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EASTON, REDDING REGION 9 JOINT BOARDS OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING
Joel Barlow High School - Library Learning Commons
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRtQ6dze5a8x5XT5LzBnDHA>
February 22, 2022 - 7:30 p.m.
Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Easton: Stinson, Parker, Chieda, deJesus, Hicks, Wible

Redding: Parkin, Hoffman, Oulton, Belfatto, Gibbons, Sadana Absent: Hardridge

Region 9: D'Agostino, Johnston, Graziano, Lehberger, O'Brien, Pampel, Thompson Absent: Denny

Administration: McKinnon, Pierson Ugol, Petruzelli, Scrafoni

Others: 10 members of the public, the videographer and the recording secretary

CALL TO ORDER

J. Stinson called the Easton Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

C. Parkin called the Redding Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

M. D'Agostino called the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Concerning the Minutes of the Easton, Redding and Region 9 Joint Boards of Education Special Meeting of January 6, 2022: M. D'Agostino requested that, on page 2, "BOE members were amenable to this idea," be stricken. With no other comments from Region 9 BOE members, M. D'Agostino deemed the Minutes approved.

Concerning the Minutes of the Easton, Redding and Region 9 Joint Boards of Education Special Meeting of January 6, 2022: J. Stinson requested that, on page 2, "BOE members were amenable to this idea," be stricken. With no other comments from Easton BOE members, J. Stinson deemed the Minutes approved.

C. Parkin said that the Redding Board of Education had previously approved the Minutes from the Easton, Redding and Region 9 Joint Boards of Education Special Meeting of January 6, 2022.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Stephanie Duque, Jessie Lee Lane, Easton, asked that the BOEs please take masks off of our kids.

Rachel Mazzerilli, Ground Pine Lane, Easton, said that she understands that masks will become optional and said that masks did not work in the prevention of COVID, and that it is time for them to end.

Kristin Falzone, Tranquility Drive, Easton, said that she was voicing her support for lifting the mask mandate and wants the BOEs to contemplate letting parents into the schools again.

Julie Basset, Dairy Lane, Easton, said that she echoes what the other three women just said and would like to understand what the significance of the February 28 date is, and also would like to understand the policy of what would happen if COVID cases rise and also quarantine issues.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

M. Hoffman said thank you to all that had come out tonight and for your feedback.

S. Lehberger said thank you to the public who had come to the meeting and that she looks forward to a great resolution today so that we can be more at peace and work things out together.

C. Graziano said ditto to what Sarah said.

M. D'Agostino said that the BOEs always appreciate feedback from the community, and that they always have the well-being of the students in mind.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SUSPENSION OF POLICY 5141.8 FACE MASK COVERINGS

C. Parkin read the proposed Motion for the suspension of Policy 5141.8:

1. Suspend policy 5141.8 Facemasks, until the earlier of August 15, 2022 or further action of the Board and
2. Specially delegate to the Superintendent the authority to require the use of face coverings in the event public health circumstances so warrant and/or upon recommendation of the Boards' medical and health advisors or as otherwise required by federal, state, or local authorities..

In Redding: Motion was made by C. Parkin and seconded by C. Sadana.

In Easton: Motion was made by D. Wible and seconded by R. Hicks.

In Region 9: Motion was made by C. Graziano and seconded by S. Lehberger.

A lengthy discussion amongst all three BOEs followed with the key deliberating points being: the inclusion of line #2 in the Motion, and whether or not to proceed with a 1st Reading of Policy 5141.8 at tonight's meeting. Some BOE members voiced their objection and pause to line #2, while others said it was an opportunity for the Superintendent to do his job and that it is already part of his job responsibilities. Some BOE members felt the process of fully revoking Policy 5141.8, with a 1st Reading of the Policy, should begin at tonight's meeting since fully revoking was the eventual result; other BOE members felt that a more deliberate approach should be taken in an effort to comply and preserve BOE policy procedure. Several Board members wanted the community to understand that the mask mandate came from the State of Connecticut and that now they were tasked with ending this mandate, which they wanted to do in the most expedient manner. M. D'Agostino suggested the removal of line #2 and offered revised language for the Motion on the floor.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education remove #2 of the Motion concerning Policy 5141.8. (Hoffman, Belfatto). Approved. 3-1-2. (Sadana, Oulton abstained).

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education remove #2 of the Motion concerning Policy 5141.8. (Wible, Parker). Approved. 5-0-1. (Chieda abstained).

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education remove #2 of the Motion concerning Policy 5141.8. (Johnston, Thompson). Approved. 5-2.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education amend the original Motion concerning Policy 5141.8. (Hoffman, Gibbons). Approved. 6-0.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education amend the original Motion concerning Policy 5141.8. (Wible, Chieda). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education amend the original Motion concerning Policy 5141.8. (Graziano, Lehberger). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education approve that public health conditions have changed and the terms of Policy 5141.8 are obsolete, therefore we move to suspend Policy 5141.8 Facemasks until the earlier of August 15, 2022 or until further action from the Board. (Parkin, Sadana). Approved. 6-0.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve that public health conditions have changed and the terms of Policy 5141.8 are obsolete, therefore we move to suspend Policy 5141.8 Facemasks until the earlier of August 15, 2022 or until further action from the Board. (Wible, Hicks). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve that public health conditions have changed and the terms of Policy 5141.8 are obsolete, therefore we move to suspend Policy 5141.8 Facemasks, until the earlier of August 15, 2022 or until further action from the Board. (Graziano, Lehberger). Approved. 7-0.

Region 9 BOE members requested that Policy 5141.8 be moved to a 1st Reading; J. Stinson explained that it would need to be done in the form of an Agenda Change.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education add Agenda Item 1st Reading of Policy 5141.8 for the purpose of nullifying the policy. (Hoffman, Gibbons). Approved. 5-1.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education add Agenda Item 1st Reading of Policy 5141.8 for the purpose of nullifying the policy. (Chieda, Parker). Failed. 3-3.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education add Agenda Item 1st Reading of Policy 5141.8 for the purpose of nullifying the policy. (Johnston, Pampel). Approved. 7-0.

The question of moving Policy 5141.8 to 1st Reading was put to vote for the Redding Board of Education and the Region 9 Board of Education only, as the Agenda Change Motion failed in Easton.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education accept to a 1st Reading, Policy 5141.8. (Hoffman, Gibbons). Failed. 2-4.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education accept to a 1st Reading, Policy 5141.8. (Johnston, Pampel). Approved. 5-1-1. (O' Brien abstained).

J. Chieda asked if it would be possible to further discuss the word “recommended,” at the meeting. J. Stinson explained that an Agenda Item would need to be added. It was decided to save the discussion for a future meeting.

C. Parkin noted that the earlier vote by the Redding Board of Education on eliminating line #2 of the Motion on suspending Policy 5141.8 should have been recorded as “failed,” since the two abstentions in the vote of 3-1-2 caused the vote to not have a majority.

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jason McKinnon, explained his communication to parents concerning the suspension of the mask mandate, saying that the letter was sent to BOE members prior to going out to parents. He said that he had met with the District’s medical advisors who were not comfortable with ending the mask mandate and that is why he said that masks are optional, but recommended, for wear. Dr. McKinnon said that he understands the BOEs lengthy conversation about how to end the mask mandate, but that he is more worried about guidance that the District can give to principals and teachers so that they can have conversations with the students. He asked that everyone be patient because the District gets last-minute, and sometimes no, guidance on how to proceed.

Dr. McKinnon requested a five minute recess; no BOE members objected. The meeting went into recess at 9:19 p.m. The meeting resumed at 9:26 p.m.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CENTRAL OFFICE BUDGET

Dr. McKinnon first said that the Central office is the leadership team of a learning organization. He then explained that the budget was broken into three new cost centers: staff, facilities and operations. Dr. McKinnon also pointed out that easily visible in the budget slides were: each tri-district share of the budget, last year’s budget, the new budget and the percentage of increase. Overall, the Central office budget for 2022-2023 is at \$2,056,021.51; a \$3,753.53 – or .18% – increase. The increase for each of the three Districts is \$1,251.18 – or .06%. BOE members had questions about: health insurance, social security/medicare taxes, utilities, eFinance fees, one staff member’s pension and the lease on the Central Office space.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education approve a Central Office budget for 2022-2023 in the amount of \$2,056,021.53, which is an increase of \$3,753.53, or .18%; this is an increase of \$1,251.18 for each District, or .06%. (Sadana, Belfatto). Approved. 6-0.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve a Central Office budget for 2022-2023 in the amount of \$2,056,021.53, which is an increase of \$3,753.53, or .18%; this is an increase of \$1,251.18 for each District, or .06%. (Parker, Chieda). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve a Central Office budget for 2022-2023 in the amount of \$2,056,021.53, which is an increase of \$3,753.53, or .18%; this is an increase of \$1,251.18 for each District, or .06%. (Graziano, Thompson). Approved. 7-0.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: JOINT COMMITTEES

J. Stinson presented a slide that detailed the 10 Joint Board of Education Committees, their purpose and meeting frequency. The Committees are: Long Range Planning & Steering; Calendar; Food Service; Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force; Negotiating; Central Office Ad Hoc; Transportation; Wellness; Policy; and Health Insurance. Principal members of the Committees further explained what is entailed with each Committee. A discussion about the Committees followed that included: does a Committee need to have a charge; consolidation of similar subjects/tasks; member groupings; gaining or not gaining efficiencies by grouping Committees; and preservation of administrator time.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Joint Policy Committee: J. Stinson said that Region 9 had not appointed a member to the Joint Policy Committee, and that they had decided not to meet until a member is appointed.

Joint DEI Task Force: D. Wible said that she had been appointed Chair and that they had changed their meeting schedule to quarterly meetings.

Joint Food Service: J. Parker said that their goal is to bring a recommendation for a food service contract to the May Joint BOEs meeting. He said the RFP had been sent to the State for approval and then it will go out to food service companies.

Central Office Ad Hoc: M. D'Agostino said that there are improvements needed to the building, and that going forward he'd like to have a written contract with Easton.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

L. Gibbons thanked the administration for the comments about helping students acclimate to the new mask rule.

C. Parkin read a prepared statement in which he said, in sum: He, too, is tired of masks and social distancing and COVID like everyone else, but that we cannot simply end the pandemic by turning off the television, that it takes a collective effort of society to end it. He said that school leaders have spent hours and hours in meetings trying to balance core teaching with the health & safety of our students and staff in an evolving crisis. C. Parkin said that we collectively have an obligation to keep our schools safe, but we don't have an obligation to solve every risk, but we should not rush to stop mitigation of COVID risk while transmission remains high. He said that it's an easy way to placate people and in the current climate it seems to be the only basis for such a decision. C. Parkin said that this isn't and shouldn't be a political decision and our action tonight as a Board makes it clear that it won't be. He said he fully expects the Superintendent will act in accord with his preliminary plan, and a plan that all schools in the region have, which is to recommend, but not require, until the State mandate is lifted. C. Parkin said that he trusts our Superintendent to do the diligent work with our health officials.

D. Wible said that she had two comments: 1) in regards to not wanting to do the 1st Reading tonight: it was the right thing to do, but that she understands the desire of some wanting to do so. She said that rushing can set a dangerous precedent for future policy. 2) about tonight's decision about rescinding the policy: she said that she trusts the Superintendent and the administration and that she wants to remind folks that this is not political, that these are our children. D. Wible said that even though we don't always

agree with the decisions, it doesn't make them wrong and it's important to support these decisions especially when emergent health decisions could potentially still arise.

J. Chieda said that she does not think that the decision made by the BOEs tonight had anything to do with placating people, but that the BOEs are responding to changing information and a change in the disease, and that the BOEs are weighing priorities. She said that rescinding the policy at the local level and the state level puts the assessment of risk in someone else's hands; it's a family decision to decide if they are willing to accept the risk.

M. Pampel said that it's the responsibility of our superintendent for our staff and that she doesn't want that to be forgotten.

K. O'Brien said that she appreciates Dr. McKinnon's words.

S. Lehberger said thank you to Dr. McKinnon and that there is a weight on his shoulders. She said that we all need to extend grace to one another.

K. Thompson said a special thank you to Dr. McKinnon. She said that his communication was excellent, especially when he addressed the parents who were here.

T. Johnston said that he is glad that we suspended the policy. He said that as a Board member he finds it concerning that some people have said that they need more time to read the policy. T. Johnston said that there's a lot of operational work that needs to be done and prioritized, and that there needs to be a discussion with teachers and students about respecting what people choose to do.

M. D'Agostino said that he appreciates the thoughtful conversation here and that he has always stressed throughout the pandemic that we need to look out for one another and respect each other. He said that he disagrees that moving to a 1st Reading to annul the policy was out of step with typical procedure. M. D'Agostino reminded everyone that the JBHS Theater Department is putting on "MacBeth," this Thursday through Saturday.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education meeting be adjourned. (Hoffman, Gibbons).
Approved. 6-0.**

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education meeting be adjourned. (Chieda, Wible).
Approved. Unanimous.**

**Motion: move that the Region Board of Education meeting be adjourned. (Lehberger, Pampel).
Approved. 7-0.**

The Redding Board of Education meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

The Easton Board of Education meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

The Region 9 Board of Education meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Submitted by Jeff Parker
Secretary, Easton Board of Education

Recorded by
Sarah Ota