

Superintendent's Update

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Today was the 167th day of the 2020-21 school year. We have 3 school days left this year. Just as a reminder, the last day of school is Monday, June 21 and this is a half-day for students.

As everyone is aware, our hearts are heavy due to the tragic death last week of DHS Senior Alonzo Polk. We partnered with Riverside Crisis to provide counseling support for students, faculty, and staff last Friday and over the weekend at Dedham Town Hall. MANY students and families made use of these additional services. Trauma specialists from Riverside were again available at DHS yesterday during the final day of traditional classes (before the start of final exams) for both students and faculty/staff. I want to thank all our counselors and psychologists from DHS as well as Principal Forrest, Assistant Principal Kristy Yankee, and Director of Counseling Services Dr. Ashley Dube for their help with this very difficult sequence. Riverside Trauma/Crisis will be doing follow up counseling this Friday for impacted faculty and staff from DHS. When arrangements or services for Alonzo are complete, we will provide notice to the community.

DHS had its last day of typical classes on Monday this week. Traditional finals exams will be taking place each day this week with make-up exams on Monday, June 21. Athletics Awards night took place on the turf field last night. Committee members may be interested in viewing the [DHS 202-2021 WINTER VARSITY ATHLETIC AWARDS](#) that was recently produced and posted by Athletic Director Steve Traister.

Our elementary schools are having promotion ceremonies for their 5th graders this Thursday and Friday in the mornings and Dedham Middle School will be having a drive-through promotion ceremony this Friday also. Remember, DMS students will have a half-day on Friday to allow for this ceremony. Dismissal at DMS will be at 11:35 AM this Friday.

We are close to naming a successor to replace Director of Health Services Gail Kelley. A committee has interviewed four candidates for the position and we are in the process of narrowing down finalists for an appointment soon. As typically happens at this time of year, we have a few other positions that will require searches and we will be pursuing those in the days ahead.

I wanted to take a moment to also recognize the many years of service of our Dedham High School Athletic Trainer Megan McColghan. Megan has been a fixture in all DHS sports and she will be moving on to pursue additional education and certifications in nursing. Megan's contributions to the students in Dedham went well beyond just their physical well being. She was a mentor, a counselor, and a life coach to so many young adults in the community. From her personal efforts to secure heart rhythm screenings for our athletes to her support for students who were experiencing challenges in their lives, Megan has always been there for anyone in need of help. Thank you, Megan, for your many years of service and commitment to the community. We wish you all the best as you pursue advanced education and training in the years to come.

I wanted to take a moment to thank Starbucks in Dedham for their "Global Month of Good" program. The Starbucks manager reached out to Dedham resident Dawn Sievers to ask how they could help support the schools. This turned into a donation option for Starbucks customers that generated a sizable donation used to purchase hand sanitizer dispensers for district schools. This is very much appreciated and I wanted to recognize Dawn and Starbucks for this gesture.

I also wanted to thank the Dedham Police Department for their donation of an Ice Cream Mart vehicle and free ice cream for Dedham Middle School students last Friday, June 11. After a VERY hot week last week, this gesture and donation was very much appreciated by DMS students and staff. Thank you to Officers Jay Sullivan and Neil Cronin and the Chelsea Police Department who coordinated the use of this vehicle!

I learned earlier this week from DPS Choral Instructor Sarah Santos that Dedham's All Town Elementary Chorus has two videos coming out on Thursday evening June 17 at 7pm on youtube. Please feel free to attend "virtually" to watch them perform. It really has been a town wide effort with all 4 elementary schools having students in the 4th and 5th grade Chorus. Please use the links [in this document](#) to virtually attend.

As Committee members are aware, the expiration of Governor Baker's declared State of Emergency in Massachusetts on Tuesday, June 15 has implications for elected officials and organizations in terms of remote meetings and compliance with the state's Open Meeting Law. I've provided a [link to a legal brief](#) concerning this matter from our legal counsel (Murphy, Hessy, Toomey and Lehane) and would advise review of this by Committee members in the event this issue arises. UPDATE - I received word at about 12:30 PM today that the Governor has signed a bill into law with the following provisions:

[Per MMA](#): The bill sent to the governor (S. 2475) would:

- Allow for remote meetings and hearings by public bodies through April 1, 2022
- Ratify any remote meetings held between the expiration of the state of emergency and the signing of the law
- Extend the ability to reduce the quorum at any town meeting through Dec. 15, 2021
- For towns with representative town meetings, extend their ability to hold those meetings using remote participation through Dec. 15, 2021

On Monday this week I met with folks from DHS and Facilities to discuss the pending renovation of the DHS library that was approved as a part of the [Capital Budget process for FY22](#) (see page 18 of the [FY22 Budget Book](#) for a description of approved capital projects). Unfortunately, the lone bid received for this work was more than double the amount estimated and approved for this work. There was \$250,000 allocated for the demolition and construction, and the bid came in at over \$529,000. We decided the bid would be re-posted with some changes to criteria in hopes of receiving additional bids and a more reasonable price for the work. We will re-post the bid in July and hope for a revised schedule for this work by early August. At best we may be able to complete this project by January 1, 2022 or we may choose to push this back into summer 2022.

We are in the final stages of firming up summer programming options across the district. The TREK program is set to begin on Wednesday, June 23 (right after the last day of school on Monday), and our Extended School Year programming for students whose needs require this will begin just after the July 4th weekend. In addition, the Avery Institute and our Title One and English Learners programming will start just after July 4th also. The Kindergarten Jump Start program will begin its first-ever summer programming for students in need of introductions to formal schooling on Tuesday, July 6.

I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.