

EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EASTON, MA

EASTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, February 17, 2022

Minutes of the Virtual School Committee Meeting, February 17, 2022, Virtual Meeting via Zoom convened at 4:02 p.m. Present by roll call: Michelle Durrance, Nancy De Luca, Jacqueline Weisman, Caroline O'Neill, and Jennifer Starr.

Also in Attendance:

Dr. Lisha Cabral, Superintendent; Crissy Pruitt, Assistant Superintendent; Lynn Souza, Administrative Assistant to Dr. Cabral and School Committee Secretary..

Call Meeting to Order:

Chair Durrance called the meeting to order by stating that in keeping with an act relative to extending certain Covid-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency, signed into law by Governor Baker on June 16, 2021, the meeting will be conducted remotely over Zoom. Attendance by Board members will be remote and remote attendance shall count toward quorum. The meeting will be broadcast live on FaceBook and recorded on ECAT. To use zoom you will need to download the Zoom application or use the link on the agenda.

Vote to Approve Music Department Out of State Trip

Jeff Benson, Chair of the Music Department, presented the proposal for the OA Jazz Band to the Jazz Festival in Durham, New Hampshire. He said that this replaced the Berkeley Jazz Festival as they are no longer hosting. He spoke of the COVID protocols and that the bus ride by Lucini will be funded by the Activities Fee and TEMPO. He said there are limited tickets due to COVID.

A discussion took place about the COVID protocols.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. O'Neill, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee approved the out of state trip for the music department.

Presentation and Vote to Accept OA's Program of Studies

Dr. Cabral introduced Kelly Cavanaugh, Principal of Oliver Ames High School.

Ms. Cavanaugh thanked all the faculty and department heads for all their contributions and thanked Ms. Crowley for putting the presentation together. Ms. Cavanaugh presented OA's Program of Studies.

A discussion took place.

Dennis Gibson, 185 Lincoln - *"Will small engines and forensics still be offered? I know several*

kids signed up but didn't get to take it."

Ms. Cavanaugh responded that forensics will not be offered next year and that it will be replaced with the Science Leadership Project course. She said the way that they have looked at the Industrial Arts and Engineering Program is to build experiences with different technologies, woodworking, and metalworking. She said small engines will still be built into the courses that they teach but won't be a separate course. She said they are hoping to provide students with a variety of experiences, get their feedback, and then develop some electives that are specialized and highly in tune to certain areas of exploration for these students.

Sharon Gibson, 185 Lincoln St. - *"The honors chemistry class size was recently doubled due class consolidation from a teacher leave and a retirement. Is this a permanent solution for this year? How does that impact the science classes and added science project next year?"*

Ms. Cavanaugh responded that a Chemistry teacher was on leave so they combined 2 courses for the duration of the leave. Ms. Cavanaugh said they removed the forensic course so it wouldn't change the numbers across the board and that they will also have a full time teacher back in place next year.

Ben Rey, 147 Randall Street - *"I didn't see any courses focused on software development or writing code, which is major industry in Boston. Will there be future courses on that?"*

Ms. Cavanaugh responded that she didn't address them in her presentation because the courses are not changing but they do have computer science courses in their program of studies and she encourages people to take a look at those. She said it is something that they are continuing to look at because they believe there will be a push to have more computer science courses offered within and that the Math Department Chair, Mary Romans has been watching this very closely.

On a motion by Ms. Starr, seconded by Ms. O'Neill, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee accepted OA's Program of Studies.

Discussion and Vote to Approve Capital Plan

Dr. Cabral introduced David Twombly, Director of Operations. She noted that the capital plan has been added in the Committee's packet.

Mr. Twombly said that some changes have been made since they received the document. He said there is an updated quote for the security system from Perkins Eastman, the designers on the new Blanche Ames Elementary School project. He said in addition to that he found out from the Community Preservation Act Committee that they will not be giving out any CPA funds in May of 2022 but will in May of 2023; therefore, he has it on the list for capital. He said that they hope to have the RO playground done in the summer of 2023.

Mr. Twombly reviewed the list of capital items.

A discussion took place.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee approved the Capital Plan budget.

Personnel Changes: Retirements - Adjustment Counselor MH and Special Ed Teacher OA

Dr. Cabral announced the retirements of Barbara Anderson, Adjustment Counselor at Moreau Hall effective February 1, 2022 and Barbara Ratcliffe, Special Education Teacher at Oliver Ames High School effective September 4, 2022.

Chair Durrance read Ms. Ratcliffe's retirement letter.

Committee members expressed their gratitude for Ms. Ratcliffe's time in Easton and wished her well in retirement.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Starr, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee accepted Barbara Ratcliffe's retirement letter with regret.

Dr. Cabral said that they did not have a letter to read announcing Barbara Anderson's retirement.

Committee members expressed their gratitude for Ms. Anderson's time in Easton and wished her well in retirement.

On a motion by Ms. O'Neill, seconded by Ms. De Luca, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee accepted Barbara Anderson's retirement letter with regret.

Vote to Appoint Three Members of the School Committee to the Professional Improvement Leave Committee

Dr. Cabral stated that they are receiving comments in the Q & A and that she wanted to let everyone know that comments are taken during the Public Comment agenda item. She said at the risk of anyone saying that they aren't transparent, she wanted to make sure that she notes that she is being called rude because the Committee is not addressing the masking item. She explained the Open Meeting Law and that on the agenda it lists the items that will be discussed and in the order they will take place. She said that people who have seen the agenda may be planning to attend later in the meeting when the discussion will take place. She asked for the comments to stop and the name calling stop.

Dr. Cabral said that there is language in the educators contract called Professional Leave which is similar to a sabbatical leave. She noted that a staff member has asked to take a Professional Improvement Leave which is an opportunity for someone in the unit to improve their education or to improve their experience through an accredited program. She noted that the Committee calls for 3 representatives of the Easton Educators Association and 3 School Committee representatives. The Superintendent serves as the Chair on the Committee. Dr. Cabral said that the 3 representatives of the School Committee could be members or they could appoint someone to act as their representative.

Ms. O'Neill suggested that the principal of the person's school serve on the Committee.

Ms. Starr and Ms. De Luca expressed interest in serving on the Committee.

The vote will take place at the March 10th meeting.

Vote to Change the 2021-2022 School Calendar

Dr. Cabral said that she had checked with the district's legal counsel and was told that the Committee did not necessarily have to vote on the 2 half days for February 18th and March 18th

that were previously presented for the 2021-2022 school year; however, the Committee could vote to accept the 2 half days if they choose to do so.

On a motion by Ms. Weisman, seconded by Ms. O'Neill, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee approved February 18th and March 18th as 2 half days to the 2021-2022 school calendar.

On a motion by Ms. Weisman, seconded by Ms. O'Neill, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee accepted the calendar changes to the 2021-2022 School Calendar to include 2 half days.

Discussion and Possible Vote on the Return to Play Policy (First Reading)

Ms. Starr said that as discussed last time they were presented with the details of the protocol itself and what was included in the packet is the actual policy. She noted that Ms. Pruitt reached out to counsel and they provided a draft and some edits were made that she wants the Committee to review. Ms. Starr added that in the packet included the draft with edits as well as the final version. Ms. Starr said that because it was not a MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) policy, she referenced a file that doesn't conflict with anything in file JJIF and JJIF-R which are the concussion policy protocols.

Ms. De Luca thanked Ms. Starr for her work on it.

The Committee agreed that the second reading with a vote would take place at the March 10th meeting.

Discussion of 2022-2023 School Calendar (First Reading)

Dr. Cabral said that the date of the primary elections just came out and that it will take place on September 6, 2022. She said that the Town Clerk's office prefers to have no students in the building during the elections for parking to be available to the voters. Dr. Cabral said that she was asked to convey that request and noted that they had taken the November 8th elections into consideration and made that a Professional Development Day. She said there are 3 drafts for consideration.

A discussion took place.

The Committee decided to discuss all 3 drafts at the next meeting and vote on a final calendar at the March 10th meeting.

Discussion of 2022-2023 School Committee Meeting Schedule (First Reading)

Dr. Cabral presented the meeting schedule of the School Committee for next school year. As this is a first reading, no vote was taken.

COVID Cases Update

Ms. Pruitt said the testing program is underway and running smoothly. She said that the district has received extra staff from CIC and they are being extremely helpful in distributing the tests to students. She reminded everyone that students can enroll in the testing program at any time.

Dr. Cabral added that the kit contains 2 tests and they are distributed every 2 weeks to the students who are enrolled in the testing program and tests are being done in the home.

Chair Durrance reminded everyone that the Committee will be taking questions via the chat feature. She said names and addresses need to be provided for questions to be answered and that they will do their best to answer questions; however, they will not reread questions that have already been answered. Due to the potential of a high volume of questions, everyone will be allowed to submit 1 question and once everyone has had the opportunity to ask 1 question, if time permits they will go back and answer more questions.

Discussion and Possible Vote on Mask Mandate

Dr. Cabral presented a slideshow on the Masking Requirements for EPS.

Due to the confusion and misinformation that had been out in the community, Dr. Cabral provided a timeline of the following:

- Thursday, January 27 - SC cancels February 10 meeting because February 17 & March 10 already scheduled
- Wednesday, February 9 - Commissioner call/no questions taken and Governor's announcement
- Thursday, February 17 - School Committee scheduled meeting
- February 28 - first possible day of optional masking
- Other districts??? - coincidence of scheduling and/or 80%

Dr. Cabral presented the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) rationale for reverting to local control over masking:

- Consultation of risk with medical experts and state health officials
- High level of vaccination rates
- Widespread availability of COVID-19 testing for students and staff
- STRONG recommendation of continued DESE/DPH protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios
- Unvaccinated and/or immunocompromised individuals should continue to mask
- Continued requirements -
 - Mandatory masking for ALL on school buses (federal order)
 - Strong support for those who choose to continue to mask
 - Continued monitoring local data
- In alignment with DESE/DPH Protocols for Responding to K-12 Scenarios, DESE and DPH guidance will continue to strongly recommend:
 - After a five day isolation and/or quarantine period, wear a mask around others for an additional five days, except when eating, drinking, or outdoors
 - Individuals who experience COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and obtain testing. If they receive a negative result and their symptoms improve (including remaining fever-free for a 24 hour period without fever-reducing medication), they can return to school but should also wear a mask until their symptoms fully resolve
 - Unvaccinated individuals should continue to wear masks in school settings

Dr. Cabral reviewed some important considerations:

- Easton-specific and ePS-specific data and trends
- Implications at EVERY grade level and in every program
- Music guidance (chorus, wind instruments, performances)
- MIAA guidance for sports (received February 11)

- Input from: administrators, school nurses, therapeutic staff, educators, parents, health department
- Capacity for effective implementation
- Procedural issues and agenda - vote? Public hearing?

Dr. Cabral noted that for the week of February 10 - February 16, 2022, 11 Students tested positive and 3 staff members tested positive. She compared the cases this year to last year and noted the spike from the Omicron virus in January of this year. Dr. Cabral showed a comparison of positive students by grade span. She reviewed specific programming information:

- EEC (Early Education and Childcare department) - PK no recommendation beyond September 2021 for optional masking ages 2-4 (DESE does not preside over PK as it is EEC)
- MIAA - February 11 - *“Beginning February 28, 2022, the MIAA mask-wearing protocols will end. Moving forward as we navigate the winter Statewide Tournament, we will adhere to host school and venue-specific restrictions. Anyone who chooses to wear a mask may continue to do so.”*
- Music - International Coalition of Performing Arts - masks, instruments covers, distancing, rehearsal times (MMEA - not yet updated)

Dr. Cabral presented the following for the School Committee’s consideration:

- **Optional** masking for all students and staff starting February 28 (why not March?)
- **Includes** optional masking for PE, PK, performance audiences, all sports and activities and audiences, and school visitors
- **Mandatory** masks for singing and bell covers for instruments when in close proximity (based on larger distancing, many not be needed) ie: larger performances in biggest performance spaces or outdoors
- **Strict adherence** to current COVID protocols in Playbook (including where masking is **mandatory**)
- **Mandatory** masking on buses for everyone
- **STRONG** recommendation of continued masking for unvaccinated and/or immunocompromised individuals
- **Strict** support for masking individuals
- **Avoid** disclosing individual medical information
- **Continued** mitigations and data monitoring (with adjustments as/if needed)

Dr. Cabral reviewed the following current and continuing mitigation efforts:

- Availability of vaccinations (and Easton-offered clinics)
- Weekly COVID testing for all students and staff to end of the school year (not April)
- Quality of air purification systems in every occupied space
- Disinfection regiment including electrostatic sprayers
- Hand washing and hygiene campaigns
- Social distancing wherever/whenever feasible
- Open windows and outdoor opportunities wherever/whenever feasible

A discussion took place and the Committee asked for more information surrounding the music and athletics recommendations.

On a motion by Ms. De Luca, seconded by Ms. Weisman, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee accepted the Easton Public School's recommendation to make the mask mandate optional effective February 28, 2022.

Public Comment:

Leonardo Bellini, 752 Foundry Street, Easton - *"MASK MANDATES COVID numbers are decreasing, DESE and the Governor ending state wide mandates for Masks in Schools with no conditions for ending the mandates, Stoughton Public Schools is eliminating mask mandates as of February 28 per direction of the Superintendent. Masks protect the user, not others. If a teacher is not comfortable, then that teacher can wear an N95 mask. If a student is not comfortable, that student can wear a mask. We are not asking to prohibit masks, but rather to allow the parents to choose what is best for their own child. This is not about masks, this is about freedom. We need to allow parents to decide for their own kids and not a select few decide for everyone and take away personal freedoms. Please eliminate the mask mandate in schools for all staff and students, regardless of vaccination status, just like DESE and the Governor did without a condition of vaccine. Thank you."*

John Powers, 4 Meetinghouse Ln. S.Easton - *"I'm not sure what the definition of mandate being used is, or if any Board Members are licensed to practice medicine to enforce the mask mandate but enforcing the use of a medical device requires an exam of each individual, a complete health record evaluation and parental consent so is anyone there a practicing physician? Otherwise I believe it's a felony."*

Dr. Cabral responded that not to her knowledge.

Max Powers, 22 Summer st - *"Since medical mask exemptions are allowed for public transportation, will this carry over to school buses? my children don't wear masks on public transit because of their exemptions, so am I correct in thinking they are not required to wear one on the school bus?"*

Dr. Cabral responded that the question had been previously answered and that this is a federal order for school buses; therefore, the district does not have the option to do anything different at this time.

Amy Duffy, 178 Washington st. - *"Thank you for all the hard work and information during this presentation. Are parents going to be allowed in the schools starting feb 28th for volunteering during school events, book fairs, readings, assemblies...etc? Again, thank you for all the hard work and everything you've done for the kids of Easton."*

Dr. Cabral responded that she will be having that conversation with her Cabinet Team and the educators and will be announced as soon as possible.

Joe Savino, 6 Oak Leaf Lane - *"You are reading a bias report obviously."*

Michael Duffy, 178 Washington Street - *"I want to thank all of you for your hard work. Covid has not been easy on anyone. I agree with the recommendations by the Superintendent. Masks being optional is a great move. And I also think that teachers and administrators should be*

vigilant with not allowing bullying for students who want to continue wearing the mask."

Meray Nemr, 40 Forest Edge Rd- *"As for individuals who test positive with COVID, how will their mask wearing be enforced for the safety of peers. Despite reminders, my friends and I regularly see students disregarding these reminders."*

Dr. Cabral responded that it is part of the implementation that was discussed earlier. She said it is very difficult to know which students had COVID. They are supposed to be wearing their mask from day 6 to 10 and that this is something we will have to do to the best of our ability and need the cooperation from parents.

Meagan Almeida, 477 Bay Road - *"taken in to account all the data on the decline in childrens mental health and the data/science on masks not working what would be the benefit of keeping a mask mandate and not allowing choice?"*

The vote had been taken to make the mask mandate optional.

Lauren Loomis, 4 Abbey Rd - *"How are the teachers in general, but especially in the lower grades, going to "enforce" mask wearing for students whose parents wish them to stay on? Kids are so easily influenced by their peers."*

Dr. Cabral said she had just answered that question but suggested they communicate with their children's teachers that if they want their child to keep their mask on, between the parent's reinforcement with their child and the staff's reinforcement, the district will do their best to respect a parent's wishes.

Lydia Mikhail, 7 High Street - *"How will you enforce mask wearing for Covid positive students? Failure to do so would endanger other students. Would desk cleaning be mandatory as well?"*

Dr. Cabral said the first question was just answered and as far as the second question, the district still has the desk cleaning materials available in every classroom and in every school.

Kathy Harris, 22 Gilmore - *"So, I'm not understanding about the music. children wore masks for the orchestra singing recently. If children want to wear masks during singing, they should be able to. If they do not, they should have that option. Caroline- we have learned so much in the past year. Please do not cite year old data."*

Danielle Gollenberg, 22 Possum Run Rd. - *"Doesn't optional mask wearing apply to singing situations and sports? Meaning if a family chooses to mask their child they would have them on during circle time singing, chorus, practice, games, etc? Social distancing is a recommendation not a requirement, correct? Certainly no social distancing in sports. All of these "refinements" feel like a slippery slope of a lot of "mandated" circumstances."*

Dr. Cabral said as far as music, she just conveyed the music association's recommendations because they are the representatives of the music professionals in the country. As noted they will be collecting more information for the School Committee and they can make refinements to that if they choose.

Erica Mandell, 50 Main St *"Thank you all for making the right decision. Dr. Cabral I appreciate the recommendation greatly thank you SO much"*

Monika Hallama, 15 Foundry - *"Thank you for staying consistent with following DESE on this topic and making masks optional. Please keep in mind that children won't be using masks while playing against districts where masks are optional in sports, so forcing children to play basketball or to wrestle only in Easton makes no sense. If masks work, those who are afraid should continue to wear them. Masks in sports are even more dangerous. Option all the way."*

Joe Savino, 6 Oak Leaf Lane - *"Hello, can someone answer me please? When is the mask discussion? So when are we getting to this mask debate. We are all waiting and wanting to give our input as to this serious situation. That's rude! Are you incapable of answering my question? Can you please get to my question. Sounds like all you people in this Easton School Committee all need to be in Newton where you fit in. What a lie, not one kid wants to wear a mask. How many parents and kids have given input about wearing the mask? Answer please answer. "*

Dr. Cabral responded that she has started collecting that information but she is not finished as she hasn't gone through all the emails. She has received several emails as she is sure of the Committee members, and that she will compile them and report that at a future meeting if the School Committee desires.

Joe Savino, 6 Oak Leaf Lane - *"Again, please answer the question. Are you saying that no parents have said they wanted to end the masks? How about answering our questions? This is such a disastrous display of abuse of power! When are you gonna answer our questions?"*

John Powers, 4 Meetinghouse Ln., S.Easton - *"Has all the officials in town involved taken an Oath of Office and is everyone bonded there? My comments don't seem to be getting addressed."*

Dr. Cabral responded that the School Committee members have taken an oath of office because they are elected officials. Mrs. Pruitt and Dr. Cabral are not elected officials so they do not take an oath of office and the School Committee members are not required to be bonded nor are the Central Office Administrators.

John Powers, 4 Meetinghouse Ln., S.Easton - *"What is your position on students that have antibodies?"*

Dr. Cabral said that she will interpret the question as if a student had tested positive for COVID and that the district does not require proof of a negative test for 90 days.

Max Powers, 22 Summer St. - *"The Easton Board of Health does not have jurisdiction over schools. They would not be able to override any decision the school committee makes."*

Dr. Cabral responded that Russell Johnston of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education told Superintendents that on a matter of public health, the health department can overrule the school department on that and so if they wish to require masking they can do that.

Max Powers, 22 Summer st - *"Federal allows for mask exemptions. So is it correct that mask exemptions are then accepted on school buses?"*

Dr. Cabral responded that mask exemptions were accepted for medical exemptions and that

would continue. The details of a medical exemption are in the district's playbook located on the district website.

Leonardo Bellini, 752 Foundry Street, Easton - *"The Mask Mandate being eliminated does not mean people can't wear masks. If a student has grandparents and wants to wear a mask, they can wear a mask. We are not making masks illegal, just optional. That needs to be made very clear. Dr. Cabral made it clear, but committee members sound like they are not taking that into account in their comments."*

Lauren Noller, 51 North Main Street: *"Will the district continue to provide kn95 masks to staff members who still wish to wear them?"*

Dr. Cabral responded yes.

Diane Hrenko, 14 Scott Drive, *"Thank you all so much for working so hard for our children. It is very much appreciated!"*

Kathy Harris, 22 Gilmore - *"That is not true. My children had valid medical mask exemptions and they were not granted. So why would I believe they will be valid on school buses."*

Dr. Cabral responded that if the parent would like to contest a medical exemption that was denied, they can do so by contacting the Superintendent's office.

Lauren Loomis, 4 Abbey - *"In other communities, a select group of students volunteer at the polls and receive some sort of credit."*

Leonardo Bellini, 752 Foundry Street, Easton - *"Is the Town Clerk being persistent and directing towards our budget being affected? I know I had an issue with parking as a voter. I got blocked in by some kids' cars. They eventually moved the vehicles, but it did make me late for work. With COVID not fully leaving and everyone trying to get a larger voter turnout plus the larger number of precincts, we should have the day of voting closed for kids. Kids don't have time to observe the process. So it is a safer situation to not have the kids in the school when there is voting taking place."*

Dr. Cabral responded that the district's budget is not being affected either way. In terms of parking issues, thank you for that feedback and she will make sure that they have a specific focus on the parking lot for voters and to make it as convenient as possible for people to come into the building to vote.

Kathleen Sheehan - Harrison Ave - *"Per 603 CMR 27.03 "Prior to the beginning of each school year, every school committee shall establish school year schedules for each of the public schools under its supervision and control" and per Easton School Committee Policy IC/ICA, the "school calendar for the ensuing year will be prepared by the Superintendent and submitted to the School Committee for approval by May 1st of each year" and per School Committee Policy ID, "The length of the school day is negotiated in the collective bargaining agreement with the Easton Educators Association. The specific opening and closing times of the schools will be recommended by the Superintendent and set by the Committee. The Superintendent is*

authorized to make minor changes in opening and closing times to simplify transportation scheduling, however, major changes and schedules will be subject to committee approval". Students losing a full day of instruction time is a "major change" unrelated to merely simplifying transportation scheduling therefore, a discussion and a formal vote was required per your own policy. In addition, per my recent email exchange and conversation with DESE, Commissioner Riley did not state that districts are permitted to use snow days due to school staff "overextension". He did state that snow days could be used to accommodate staffing shortages during COVID surges. As we know, snow days need to be made up at the end of the year, and do result in a loss of instructional time. With that, since a lack of educator planning time and teacher burn-out have been chronic issues plaguing many public schools, can you please describe any creative solutions that you are implementing to retain quality educators while addressing the learning loss resulting from school closures? I'm particularly interested in solutions that benefit all parties, students, parents/guardians, and educators. Solutions shouldn't reduce student instructional time and shouldn't place unanticipated financial burdens upon families. As you can imagine, there are many parents and guardians who are paid hourly wages and these calendar changes result in a loss of wages for such families. Sorry for the multiple messages however, there appears to be a character limit on comments."

Dr. Cabral responded that they do vote on the annual calendar before May 1st. The first reading was reviewed this evening and it will be voted on at the next meeting. This typically happens in January, but it is still far ahead of the May deadline. The opening and closing time for school does not include half days; however, the School Committee voted on that as well. She said Commissioner Riley did say directly to her the words "staff extension" was actually a quote from him. She said she doesn't know who Ms. Sheehan spoke with and she apologized on their behalf but she received contradictory information. Dr. Cabral said her information was directly from the Commissioner. The creative solution for retaining quality educators when they are burnt out is giving them time to collaborate with their peers on these 2 half days and asking them to do that outside of a school day contributes to their burnout. The out of school time they believe as professional educators is going to be enhanced by the amount of time that the professionals can spend together. We are very wary of the financial burden that this places on families which is why she gave financial options to all families including free scholarships to those who are in need.

Michael Duffy, 178 Washington Street - *"What is the Teachers Union Stance on the Mask Mandate? Since we are now making the mask Optional? Will that affect staffing?"*

Dr. Cabral said that she had provided the School Committee with information that you heard them reference from different constituents in the district. There was one specific from the educators association that was placed in the School Committee's packets. She asked a School Committee member to read it as she didn't have it right in front of her.

Ms. De Luca read the EEA Stance which read:

"To: Dr. Lisha Cabral and EPS School Committee, From: Amy Meehan, EEA President, Date: February 15, 2022, Regarding: Mask Policy

The following reflects the EEA feedback on the recent DESE decision to lift the "mask mandate." 294 EEA members responded to the survey. A majority of the respondents were in agreement with lifting the mandate. It is noteworthy that the timing of the lift presents concern

for some. The position of the EEA is that we are in support of implementing a “mask-optional” policy. However, we encourage you to give careful consideration to a delay until March 14th.”

John Powers, 4 Meetinghouse Ln., S. Easton Ma. - *“With all the comments I’ve been listening to, has the mask mandate been lifted, optional or still being enforced for the rest of the year? Thank all of you for your patience especially dealing with such a sensitive topic. Respectfully John Powers.”*

Dr. Cabral displayed the “Current (and continuing) mitigation efforts” along with the “EPS recommendation for SC consideration” that were presented earlier in the slide presentation.

Lisa Galas, 11 River st - *“Please let music and theater students make their own decision on masking. Those who want to mask can choose to do so, same with sports. Especially the musical kids should be permitted to sing out loud and clear , they have been muffled for two years! And it is no longer needed. Those with grandparents or other issues are welcome and encouraged to continue to mask . Thank you.”*

Dr. Cabral responded that she will be getting more information to provide to the School Committee pertaining to music and athletics. She clarified that when talking about the theaters that would be considered a large performance area and so if students are on stage and moving frequently then masking is optional unless the School Committee changes that based on the guidance she receives from those departments.

Leonardo Bellini, 752 Foundry Street, Easton - *“I see a very large wish list for the school budget, but I do not see a school resource officer listed. Why wouldn’t you include an SRO in the budget wish list? You say that safety is paramount, but an SRO is a key part of safety and not in the budget. Or perhaps I missed it?”*

Dr. Cabral explained the difference between the capital budget and the operational budget. Capital budget is strictly for items that are over \$25,000 that have a useful life of 5 or more years. It is used for technology and facilities, not used for personnel. Human Resources are in the operating budget which is a separate budget. The operating budget is a 43 million dollar budget and is presented at Town Meeting. The Capital budget consists of all the departments in town and each department puts forward their requests for equipment, police cars, fire engines, etc. not personnel.

Christyn Hobbs, 18 Lyman Wheelock Road - *“Does any of this change the requirement that parents / volunteers are not allowed in the buildings? (specifically asking for fundraisers such as Scholastic, etc. that rely on parent volunteers for success)”*

Dr. Cabral responded that it is an operational issue so it is something that we determine with the Cabinet Team and educators not with the School Committee and as she said earlier, she will be meeting with those teams and will let everyone know once the decision is made.

Leonardo Bellini, 752 Foundry Street, Easton - *“Thank you for the clarification on the budget types and differences. I appreciate it.”*

Christyn Hobbs, 18 Lyman Wheelock Road - *“Thank you! Sorry, I must have missed that.”*

Appreciate you all!"

Superintendent Notes

None.

Assistant Superintendent Notes

Ms. Pruitt reminded everyone that tomorrow is a half day. She said the feedback that she received from the staff who worked with Debby Irving was remarkable. Debby Irving is the author of "Waking Up White" she spoke to the community and did a follow up session with the staff on how to ensure that their instruction is equitable. Ms. Pruitt said they are starting the process of a full adoption of the new literacy program K through grade 6. She noted that this is on the capital plan which the Committee approved and it will be a year and a half process to vet the correct program. There will be 2 separate committees that will fall underneath this literacy process. The first committee is the Literacy Adoption Committee and the second is the Literacy Pilot Committee. The committees are voluntary for the staff and there are some limits because sometimes the size of the committees can be too big. She said an email went out and teachers and administrators have expressed interest in serving on the committees. She said for the remainder of the year, publishers will come to the district to speak to the district to show their product. She said once they choose 2 to 3 programs, they will pilot them next school year and at the end of the process they will be meeting monthly with the adoption committee to provide feedback about the program. Ms. Pruitt noted that Easton writes their own units and that is based off of our Massachusetts Frameworks. The programs that the district adopts are used as the primary source of material that they pull from. She noted that the standards in Massachusetts are much higher than most of the country and other states. She said she will provide an update to the Committee on the process in March. She noted that the program Reading Street that the district currently uses, is an outdated program.

School Committee Notes

Ms. Weisman wished everyone a happy February vacation.

Ms. De Luca thanked all the parents and people who wrote emails pertaining to both sides of the mask mandate. She said she understands both sides of the debate and asked everyone to be respectful of each other. Ms. De Luca said she is really looking forward to the OA musical Legally Blond and wished the performers good luck. She also wished the wrestling team and the girls basketball team good luck in the state finals.

Ms. Starr echoed what Ms. De Luca said and wished good luck to all the athletic teams wrapping up their seasons as she knows there have been quite a few accomplishments and awards. She said it has been fun reading Bill Matthews' twitter feed. She said the Annual TEMPO Dessert Less Show was a big success and it was nice to see all of the phenomenal performers from middle school and high school ensembles. She said they are incredible performers and encouraged everyone to attend the annual show. Ms. Starr congratulated Mr. Benson and said the whole music program was really great

Chair Durrance said the show was fabulous and that they show the groups in order of age so that you can see the growth. She added that they did a great job. Chair Durrance said the next scheduled meeting will take place on March 10, 2022.

Executive Session RE: Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21 (a) 3 - To Discuss Strategy with Respect to Litigation and Bargaining:

Chair Durrance made a motion to enter into the Executive Session not to return to open session for the purpose of discussion of strategy with respect to litigation and bargaining and stated that, in her opinion, having this discussion in public would be detrimental to the bargaining position of the School Committee. Ms. Weisman seconded the motion, with a roll call vote of 5-0, the Committee entered into the Executive Session at 7:51 pm.

Minutes Recorded by,

Lynn Souza

Respectfully submitted,

Lisha Cabral
Secretary