

EAST GREENBUSH CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2020

Transcript of the remote proceeding:

Michael Buono: I will call the meeting to order at 7:31, Mr Edson? Attendance, as I mentioned, Ms Massey and Ms. Curtin not available. We did the pledge already, earlier in the public hearing and let's move to the student council. Is Katie or Lily out there? I thought I saw one of them sign on.

Michael Harkin: Mike,

Michael Buono: Yes?

Michael Harkin: Meagan Asenbauer just texted that they lost their signal connection, so she is going to email you guys the minutes.

Michael Buono: Sounds good.

Jeffrey Simons: Can you tell who is there?

Peter Goodwin: It's their connection, it is not ours.

Jeffrey Simons: Oh, ok

Michael Buono: Yeah, we can't see who is on. We only see like 4 or 5 of you on the screen right now.

Peter Goodwin: There are 22 right now.

Michael Buono: Yeah, I don't see either of them signed on yet. Well in the interest of time, what I'll do is I'll move to the public forum, read that and then we can come back to Katie or Lily if they are able to sign back on. So, again, a reminder for the public forum that we will take emails to the Board email address.

Residents, students, employees, and business representatives of the East Greenbush Central School District may address the Board on matters concerning programs and/or operations of the district, other than matters involving personnel. Members of the Board do not directly respond to citizen concerns during the Public Forum. If a response is appropriate either the President or Superintendent will contact the individual in the near future. Those persons wishing to address the Board will be recognized by the chair of the meeting and should state for the record their name and address, or affiliation with the District or business. While the Board does not wish to infringe upon free speech protections, it must be stressed that the "Visitors' Forum" is not deemed to be an "open forum". The Board president will conduct the forum for the orderly and efficient operation of Board business. In addition, any remarks which may be considered defamatory or stigmatizing are prohibited and will be declared out of order. All comment shall be limited to five minutes.

So this is an opportunity now to email any comments. We will give you a few seconds to do that and we will just keep checking.

Jeffrey Simons: I'm refreshing

Michael Buono: Refreshing?

Jeffrey Simons: Nobody there yet.

Michael Buono: No comments yet. And again, there will be a second opportunity to do that later in the meeting, as well. Seeing no public comments, is there any other Board comments? In general? This is challenging without seeing everybody. I see a list of names out there so if again, if you do have something to say just unmute and you're going to have to shout it out and identify yourself. They are hearing me okay? Alright.

Jeffrey Simons: That can't be fixed Peter? The grid view can't be fixed?

Peter Goodwin: No, they have had a problem with it all day.

Jeffrey Simons: Ok, grid view can't be fixed?

Peter Goodwin: I attempted to earlier, but it didn't work.

Jeffrey Simons: Ok

Michael Buono: Alright, any reports Mr. Simons on this part?

Jeffrey Simons: I don't at this time.

Michael Buono: Ok. and again if Katie or Lilly come on, if they have some comments to make about what is going on with the students. We would love to hear from you if you're able to sign on.

Jeffrey Simons: Actually, I do.

Michael Buono: Ok

Jeffrey Simons: I just thought of something. Last night, I want, Mr. Leonard started a process which I did approve to recognize our senior athletes. Typically during a sports season, we have a senior night and Mr. Leonard worked diligently with the athletic trainer and his coaches to create a process that complied with all of the requirements including 10 or fewer people in a gathering, social distancing, cones, procedures to invite student-athletes from the various spring teams who did not have a chance to compete, to come with their families, parents and take a photo in their uniforms and to be recognized, which was a really nice initiative on Mr. Leonard's part. There were a couple teams last night, there are some additional teams tonight, and he's going to be running that over the next few days. I will say at the Town board meeting, some of the Town board members who were parents were very appreciative of Mr. Leonard's and the athletic department's efforts. I think everybody feels badly that the kids didn't get a chance to compete this year particularly in their senior year, so this was a nice recognition and acknowledgement of the students and their families senior year and I want to thank Mr. Leonard and the entire athletic department for doing it.

Michael Buono: Yeah, that was great job I think I was able to see a lot of it on social media on Twitter, the reposting by the athletics and I seen the parents and the athletes together, you know, they didn't have much of a sports season, but it's good to see that they're able to do that.

Jeffrey Simons: He will also be doing a program for those students that are going to college to play sports. The signing ceremony that we typically do and he will be having that coming up.

Michael Buono: Great. Ok now we have moved to our discussion items. The first item up for discussion is summer school planning.

Jeffrey Simons: I know Molly McGrath is out there. Molly, are you out there?

Molly McGrath: Yes, I am Jeff.

Jeffrey Simons: Ok, very good. Last Friday the Governor, through an announcement, indicated that schools would only be permitted to provide summer school through online virtual learning. Molly McGrath has been working with special education staff and the Department of Human Resources, Marissa Cannon to develop a program for online summer school for our students who are required to receive summer school through their individual education plan and I'm going to turn it over to Molly to talk about the planning of that virtual summer school.

Molly McGrath: We understand that the online format of distance learning and tell us therapy can be very challenging for our students with disabilities who has been working very hard and weak to continue learning in this structure, so in order to run an efficient and cost-effective summer school we decided that it was important to contact every individual family that has a student who is eligible and check in with them to see if they would like to continue to participate in our regular 6 week summer program for 3 hours a day or if they would like to decline and take the summer off because many families are feeling distant learning fatigue if you will. Right now our special education teachers are highly responsive and they have already touched base with almost 87 students and families. They are still working through the list through the end of this week and we've had about 25% of the families say No.

Michael Buono: Wow, that's a big number

Molly McGrath: Once we have accurate enrollment numbers, we will be building class lists and staffing accordingly.

Jeffrey Simons: Molly, one of the things you talked about the other day is that we still have a fairly high percentage of staff interested in doing it even though it is solely remote, is that right? You've kinda canvassed the staff and there is still a high interest in providing the program?

Molly McGrath: Correct.

Jeffrey Simons: At what point will you determine that the enrollment is set and kinda the cut-off update.

Molly McGrath: We are hoping by early to mid next week we will have more accurate enrollment numbers and we will be able to build accurate class lists in order to hire the correct number of staff to run the program effectively.

Jeffrey Simons: Thank you

Michael Buono: And when is the first day of summer school, Molly? This is Mike.

Molly McGrath: July 6th- August 14th. It's a six week program, 30 school days, 3 hours a day from 8-11, which will obviously be the distance learning and teletherapy this summer.

Jeffrey Simons: We are recommending this evening the appointment of Tom Brownell to be the summer school principal. Mr Brownell did a really good job last year in that role and there will still be a lot of coordination and oversight required to oversee the program.

Michael Buono: Ok, any questions for Molly? Board members? Hearing nothing. Thank you Molly, I appreciate the information on summer school and keep us posted.

Molly McGrath: Absolutely, thank you.

Michael Buono: Thank you. The next discussion item, probably something everyone has been hearing about reopening and a taskforce that the District will put together to facilitate that process. The guidance has been fairly minimal. There's a lot of questions, not a lot of answers. Being proactive many districts including East Greenbush and others are looking at putting together internal teams to see what a potential reopening might look like and consider all the factors and maybe Mr. Simons can share a little about that.

Jeffrey Simons: We sent out an email last week to the Board, the administrative team as well as our respected union leaders. In the email we identified various roles were looking for representation on the reopening committee. As Mr. Buono said we don't have any guidance yet from the State Education Department nor any information from the state task force we do need to begin to plan for multiple scenarios. Everything from a reopening of our schools where there's physical attendance in the school but we need to follow different procedures, group size considerations such as in the cafeteria and the gym, limiting contact the wearing of masks, appropriate sanitation, procedures will have to change for the students coming off the bus, entering into the building, a whole number of decisions that would need to be made regarding how we group classes to avoid grouping classes into large groups. Impact on assemblies, impact on field trips just an overall review of how we will operate if the kids are actually, and the staff are actually reporting to school. The second scenario would be if we are continuing to operate online for a period of time and what we've learned from this experience and how we might be able to evaluate what we're doing and perhaps do it even better than we are, as well as a potential hybrid model in which kids are coming to school for part of the day and engaged in remote learning for the remainder of the day. Again we don't have any guidance other than documents have been provided through various BOCES that have been developed regionally with a number of different decisions that we have to look at, we're going to start looking at those documents making some decisions regarding what if this occurs what if that occurs. Last week the Governor had a press conference and he announced that schools would have to provide their plans for reopening by July 1st, however we have not received anything from the Governor's office in regard to that announcement nor a SED and we don't really know what that means but we can't wait to find out if we have to have a due by July 1st. I've had an enormous response from the staff interested in doing this everybody wants to pitch in and help. I started working with Stephanie, my secretary today to compile a list list is fairly long though the people that want to do it and we may have to make some determinations about breaking the group into smaller groups. We are going to have an initial meeting on the 8th of June, through Zoom, and kind of talk about how we organize and what our goals will be. Mr Mann will represent the Board. He was nominated by his peers and I'm looking forward to working with Mr. Mann and all the staff. Overwhelming teaching assistants, teachers, administrators, nurses, driver bus drivers, people that are monitors, security supervisors, everybody wants to be involved. At Molly's suggestion,

which I thought was a good one, Dr. Albert has agreed to serve on the committee, as well. His expertise will be very important.

Michael Buono: Parents or students?

Jeffrey Simons: Yes, we have one parent. One parent nominated by high school I'll be looking for at least one if not a couple parents at every level.

Michael Buono: How about a student?

Jeffrey Simons: A student would be a good idea, too. Probably a middle school and high school. I had that we had that in mind they tend to be a little easier. It's gonna be a large group, break into small groups and we're gonna to try to organize the work based on various scopes of responsibility. We're looking forward to the first meeting.

Michael Buono: Any questions for Jeff regarding the reopening task force and the committee membership in proceeding. I'm not hearing anyone so I'll just chime in quick. Thanks for tackling this, I know it's going to be a big undertaking. One of the things we continue to strive for is community input, staff input, parental input on how our schools are functioning during this time and how a reopening within the guidelines that are prescribed, once they come out, but we need to consider, this is our community, these are our students, they are your kids, and we want to do what is best for them as well, and our staff, with in whatever guidelines the State provides us. Your ideas and input are critical, so thank you for that. Moving next on the agenda, Committee reports, Marissa? Anything?

Marissa Cannon: There is an agreement on the Consent Agenda, item K. It's an agreement between the District and CSEA and I just want to touch upon that for a moment. This bargaining unit is comprised of our foodservice department, maintenance, and transportation. The agreement is regarding the time worked between March 17th and April 20th, 2020. Those members that were called in and were required to report during that time frame, they will receive a pay adjustment and that pay adjustment will be an equivalent of straight time for all hours worked. Between the period of April 21st and June 30th, all CSEA will be paid per their regular scheduled hours at their regular rate of pay. I did calculate the financial impact and it equates to about \$62,577 for that March 17th - April 20th time period with that special pay adjustment.

Mark Mann: What did they do? They came in on...

Jeffrey Simons: This is a similar agreement that we reached with SRP, when we initially had to close on March 17th. We implemented the essential people that needed to report, given a snow day provision. We provided a cost analysis to the Board, I think around April 3rd and that cost analysis was based on what we knew up to that date. We entered into discussions with the unions about how we could not continue this because it was unaffordable and both the SRP and CSEA we can to a resolution to pay them up until the 20th.

Mark Mann: We did SRP last time, right?

Jeffrey Simons: Yes, they are being paid after the date of April 20th, they are being paid their regular pay, not any extra pay.

Michael Buono: Thanks, Marissa, anything else?

Marissa Cannon: That's it, thank you.

Michael Buono: Thank you. Mr. Edson?

Lawrence Edson: Nothing

Michael Buono: Nothing for Mr. Edson. Mr. McHugh?

James McHugh: Just a few quick updates. An email went out to all District employees yesterday regarding Stephen Birchak, Doc Bird, who was our opening day speaker. He is going to do a District wellness check-in on Friday June 5th, @ 9 a.m. I put it on My Learning Plan yesterday and by this morning we had 55 employees registered for that virtual check-in. Another topic, General Dynamic Information Technology, that is the business that is located in the old Ames plaza on 9& 20. I was contacted by Patricia Serphin, who would like to help support our two title one schools, Red Mill and Donald P. Sutherlandby organizing a collection of some school supplies. Mrs. Squillace and Mr. Alvey were kind enough to make a list of some items that they are absolutely certain that will be needed to start a new school year and General Dynamics Information

Technology is going to do their best to collect those items. That is important because the COVID 19 pandemic definitely impacted our families and the structure of our school year is going to change a little bit. In our primary grades, a lot of times there was some community sharing. Students would organize the tables and they shared crayons and other supplies and most likely that will not occur at the start of the next year and the students will need their own supplies. That should allow us to remove some of the things on the general school supply lists and ease the burden for some of our families to those two schools.

Michael Buono: Thanks, Jim. I want to thank General Dynamics, our principals Helen & Jack for helping support that effort as well, for all our schools. I would encourage anyone that know, remembers Doctor Bird, it is a , he's a very humorous fellow and does a great job with wellness and actually BOCES is going to have him the day before. Mr. Simons, anything?

Jeffrey Simons: There's a lot of concern regarding graduation ceremonies in the public and among Superintendents and School Boards, really everyone in the educational community. As a Superintendent, I can tell you, I wish I had the discretion and authority that I typically have to go forward with a plan at this time that could meet everyone's expectations, but I can't. I just want to advise everyone what the process is at this point. At the community forum we talked about the options that were available and under consideration, including an actual physical ceremony of students on the turf field at Columbia High School, which I have very confidence would be done, and done well, done safely, and done appropriately to honor and respect the students and their families for graduation and completing their K12 experience. That particular program is not within the current State and CDC directives to have 10 or fewer people in a gathering. Of the course of the last couple weeks, we have seen some loosening of the guidelines from the governor's office as it relates to Memorial ceremony Memorial Day ceremonies being able to be permitted, religious observance being able to be permitted, and today we learned that the state of New Jersey is going to permit graduation ceremonies in July, later than typical. I don't have all the information, I know at this time to be able to say we can go forward with that plan but we rolled that plan out to the community as plan A. Plan B was to have an event to celebrate graduation at the Malta Drive-In and we're up against a deadline to book that drive-in and make sure that we could honor that reservation because there's other districts in line on a waiting list. We sent a survey out to the parents of our seniors, last week and we got a very good response to the survey and we asked them initially what was your preference Plan A, Plan B, or both and the idea of both was presented in order to make sure that while we waited for further guidance and direction from the State if it is going to come, or the county, that we wouldn't lose the opportunity to do the the drive-in event and then we could always schedule the graduation and actual physical graduation diploma ceremony after that. Based on where we're at right now we are going to go forward with a drive-in event and we're going to reserve decisions regarding an actual graduation ceremony until we see what happens over the next couple of weeks. We've had many discussions among superintendents in the Questar BOCES with our County Executive and our County Department of Health we probably had four, we had one today, and we are in a position where the county doesn't feel it has the authority to approve or disapprove of our graduation plans. They feel that school districts can be trusted to execute those plans safely however there is also an indication that in some communities these plans have been directed to be shut down by the Governor and therefore I don't want to take a chance that we go forward with a plan, disappoint students and families and potentially embarrass the community until we know exactly whether or not we have that discretion. It doesn't hurt to have a nice event at the drive-in to celebrate our families and our seniors and then wait and see what might happen. Another processes that we have set up through Craig Hanson at BOCES we provided some information regarding what district we're planning many districts are planning multiple options Craig Hanson we created a format for submitting those plans work to Craig and Craig will be facilitating the review of those plans with the County Department of Health but they're not going to say go ahead and do it. They are just going to give us feedback on the plan. We are working the best we can. My preference, again, hasn't change, I would like to have an actual ceremony to recognize the kids. The other thing we asked on the survey was, in the event that we postponed the date for graduation later into mid July, would you be available? We do have some students and families that would not be available, the

majority of those...it's a small group but it's an important group, graduates that may be going into the military and are required to report. In the event that we have to postpone our full graduation, there always is the possibility the State may do something similar tho New Jersey and permit ceremonies later on in the summer. If we do have to do that we will have a separate ceremony for those kids who can't make it.Or a separate event for those kids who can't make it because they have obligations. That is the best we can do at this point.

Mark Mann: You're talking the drive-in plus a ceremony here?

Jeffrey Simons: Yes

Michael Buono: Any questions for Jeff?

Jeffrey Simons: Possible later on

Michael Buono: Regarding graduation, Board members?

Jeffrey Simons: Mid July

Michael Buono: No questions, ok. I just want to, again, we are trying to be sensitive to the needs of the community,the seniors, the parents. I know its a frustrating thing to not know what's happening and having th multiple options at least gives us an opportunity to react. I think we will proceed the best we can given the circumstances, we've said this before. We recognize the frustration we also want to keep our kids and family safe and have an opportunity though to celebrate this year, this very unusual year. We'll continue to reach out, keep you informed of what's happening and move forward from there.

Jeffrey Simons: The concern is nobodys knows who has the authority to do this, approve this.

Mark Mann: Have we looked at the drive-in in Averill Park as an option, because it's closer?

Jeffrey Simons: It doesn't have the capacity for the number of grads, it doesn't have enough spaces.

They have to do every other space at the drive-ins. We have 305 graduates, Malta has more space than the Averill Parkdrive-in. It won't accommodate all of our vehicles. That is my understanding, Mike. Is that right?

Michael Harkin: Yea that is correct. We are going to Malta because it has 400 spots which will allow us to park wiith social distancing. Averill Park high school is also going to, I think they are going to the Jericho drive-in.

They are too big for the Hollywood Drive-in also.

Jeffrey Simons: Thank you, Mike. It is about a 35 minute drive, I think or something of that nature, I looked it up, but we wanted to get our, we needed to act fast to get pur reservation before we lost it.

Michael Buono: It will be quite a caravan if we have 300+ cars headed to the drive-in.

Jeffrey Simons: Mike, have you confirmed that June 16th date?

Michael Harkin: Yes, we are all set. The purchase order should be coming up tomorrow.

Jeffrey Simons: Alright and Mike and I and Mark Adam are having another meeting tomorrow to put out another communication to the families about it.

Michael Buono: Thanks Mr. Simons. Removing from discussion items, Peter, can you put the tile on the side for me. We have the approval of draft minutes for May 20th. Mr Mann, you were not present at that meeting so any questions, revisions to the minutes?Board members, anything? I'll need a motion to approve the minutes from someone in the audience, Board member, I can't see anyone so you have to shout it out. John?

John Dunn: I will make a motion

Michael Buono: I need a second

Michele Skumurski: I second it.

Michael Buono: Is that Michelle? Good, all those in favor? All those abstaining? Mark is abstaining so we got everybody thank you. Next going to regular business, approval for Programs for Resident Children with Disabilities I need a motion to approve that. Just unmute and shout out

JoAnn Taylor: I make a motion, Mike

Michael Buono:Joanne Taylor, second?

Karen Curran: Karen

Michael Buono: Karen second. All those in favor, virtually? Good, thank you approved. Moving to Reports and presentations of the Superintendent. Jeff, anything furthur?

Jeffrey Simons: Nothing further.

Michael Buono: Ok, tabled motions, I have none at this time. Old business, Board members, any old business? No, then we are moving to the Consent Agenda. We have items A through L. Any questions or comments on those items.

JoAnn Taylor: Mike this is JoAnn, I just need to pull item G, the extended season for a separate vote, please.

Michael Buono: Item G, separate vote, very good. Anyone else, comments, questions? Okay I need a motion to approve by consent items A through L except for item G for separate vote. So again that's item A through L without G. I need a motion to approve that, Mark. Second?

John Dunn, I will second it.

Michael Buono: John Dunn.all those in favor? All those abstaining, none. Very good. Now item G, I need a motion to approve item G extended season appendix C, I need a motion for that.

Mark Mann: I will

Michael Buono: Mark, second? I need a name, is that Deanna?

Jeffrey Simons: yes, it's Deanna

Michael Buono: Ok, thank you, Deanna. All those in favor? All those abstaining?

Joann Taylor: Aye

Michael Buono: JoAnn Taylor abstaining, Approved. New business? Any new business, Board members, that you need to discuss? Hearing none, we will move to public forum #2.

Mr Simons, any comments, emails? Public forum#2, did I miss something?

Jeffrey Simons: I have to re-log in.

Michael Buono: He has to re-log in.

Jeffrey Simons: Bear with me a minute, I got timed out.

Michael Buono: We will move to, we will come back to the Board forum when Mr. Simons, I mean public forum, when Mr. Simons signs on. Board members, any comments, at this time?

John Dunn: Mike, I just have a brief comment, if you're ready

Michael Buono: Yes, go ahead, John.

John Dunn: I just wanted to thank the administration and you specifically through this difficult time transparency and a time or information is ever-changing and flowing is what builds confidence in what we're doing so I really appreciate your efforts Jeff and Mike to keep this in the forefront of what we're doing and moving the district forward in these uncharted waters, so thank you and I just want to acknowledge the hard work that both of you are doing and your team Jeff as well.

Jeffrey Simons: Thank you, John.

Michael Buono: Thank you, John, I appreciate that. Anyone else, comments? We checked the email and there was no public comments, all right, so I'll close the public and board forum. Just one last chance, anybody?

Board members? Now we will have need for an executive session, as we have done in the past Mr. Goodwin will do a separate email to the Board members to log into the Executive session. At this point I'll need a motion to move into Executive session. Mr. Mann, second?

Michelle Skumurski: Second, Michele

Michael Buono: Second, Michele, all those in favor? so everyone have a great night we don't expect to have any business after the Executive session and the purpose will be for employment history and personnel matters. Thanks everybody, have a great night, I appreciate your attendance tonight. Enjoy the evening. Board members, Peter will send out the email and log back on.