

**TUESDAY, September 20, 2022**  
**SCHOOL 7:00 p.m.**

**ERVING SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**ERVING ELEMENTARY**

**Present:** Jennifer Eichorn, Chair, Katelyn Mailloux-Little, David Chagnon, Members; Jenifer Culkeen, Superintendent of Schools; Lisa Candito, EES Principal; Brittanie Mimitz, Minute Taker; Caitlin Sheridan, Director of Finance and Operations; Lori Flaherty, Megan Gagne, Andrea Elson, Elizabeth Desorgher, Catherine Buell, Mark Burnett, Stephanie Barry, Laura George, Jamie Parse, Heather Peterson, Lori Hale, Rebecca Bosworth-Clemens, Rinky Black, Jim Hanson, Tracy Saharceski; EES Staff.

**Final Meeting Minutes**

**A. The Meeting was called to order** at 7:02 p.m. by Jenn.

**B. The Pledge of Allegiance** was recited by all.

**C. Public Hearings-**

- **Statements from EES Staff members;** Mark Burnett and Jamie Parse.

Good Evening School Committee Members,

I am here tonight to make a statement to you on behalf of the Erving Teachers' Association professional staff, Unit A. As you may know, the Erving Teachers Association has been in negotiations with the School Committee negotiating team since January 2022. During this time not only have we faced the challenges of a global health pandemic, but we have seen unrelenting and historical inflation scaling upwards of 9%. Despite our best efforts, we have been unable to settle a contract with a cost of living increase that reflects the value that Erving Elementary School educators bring to our District, and our contract expired on June 30, 2022.

We love this school! Erving Elementary has always been a wonderful place for children to learn and blossom. You know that. Three of you attended this school as children, just like me. All of you have or have had your own children attend this school. Here, students learn in an environment that is kind, open, understanding and patient. As well, students are held to high standards and pushed to become the best person and student they can be. I know you know this environment, and I think you know that doesn't just happen, it occurs through a lot of difficult work - by the men and women here tonight that I am proud to represent.

Over the past three years of Covid learning, our staff has worked in myriad new and difficult situations. For one, many students are multiple grade levels below academic benchmarks. As well, students' mental health have suffered significantly. More and more, we see students who are suffering emotional outbursts that are unsafe for themselves and their classmates. It is safe to say that students are in a precarious position.

In arguably one of the most historically challenging times in education, the staff here at EES have remained committed to supporting our students both academically and emotionally. Many of us have or are currently taking graduate courses in areas of social emotional learning and trauma based teaching so that we can meet the increased needs our students face after three years of pandemic learning.

Many of us have contracted Covid-19 and been away from teaching during the year. Because of the lack of substitute teachers, those who remained worked to figure out how to teach outside of their areas of expertise, while trying to plan and prepare for their own class at the same time. There have been many times when staff absences have been in the double-digits for a day, with no substitutes available.

I believe you know some of this, and there is certainly more to share, but I think we can agree that teachers are performing and working above and beyond expectations. It is for these reasons that our union is advocating for fair cost of living adjustment.

You may not know that three positions in town, the town treasurer, the fire chief, and town administrator received wage increases of 16%, 20%, and 25% this year. Do we think that is wrong? No. They work hard, they advance their knowledge in their profession through advanced coursework, and put in more hours to do their job well. But, you know who else does all of those things, too? The people in this room.

The initial offer given to us by your committee was at less than one percent each year, and, we have not actually

even reached a point where we are being offered a consistent 2% cost of living increase for all Unit A staff.

Besides a realistic wage increase we are being denied a salary lane for those of us who have reached 60 advanced graduate credits. This is equivalent to a doctorate or double master's degree. Our request was denied by your committee because it was deemed too costly to the town.

This column, which is standard in many districts, is being dismissed out of hand. Why? It certainly should not be because the Town of Erving cannot afford it, as was shared with us. As a matter of fact, the school committee just returned over a quarter of a million dollars from this past year's operating budget that wasn't spent.

The Town of Erving is currently sitting on just under \$10 million dollars in a savings account, according to its Fiscal Year 2023 Proposed Operating Budget. However, the town's leadership feels that in a time of nearly 9% inflation and with nearly \$10 million in savings, a 2% increase for its emergency personnel and other staff, and less than 2% for teachers is fair and reasonable. We strongly disagree.

Not all of you are at the negotiating table, but you should be aware of the progress at the table, and each of you has a voice in this process. If you didn't know about much or all that I've shared here tonight, I hope it has persuaded you to think about all of the dedicated staff members you have here, and not just those in this room tonight. With the massive raises given to a very select few town workers and with absolute the ability to give what is fair, I hope each of you find your voice to say, "Enough. It's time to settle a contract that shows that we value our schools and our staff."

Mark Burnett

Dear Members of School Committee,

When I heard about how contract negotiations were progressing, I was so sad, confused, and hurt. I wondered why and what happened to make you devalue me and all the teachers that work so hard to support our students. Have the distancing requirements of COVID not only separated us physically, but has it separated us as a community? Does the community that I love and value so much not feel the same for me? After reflecting upon this over and over I began to realize that the negotiations are a result of a very small representation of the Erving community; and I began to feel angry.

I wondered if you know the kind of teacher I am and what I have poured into this beautiful little school. So before you make decisions that affect my life, I would like to share a bit about myself with you. Last year was my 7th year teaching at Erving and my 2nd year teaching kindergarten. The first year of kindergarten completely wore me down. If you know me at all, you know that I have difficulty speaking in front of large groups of people (above kindergarten age) and I struggle with technology (thank God for Tom Smith). Teaching through COVID was one of the worst years of my entire life. I never slept. I was constantly working to learn new technology and then have to try and teach it to parents (again, thank God for Tom). I would begin getting the day ready hours before the kids logged on to make sure everything was working for my kindergarteners while continuing to figure out ways to make everything developmentally appropriate, follow all the kindergarten curriculum, and ensure that all the kids were doing ok emotionally (trying to read that through a computer screen doesn't feel great). For me, that was not the worst part. I struggled with having to sing, dance, soothe upset kindergarteners, and manage behaviors all while in front of a group of people that were not just kindergarteners. Every time I sat in front of that computer to begin a google meet I felt like I was going to throw up; but I did it. I pushed through a lifelong struggle I have had without a word, because that's what most of us teachers do. I couldn't work from home because my wife didn't work with my 3 daughters and husband in live meetings all day. So I worked in a very cold building, I worked countless hours, taught in ways that I totally didn't sign up for, and put myself and my family on the backburner so that I could be there for my students and their families.

I was so excited for my second year teaching kindergarten, but it didn't turn out to be the year I had looked forward to. I have a blood clotting disorder and last year I developed a pulmonary embolism in January and I was treated for several days at the hospital. I returned as the kindergarten teacher for only half days because my recovery was slow (I later found out that a medication the doctors had switched me to wasn't treating the clot and it was going deeper into my lung) and in mid-February the clot broke free and burst through my heart. After that I was not able to return back to my classroom and my students. Leaving them at this time of year was so hard for everyone. Through my own choice, I

worked my best to ease the hardship; I wrote upcoming education assessments for students' IEPs, consulted with the kindergarten team, and kept in contact with the children. I came in for special days like field day, to plant our kindergarten garden outside our classroom door (I watched, they did all the work), and just to spend some time with them. I don't write this for sympathy, I just want you to see how much I love my students, this school, and how I work for both even when I'm pushing myself too far. I know that no one asked me to, I just want you to know how much I really do care.

I want to end with this. I am a person who loves Erving Elementary School, I am a person who loves my students (and their families), and I am a person. I have three daughters, a husband, a mortgage, an insane increase in so many of my bills that are needed to live (oil, gas, food, and electricity has skyrocketed for me), and now I have accrued thousands of dollars in medical bills (those small increases in our health insurance co-pays really add up fast when something goes wrong). You four know how it is right now and how hard it has been the past few years. If I don't deserve your support right now, then when will I? I am just one voice, but if you speak to all of us, you will see how similar we all are. I know a teacher who took on teaching two classrooms without thinking twice because she loves our kids, I know a teacher who spent countless hours helping teachers, students, and families make online school work during COVID, I know teachers who have fractured knee caps and still gather collections of books for teachers and kids, I know teachers who have suffered great losses and pushed on through without skipping a beat, and on, and on and on and on. We do deserve you and the school communities' support.

In hopes you can hear us,

Jaime Parse

**D. Approval of Minutes-**

- A motion was made by Jen and seconded by David to approve the edited minutes from May 17, 2022\*. AIF.
- A motion was made by David and seconded by Katelyn to approve the minutes from June 21, 2022\* and August 23, 2022\*. AIF.

**E. Warrants –**

	1120	6/28/2022	\$4,611.00
<b>Accounts Payable</b>	1001	7/1/2022	\$9,838.76
	1002	7/28/2022	\$5,644.37
	1011	7/28/2022	\$5,441.74
	1003	8/11/2022	\$18,731.39
	1004	8/11/2022	\$10,024.75
	1005	8/25/2022	\$15,908.95
	1006	8/25/2022	\$34,581.77
	1009	9/7/2022	\$4,186.40
	1007	9/8/2022	\$24,267.14
	1012	9/8/2022	\$9,360.00
	1008	9/22/2022	\$41,960.43
	1013	9/22/2022	\$11,426.94

<b>Payroll</b>	126	6/23/2022	\$108,006.17
	101	7/7/2022	\$87,467.96
	102	7/21/2022	\$91,220.87
	103	8/4/2022	\$102,864.14

	104	8/18/2022	\$88,701.90
	105	9/1/2022	\$101,453.33
	106	9/15/2022	\$100,848.82
	106.1	9/15/2022	\$1,969.57

**F. Report of the Gill-Montague Representative-** No report available.

**G. Collaborative for Educational Services Report-** David has a schedule change that conflicts with the meeting times. He will contact Dan Hayes to get the meeting minutes to share with the committee.

**H. Regionalization Update-** The most recent meeting was August 31, 2022. The main focus right now is building a large slideshow to present to the towns.

**Gill-Montague Agreement -** The Agreement dates back to 1980. Currently Erving is able to participate but unable to vote. The committee may want to amend the agreement if Regionalization moves forward. Jenn asked that the committee to look over the documents and move the item to the next meeting for a vote.

**I. Capital Planning Committee Update-** The Freezer installation project is moving forward. It will hopefully be finished during February break. There is about \$100,000 in grant money to update the HVAC system which is one of the next projects on the list.

**J. Superintendent's Report-** The Union was able to have Opening day in-person this year. Thank you to EES for hosting the event outside under the tent. New Staff members were welcomed as well as staff members in new positions. There are some new administrators and a New Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The leadership team presented the draft Strategic Plan; what the union will look like in the next 3-5 years. The leadership team worked on that all summer. The Union was able to participate in the mandatory civil rights training as a whole group. It typically is done school by school but this year everyone was able to hear the same message. The new Curriculum Director presented the new Curriculum Accommodation Plan that has been in the works for 3 years. There will be exciting PD's this year. The Union will be doing some work with Hill for Literacy on the Science For Reading. The Director of Finance and Operations will be heading a Wellness Committee that will be Union wide.

**K. Director of Finance and Operations Report\*-** Caitlyn shared the Erving Expenditure Report with the committee and will send a slideshow later displaying all the numbers. She then went through each line and how to read it. On the bottom of the last page is the Grand Total line which includes the total budget amount, money spent to date, amount encumbered, and most importantly the total budget balance which is currently \$1,000,1624.40. She is currently working on the final end of year reports that are due September 30th. The wellness committee is going to be Union wide. This way a variety of staff members can share their knowledge. School committee volunteers to join the Wellness committee would be appreciated. Caitlyn is attending the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials meeting next week.

**L. Principal's Report-** Lisa reported that we have completed 15 days of school. During the last few weeks EES has been able to host an in-person Kindergarten open house and a bus drill. The pre-k and kindergarten class is going on a field trip to the apple orchard tomorrow. The amazing literacy team has already completed the literacy screenings for k-6 and math screening is underway in grades k-6 as well. This year EES is taking some of the Wednesday afternoons and setting aside blocks of consultation time for all staff members to attend appropriate grade level meetings. Gary Porlier will be retiring on November 11, 2022. Erik Harris will take over his position and Bill Fiske will take over for Erik. Looking to hire more subs and paraeducators. There has been a question of residency with several students. They are claiming to live in Erving but actually reside in another town. There are currently 130 students attending EES.

**M. Budget and Personnel Committee Report**

· Next Meeting Date – October 17, 2022

**N. Union #28 Committee Report-**

· Next Meeting Date – November 14, 2022 @ 6:30 p.m.

**O. Old Business-** None

## **P. New Business**

· **Application for Regional Efficiencies** - Erving was asked to partner with the Collins Center to apply for a grant to study Regional Efficiencies throughout the union. The cost of the study is \$32,000. The Collins Center would then make recommendations on how to move forward.

- Caitlyn and the Superintendent shared questions from the community.
  - Two students were school choiced to another school in the union and seven staff members left for other opportunities this year. The Sixth grade is split because of needs for those students. First grade has 20 but it also has 5 adults in the room. This year programs will begin coming back. The school play, holiday concert, and field trips will be Universally Designed to make it better for all students.
- **PIEE Report-** PIEE had our first meeting and had a new parent join. The mum's fundraiser just finished and we will be moving forward with other fundraisers and programs. The meetings are the first Monday of each month.

## **Q. Policy Review and Update**

### **Second Reading, First Vote on:**

- AC – Non-Discrimination\*
- ACAB – Sexual Harassment\*
- JICK – Harassment of Students\*

- **A motion was made by Katelyn to move to a final vote on AC, ACAB, and JICK. The motion was seconded by David. AIF.**

### **Final Vote on:**

- KHA – Public Solicitations in the Schools\*
- KHB – Advertising in the Schools\*
- KI – Visitors in the School\*
- LA – Education Agency Relations Goals\*
- LBC – Relations with Non-Public Schools\*

- **A motion to accept KHA, KHB, KI, LA, and LBC was made by Jen. The motion was seconded by Katelyn. AIF.**

## **R. Future Business**

· Next School Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday, November 15, 2022 – 7:00 p.m. ·  
Erving Policy Committee – Tuesday, November 15, 2022 – 6:30 p.m.

## **S. Adjournment and Executive Session**

- To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining
- A motion to adjourn the general meeting and move to an Executive Session was made by Jen and seconded by Katelyn. AIF.

Roll Call out- I Eichorn, I Mailloux-Little, I Chagnon

### **\* Enclosures**

Respectfully submitted,  
Brittanie Mimitz  
Minute taker