

EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EASTON, MA

MINUTES/TRANSCRIPTS OF THE EASTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
Thursday, February 4, 2016

Minutes of the Easton School Committee Meeting Question and Answer Session, February 4, 2016, Simmons Lecture Hall, 100 Lothrop Street, convened at 5:30p.m. Present: Fred Isleib, Laurie Han, Caroline O'Neill, Sean Mullen, Jackie Weisman, Dr. Keough and Dr. Cabral.

Chair Isleib welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance tonight. He thanked the audience for their emails and that their feedback was appreciated.

Chair Isleib stated that the Start Time Sub Committee presented to the School Committee three options of school start times. He stated that the School Committee evaluated those options presented and decided that option number one and option number three were not palatable based on the impact for students and their families. In addition, Chair Isleib stated that the Committee had asked Dr. Keough to come up with some possible additional options. Chair Isleib assured the audience that because the Committee had not deliberated on any additional options that have been presented, no decision had been made by the Committee contrary to what people may have read or heard. Chair Isleib said that Dr. Keough would present on Start Times this evening followed by a question and answer session. He stated that on February 11th at 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. in the Easton Middle School Library, Dr. Keough would hold another Start Time Presentation for those who could not attend this evening.

Dr. Keough presented a Start Time PowerPoint Presentation.

Chair Isleib asked the audience to please limit their comments to no more than one minute and reminded everyone to be respectful of their fellow residents. He said the comments would be recorded and posted to the website.

Question: *There is a slot of time of 20-25 minutes in between the PK-2 and EMS run before going to Richardson Olmsted School, did anyone look into using that slot of time in between those bus runs?*

Chair Isleib agreed that that was a great question and that Option number two presented today eliminated that gap period of 20-25 minutes referenced.

Question: *The 3rd, 4th and 5th graders would not be getting the same level of success due to budget restraints and the priorities going towards the high school kids and I just hope we include all the children as far as start times and their ability to get the right amount of sleep.*

Dr. Han responded that the two concerns the School Committee have is the students' achievements and what makes sense for families. She continued that the sleep cycle starts shifting at puberty and puberty in the United States starts at age 9 therefore, 6th and 7th graders are also having a hard time getting up early. She stated that improving sleep times can result in better school attendance, better graduation grades, better test scores, less drug abuse, less caffeine as kids are using stimulants to stay awake during the day, and car accidents decrease by 60% when sleep time is increased by one half hour in the morning.

Question: *Does the Committee have any information on the effects of lack of sleep for the Richardson Olmsted age kids?*

Dr. Han responded that there is not much research on the younger kids however, a study out of Kentucky with the lower elementary schools in situations where they flip start, that there was an impact on the little kids when they started really early. She stated that younger kids are more ready to learn between 7:00-8:00 where the high school kids are more ready to learn at 8:00-9:00.

Ms. O'Neill stated that the sleep cycle shifts, if you send an 8 or 9 year old to bed at 8:00, they will be able to sleep but if you send a 15 year old to bed at 8:00 their body won't allow them to fall asleep. She continued that no one wants to disadvantage the younger kids. She stated that some of the long term side effects on lack of sleep are substance abuse, obesity and depression.

Question: *Are you looking into how more kids are suffering from ADD because they are being forced to sit in their seats for longer periods of time and the academic demands at the younger ages are more than what they were in the past?*

Dr. Keough responded that the state have set limits on how much time is spent on learning, it has to be 900 hours a year on learning and recess and study hall in high school doesn't count.

Chair Isleib stated that this was an item that would need to be evaluated in the future.

Question: *If we are going from 3 to 2 routes, I would think that we are saving some funds rather than spending more, how do we add a bus going from 3 routes to 2 routes?*

Chair Isleib responded that we would need more buses running simultaneously to get to all of the students and that this is something that would have to be put on the override as it has not been budgeted. He continued that Option number 2 is an option that would cost us more money, and if the budget doesn't go through then after a discussion with the Committee, and if they agree that it needs to go on the override, then it would go on the list, if the override does not pass then we would have to potentially raise fees.

Question: *A lot goes into a student's day, not just school, please consider the full day's routine and work schedules when considering start times for all students.*

Question: *There have been issues on the buses with some of the older kids interacting with some of the younger kids, this could potential be a safety issue and maturity versus immaturity issue.*

Question: *Have you considered charging for the buses for certain individuals based on how far they live from the schools and are you thinking about the earlier times the kids are out waiting for the buses?*

Chair Isleib responded that the Committee will be looking into the fees.

Dr. Han stated that fees and start times are two separate issues; a possible increase in fees is a budgetary issue that has not been discussed very much.

Ms. O'Neill commented that the state requires the schools to bus children who live within two miles up to grade 6 and that it would not be enough money if we are only charging fees to a small portion of families who live further than the two miles out.

Dr. Keough stated that Easton Public Schools are facing a very difficult budget year, and encouraged everyone to stay for the Budget Presentation during the School Committee Meeting following the Question and Answer session. He added that in order for the budget to pass the Committee and Administration had to cut almost half a million dollars or find from the existing budget just to get to the point where the Town wants EPS to be. He continued that raising fees is not necessarily to cover the cost of the buses if the School Committee were to go this route, it would basically be because there is no other option right now.

Question: *There are so many factors with kids and sleep, I don't buy the scientific agreement that teens need more sleep. If a kid comes home and drinks a coke at 7:00 then goes on the computer at 9:00, of course they are going to be juiced and not go to bed until 1:00, it's not just about the sleep.*

Dr. Keough responded that it is critical as parents we set limits on our kids. He continued that the research is speaking to the fact that a teenager will wake up but will psychologically just be exhausted regardless of how much sleep they have because their time clock is different, which is why they want to sleep until 12:00.

Dr. Han added that when we are talking about our personal choices for our children and how busy their day is and what we consider in education, we also don't overbook them at the end of the day as well.

Question: *I have a child on an IEP and she has serious morning disabilities, I think that it is a different issue for kids with disabilities and differences. I feel that family dinners will be*

negatively impacted by a plan where kids have to go to bed much earlier than they are accustomed to going and parents are going to miss spending time with their kids and kids with their parents.

Question: *I want to remind folks that the School Committee and the Administration has to have the perspective of 4,000 students and it's very difficult to come up with one solution that will meet the individual family needs of all 4,000 students.*

Question: *If you increased the buses will the routes be shortened and will the length of bus rides be impacted?*

David Twombly responded that could potentially be an issue.

Dr. Han added that the bus company is supposed to come up with some workable times.

Question: *If school time does go later, some kids will be getting themselves ready for school, what happens if they miss the bus, parents won't be home to take their kids to school, I'm wondering if any of the towns that have the later start times found this to be a problem?*

Dr. Han responded that tardy and absenteeism went down, and that one of the reasons that achievement goes up is because kids are doing their homework a little later and the parents are home supervising.

Question: *Did the Committee and Administration consider that with the later start times at the high school, how is that going to impact the sports with regards to daylight savings time and the paying to have the soccer field lights on?*

Dr. Keough responded that Bill Matthews, the Athletic Director, was on the Start Time Sub Committee and he assured us that an 8:00 start time would not be a problem.

David Twombly added that the bus company wants as much time as possible in between runs but that they could probably make 35 minutes in between runs work. He continued that it would definitely be tight and there maybe a couple of hiccups along the way. Mr. Twombly added that when looking into the transportation of the Special Education students, they may have to outsource a possible run because it just may be too tight if we go to a two tier option.

Chair Isleib announced that it was time to close the Question and Answer Session of the meeting. He apologized if anyone did not have an opportunity to ask their questions, and stated that another Start Time Discussion session will be at the Easton Middle School on February 11th at 7:00 p.m. Chair Isleib asked everyone to consider staying for the Budget Presentation by Dr. Keough and thanked everyone for their attention and the way they conducted themselves.

Dr. Han reiterated that people stay for the Budget Presentation and explained that the budget is a big issue, and the schools are in really dire straits.

The Question and Answer period of the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew W. Keough". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Andrew W. Keough, Ed.D.

Secretary