

**EAST TROY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Regular Meeting Minutes – March 13, 2023**

The East Troy Community School District Board met in regular session on March 13, 2023. The meeting was called to order by Board Member Ted Zess at 6:02 p.m followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Board members also present were Anna Janusz, Dale Ames, Steve Lambrechts, and Adam Witkiewicz. Also present were Dr. Christopher Hibner, Amy Jenquin, Amy Foszpanczyk, Amanda Jones, administrators/supervisors, and forty-three guests. Ted Zess read the open meeting statement indicating that the meeting is open to the public as required by state statute and that notice of the meeting had been sent to the media and/or posted.

***IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AS POSTED***

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A motion was made by Anna Janusz for the approval of the agenda and both amended agendas. The motion was seconded by Dale Ames. Motion carried unanimously.

***V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES***

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A motion was made by Steve Lambrechts and seconded by Dale Ames for the approval of the minutes from February 13, 2023 (Regular Board Meeting) and February 20, 2023 (Special Board Meeting). Motion carried unanimously.

***VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PER BOARD POLICY***

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Allie Kemper (Nationally Certified Speech Language Pathologist) and Kelly Fitch (National Board Certified Early Childhood Teacher) highlighted the Three-Year Old Play Group including 26 students with and without special needs. This group incorporates the district's 6 Cs and addresses all domains of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. Parent feedback and testimonials were shared.

Jane Wolfe, East Troy Community School District math interventionist, highlighted the positive outcomes of the intervention program on students' lives. She discussed how every position is essential to the success, academic development, and well-being of students. Additionally, Mrs. Wolfe explained that every program and service that is currently offered plays an important role in addressing the varied needs, passions, and personalities of the students. Lastly, Mrs. Wolfe expressed concern over the programs that may no longer be offered if the operational referendum does not pass.

Tiffany Bottoni, first grade teacher, resident and parent, highlighted examples of community connections and personalized learning that are incorporated into her classroom. As a resident, Mrs. Bottoni communicated her pride regarding the sense of community and expressed her confidence in the schools. She had hoped that her children would start their educational journeys in East Troy. However, she does not want her children to be in a district where the community does not support their schools. Mrs. Bottoni shared her concern regarding class sizes should the referendum fail. Lastly, Mrs. Bottoni urged community members to pass the referendum in order to maintain the quality education and charm of East Troy.

Emily Will, resident and parent of three, moved to East Troy for the small town feel. She described the school and community pride, highlighted meaningful events, expressed appreciation for the teaching staff, communicated the importance of maintaining a thriving community, expressed her support for the upcoming referendum, and asked community members to protect the traditions that make East Troy a great place to work and live.

Heather Glass, community member and parent of two school-aged children, explained that East Troy is a town like no other. She described the events, celebrations, and connections that contribute to the strong sense of community. Mrs. Glass highlighted the components of the quality education provided by the schools including best practices, engaged students, modern technology and hands-on labs, and an extraordinary staff. She described the schools as the heart and soul of the town and expressed her pride regarding the opportunities afforded to students through activities that build communities. Lastly, Mrs. Glass explained that the district cannot cut over \$2 million without falling apart and, as a result, will be voting yes on April 4th.

Kortnie Christen, kindergarten teacher, discussed the benefits of an inclusive classroom made possible by the quality staff. She expressed her fear that these opportunities will not be available for the students who need it the most.

Christine Hamele, school counselor at Little Prairie, expressed thanks for the unanimous vote of the board to support the operational referendum. She described reasons why she is proud to work in the district including: the dedicated and supportive staff, strong relationships with students and families, trustworthy, innovative and responsive administrators, and a community that generously takes care of those in need. She asked the voters to recognize that the school staff serves all residents in various capacities and urged community members to vote on April 4th.

Phil Glass, parent and community member, explained that the school district is fundamentally key in molding young learners into adults that show pride for where they grew up. While Mr. Glass recognizes that financial implications should not be taken lightly, he explained that the community cannot ignore the needs of a foundational piece of the community. He described the school district as the community's responsibility and highlighted surrounding districts that are passing referendums to support infrastructure. Mr. Glass explained that we have a systematic issue that is being kept together with band-aids and that the community needs to vote yes on the referendum for every single person in the community.

John Kendall, chairman for the Town of Troy and long-time resident, wanted to let the board know that the three municipalities are behind the school district and the referendum. They are working to get the word out through phone calls and door to door efforts. Mr. Kendall also expressed the need to follow up with legislators to address the issue of school funding.

Kristine Kendall, mother of three alumni and two grandchildren who are currently East Troy students, expressed appreciation for the educators and their commitment. She explained that the school is important to the whole community and encouraged the community to share this message.

Colleen Robson, community member, explained that she moved to East Troy so that her son would have a small town upbringing where the community shows up for their kids. While she is

a retiree on a fixed income, she indicated that she will find a way to stand behind the referendum so that future generations can continue to have the same opportunities provided to those who came before them.

Eileen Kostopoulos expressed appreciation for everyone involved in making decisions regarding the district's funding and those who are charged with working under the conditions that are a result of these decisions. When considering whether or not this funding is needed, Mrs. Kostopoulos expressed a resounding yes. She explained that she would have supported a capital referendum and additional funds for the operational question but understands and respects the decisions made by the school board. When considering her share of this proposal, Mrs. Kostopoulos identified the impact on her as an additional \$287 annually or \$24 per month. She explained that she will soon be on a limited income but cannot think of a better reason to increase monthly expenses than to fund public schools. She ended by stating that we need our schools to be funded and urged the community to vote yes

Keith Marcinkevic, a resident and parent, highlighted the music program including events like Band-O-Rama and Solo Ensemble. He explained that music stimulates the brain and assists with math, engineering skills, and leadership development. Mr. Marcinkevic fears that, if the referendum does not pass, the music program could fail. He also shared that this referendum will cost his family \$31 per month and explained that he would rather give up a meal at Culver's every month so that children can have a better school district.

Molly Moody, an East Troy resident, a member of PTO, a parent, a local business owner, and ETHS alum, explained that she moved back to East Troy to be closer to family and the community that helped to raise her. She described East Troy as a community that thrives because of the school district. Ms. Moody explained that she is voting yes so that her kids and their friends will have access to a robust and meaningful education and the resources they need to succeed in the community they exist in now.

Dani Foster, a resident of the Town of East Troy, a parent, and the PTO president, explained that she is in attendance to show support for the referendum and the school district and to express gratitude to the school board, administration, and staff. She addressed the community and reminded them of the incredibly important choice that must be made on April 4th. Mrs. Foster explained that this choice will have consequences that will either benefit or hurt the community. She described the things she wants for her children including; course options, qualified and enthusiastic educators and staff, and a connection to the community through the school. Each of these things are on the line and cannot be taken for granted. Mrs. Foster reminded the community that those who vote no or do not show up to vote at all are choosing larger class sizes, less course options, more staff turnover, and longer bus rides. These choices make East Troy School District less desirable than neighboring districts and require families to either settle for less or to make the choice to open enroll into a different district. Despite challenges and differences, East Troy has shown immense resilience while holding onto its roots. Mrs. Foster explained that the children deserve a good education in the local community. Lastly, Mrs. Foster reminded the community that they can preserve the traditions, the school district, and the community by talking to their neighbors and showing up on April 4th to vote yes.

Cari McBurney, the district's literacy specialist but also a community member and parent, described her journey to find East Troy. She shared instances of the people of the community caring for one another. Like Little House on the Prairie, the schools are the pillar of the strong and united community. Mrs. McBurney reminded the community that, while the show may be fictitious, the morals are not. She expressed concern about what will happen to students if this referendum does not pass as strong schools make strong communities. As a literacy specialist, Mrs. McBurney described the consequences for those who are not able to read as well as the negative impact on instruction if staff needs to be cut. Like Walnut Grove in Little House on the Prairie, East Troy is a place where values are never compromised and people (especially the children) come first. Mrs. McBurney urged the community to educate and plead with their neighbors so that April 4th will bring hope instead of heartache.

Ryan McBurney, a parent, stated his understanding of the financial uncertainty that the district is facing and acknowledged the related stress. However, Mr. McBurney also stated that this stress has not affected the work that is done with students day in and day out and expressed his appreciation.

James Comfort, a parent, spoke in support of the referendum. He explained that the referendum will cost his family \$51 per month or \$1.66 per day. Further, he described that, after conversations with state representatives, he has come to the cold hard truth that relief is not coming. Rural communities must often resort to referendums to support their schools. While referendums are not ideal, they are necessary; and the only other solution is to challenge the system. Because we do not have the time to do this, Mr. Comfort is hopeful that the community can band together to support this referendum so that a future is possible.

John Lightfield, an ETHS alum, realizes that the referendum is asking for money, but the community must consider what it gets you - an educated populace and community values. Mr. Lightfield indicated that public school funding has gotten to this point because small town education has been abandoned. While schools are cutting budgets and going to referendums, the state has a record surplus; but legislators have decided this money is not meant for this community. Mr. Lightfield indicated that he will be voting yes so that East Troy remains that place that the community wants it to be.

Kira Mallon, a parent, explained that the referendum is of utmost importance to her family. She expressed concerns regarding the ramifications of a struggling district, districts that do not attract families. Ms. Mallon highlighted several positives from the district including: the fact that staff are raising their families in East Troy, a PTO that purchases a book for every student at every book fair, and community members that support the students. Ms. Mallon encouraged anyone with questions about the referendum to reach out, engage positively, and ask questions so that East Troy can be a thriving community not just a surviving one. For the Mallon family, the impact of the referendum is the same as two meals out, a small and affordable sacrifice. Finally, Ms. Mallon encouraged a yes vote on April 4th.

Jenny Ledin, a resident, parent, and teacher, shared the experiences made possible by the district. Mrs. Ledin described East Troy as a small town that delivers big on education and commended the district for continuing to add things while cutting and balancing the budget year after year. She highlighted programs including: problem-based learning, STEAM, art, music, band, world

language, robotics, desktop design, AVID, FAB Lab, etc. Without a passing referendum, Mrs. Ledin is worried that these opportunities will not be there for our littlest learners. Mrs. Ledin encouraged people to become educated and know how important the referendum is for our community.

Linda Dodge, a 1982 East Troy High School graduate and public school teacher, shared her insight regarding the community. Linda Dodge described the positive feelings regarding the passionate people speaking tonight. As a parent, Mrs. Dodge feels lucky to have had kids that were happy in school and she is committed to paying it forward. Mrs. Dodge thanked the board for unanimously supporting the referendum and expressed the need to keep East Troy a special place.

Dave Dodge addressed those who may be on the fence or plan to vote no and encouraged these individuals to reach out and engage in conversation. Coming from the business world, Mr. Dodge deals with the individuals who are coming out of the public schools and are entering the private sector. He commended the public schools for doing an amazing job and acknowledged the school board for their fiscal responsibility. Mr. Dodge indicated that it is time for the community members to do their job and vote yes for the referendum.

Gina Dingman, a resident and real estate agent, chose East Troy because she wanted her kids to go to school in a place where people would look out for them. She encouraged the community to consider the housing market and to think about what it would look like without a school district. She explained that, without a school district, families won't want to move into the community or take jobs here, She reiterated that the teachers and staff deserve support. Ms. Dingman urged the community to vote for the schools and keep the community thriving.

Kim Pluess, a 1996 graduate of East Troy High School and a parent, is thankful that her kids are safe every day coming to school. Mrs. Pluess explained that her kids are employed, invested, and connected and it all started with the schools. She indicated that it is time to give it back and pay it forward.

Carly Geller, a resident since June, came in unsure of the district but knowing that she wanted to get her kids the best education. While she looked into surrounding districts, she was impressed by the helpful administrators and the care that was expressed in East Troy. She indicated that there is something special here and the community must invest in the schools. East Troy is worth voting yes for.

## **VII. FINANCIAL REPORT**

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Dr. Hibner introduced Amy Jenquin, the new Director of Business Services for the ETCS D.

Dale Ames made a motion to approve the January 2023 payments in the amount of \$1,643,991.02 and receipts in the amount of \$6,625,164.70 as reflected on the financial statements. Steve Lambrechts seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Dale Ames made a motion to approve the February 2023 payments in the amount of \$1,838,430.73 and receipts in the amount of \$5,758,358.25 as reflected on the financial statements. Steve Lambrechts seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

### **VIII. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

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- A. Staffing Retirements: Ted Zess made a motion to approve retirements for Carrie Franzene and Kristin Michalski. Dale Ames seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- B. Staffing Resignations: Ted Zess made a motion to approve resignations for Rebecca Picchi and Sarah Eckert. Adam Witkiewicz seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- C. Staffing Recommendations: None
- D. Basic overview of referendum question and preliminary impact to 2023 - 2024 budget: Dr. Hibner and the administrative team reviewed the ballot question, the circumstances contributing to the need for the referendum, and the budget implications for the 2023 -24 budget resulting from an unsuccessful referendum. The Board of Education made a statement regarding the importance of the referendum.
- E. Approval of SCN (Start College Now) and ECCP (Early College Credit Program) applications: Ted Zess made a motion to approve the Start College Now and Early College Credit Program applications as presented. Dale Ames seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- F. Overnight field trip request: Anna Janusz made a motion to approve the FFA Leadership Retreat and the HOSA State Leadership Conference. Adam Witkiewicz seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- G. Summer School 2023 update: Amy Foszpanczyk presented an update regarding Summer School 2023. The 2023 Course Guidebook will be sent to all families on Friday, March 24th and registration will run from April 3rd - 21st.
- H. Notice of School Board Election: Dr. Hibner read the Notice of Election -At an election in the East Troy Community School District on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, the following question will be submitted to a vote of the people: “Shall the East Troy Community School District, Walworth and Waukesha Counties, Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$3,000,000 per year beginning with the 2023- 2024 school year and ending with the 2025-2026 school year, for non-recurring purposes and consisting of operational expenses to help maintain existing programs and staffing.” A copy of the entire text of the resolution directing submission of the question set forth above to the electorate and information concerning District boundaries can be obtained from the District Clerk at the School District offices located at 2040 Beulah Avenue, East Troy, Wisconsin. Acceptable photo ID will be required to vote at this election. If you do not have a photo ID, you may obtain a free ID for voting from the Division of Motor Vehicles. Persons with questions regarding the referendum election should contact Dr. Christopher G. Hibner, District Administrator or a school board member.

Dr. Hibner read the Notice of School Board Election - Notice is hereby given that at an election to be held in the East Troy Community School District on Tuesday, April 4 2023, the following offices are to be elected to succeed the present incumbent listed. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes will fill the regular terms up for election and serve a three-year term beginning April 24, 2023 and ending the 4th Monday in April 2026.” The candidates are Mr. Kevin Bong and Mr. Steve Lambrechts.

- I. Choose Board of Canvassers for election in April: Anna Janusz, Ted Zess, and Cari McBurney will serve as the Board of Canvassers on Friday, April 7th at 9:00 a.m. at District Office.
- J. Preliminary staffing proposals: Moved to executive session.

***IX. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS***

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- A. District Administrator Report: None
- B. Business Manager Report: None
- C. Director of Teaching and Continuous Improvement of Student Learning Report: None
- D. Director of Pupil Services: None
- E. School Board President's Report: None.

***X. POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT***

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None.

***XI. COMMUNICATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS***

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Dr. Hibner reviewed the hiring process for the Director of Building and Grounds and District Safety Coordinator position and introduced Salvador "Jake" Hernandez as the district's new Director of Building & Grounds and Safety Coordinator.

***XII. BOARD OF EDUCATION – FUTURE ITEMS***

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None.

***XIII. ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION***

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Ted Zess made a motion to adjourn to executive session for the discussion of preliminary staffing proposals and former employee alleged misconduct as provided under s.s. 19.85(1)(b), 19.85(1)(c), and 19.85(1)(f). Dale Ames seconded the motion. Roll call vote to adjourn to executive session: Steve Lambrechts-Yes, Adam Witkiewicz-Yes, Dale Ames-Yes, Anna Janusz - Yes, ,Ted Zess - Yes. Motion carried unanimously and moved to executive session at 8:36 p.m.

***XV. ADJOURNMENT***

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A motion was made by Steve Lambrechts and seconded by Ted Zess to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Lambrechts