

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

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**MINUTES**

**January 15, 2020**

*(Approved 2/12/2020)*

MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

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

Meeting Location: Avery Elementary School

Meeting Commenced: 7:00 p.m.

**Student Update**

High school student representative to the School Committee, Junior Asal Al-Azzawi, updated the Committee on events and happenings at each of the schools.

**Out-of-State Field Trip Request**

High School Principal James Forrest came before the Committee asking them to approve an out-of-state field trip request to take the Dedham High School Ski Club to Gunstock Mountain located in Gilford, New Hampshire on Thursday, February 20, 2020.

Ms. Briggs motioned to approve the Dedham High School Ski Club Field trip to Gunstock Mountain in Gilford, New Hampshire on February 20, 2020, Dr. Pearrow second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

## **Donations**

Principal Kim Taylor came before the Committee asking them to accept a grant in the amount \$6,500 from the Dedham Savings Foundation to support the “Choose To Be Nice” program initiative for the Early Childhood Education Center. Adjustment Counselor Jenna Callahan and Program Founder Dina Creiger were also in attendance to speak about the program.

Ms. White motioned to approve with grateful appreciation a grant in the amount of \$6,500 from the Dedham Savings Foundation to the Early Childhood Education Center to support the “Choose To Be Nice” Program, Ms. Laprade second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

## **Public Hearing I**

Ms. White motioned to open the FY21 Budget Public Hearing I, Ms. Laprade second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Supt. Welch explained there will be two Public Hearings. The second hearing will be on Wednesday, January 22, 2020. Both meetings will allow the public opportunities to ask questions and have input into the proposed budget. The budget proposal has not yet been voted on by the Budget Subcommittee and remains subject to change.

Supt. Welch provided the Committee with a presentation of the FY21 Proposed Budget. The presentation will be available on the District website. The Superintendent’s proposed operating budget proposes a 5.87% increase.

Supt. Welch reported on the Operating Budget proposal.

### Questions & Comments from the Committee

Mr. Bilafer noted the growth occurring in the Dedham Public Schools and the need to expand the budget appropriately.

### Questions & Comments from the Public

None

Mr. Donati stated that if anyone from the public had inquiries after this meeting to please email him. (Mr. Donati's email address can be located on the District website.)

Supt. Welch reported on the Facilities Operating Budget proposal which includes a 4.6% increase.

#### Questions & Comments from the Committee

Dr. Pearrow asked if the new Student Opportunity Act (SOA) will provide any additional resources. Supt. Welch explained that the only funds guaranteed to come to the School Department will be for Special Education Transportation. The money being targeted from the SOA is included in Chapter 70 funding that goes directly to the Town. At this time Supt. Welch does not know how money Dedham will receive from the SOA.

Ms. White referred to the Educational Budget and noted that all of the items on the lists are “needs” not “wants” explaining that it is expensive to run a school department.

Ms. Briggs asked whether the recommendations were prioritized. Supt. Welch answered they were not but that numbers 1-8 are necessities.

Ms. Laprade noted that the subcommittee is looking at ways to offset costs, such as raising preschool tuition.

#### Questions & Comments from the Public

None

Ms. Briggs motioned to close Public Hearing I of January 15, 2020; Dr. Pearrow second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

## **Old/New Business**

#### Continued Discussion of 2020-2021 School Year Calendar

Superintendent Welch expressed his concerns with having Fridays as half days of professional development. His research indicates that student absenteeism essentially doubles on those days. He would like to recommend to the Committee moving away from that practice.

He also agrees with the Committee’s previous comments and recommends making December 23, 2020 a full day off from school.

Ms. Laprade inquired into why the Kindergarten start date is the day after the Grade 1-12 start date. ECEC Principal Kimberly Taylor explained that the day is orientation for Kindergarten parents and it is an important time for parents to learn about the school, complete important paperwork and be able to ask and have questions answered in person. It is especially important for first time parents. Ms. Taylor encourages continuing this practice.

The Committee also discussed December 23, 2020 as a half day or full day off of school. They noted absenteeism, traffic concerns, and family holiday traveling as a reason to have the day off. They also noted that many parents who work full time rely on the schools being open. The Committee did agree

that December 23 should not be a full day of school; it should either be a half day or no school day. Ms. Laprade suggested a parent working group to help develop the calendar.

## **Subcommittee Reports and Updates**

### Dedham Organization for Substance Awareness

Dr. Pearrow talked about a parent survey that had been sent out to the community and over 300 responses had been received. The Survey focused on monitoring substance abuse. Dr. Pearrow asked whether the results could be posted on the Dedham Public Schools website.

### Equity & Inclusion Task Force

Mr. Donati thanked the Human Rights Commission and Livable Dedham for the successful MLK Celebration that took place on Monday, January 20.

### Master Plan Update

The consulting firm SMMA presented at a community meeting on January 13. They provided slides and models with many different options and considerations. The presentation is available on the District website.

### Negotiations

There are two upcoming negotiation sessions set for January 21 and January 29, for Paraprofessionals and Educational Interventionists.

### Policy

The next meeting will be on January 22 before the regularly scheduled meeting.

### SBRC

The next meeting is Tuesday, January 21.

### Traffic Circulation Study

There will be a community meeting with consultants VHB on February 4 at 7:00 p.m. in the High School cafeteria.

Mr. Donati asked whether the Town's Master Plan could be added to the subcommittee agenda for future comments.

## **Minutes**

Ms. Laprade motioned to approve the minutes of December 18, 2019, Ms. White second; the Committee voted 6-0 in favor. Ms. Briggs abstained as she was not present at the December 18 meeting.

## **Public Comment**

None

## **Acknowledgements and Announcements**

None

Mr. Coughlin noted the need for an Executive Session under Exemption 3, Contract Negotiations.

Mr. Donati motioned to enter Executive Session under Exemption 3, Contract Negotiations, Ms. Briggs second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer - Yes

Mayanne MacDonald Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow - Yes

Tracey White – Yes

Lisa Laprade, Vice-Chair - Yes

Kevin Coughlin, Chair – Yes

Motion passed 7-0

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

Regular Meeting concluded at 8:30 p.m.