

Note: Per C.G.S. 10 – 218, Board of Education meeting minutes are provided in a draft format within 48 hours of the date the meeting was held. With the exception of motions and votes recorded, these minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote of the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at the next regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and voted upon.

SCOTLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

Scotland, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

March 1, 2022

Chairperson Cassidy Martin called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Present were Board members Scott Sears, Rod Perry, Bill Trudelle and Gracie Martin. Administrators present were Superintendent Valerie Bruneau, Principal Ann Knowles, Special Ed Director Maggie Courter and Finance Coordinator Tim Smith. Unable to attend were Board members Sherry Smardon and Clark Stearns.

The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

- Brynn Lipstreu expressed concerns with cutting para educator support and offering payouts to resign or retire, no introductory letter for the new Special Ed Director, sharing confidential information, communication with part-time administrator, and Climate Survey not being sent out yet. She thanked the Board for all they do for the community.
- Kimberly Ausburger expressed concerns about the change in roles for the paras with cutting 3 positions (staff is already stretched thin), and the safety of the students.
- Carol Sweat expressed concerns with eliminating 3 paras with offers of early retirement package and a change to current positions (Michelle Gibson would be moved to Special Ed student in higher grade - accepted early retirement package).
- Mike Whitehouse expressed concerns with masks that cover important verbal cues and the damage they do to kids (suggested looking up information from the CDC).
- Krista expressed concerns with masks having long-term effects on mental health and those with asthma and suggested being in unison with the CDC guidelines and remove the masks.
- A parent expressed concerns with cutting Special Ed positions (would be a grave disservice to the students and deter families from coming to town) and missed social cues for children wearing masks.
- Katelyn Shafer would support a Board decision to move to mask optional (no longer required in Town Hall). Smiles have brought energy back to the classroom in area schools that have moved to mask optional. She also expressed concerns with cutting staff that would encourage remaining staff without support to leave.
- Christina Kettle expressed concerns with wearing masks and shared her family's struggles with asthma and behavior that impacted learning. Masks should be optional – it is time to see smiling faces again.
- Christina from Canterbury hopes the school chooses to make masks optional that would be great for parents to have a choice (seeing a smile is a warm experience).
- Dena Poppy is in favor of mask optional with parent choice and shared concerns from many parents about the harm to their children from wearing masks (chose to homeschool her children due to mask mandate).
- Rob Keator is in favor of mask optional (suggested looking at court enforced data dump from Pfizer and Moderna to see what science has kept from you), suggested keeping Special Ed staff (will be needed after 2 years of wearing masks) and expressed concerns about state level enforcement.
- Wendy Sears expressed concerns with masks and asked the Board to take care of the kids by moving to mask optional (done by Parish Hill).
- Miranda Lucas expressed concerns with her child never having attended school without a mask (doesn't want masks to be considered normal) and suggested giving people the choice.

3. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE BOARD: None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **Regular Meeting of February 1 2021, Special Meeting of February 15, 2022:**
#1-21/22 Motion to approve the regular meeting minute from February 1, 2022, was made by Scott Sears, seconded by Bill Trudelle and carried unanimously.
- *#2-21/22 Motion to approve the special meeting minutes from February 15, 2022, was made by Rod Perry, seconded by Gracie Martin and carried with one abstention by Bill Trudelle.*

5. OPPORTUNITY TO ADD OR DELETE AGENDA ITEMS:

#3-21/22 Motion to switch Item 8H1 - Budget Draft Proposal and Item 8H2 – Masking Update, was made by Scott Sears, seconded by Gracie Martin and carried unanimously.

6. CELEBRATIONS:

The Board was thanked for their service with gift bags in honor of Board Appreciation Month.

7. REPORTS

A. Chairperson's Oral Report:

The Ad-Hoc Committee and First Selectman requested a meeting with the Board for the Programming Committee to present their findings (the Board is available on Monday, March 21st).

B. Superintendent's Report:

- The Board was presented with Health Update. Home test kits and masks are available for anyone interested. Many towns mentioned in the public comments are not in the Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD) that Scotland is a part of. Most towns in the health district are keeping the status quo for masks and will decide at their next meeting including Chaplin Elementary (Hampton Elementary is not in the health district). If masks become optional, there are other guidelines that will remain in place making timing difficult. Positive cases with 10% of students or 3-4 from a group that could be considered a cluster or outbreak would go back to masks per recommendation of the EHHD. Bill Trudelle expressed concerns with recommended guidelines and who makes the decision with no state mandate.
- Staff and families were surveyed for mask removal. 20 staff responded with 50% for immediate removal. 37 families responded with 66% for immediate removal. The remainder were for a slower approach, after April break or end of the year. Recommendation is for 3 days to prepare (allowing parents to talk to their children) with mask removal starting on Monday, March 7th.
- Met with EASTCONN regarding the Food Service program. The agreed contract is a flat fee with all money collected and other revenue retained by EASTCONN (including federal rebates). Reached out to other towns that provide their own food service for proposals.

C. Principal's Report:

- Enrollment is at 102 students.
- 68% of students received Hot Lunch (up from last month) with Breakfast lower at 29% (possibly due to selection of food - currently working on). More food is being cooked instead of using prepackaged food.
- Moving back to normal with an Author Series starting with a local author from Chaplin with a book for each student (will have an author each month) and more activities between the classrooms.
- In the process of applying for the School Readiness Grant.

- The two Curriculum Committees have received a lot of curriculum books that are being organized by Michele Cote. Looking for new curriculum for Reading, Writing and Math for next year with Professional Development held to research and review.
- Preparing for SBAC testing in May including working on typing skills.
- Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held next week with most in-person.

D. Special Education Report:

- Meeting with the State Special Ed Director to update on assessments for current programming, provider caseloads with schedules and service times and looking at related service providers.
- 2 Special Ed teachers will be attending CT SEDS IEP Quality Training.
- Communication is ongoing with parents through Zoom, phone calls and email.
- Met with the Special Ed Director for Parish Hill and Chaplin Elementary on transition to Parish Hill.

E. Financial Report:

The Financial Reports were reviewed. Grants are doing well and on target for spending down this year (Board presented with ESSER Grant breakdown). Rod Perry asked if there were any unusual expenses (\$2,665 to Repairs & Maintenance for emergency service by Impact Fire). Tuition for outplaced student - \$16,813 (not budgeted with an additional line added for Transportation).

#4-21/22 Motion to approve Financial Statement dated February 25, 2022, was made by Rod Perry, seconded by Gracie Martin and carried unanimously.

F. PTO:

PTO Communications Officer Jeannie Horton presented highlights from the last meeting:

- Working on Munson Spring Fundraiser with notice going out today.
- Will be sending out flyers to order Scotland spirit wear including sweatshirts and sweatpants.
- Discussed the possibility of adding questions to the climate survey the Board will be sending out.

G. Committee Reports:

Inter-district Cost Sharing, CABE/EASTCONN, Readiness Council, Policy Committee, Personnel Committee, Technology, Facilities Committee, Finance Committee, Transportation and Climate Survey Committee

Inter-district Cost Sharing – The Programming Committee has been working hard (especially Wendy Sears) and will report to the Board at a special meeting the end of the month.

Readiness Council – Working on the School Readiness Grant and created a Policies Committee to review policies.

Technology – Rod Perry asked to invite Savage Systems to the next meeting and add to the agenda.

Climate Survey – The survey is ready with many questions and will be sent out as soon as possible. The PTO is welcome to do their own survey.

8. BOARD BUSINESS

H. Items for Discussion & Actions:

1. Item: Masking Update, Action (Discussion):

Discussion was held regarding masks including the following: respect the Superintendent's opinion for 3 days to prepare with masks removed on Monday; remove masks tomorrow since Parish Hill is mask optional with many Scotland students having siblings at Parish Hill; not holding a special meeting to discuss the issue; making parents aware of recommendations from Eastern Highlands Health District by posting them on the website; determine who is legally responsible to make decision to return to masks if there is an outbreak of Covid cases; consider survey results with decision.

- **#5-21/22 Motion to remove masks starting tomorrow, was made by Bill Trudelle, seconded by Scott Sears and failed with the following vote:**
YES: B. Trudelle, S. Sears. NO: R. Perry, G. Martin, C. Martin.
- **#6-21/22 Motion to remove masks starting Thursday, March 3rd, was made by Gracie Martin, seconded by Scott Sears and carried with the following vote:**
YES: G. Martin, R. Perry, C. Martin. NO: B. Trudelle, S. Sears.

2. Item: Budget Draft proposal to the BOE (Discussion)

Valerie Bruneau presented PowerPoint of 1st Budget Draft with an overall increase of 0% based on needs assessment that includes: reduction of 3 paras (11 to 8); decrease for STEM Tuition (10 slots to 8); reduction of Special Ed teachers (2 to 1.5); increase for Special Ed Director (.4 to .6); increase for Transportation (extended contract with Savino); decrease for Legal Services; increase for Principal (moved stipend from School Readiness); addition of Discretionary Fund (\$500); decrease for Electricity (solar panels); increase for Heating Oil. Bill Trudelle expressed concerns with the increase for administration and decrease for teachers that would take away from the kids. Rod Perry asked to share with the Board how staffing compares to similar schools. Any questions should be emailed to the Superintendent.

3. Item: Facilities Maintainers (Discussion):

The Board was presented with time sheets for the two maintainers that are sent to the Town Hall with list of jobs being done. One of the maintainers Nate reported about work on the HVAC System - all filters have been replaced with MERV 8 filters (heavier filters can damage the unit) and in the process of greasing motors (70 fittings in tight spaces); and maintaining infrastructure. Bill Trudelle asked about the AC contract (coming on the 15th to review the contract that will be done in 2 phases). Phase I is for the majority of classrooms with an increase of \$2000 (price increase to materials). Phase II is for the cafeteria, computer room, and 2 other rooms.

I. Old Business updates

- **Rose Khourie Scholarship:**

There are enough funds for a scholarship this year per the 1st Selectman who will continue to do research.

- **A/C Project:** Covered under Item 8H3
- **BOE Goals:** No Update

9. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON AGENDA ITEMS:

- A Special Ed teacher thanked the Board for their service and expressed concerns with cutting paras (they are an important part of the school) and needs assessments done without consulting the staff.
- Kimberly Ausburger expressed concerns with the proposed budget – the need for a sunshine fund and paras using off-time to fill in for the library (no off-time).
- Katelyn Shafer expressed concerns with reducing paras from 11-8 (reducing support reduces resources for early intervention) and reduction of Special Ed teachers from 2 to 1.5.
- Bill Trudelle is sorry to hear that Michele Gibson who was great with his children and a great asset to the school is leaving (an audience member responded about her not really wanting to leave and that a para is still needed for PreK).

10. OTHER ACTION ITEMS: None

11. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- **Regular Board Meeting April 5, 2022**

- **Items for Next Meeting and Assignments**
 - Budget
 - Savage Systems

12. ADJOURNMENT:

#7-21/22 Motion to adjourn (10:49 PM) was made by Scott Sears, seconded by Bill Trudelle and carried unanimously.

***Respectfully submitted by Kathleen Scott
Recording Clerk***