

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

September 18, 2019

(Approved 10/2/2019)

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Kevin Coughlin, Chair

Steve Bilafer

Mayanne Briggs

Joshua Donati

Dr. Melissa Pearrow

Tracey White

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

Lisa Laprade, Vice-Chair

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael Welch, Superintendent

Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent

Samuel Rippin, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location: Early Childhood Education Center

Meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.

Recognitions

The Committee recognized Facilities Director Denise Moroney for securing the Local Equipment & Technology Grant from Safer Schools and Communities. DPS received capital funding to upgrade door locks, so all schools will have consistent security and access. The Committee thanked Ms. Moroney for all of her work in writing the grant as well as getting all of the buildings ready for the opening of school.

Superintendent's Update

Today was the 10th day of school of the 2019-2020 school year.

Last Friday Supt. Welch issued the first edition of his 30-Day Update for this school year. The update is available on the District website.

As of last Friday, all schools have completed fire drills and will complete their annual lockdown drills within the next month. These drills were coordinated through the Safety Super Team in cooperation with the Dedham Police and Fire Departments and carried out by our school resource officers. The Safety

Super Team has been meeting monthly and has planned individual school evacuation drills for later this fall. These drills will initially take place without students (staff only), and then will take place during the day with students sometime before Thanksgiving.

All licensed educators in Dedham have been busy completing their annual self-assessments and updating their two-year annual goals. These are due to be uploaded into TeachPoint by October 1. Each principal, director, and department head will conduct individual goals meetings with each educator during the month of September to review the goals' alignment to school improvement plans, School Committee goals, and the district's 5-Year Strategic Plan.

Supt. Welch indicated to the Committee there is information regarding the TREK program in thier folder. He thanked Director Chris Nadeau for his work on this very successful 6th grade summer transition program.

Reports

2019-2020 New Staff & Hiring Review

Human Resources Administrator Kathy O'Leary presented to the Committee a review of staff turnover and hiring for the start of the 2019-2020 school year. The presentation will be available on the district website.

Dr. Pearrow inquired if there were any training for new unlicensed paraprofessionals. Dr. Kelly explained there are procedures and online classes for paraprofessionals. However, since roles vary for this position, most of the training is on the job.

Ms. Briggs asked about daily substitutes and if they are building-based. Ms. O'Leary explained that building-based subs could not be hired due to restrictions in the contract. However, subs are asked what their placement preference is and the Substitute Coordinator, Katie Murray attempts to accommodate these requests. Ms. O'Leary complimented Ms. Murray on her role as Substitute Coordinator. There are about 24 substitutes currently on the payroll.

Supt. Welch announced the need for substitute teachers. Anyone interested can apply via the Human Resource page of the website. He also explained how it was an ethics law violation to simultaneously hold more than one job for a municipality.

Ms. O'Leary also noted that last year 50 substitutes were hired during the school year. The number quickly decreases because many times the applicant will receive a full time job somewhere else right after all their paperwork is processed.

Ms. White asked if the substitute pay rate was comparable to other distracts. Ms. O'Leary explained that we cannot compare to Boston, but we have comparable rates to other surrounding communities.

School Enrollment Trends

Supt. Welch reviewed the student enrollment numbers as of today, September 18, 2019. The presentation will be available on the District website.

Mr. Donati asked about the Kindergarten classroom with only 14 students and whether the intention is to add more students. ECEC Principal Kim Taylor explained that the additional classroom was the one that

was added to accommodate increased enrollment. She also said this classroom was smaller than the other classrooms and would not accommodate a large number of students.

Mr. Donati asked if there had been discussion of adding a 12th classroom. Supt. Welch explained that a tuition-based preschool classroom would need to be taken over in order to add a 12th Kindergarten classroom. Mr. Welch stated that even using census data it is difficult to determine how many students will enroll next September. He did note there is an uptick in trends.

Mr. Donati asked about the second grade class sizes at Greenlodge and how it was determined that they should each assigned a paraprofessional. Supt. Welch explained this was determined by the number of Special Education students with Individual Education Plans in these classes.

Ms. Briggs inquired into Ms. Kant's preschool numbers. Principal Taylor explained that Ms. Kant teaches three separate sessions. The total number represented three separate classes.

Ms. Briggs also asked about having the Preschool Lottery in November without knowing the Kindergarten enrollment numbers. Supt. Welch stated that he and Principal Taylor will work together closely to monitor and estimate the numbers moving forward.

Ms. White inquired if the district could poll private preschools in Dedham to see where the parents are planning to send their children for Kindergarten. Principal Taylor said she would try to put something together.

Mr. Bilafer asked why there was such a discrepancy in the Grade 2 numbers at Oakdale. Supt. Welch did not have a definite answer but suggested it was related to Special Education.

Quarterly Budget Report

Assist Supt. Rippin provided the Committee with the following budget report the 2018-2019 School year:

Fourth Quarter Overview

In summary, we finished FY2019 fully spending out the Education budget of \$39,001,100. That being said, \$643,300 was reverted to the Town; This reversion was done to set aside for free cash a sufficient amount of funds deemed necessary to fund Unit A, Unit B and Educational Interventionists eventual CBA settlements retroactive to FY 2019. Unit A is currently in fact finding with an arbitrator and a settlement is expected during FY 2020 at which time we will ask Town Meeting to appropriate monies to fund the retroactive amount of wage increases. For School Facilities, we returned \$56,562 out of our \$3,788,882 FY2019 appropriation largely due to a vacancy in the Assistant Director of Facilities position and utility savings specifically in electricity expenses.

FY2019 Budget Highlights

As you all know, we have not settled contracts for Unit A, Unit B and Educational Interventionists, thereby necessitating reverting to free cash an amount that was both budgeted in FY 2019 and would be reasonably expected to fund an eventual settlement.

Besides this, legal expenses were higher than budgeted by \$14,243 largely due to the unusually high amount of negotiation sessions with Unit A over FY 2019.

Copier expenses were under budget by \$26,485, Unemployment was under budget by \$21,316 and Advertising was under budget by \$12,348. It should be noted that \$25,000 from copiers and \$20,000 from advertising budgets were used to fund the communication position \$36,000 and partial fund programming options \$9,000 for FY 2020.

For FY 2019 positional turnover in total cost the DPS \$15,870 due to both the cost of replacement hires and the lack of retirements.

Areas of Concern/Exposure

Overall, FY2019 was a challenging year for DPS financially. That being said, there were both successes and challenges worth noting.

The new ECEC opened for students on Monday February 25, 2019. The building opened on time and within the appropriated budget. Staffing, utilities, ancillary and supply budgets were adjusted as needed for both FY 2019 and especially for FY 2020; which is the first full year of operation for the new building.

Challenges continue to be not increasing the Out of District tuition budget since we reduced this budget by \$500,000 in FY2018. Due to increased tuition rather than increased headcount, we had to tap into the Special Education Circuit Breaker account for \$442,819 over what we would normally use to balance the FY 2019 budget. This issue will provide a challenge for FY 2020 as we level funded this line and will be a potential significant budget driver for FY 2021.

System-wide textbooks expenditures were \$252,622 during FY 2019 versus the \$160,000 allocated per budget. This equates to a \$92,622 overage. Two new initiatives that drove this increase were Renaissance Learning for the Star 360 program in Grades K-8 along with Carolina Biological Supply to revamp and enhance our Science kits in Grades K-5. The feedback has been extremely positive with respect to these two initiatives.

Ms. Briggs asked if there was any indication of Out of District Tuition increases and when to expect them. Mr. Rippin explained the increase first needs to pass through DESE and that we probably wouldn't know the numbers until spring. Mr. Rippin is estimating an increase of 5%.

Ms. White expressed her concern for the unanticipated increase and asked where the funds would come from. Mr. Rippin stated some of it would come from Turnover Savings and the rest he would have to find within the budget.

Ms. White and Ms. Briggs both agreed that this number would be much higher if we didn't have such a quality Special Education program that allowed students to stay in the district.

Mr. Donati asked about the text book driver would continue to increase. Dr. Kelly explained that many of these purchases were done to bring the curriculum in line with the state standards (Science Kits, 8th grade Civics). Many of these are onetime costs. Mr. Donati expressed he would like to see some data for the Budget Subcommittee.

TREK Review

Supt. Welch explained to the Committee that Coordinator Chris Nadeau created a report for the Committee detailing this year's TREK program percentages. The program ended in the black. The program is not only a great transitional experience for incoming 6th graders, but also a chance for high school students to volunteer and mentor their younger peers.

Supt. Welch thanked High School Foreign Language Teacher Chris Nadeau and Middle School English Teacher Sara Ascenzo for their work on running a successful program.

Dr. Pearrow asked Supt. Welch to let the TREK Coordinators know how much their work was appreciated by the Committee and how important this transitional program is for the community.

Old/New Business

NONE

Subcommittee Reports & Updates

Budget

The first meeting of the Budget Subcommittee will be October 2.

Equity and Inclusion Task Force

Mr. Donati met with Supt. Welch to discuss making the subcommittee a more student based group. Supt. Welch is working on pulling a group of students together for this purpose.

Negotiations

Fact Finding is on October 3.

Policy

Ms. Briggs will work on getting a meeting on the books. Mr. Coughlin asked if a policy on signage could be added to the agenda.

SBRC

Mr. Bilafer stated the SBRC meeting was Monday night and the committee is heading toward closing out the project. KBA is trying to obtain a “Silver” rating for the school. The project manager is in the process of rating the sub-contractors and the punch list is almost complete.

Mr. Bilafer thanked Dave Roberts, Chair of the SBRC, for all of his hard work on the project.

Traffic Circulation Study

The Subcommittee is working with VHB to continue collecting data and to get a fall meeting on the books.

Coalition for Drug and Alcohol Awareness

Dr. Pearrow asked for this Subcommittee to be added to the agenda for future meetings. She explained that the Town had received a Drug Free Program grant and wanted to know when the MWAHS results would be presented. Supt. Welch stated that presentation would occur at the October 16 meeting.

Mr. Donati noted he was the designee from the School Committee for the Town Master Plan.

Ms. White inquired into the Traffic Circulation Study data gathering and asked if there was a plan for data collection in the fall. Mr. Rippin explained the Subcommittee was meeting with VHB next week to pan out issues and determine the scope of completion. He believes VHB is targeting for a mid October collection date.

Minutes

Ms. Briggs motioned to approve the minutes from September 4, 2019, Mr. White second; the Committee voted 6-0 in favor. Ms. Laprade was not in attendance to vote.

Public comment

Steve Davey, Precinct 3, asked if the enrollment numbers would be made public. Supt. Welch explained that historical information is available on the website. Mr. Davey also asked if the “Rail Corridor” was specifically being looked at in the Traffic Study. Mr. Coughlin explained that the warrant article states the area between Walnut Street and East Streets are being studied. Mr. Davey again wanted to know if the Rail Corridor was specifically going to be studied and why it wasn’t stated in the warrant article. Mr. Bilafer explained the warrant article was written to include the area inside and outside of the campus property; this includes the area of the Rail Corridor. Right now the Committee is waiting to hear what the consultants have to say. The results will be presented to numerous Boards. Mr. Bilafer felt it was incorrect to say that area was not being studied. Mr. Davey asked if the School Committee had been notified of the Grant awarded to the DPW for bike trails. Mr. Coughlin stated that the Committee was not notified and he will discuss that with the proper people. Mr. Davey asked Mr. Coughlin if he was aware of an article in the Dedham Patch stating a School Committee member had said that the letter from the Department of Transportation (regarding the Rail Trail) was unenforceable. Mr. Coughlin stated he did not know where that comment came from and asked Mr. Davey who wrote the article. Mr. Davey stated Jean Zieler wrote the article.

Emily Kadehjian, asked if parents could be involved in the evacuation drills to try to pick up their children. Supt. Welch explained that first the drill would be done relocating staff only. Then it would be done with children. The reunification process is more complicated and would be the next piece. Ms. Kadehjian asked if parents of younger children could be notified in advance to have time to prepare their children.

Donations

None

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Ms. White announced she has been working with the Seager Family to come up with a date for the dedication of the Donald W. Seager Athletic Field.

Ms. Briggs announced the School Committee will be hosting a table at Dedham Day on September 29

Superintendent Welch announced he is working to secure three dates in October for SMMA to present their Master Plan findings to the Greenlodge, Oakdale and Riverdale communities. It will also be important to have ECEC parents notified of these meetings.

Mr. Coughlin announced the need to enter Executive Session under Exemption 3, contract negotiations.

Ms. White motioned to enter Executive Session under Exemption 3, contract negotiations, Mr. Bilafer second: a roll call vote was taken:

Steve Bilafer - Yes

Mayanne Briggs- Yes

Joshua Donati- Yes

Melissa Pearrow- Yes

Tracey White- Yes

Kevin Coughlin, Chair- Yes

Motion passed 6-0

Mr. Coughlin announced that the Committee would not be returning to open session.

The open meeting ended at 9:00 p.m.