

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES

May 15, 2018

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Steve Bilafer, Chair
Kevin Coughlin, Vice-Chair
Mayanne Briggs
Joshua Donati
Lisa Laprade
Dr. Melissa Pearrow
Tracey White

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael Welch, Superintendent
Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent
Samuel Rippin, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location: Dedham Middle School

Executive Session commenced at 9:30 p.m.

Superintendent Welch passed out a civil rights violation complaint received from the Department of Education just prior to April vacation. On Wednesday, Supt. Welch along with Asst. Supt. Dr. Ian Kelly met with a mediator along with the complainant (mother) and her daughter (the subject of the complaint.) The complaint cited an incident that occurred in January of 2017 at the middle school where the complainant feels her daughter was discriminated against due to her race. According to the mother, her daughter no longer wanted to attend school after this incident. Supt. Welch noted the mother feels the district has treated her family unfairly ever since they enrolled in the Dedham Public School System and cited occurrences that date back to elementary school. The mother decided to enroll her daughter in private school.

When Principal Hillman took over at the Middle School, Supt. Welch tried to have the family come in and speak with Ms. Hillman. The family declined and filed a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights.

During the mediation, the mother asked for the district to pay for her daughter's private school tuition and transportation costs. Supt. Welch declined to pay for either the private school tuition or the transportation costs.

Supt. Welch did offer to hire a counselor 10 to 15 hours a week to offer clinical support for students who have encountered issues related to cultural diversity.

Dr. Kelly elaborated that three demands were made at the table. One was to have a social worker in the schools whose expertise is dealing with cultural diversity issues. The second was proper diversity training for staff. And the third was the district paying for private tuition and transportation.

Supt. Welch stated there has already been a lot of work done training the staff.

Ms. Briggs mentioned bringing in Angela Osei-Mensah from the Dedham Youth Commission. According to Ms. Briggs and Ms. White part of Ms. Osei-Mensah's job description with the Dedham Youth Commission is to help with the schools and the School Department has not been utilizing her in this capacity.

Ms. Briggs also noted that historically the School Committee has denied paying private tuition requests.

Supt. Welch stated he will try to connect with Ms. Osei-Mensah.

Supt. Welch stated he will be responding to the OCR complaint, but wanted the Committee to be aware of the case and his response. The District will comply with the hiring of a part time diversity counselor and continue its diversity training with staff. However, he will not agree to pay for private tuition.

Supt. Welch collected the OCR complaint that he passed out at the beginning of the meeting.

Ms. Briggs motioned to exit Executive Session, Ms. White second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs- Yes
Joshua Donati- Yes
Lisa Laprade- Yes
Dr. Melissa Pearrow- Yes
Tracey White- Yes
Kevin Coughlin, Vice-Chair- Yes
Steve Bilafer, Chair- Yes

Mr. Donati motioned to close the meeting of May 15, 2018, Dr. Pearrow second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs- Yes
Joshua Donati- Yes
Lisa Laprade- Yes
Dr. Melissa Pearrow- Yes
Tracey White- Yes
Kevin Coughlin, Vice-Chair- Yes
Steve Bilafer, Chair- Yes

Meeting concluded at 9:45 p.m.