

EASTFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Eastford Elementary School
12 Westford Road
Eastford, CT 06242
March 13, 2025

Present: Lauren Barlow, Michael Bilica (virtual 6:15 PM), Stephen Bowen, Terry Cote, Adam Minor, Jessica Perry (virtual)
Absent: Robert Ellsworth
Also Present: Dr. Donna Leake, Superintendent (virtual); Carole McCombe, Principal; Charles Kernan, Director of Pupil Services

I. Call to Order

Chair Bowen called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Bowen led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. High School Presentation

The Woodstock Academy Head of School, Christopher Sandford, and Dean of Academics, Michael Harten, presented an overview of what The Woodstock Academy has to offer Eastford students. The Board asked questions regarding academic programs and student assessments.

Mr. Bilica joined the meeting at 6:15 PM.

IV. Citizen Participation

None.

V. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: (Barlow/Cote) To approve the Board of Education minutes of the Regular Meeting on February 13, 2025. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Correspondence, Communications

- Letter from Dr. Leake to First Selectman Deb Richards providing the Board of Education's 2025-2026 Budget and Long-Term Capital Improvement Plan
- Letter of resignation from Readiness Liaison Sharon Kozey Greene
- Letter from the EES Student Council nominating Spanish teacher Catherine DePercio as a Most Valuable Educator through the Red Sox MVE Affiliates

VII. Committee Reports

- A. Executive/Personnel— None.
- B. Fiscal— The Board received the minutes of the February 13, 2025 meeting.
- C. Policy— None.
- D. Woodstock Academy – None.
- E. EastConn— None.
- F. Long Range Facilities— None.
- G. Transportation – None.
- H. Curriculum— None.
- I. Scholarship Steering Committee – None.

J. School Safety Committee – None.

VIII. Superintendent Report

Provided the BOE with updates including:

- Highlight of the Month – *March is Board Appreciation month, a very special ‘thank you’ to the Board members *Appreciation to Michelle Bibeault for working above and beyond, especially all her hard work organizing Read Across America week
- Educational Leadership – *Continued focus on policy changes *State level funding changes *School calendar adjustment *Scholarship application period open
- Facilities - *Elevator is now working *Toilet issues *Plan on upgrading the fire panel/alarm system *HVAC
- Finance - *Monitoring status of the current budget *Reviewing the 2025-2026 budget
- Collaboration and Communication – *Draft audit report received *Discussions with Deb Richards on 2025-2026 Town-wide budget concerns *Summer school discussion *Discussions with EastConn regarding possible collaborations
- Comments on selected agenda items

IX. Principal Report

The Board received the Principal’s report which discussed and/or provided the following information:

- Field Trips/ Virtual Field Trips
- Readiness Program/ Council Update
- Data on Student Progress
- High School Information and Updates
- Professional Development
- Upcoming Events
- Special Notes and Thanks

X. Director of Pupil Services Report

The Board received the March report, which reflects changes from the February report.

XI. Unfinished Business

A. High School Discussion

There was some discussion on the student achievement data shared during The Woodstock Academy’s presentation.

B. Budget 2025-2026, Discussion and Possible Action

Dr. Leake spoke to the Town’s request to lower the school budget submitted to them. She also mentioned how numerous State mandates are affecting small districts like Eastford.

Ms. Cote mentioned that the Town’s grand list and revenue were both down. Mr. Bowen noted that some of that has to do with changes to the motor vehicle evaluation, which is being reviewed but may not change in time for this budget.

Mr. Bilica stated his disappointment with the direction the Board must go financially.

The administration provided the Board with some options to lower the 6.99% budget to a 3.99% budget, (an increase of \$183,935), which does not affect staffing, and the Board chose to take that to a vote.

MOTION: (Cote/Bilica) To submit a revised 2025-2026 Board of Education budget of \$4,794,179, an increase of 3.99% over the 2024-2025 budget, and re-submit it to the Board of Selectmen. Motion passed unanimously.

XII. New Business

A. Pay for Sports

Dr. Leake spoke to adding a policy to regulate student fees to play sports and that the auditor suggested those fees collected be put back into the budget, instead of being stored in a special revenue account as it is now. Mr. Bowen would like to keep the process as it now stands.

XIII. Additional Agenda Items

None.

XIV. Financial Reports

A. February 2025 Disbursements—sent to BOE via email

B. Monthly Financial Summary, February 2025

The Board received and reviewed the monthly summary.

C. Budget Transfers

MOTION: (Bilica/Barlow) To authorize the proposed transfers in the FY 2025 budget:

\$10,000 from Substitutes, Certified (100.1000.1.121.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$30,000 from E/B Insurance, Regular Program (100.1000.1.210.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$1,783.84 from Purchased Services, Evals/Consults (100.2140.3.323.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$9,000 from Transportation, Secondary (100.2700.2.519.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$6,945.96 from Tuition, Secondary, WA (100.1000.2.561.31.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$6,278.00 from Tuition, Secondary, Killingly (100.1000.2.561.32.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$1,285.20 from Tuition, SE, Public (100.1200.3.561.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$1,867.00 from Tuition, Secondary, EastConn (100.1000.2.564.35.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$2,175.00 from Purchased Services, OT (100.2190.3.323.00.5) to Purchased Services, BCBA (100.2190.3.323.03.5)

\$825.00 from Purchased Services, PT (100.2190.3.323.01.5) to Purchased Services, BCBA (100.2190.3.323.03.5)

\$1,889.00 from Purchased Services, Sports Officials (100.2190.1.350.00.5) to Purchased Services, Actuary (100.2310.1.340.02.5)

Motion passed unanimously.

XV. Citizen Participation

Mr. Bowen thanked Dr. Leake for the goodies she provided and thanked the administration for all the work they put into the 2025-26 budget.

XVI. Adjournment

MOTION: (Minor/Barlow) Motion to adjourn the Board of Education meeting at 7:09 PM.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kymerli A. Gaylor, Clerk