

**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 19, 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:

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

Opportunities for Visitors to Address the Committee:

Christina Ruel: I have a question, I talked to a lot of people, it's not just myself, but a lot of people in town. We feel that our kids should be back for in-person learning. So my question is what matric and qualified data are being used to determine a potential reopening in schools? I also have a follow up question too, but I don't know if we can answer that.

Chair: This isn't necessarily a time for questions Christina, certainly if you have things you want to say, we are going to talk about some of our plans later on in the agenda. This is more of an opportunity for statement. If you want to ask questions, we won't necessarily answer them right now, but we will later on in the meeting.

Christina Ruel: Okay, they all were mostly questions going along with that and the reopening. So at least we could all be transparent going forward. I know some people were apprehensive about the hybrid, I was just curious if we would look at other towns in the area and possibly switch to a hybrid plan. I can tell you, I am home with my kids most of the day and it is a struggle. I know everybody's doing the best they can, the teachers are awesome, I do the best I can. I hate to say it, it's not working. I do feel like COVID is not the only issue we should be concerned with. COVID is not going away, and I don't feel as though we should just be looking at COVID numbers. I think we need to also focus our kids' education, their mental health. There is so much more to it that I feel like we are failing them if we are only looking at COVID. If all other essential businesses and everything else have been open so far, then why can't the schools be opened?

Karen Phillips: I have two kids in town, fifth grade and second grade. I absolutely love their teachers; I am a huge supporter of the teachers in town. I do have a question, I am speaking on behalf of a large and growing number of families in town that feel it is their right to choose for their children to learn in person. I know that Christina has asked a few questions, I have one specific question. We would like to see a formal steering committee immediately formed to focus on the return to a fall safe reopening in conjunction with the DPH. This committee will further investigate and consider recreating a more robust hybrid model that would be suitable to the majority in our town. The committee could include various stakeholders such as you and a member of the school committee, Department of Public Health, medical professionals, teachers, town human resources, parents and students. Are you willing to coordinate such a committee, if so, what would be the next step?

Chair: Thank you Karen, as I said prior, this is not necessarily the time to ask questions, certainly we welcome your questions. We are going to address some of these issues later on in the meeting. Hopefully we can address some of those points.

Committee/Sub-committee Communications

Elizabeth: Squire Farms, they are doing a fundraiser for all of our schools. You just go on their website, you can get wreaths and garland and things like that. The prices were actually very reasonable. So we are supporting all our schools. So we are helping somebody local, we are helping kids, and I'm all thumbs up for that. I'm trying to do all my shopping as local as possible this year. The other thing I wanted to say, last week we were voting on the resolutions for the MASC annual meeting. For all of you out there, it's just all the school committees come in and they have a meeting once a year. And they create these resolutions of things that they think they would like to lobby on behalf of the state to vote on. I had a problem one of them, it was the one with having the kids being able to vote if they are under 16. I said just let it go, I knew the will of the committee was probably to do that. I'm just going to voice my opinion on it. Obviously, I'm going to vote the way our committee has chosen. I just don't think it's a wise idea. I think these children shouldn't have necessarily a right to vote because they can't be in the military, they can't live on their own, they can't even their IEP's they have no control over those. There's voting on drugs, alcohol, on tobacco questions. I'm just throwing out there, because I felt after I said let go, I said no, I feel strongly about this. I think there are some kids that are at that age where they could I think, sixteen is a tough time for us to expect our kids to be taking that on. That said, children should always talk with their family about things like that that they find important and the questions should always happen. So I just had to say it.

William: Just a quick follow-up to that, as I stated in the last meeting Beth and for the benefit of the committee and everybody watching, these resolutions has come before the Board of Directors several times. They go through these old resolutions during a meeting and they basically pick and choose what they want to throw on the table again to see if it gains any speed or momentum. I feel that this one at the delegate assembly will be a controversial one based on what you said Beth. Because that's the feeling across the state the last time it was brought up. I was an intricate part of the delegate assembly. That being said, I am not sure it will even make it off the floor of the delegate assembly. If it follows the same path as it has in the previous years, the legislature won't even address it.

Elizabeth: I just had to say my piece about it.

William: Everybody is entitled to their opinion. If you are more than welcome to give your opinion at the delegate assembly when they are start asking for the vote. That's the quick history of it. I understand and I appreciate your thoughts as always.

Superintendent's Report:

5.1.1 Mr. Smith presented the Capital Projects for FY22

We have two carry-overs from FY21: HS Electrical Switch/Gear Distribution and MS Phase 2 Steam Piping & Heating system. For the FY22, we have approximately 15 projects totaling to about \$9,168,654.70, in that number you have some high school projects that will be picked up in the comprehensive project as we continue to move through the MSBA eligibility process. About 6 million of that is the high school, this includes the feasibility study. The number one project still sitting here based on last year's prioritization is the replacement of the modular at Mountain View.

William: Would the Mapleshade roof replacement fall under the MSBA accelerated?

Mr. Smith: We could give it a shot; we certainly could look at that process.

William: I would encourage looking into that process based on the price tag.

Mr. Smith: Next step would be to bring this back to you and have you prioritize the projects and we are still looking to refine MS renovation of their play area and redoing asphalt. So I will bring back for November 2nd and then submit it to the Town Manager.

5.1.2 MSBA Eligibility Process was presented by Mr. Smith. In your packet you will find the time frame for our eligibility period which runs from October 1, through to June 28, 2021.

Eligibility Period Schedule:

- Initial Compliance Certification (Completed) - Due November 2, 2020
- School Building Committee - Due November 30, 2020
- Educational Profile Questionnaire - Due December 30, 2020
- Online Enrollment Projection - Due December 30, 2020
- Enrollment/Certification executed - Due March 30, 2021
- Maintenance and Capital Planning Info - Due March 30, 2021
- Local Vote authorization - Due June 28, 2021
- Feasibility Study Agreement - Due June 28, 2021

Our most recent discussion with MSBA was that we would possibly be eligible for 56% reimbursement of all eligible cost. They will reimburse up to a certain amount.

Chair: The pool and Central Office are not included in the reimbursement.

Elizabeth: I know that we have due dates, can we make these due dates a month sooner in our minds, with the pandemic and possible shut down, we don't know what's going to happen. So in our minds, if we do them a month sooner, and not wait in case we get derailed.

Mr. Smith: We are already doing that, that is why we already submitted the Compliance Certification. For the enrollment projections, we use NEASC to help us. That is why I sent them this afternoon all the information that they need to put together the enrollment projection. Hoping to get that back late November early December. Our liaison with MSBA is Elena Seiti.

Our next big step going forward is developing and presenting a School Building Committee. There are requirements for this committee. You have to have a member that is MCPPO Certified, Ms. Blair qualifies for this and I believe Mr. Fenney is working through the process to become MCPPO Certified. You also need town officials on this committee such as, Chief Executive Officer, which is our Town Manager, as you go down the list it says one School Committee member, I recommend you have two.

Sarah: This committee has a purpose, but there might be a future committee with a broader net cast that includes more voices.

Mr. Smith: Absolutely, when/if we get to the feasibility study, that's when they would probably bring in focus groups, what are people interested in both, community members, students, staff and so forth. There will be opportunity throughout this process.

Chair: Being on the committee for so many years, I would like to be one of the members on this committee.

Elizabeth: I too would like to be on this committee.

Antonella: I am also interested in being one of the members.

Elizabeth: For myself, personally I have been on the committee for a while. I've started with the process as with Greg. With this from the beginning, getting it into the MSBA. Being in on the conversations that we've had, the years that we've to re-put in. Going down to MSBA ourselves personally to push this. It's just something that's important, that I would really like to be on.

Chair: This group would probably meet during the day, because of the Town employees. I'm sure we can be flexible, but the majority of the meetings early afternoon.

Antonella: If the meetings are before 2:30, it would be difficult for me to come. I would like to be on the committee, I feel like I've had a lot of experience in high school, working in a high school for 16 years. Growing up in this town, I'm also very invested in it, but if the meetings are before 2:30 I won't be able to do.

Mr. Smith: Would it make sense to have two on the committee with an alternate.

William moved to nominate Gregory Thompson and Elizabeth Marsian-Boucher to be on the School Building Committee, with Antonella Raschilla as the alternate.

Antonella: So if I 'm the alternate what does that really mean that I 'm doing?

Chair: You can only come when one of us is not coming.

William: But you would be informed on everything. I made the motion for discussion purposes.

William: I will withdraw the motion.

Chair: We will put this back on the agenda in two weeks. Is everyone comfortable with that tentative, that we have designated.

Members: Yes

Chair: Mr. Smith and I can start reaching out to all the members.

Mr. Smith: I have already reached out to some, and will contact the others. Looking at people who have helped us, or members of the community that may have architectural engineering or construction experience. I think that 's obviously something we need to discuss.

Chair: We might want to add the parent of a kindergarten because they are really the ones who are invested in this. Maybe, one of the community members would be a young parent. Just to see it fruition.

5.1.3 Mr. Smith gave an update on the Learning Mode. We are now going into four and half weeks of remote learning. We are about 95% of our students learning remotely and the focus of the staff is trying to make that robust and structured as possible. There are challenges that we are having on our side, and there are challenges that families are having with a remote model. We have about 120 students coming in for in-person learning. Some are five days a week and some two to three days a week. Mostly students with significant and complex needs.

MTSS (Multiple Tiered Support System) team are looking at how students are doing, attendance, how they are engaging, looking at students who are not performing up to their ability. First through eighth grade just finished the iReady diagnostic. We received the report and Ms.

Brown and the academic coaches are scheduling times to meet with grade level teams to look at that information. We are also working with our staff to look at where do we transition as we look to make a decision bringing more students and staff back in person. We will be meeting this Thursday with ELEA to discuss some of those things.

Chair: We will be looking for some community input again. We will have another opportunity to send out another survey, and on the survey we are going to ask, if in fact we are able to return either in a hybrid or full model, which families will be sending their students in. I know that we are still little ways from the January timeframe, but folks are starting to get an idea whether or not they would feel comfortable sending their kids into school. From there we will have a better understanding of how many students will actually be in the building and if we

are able to fit them all in. Or if we have to go hybrid, which only allows half the students at a time. We are exploring all options, we are going to go through all the buildings, each individual classroom, count the desks and students that we can get in. This all depends on the situation on the grounds in terms of statistics and the chart from the Department of Public Health. We know there is a desire to get students back in the classrooms. We know that COVID isn't disappearing anytime soon. We do understand that a lot of families are struggling with this unique way of learning. Our staff is doing a fantastic job, the best they can with the situation that we are in and they will continue to do that. This committee does have its eyes forward on how we do get back safely. We continue to have meetings with our health officials both in person and on the school committee meetings. We continue to get their advice as well as input from the state. Moving forward, if the situation allows it, we will get these kids in as soon as we can. We do know how important it is for our families. We are also going to keep an eye on keeping them safe. We know that because we are fully remote right now, we know what tomorrow looks like for all our students.

Elizabeth: We are also going to look at the best and worst practices of the towns around us. There is not one hybrid program that I know of that has stayed the same since the first day of school started back in August. So we are going to take what they have learned, and if we come back hybrid, we come up full. We will know better than we had started back in August.

Mr. Smith: What some of the towns around us have done, they sort of rolled into a hybrid, so many towns are just now fully into a hybrid that spans from K-12. Districts are trying to learn from each other, sharing information. At our October 5th meeting we had our local health officials and medical advisors. We should invite them to the first meetings of every month. The metrics that the Commissioner and Governor use, where its gray, green, yellow and red, we are in the red. That's important information to watch. They asked us to look at three weeks of that metrics.

Chair: So if we were in right now hybrid or full, and we did enter the red zone as you said Mr. Smith, if it went to three weeks, we would have to go remote based on their recommendation.

Sarah: We talked about making the transition to January is it a fair assessment to say to folks listening and families who are watching that this will be an ongoing conversation and a standing agenda item between now and January? So folks can see a transparent fashion of the conversations that are unfolding. There has been a call from families to really hear us engaging in the conversations during our sessions and that this is the launch of knowing we will have the public health officials back, a meeting that's convened with ELEA, and some kind of report out from that at the next agenda, so that folks can watch and monitor the process so that we are transparent with the folks that are listening.

William: We should definitely engage our health department and her board at least once a month to find out where the numbers are going and what their recommendations are as we move forward.

Assistant Superintendent of Business Report

5.2.1 Ms. Blair presented the FY2020 Fourth Quarter Financial Report

William moved to approve the FY2020 Fourth Quarter Financial Report as presented, Sarah seconded the motion.

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

5.2.2 Ms. Blair presented the FY2021 First Quarter Financial Report

Elizabeth moved to approve the FY2021 First Quarter Financial Report 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)

5.2.3 Gift donation to Mountain View Library was presented by Ms. Blair

William moved to approve the Mountain View gift donation in the amount of \$21.01, 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)

Old Business: None

New Business

7.1 MOU with Unit A on Co-curricular & Extra-curricular activities was presented.

William moved to approve the MOU with Unit A as presented in executive session, Sarah 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 Unit E Contract from September 1, 2020 - August 31, 2023 was presented.

William moved to approve the Unit E Contract from September 1, 2020 - August 31, 2023 as presented, 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)

William moved to adjourn at 7:06PM, 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