

ERVING SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 16, 2023
7:00 p.m.

ERVING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Present- Mackensity Bailey, Chair; Erik Semb, Jennifer Eichorn, Mackensity Bailey, Katelyn Mailloux-Little, members; Jennifer Culkeen, Superintendent; Caitlin Sheriden, Director of Finance and Operations; Brittanie Mimitz, Minute Taker; Becky Alan, Rinky Black, Heather Peterson, Laura George, Jacob Smith, Deb Smith, Samantha Butynski, Megan Gagne, Jaime Parse, Chris Thurston, Kelly Loynd, Jim Loynd, Mark Burnett, Elizabeth Desorgher, Devon Gaudet, Jacque Boyden, Scott Bastarache, Jessica Niedbala

Minutes

A. The meeting was called to Order at 7:00pm. by Jenn. AIF.

B. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

C. Reorganization of the Committee-

Mackensity Thanked the voters for formally electing her to the committee and was happy to be chair. She is happy to be here and looks forward to next year.

Good evening,

I would like to start off this meeting by addressing a few things. We are in an unfortunate situation. At the Annual Town Meeting the voters spoke by passing a \$4,000,000 budget for 125 students. I feel that is not being fiscally responsible. Since taking over as chairperson 1.5 years ago I have listened to numerous community members, parents and staff. Any time I was approached with an issue along with my own concerns, I would bring it to the Superintendent. Unfortunately, the chain of command isn't working because no action was taken. There comes a point to where this is unacceptable and that time has arrived.

I do not believe spending more money on a budget is the answer. Currently, our MCAS scores are much lower than our surrounding districts. One has to wonder why? I do not place a high value on standardized testing, but they are an indicator. An indicator that we need to do something different. The other schools are currently operating on a much lower budget and still getting the job done. According to the FY22 DESE data, we spend \$33,815.16 per pupil. Our Union counterparts spend:

\$27,871.69 Shutesbury

\$29,384.61 New Salem-Wendell

\$21,024.93 Leverett

The state average is \$19,536.16.

One of my concerns is the apparent downhill slide of our school atmosphere. I understand that the culture in this building is not what it once was. Our staff is divided and it is affecting our student's education. As a previous educator, I have worked with many administrators that have created a collaborative culture and have worked with those who have not. The latter is an unpleasant work experience, which is where we currently stand in Erving. It starts from the top down and we are in desperate need of a new administration.

Chair- A motion was made by Jenn to nominate **Mackensity** as School Committee Chair. The motion was seconded by Katelyn. AIF.

Secretary/Vice Chair- A motion was made by Mackensity to nominate **Erik** as secretary/vice chair. The motion was seconded by Jenn. AIF.

U28 Reps (3)- Mackensity will be a U28 Rep as the Chair.

A motion was made by Jen to nominate **Erik** as a Union 28 Rep. The motion was seconded by Katelyn. AIF.

A motion was made by Katelyn to nominate **David** as a Union 28 Rep. It was seconded by Erik. AIF.

Budget and Personnel subcommittee- A motion was made by Katelyn to nominate Erik to the budget and personnel subcommittee. The motion was seconded by David. AIF.

Erving Policy- A motion was made by Katelyn to nominate herself and David. The motion was seconded by Mackensity. AIF.

Capital Planning- A motion was made by Erik to nominate **Jenn** to the Capital Planning committee. The motion was seconded by Katelyn. AIF.

Collaborative Rep- A motion was made by Jenn to nominate **Katelyn** as the collaborative rep. The motion was seconded by Erik. AIF.

Sick Bank- A motion was made by Jenn to nominate **Mackensey** and **Jenn** to the Sick Bank. The motion was seconded by Erik. AIF.

Regionalization- Will be tabled until the next meeting to get further clarification on who can serve.

D. Public Hearings-

Hello Lisa, and to whom else this may concern,

I'm writing to you as a former EES student, long time resident, and now parent of students at EES. I have done my best to show up to school committee meetings, and what I have witnessed over the past year has been upsetting. I have witnessed our administration deflect when asked tough questions, and speak poorly of staff. Most recently there was a comment made in regards to the preschool teachers, and insinuating that they have a glorified 2 hour break every day while the students "nap". As a parent of a current pre-k student, and having another go through the program, I can tell you that those teachers are extremely busy tending to the children during that time. Lisa, perhaps you should take the time to visit these classrooms to see the reality of the situation.

I have heard from at least a handful of parents, if not more, who have expressed that they have fought for multiple years since you, Lisa, have been hired, to receive IEP services that their children are entitled to by law. Only to be defeated, and left feeling like they have no choice but to leave our district. They then turn around and have their needs met within weeks of attending another school. Why is this happening? Parents choosing to take their children out of EES was unheard of. We could chalk this up to "hearsay", but I have learned that if it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, it's a duck.

Lisa, you mentioned being "fiscally responsible" at the meeting on 5/3, in regards to cutting the pre-k program down to one classroom, due to low enrollment. Yet there was mention of two sixth grade classes, containing 7 kids in each class. You sited "the decision was based on the needs of those students". However on multiple occasions I have heard how high the needs of the current first grade class are. The classroom has 20+ kids from my understanding? These children are the epitome of the lasting effects of Covid. I took the time to rewatch a previous school committee meeting on November 15th. There you said "everyone (staff and students) are still struggling from the effects of Covid", and that "the adjustment counselors plate is full". You specifically referenced that there were 5 parent referrals in first grade, and only 1 in sixth grade. To me, it would have been "fiscally responsible" to have divided the first grade classroom into two, to help better support their needs. I have been informed that you have upwards to 5 staff members at any time in first grade to help assist with their high needs. With the loss of funding and less staff, I don't see this improving. It will only get worse. The school Adjustment counselor that is provided via a grant, that you and Jennifer keep mentioning, will be gone September of 2024. You keep saying the effects of Covid could last 3-5 years. So what happens when she's gone, and there's no money to further support the needs that our students have?

After last week's meeting, I'm feeling frustrated and defeated. I was alongside many parents, staff and community members, fighting on your behalf for more funding for the school. We sat and listened to the lack of transparency, and support on an administrative level. I understand that you were given lemons and made lemonade with what you could. However it is not lost on you that the staff is struggling, and the students are struggling, and you couldn't express that. I can understand that you are trying to assure parents that "everything will be ok" with the cards that you are dealt. Mr. Bembury asked you to name a dollar amount that you felt would cover the needs at EES, and you said none were needed. You have lost my trust, and I'm sure I'm not alone. If you are truly supportive of your staff, the students and families, I would have appreciated hearing the struggles that the school has been experiencing from your perspective. There is a clear divide in your staff at EES, and a disregard of feelings and experiences that have been expressed by both staff and Erving families.

I feel a lack of confidence in the leadership of the school moving forward. I encourage you to put your personal feelings aside and genuinely look at what is in the best interest of the students at EES. At the end of the day, the children are who will suffer most. Obtaining these funds, and having extra staff can only improve the current situation.

It saddens me that EES is turning into what it is. To hear that EES is being stuck in the same category as other schools is frustrating. We have never been like other schools. The school is what people come to our town for. The students who attend Erving are the future of our community. Consider their education to be an investment in our town. We have the opportunity to do better, but it can only be done if it's

supported collectively. Changes need to be made. I am open to a meeting in person if you feel you wish to discuss this further.

Thank you,
Jessica Niedbala

Rinky Black asked that the Port-a-potty be returned to EES. Rinky and Pam maintain the beautiful butterfly garden and many families use the playground after school and on weekends.

E. Approval of Minutes- A motion was made by Erik and seconded by Katelyn to accept the minutes from March 21, 2023* and April 5, 2023*. AIF.

F. Warrants –

Accounts Payable:

1033	3/23/2023	\$26,054.83
1034	4/6/2023	\$1,946.68
1035	4/6/2023	\$32,989.13
1036	4/20/2023	\$60,034.14
1037	4/20/2023	\$3,316.17
1038	5/4/2023	\$1,231.77
1039	5/4/2023	\$48,053.88
1040	12/29/2022	\$5,353.66

Accounts Payable Erving Secondary:

1115	3/23/2023	\$5,650.00
1116	4/6/2023	\$16,675.09
1117	4/20/2023	\$4,385.50
1118	5/4/2023	\$6,350.00

Payroll:

120	3/30/2023	\$100,005.92
120.1	3/30/2023	\$2,565.73
121	4/13/2023	\$100,008.21
122	4/27/2023	\$98,952.33
123	5/11/2023	\$124,762.28

- Gifts: Acceptance Vote - none
- Grants: Acceptance Vote - none

G. Report of the Gill-Montague Representative- Jacquie Boyden reached out and will report back next meeting.

Tech School Update- There are currently 27 students enrolled at FCTS. Jacquie missed the last meeting. Some students presented Capstone projects. The Tech school is currently looking for a new building. There will be an MSBA feasibility study to determine the size. The school would be built where the current playing fields are. The Aviation program is on track to begin.

H. Collaborative for Educational Services Report- Mackensy attended the last meeting. They toured the Hampshire Education Academy and the Collaborative for Educational Services. Both are currently being updated and are under construction. They went over enrollment, budgets, events, programs, and wanted to know how the Collaborative can help with any needs at Erving Elementary School.

I. Regionalization Update- The last meeting was May 3rd. There was a request for a Public School Regionalization Consultant. The Regionalization committee has been going to different schools and presenting their findings.

J. Capital Planning Committee Update- None

K. Superintendent's Report- The Union continues to work with The Collins Center around operational efficiencies. For Union 28 all interviews were completed and documents submitted. A round of second interviews were completed with the Superintendent's office. The Collins Center will analyze data and prepare reports. First round of learning walks wrapped up with Erving today. May 10th, the leadership team met to look at the data on a district level to prepare to share on the Union and School levels. Briefing on the FY24 House Budget. Shared that tax revenue growth across the Commonwealth has been flat. School Budget conference in Leverett. Invited to a breakfast at town hall and met with Governor Corrina Wcislo met with CPAC. Coffee and Conversations with the Special Education Department. on May 18th at Shutesbury Elementary.

L. Director of Finance and Operations Report*-

- We're half way through the Annual Town Meeting calendar. Leverett had their Town Meeting on April 29 and passed the budget. Erving passed the amended budget last Wednesday. Although the total Town appropriation for the budget is final, the School Committee will be voting on the allocation of that funding later this evening. Shutesbury has the next Town Meeting on Saturday June 3, and finally New Salem and Wendell's meetings will be held simultaneously on Tuesday June 6.

- I have been meeting monthly with the Food Service Directors, individually and as a collective group. We have been aligning processes and getting ready to close out the year, but my favorite part of the meetings are when the Director's share successes, ideas, and challenges with each other. It's great when they discuss delivery challenges with certain vendors, or grants they have found, quality of produce, the CEP process, and how they're keeping track of meal counts. Donna LaClaire, Erving's Food Service Director has the most experience, and has been a great support for new FSD's from other schools.
- Erving's registration in the SAM.gov system has been renewed for this year, our new expiration date is May 1, 2024. One of the things enrollment in SAM.gov allows us to access is the Small Rural School Achievement grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Rural Education Achievement Program. Erving was awarded \$15,213 most recently through this grant.
- Finally, the bargaining agreement with Unit A teachers has been signed, which means we were finally able to retroactively pay the teachers who have been receiving salaries on the FY22 schedule their FY23 amount. This has also allowed me to review the FY23 budget and get an idea of how we will end the year. We have had many unanticipated expenses and it appears that the requested amount of \$308,500 in additional funding requested from the Town back in January might be close to the necessary gap to close the deficit.

Send a clear list of what has been spent from February - today. The unexpected costs that come up. The projections for this year are based on the numbers from last year.

Caitlin is going to look more carefully at the expenditure reports and follow up.

M. Principal's Report- None Available.

N. Budget and Personnel Committee Report – None at this time.

O. Union #28 Committee Report- Erik attended a meeting last night.

P. Old Business- None

Q. New Business

- FY24 Amended and Voted by Town- Erving Elementary School Budget- A motion was made by Erik to accept the Erving Elementary School FY24 Budget of \$4,058,739. The motion was seconded by Katelyn. AIF.
- **School of Choice Vote** – A motion was made by Erik for Erving not to be a School of Choice. The motion was seconded by Katelyn. 4 yes 1 no.
Pros do not seem to outweigh the cons. A lot of work to be done internally with students already attending EES.
- **Withdraw from U28 - Discussion-** A copy of an email sent to the committee by Mark Bembury with his thoughts on withdrawing from Union 28 was made available for attendees to read. It's an interesting idea that has been brought up in the past. Pros and Cons from all involved parties. Needs to be a significant discussion that would require outside consultation. The positions/departments that are shared with Union 28 need to be made with all other members of the Union. If not part of the Union the School Committee would have the ability to make changes to those departments because they would solely work for Erving. There is a process to leave a Superintendency Union. The town would need to get approval

from DESE in regards to all departments that were previously shared by the Union. It is a long process. It can take a year if not more to go through the steps. More discussion at the June meeting.

· **Surplus Equipment** – Moved to June meeting.

· **PIEE Report-** PIEE recently finished up another successful Erving Apparel fundraiser. We hope to run it one more time before the end of the year. Last week PIEE was able to host Staff Appreciation Week at EES. A huge Thank You to all EES families that donated to make the week happen! PIEE also hosted Bingo for Books on May 5th. The PIEE Scholarship winners will be announced in June.

R. Policy Review and Update- Policy readings and votes will be moved to the June meeting.

Policy Review and Update

First Reading on:

- o DGA – Authorized Signatures*
- o DH – Bonded Employees and Officers*
- o DI – Fiscal Accounting and Reporting*
- o DJ – Purchasing*
- o DK – Payment Procedures*
- o KCD – Public Gifts to the School*
- o DIE – Audits*
- o JIC – Student Discipline*
- o GBA – Equal Employment Opportunity*
- o GCF – Professional Staff Hiring*
- o JB – Equal Educational Opportunity*

Second Reading, First Vote on:

- o DD – Grants, Proposals and Special Projects*
- o DBC – Budget Deadlines and Schedules*
- o DBD – Budget Planning*
- o DBG – Budget Adoption Procedures*
- o DBJ – Budget Transfer Authority*
- o DJE – Procurement Requirements*

S. Future Business

· **Next School Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday, June 20, 2023 – 7:00 p.m.** · Erving Policy Committee – **Tuesday, September 19, 2023 – 6:30 p.m.**

*Katelyn requested that a meeting schedule for FY24 be created for the June meeting.

May want to consider meeting more often and have a regular meeting schedule.

T. Adjournment and Executive Session- In accordance with **Open Meeting Law (Chapter 30A Section 21 (a))**, A motion was made by Mackensy **to move into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation and adjourn the open meeting at 9:04pm.**

Roll Call out- Eichorn I, Semb I, Bailey I, Mailloux-Little I, Chagnon I.

Respectfully submitted,

Brittanie Mimitz

Minute Taker