proposing one home only to start

Mr. Paige: Yes

Gregory: Would it be prudent if we did one for this week, then one and one starting next week and then for outdoor two home this week and next week two home and two visitors. Not happy that we are not allowing those families from other districts into our facilities for no reason other than logistics which I think we can work out. I understand we have to go slow, and would do so this week, but then next week I'd like to open it up to the visitors.

Mr. Paige: If we don't have buy-ins from other schools, it does make it harder logistically to allow in visiting spectators because we would need to know who is attending, oppose to getting that information at the gate.

Gregory: Your proposal was to get a list from the opposing coach in advance. If we didn't get that list, then we wouldn't allow them in. I think it will eventually get there. I think if we modify this week and increase it to visitors next week it gives a nudge to the league.

Mr. Paige: I think what you are proposing is fair. If you are starting next week, I think it does give districts an out, those who are uncomfortable.

Gregory: It should be up to each individual district to decide what's best for themselves. This committee has the authority over the grounds at the schools, it should be each individual district that makes decision for whom is allowed to attend events.

William: My concern is there enough ventilation for indoor volleyball?

Mr. Smith: We added a C02 exchanger in both the auditorium and gymnasium.

Mr. Paige: For both indoor and outdoor we can easily meet those guidelines for both if we are expanding the guidance for two and two.

Elizabeth: A couple of comments this week from parents. Why are we allowing sports and not students in the schools? I want to let people know, first of all participation in sports is a family decision. With the exception of indoor volleyball, everything else is outdoors. Kids are social

distancing, there is a lot of space between them. It is one small measure to have normalcy for the kids. I want people to understand that that's why we are doing this, the kids are outside, it's a step into normalcy, I'm hoping to see extra-curricular activities as time goes by. I just wanted to share that with people, I think there is some confusion, it's because it's outdoors, it's a family choice, if you are not comfortable with it, your student doesn't have to do it. Whereas when it comes to educating your child, we have to educate them.

Mr. Paige: We are running other programs beyond athletics, such as Chorus programs, SAT's programs on the weekends. There are other programs connected the building that we are still running.

Gregory: How are folks on the proposal for one indoor home, two outdoor home for this week?

William: I'm good with it.

Sarah: Who is maintaining the records after the fact, is that something you Frank are maintaining, like attendees? How are those being kept after the event, in case of a situation where we might need that contact tracing.

Mr. Paige: Right now it's only been one home spectator per event. Mr. Magee is keeping the list of all those people who have basically been giving out passes to each individual student. They are providing that to the parents. We have a list of all those who have passes, we are providing those two from game to game. We will have to expand our record keeping if we expand to two home spectators and then potentially the visiting team. What we are proposing if we allow visiting spectators is that those schools provide us with a set list. So you know who's on that list, and it will not vary from week to week. If you are a parent of Joe Smith, those would be the only two parents who would have that access for that season. It would be limited, you can't change it from week to week, you can't say okay my brother can go to this game, my uncle can go to that game, there will be control to it.

**Elizabeth moved starting today, October 5, we will allow two home spectators to all home games per athlete, and one home spectator per athlete for volleyball, and then beginning on October 12<sup>th</sup> we will allow two home spectators per athlete and two visiting spectators per athlete for outdoor and one home spectator and one visiting spectator per athlete for volleyball, William seconded the motion**

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

Mr. Paige: Am I allowed to text Mr. Magee right now to allow soccer parents to jump into the game?

Chair: We did make it effective tonight.

Mr. Paige: You are about to make some parents very happy.

#### **Assistant Superintendent of Business Report-None**

#### **Old Business: None**

#### **New Business**

7.1 MOU with Unit E - Mobile Device/Self Insurance Program was presented in executive session.

**William moved to approve the MOU with Unit E - Mobile Device/Self Insurance Program as presented this evening, Elizabeth seconded the motion.**

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

7.2 MOU Fall Coaching Stipends was presented in executive session.

**William moved to approve the MOU Fall Coaching Stipends as presented this evening, Elizabeth seconded the motion.**

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

7.3 Response letter to Commissioner Riley was presented by Mr. Thompson, Chair

Mr. Thompson: We had an inquiry from Commissioner Riley, we did respond to his letter with the help of Superintendent Smith and Ms. Blair. We have not received a response back from the Commissioner, we did meet the 10-day requirement.

William: Was there any guidance given that we would receive a response on any of the things that came out?

Mr. Thompson: In the original letter, there was nothing saying that there would be a response.

Elizabeth: Well written letter, not aggressive, you told him how we felt, very well written. Good job!

7.4 Capital Project submitted to Community Preservation Committee to re-surface the track field was presented by Mr. Smith

Mr. Smith: About two weeks ago, the Capital Project we submitted last year for fiscal year 21 was around resurfacing track, out in the stadium at the high school. This type of surface generally last between 6-8 years, we are now into year nine. This item was not picked up in the town's final budget. The Town Manager's office, DPW and I worked to put together a proposal the Community Preservation Committee to seek funding to resurfacing the track which support all athletes, all sport and the community.

Elizabeth: How is the condition of the field

Mr. Smith: It's usable, last fall we worked on the drainage. It's functional, act now before it becomes a monumental cost.

Chair: It's an asset to the community. If we are able to fund it through the Community Preservation, it's certainly what those funds are intended for.

Mr. Smith: We are not asking for the entire cost we would like to contribute \$28,000 towards the resurfacing the field. This is a collaborative effort between the school department, town manager's office and DPW.

**William moved to endorse the submittal of the track resurfacing to Community Preservation for funding, Antonella seconded the motion.**

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

7.5 Revised 2020-2021 School Year Calendar was presented by Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: We met with ELEA to look at being a unique year, we started September 16<sup>th</sup>, moving quickly into October, half-day PD might not be the right timing. We chose to keep October 9<sup>th</sup> PD which is a half-day. The reason is we had already contracted with vendors to come in and work with our staff around some of the software we are using. October 21<sup>st</sup> is a half-day (parent/teacher conference - Pk-5), it makes sense since we just had in-person meeting with parents to make that a full-day. Move parent conferences (Pk-5) to December 10<sup>th</sup> half-day with PD for grades 6-12. The other change, January 22<sup>nd</sup> was a half-day, we were looking at the end of second marking period or first semester. We are moving that date to January 29<sup>th</sup>.

Chair: We decided collectively to hold off with the rest of the calendar, we stopped at January.

Mr. Smith: We will get that information out to the parents.

**Elizabeth moved to change the 2020-2021 calendar of tonight, Antonella seconded the motion.**

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

7.6 MASC Delegate was presented.

William: The delegate assembly is on Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, this is a virtual meeting. I am not interested in being the delegate this year for the specific reason it's on a Saturday instead of Friday.

Elizabeth: I don't mind doing it,

**William moved to appoint Elizabeth Marsian-Boucher as MASC delegate, Antonella seconded the motion.**

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

7.7 MASC Resolutions was presented by Mr. Fonseca

**Resolution #1: MCAS High Stakes Testing**

Therefore, be it resolved that MCAS rejects the calls for the students of 20202 who missed their 10<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS testing to be required to make it up during the 2020-2021 school year or ever. We demand those students be held harmless for not taking the MCAS and that their graduation requirements shall be determined by locally controlled voices of the School Committee and School Administration within the remaining graduation requirements of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Additionally, we reiterate our call for a moratorium on all high stakes testing for the 2020-2021 school year so all students can benefit from their time being focused on direct instruction and we urge the legislature to enact a moratorium on high stakes testing of three years.

**Resolution #2: COVID-19 State Funding**

Therefore, be it resolved that the state must guarantee every school district full reimbursement for whatever COVID-19 expenses are required to follow state mandates. We must ensure a statewide school re-opening that is safe, responsible and equitable. There can be no unfunded mandates for COVID-19.

**Resolution #3: School Committee Anti-Racism Resolution**

Therefore, be it resolved that all the school district in the Commonwealth should guarantee that racist practices are eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff. School Committee members should ensure our that school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist, and that acknowledges that all lives cannot matter until black lives matter.

**Resolution #4: Lowering the voting age for municipal elections.**

Therefore, be it resolved that the sponsors call upon the Massachusetts Legislature to pass the EMPOWER Act and take other means necessary to allow cities and towns to establish a minimum voting age of sixteen years for all municipal elections.

**Resolution #5: Supporting increased Federal support and stimulus funding for public K-12 education.**

Therefore, be it resolved that MASC align with state superintendents of schools and urge the Massachusetts Congressional Delegation and state legislators to advocate for and approve additional education funding for our nation's public schools through the enactment of progressive tax legislation.

**Resolution #6 Retention of Medicaid Revenue**

Therefore, be it resolved that MASC urges the General Court to require that 100% of Medicaid reimbursements to cities and towns be provided in full amount to the public schools of each municipality, through a school district revolving account, to underwrite the cost of providing an adequate education.

**Resolution #7: Attempts by us DOE to direct funding to private schools.**

Therefore, be it resolved that MASC petition the Attorney General of Massachusetts to review and recommend to the Executive Office of Education and the MA Department of Elementary Education to review the formal language of such statues that determine the distribution of federal funds to benefit economically disadvantaged students and, further that the Attorney General provide legal guidance to state agencies in Massachusetts to implement such formulas based on the actual language and legislative intent of the statue should that be in variance with any "advisory" issued by the United States Secretary of Education.

**Resolution #8: Membership of a school committee on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.**

Therefore, be it resolved that MASC submit to the General Court proposed legislation that MGL Chapter 15, Section 1E be revised as follows:

Section 1E: there shall be in the department a board of elementary and secondary education, in this chapter called the board, which shall consist of the chairman of the student advisory council established under this section, the secretary of education, in this chapter called the secretary, or her designee, and 9 members appointed by the governor. The 9 members appointed by the governor shall consist of 1 representative of a labor organization selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; 1 representative of business or industry selected by the governor with a demonstrated commitment to education; 1 representative of parents of school children selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees; 1 representative from a school committee from a list of three nominees provided by the MASC and 5 additional members.

**Resolution #9: Providing Equity for Sexual Orientation - LGBTQ+Students, Teachers and Staff**

Therefore, be it resolved that MASC file legislation and petition our federal legislative delegation to also file legislation which would have the effect of adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of protected classes in order to provide equity and support to our LGBTQ+students, teachers and staff and petition our legislative delegation.

**Resolution k#10: Relative to the monitoring of attendance of students during the pandemic.**

Therefore, be it resolved that MASC advocate for legislation and regulation that protect the rights of parents to withhold their children from school for reasons of their health status or health risk and further,

- That MASC advocate for regulations that hold districts accountable for the attendance of students provide appropriate exemptions for students who experience or require extended absences from school due to health-related issues or concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic and further,
- That MASC petition the Board of DESE to waive all accountability requirements regarding attendance for the 2020-21 school year, and
- That such regulations exempt districts from sanction status on the basis of attendance when such absences are related to a public health crisis, including COVID-19.

**William moved to support the ten resolutions as presented, Antonella seconded the motion.**

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

**William moved to adjourn at 7:46, Elizabeth seconded the motion.**

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

Minutes Recorded by: Kathy Celetti

Respectfully submitted by: Superintendent Smith

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature