

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
REMOTE MEETING

MINUTES

April 7, 2021

(Approved 4/28/2021)

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT via REMOTE PARTICIPATION:

Lisa Laprade, Chair

Tracey White, Vice-Chair

Stephen Bilafer

Mayanne Briggs

Joshua Donati

Dr. Melissa Pearrow

Victor Hebert

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION REMOTELY PRESENT:

Michael J. Welch, Superintendent

Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent

Sam Rippin, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location:

Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A sec. 20, the meeting was held via Zoom as posted on the agenda: <https://dedham-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/98807925022>

Remote meeting commenced at 6:06 p.m.

Ms. Laprade read the following statement regarding the remote meeting:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings in the Town of Dedham are being conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. We have arranged for a call-in number for those who would like to listen to this meeting. While it is possible that some members of the public may be invited to comment, it is also possible that despite our best efforts, we are not able to provide for real-time involvement, we will post a recording of this meeting as soon as we are able.

Ms. Laprade called the School Committee meeting to order.

Ms. Laprade took a roll call attendance:

Stephen Bilafer - Present

Mayanne Briggs - Present

Joshua Donati - Present

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Present

Victor Hebert - Present

Tracey White, Vice-Chair - Present

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Present

Ms. Laprade noted the need to enter Executive Session, under Exemption 3 contract negotiations.

Ms. Briggs motioned enter Executive Session, under Exemption 3 for contract negotiations, Mr. Hebert second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

Motion passed 7-0

The Committee returned to regular session at 6:21 p.m.

Recognitions

The Committee recognized fourth grade student Grace Donahue who raised \$1,000 for the Riverdale School Library. Throughout the pandemic Grace made masks for the community. Although she would not take any money for her efforts, she did accept donations. Grace raised \$1,000 for the Riverdale School and \$3,500 for the Jimmy Fund.

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation in the amount of \$1,000 from Grace Donahue to the Riverdale Elementary School Library, Ms. White second; a roll vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Public Comment

Dianne Loud – 28 Glenway Street, thanked the Committee for its many hours of hard work getting the students back to in-person learning. Ms. Loud wanted to make a comment regarding a video being dispersed on social media. Ms. Laprade stated that the Committee would not be taking comments about that matter.

Superintendent's Update

Today was the 118th day of the 2020-21 school year.

On Monday the district welcomed back all Grade K-5 students to full time in-person learning.

The district has created a single remote teaching environment for each K-5 grade level. All students who are learning remotely, regardless of their elementary school of residence, are combined into a single classroom for their remote learning experience.

The district continues to prepare for the return to full in-person learning for middle school students on Monday, April 26. The necessary adaptations to class sizes, teacher hiring/assignments, scheduling, furniture needs, lunch spacing, and the establishment of remote classrooms for each subject at all three grades are significant challenges that are being resolved. Supt. Welch feels there are sufficient material resources at the secondary level that will prevent the need for additional capital purchases (desks, curriculum materials, etc.). The students who are choosing to remain in a remote learning format will have a specific schedule (aligned with the current DMS schedule) and dedicated remote learning teachers. In most instances students will not be with the same teachers they currently have. Some remote learning students will have changes to their electives/specials as not all options will be available at all grade levels. Every effort is being made to support students' needs but there are limits to what can be accomplished at this point in the year.

The high school is continuing to work on logistics to bring back students on Monday, May 3. DESE has not indicated a required start date for high schools, but this announcement may come at any time and Supt. Welch has asked the high school to begin planning accordingly. There are additional considerations that are unique to the high school program and the leadership team is working on those aspects now. In addition to all of the other levels' challenges, the issues at the high school level include "eligibility" for remote learning, MCAS and AP testing interruptions, attendance taking, single occurrence classes (also known as "singletons"), and classroom configurations.

Next week, the School Building Rehabilitation Committee will hold the closeout meeting for the ECEC. Pending a final audit, the ECEC project came in \$1.2 Million under budget. This saved the citizens of Dedham over \$840,000 in direct taxpayer dollars.

Last week Dr. Kelly and Supt. Welch met with Deb Anderson from Dedham Parks and Recreation to learn more about their summer programming options. The goal was to gain some preliminary information about how both parties could coordinate efforts as the schools attempt to design and implement supportive summer “regression remediation” options for students emerging from the challenges of the pandemic. Additional meetings have been planned to better coordinate both internal planning with external Town offerings (Parks & Recreation, Library, Youth Commission, Police, DOSA, etc.), and available community resources (Nobles, DCD, YMCA, Dedham Community House). The goal is to provide necessary support to students without duplicating efforts or “competing” with existing and established available programs.

Supt. Welch expressed thanks for the work of the School Committee Negotiations Subcommittee on the recently settled Memorandum of Agreement with the Dedham Education Association. He personally thanked Chair Lisa Laprade, Steve Bilafer, and Mayanne Briggs for their many hours of dedicated time in preparation and actual negotiations. This group, in combination with Mr. Rippin, Dr. Kelly, and Kathy O’Leary, teamed up to support this effort.

COVID-19 Update

There has been a fairly steady level of COVID-19 positives in the Dedham community over the past five weeks. Dedham remains in the “Yellow” category of the state’s color-coding system. However, there has been a steady increase in the number of positive cases turning up in the student population over the past two weeks.

Since last week there have been a total of eight positive COVID-19 cases from students who have been in school during the previous seven-day period. Based upon investigations from school nurses who have performed contact tracing in each instance, there does not appear to be any connection between these cases (other than siblings). Virtually all of them can be traced to exposures within living quarters or obvious connections to other positive cases outside the schools in the greater community. The positive cases have come from ECEC, Riverdale, Oakdale, Dedham Middle School and Dedham High School.

As of this week, voluntary pooled COVID-19 testing is up and running at all seven Dedham schools. Parents are urged to sign consents to have their children participate in this voluntary program, as it is another effective layer of protection for faculty, staff, and students. More information can be found on the district website.

Last night at about 11:00 p.m. the district received notice of a positive COVID-19 testing pool at Riverdale School. This testing had occurred on Monday this week. All impacted members of the positive pool were contacted at 7:00 a.m. today, and follow-up “reflex testing” took place outside in the Riverdale parking lot this morning at 9:00 a.m. On-site testing was provided at students’ homes as necessary in order to identify any/all individual positive cases. By 10:00 a.m., positive case(s) were identified and contact tracing began at the school and classroom level. This is another example of the value of this pooled testing initiative, and another reason the Superintendent is asking everyone to participate.

Last week the district tested over 1000 individuals through the pool testing program in just over 135 separate pools. Data is reflective of the “hybrid” teaching model where students were predominantly attending school only two days per week.

Now that Grades K-5 students are back in school full time, there may be an adjustment to the testing days each week to spread out the burden of testing across our elementary schools. Emily Kadehjian and Gail Kelley continue to provide excellent leadership in this project along with school nurses and school secretaries.

Reports

Spring Athletics Update by Athletics Director Stephen Traister

Mr. Traister thanked Director of Health Services Gail Kelley, High School Nurse Maria Antonuccio, Athletic Trainer Meghan McColgan, and Principal James Forrest for all of their work trying to keep the athletics programs running this year.

Mr. Traister presented the spring athletics update. Sports being played this spring include Baseball, Softball, Boys/Girls Lacrosse, Boys/Girls Tennis, and Boys/Girls Tack. He reviewed modifications and safety measures implemented by the MIAA. The presentation is available on the district website. Mr. Traister concluded by thanking the School Committee, coaches, administration, nurses and custodians for their patience this year.

The Committee thanked Mr. Traister for keeping the students safe. Mr. Traister noted that many of the shutdowns were due to an abundance of caution. He is glad the Committee decided to roll back the quarantine restrictions. Most of the spring sports are outside and do not require close contact. Mr. Forrest stated the need to remain vigilant and for students to stay at home if they are sick. Everyone is hopeful for a full spring athletics season as it has been over a year since a full sports season has occurred.

Old/New Business

Superintendent's Review

Dr. Pearrow read through Supt. Welch's Summative Evaluation Report (The full report can be found on the district website):

- 1) Assess Progress Toward Goals
Professional Practice Goal(s) – 4.6/5 - Exceeded
Student Learning Goal(s) – 3.7/5 - Met
District Improvement Goal(s) – 4.1/5 - Met
- 2) Assess Performance on Standards
Standard I: Instructional Leadership – 3.3/4 – Proficient
Standard II: Management and Operations – 3.7/4 Exemplary
Standard III: Family and Community Engagement – 3.4/4 Proficient
Standard IV: Professional Culture – 3.3/4 – Proficient
- 3) Rate Overall Summative Performance – 3.4/4 – Proficient
- 4) Impact on Student Learning – 2.7/3 – High
- 5) Evaluator Comments

The Committee celebrates Superintendent Welch's strong and steady leadership during this extraordinarily challenging year. His careful attention to the ever-changing state and federal

guidelines allowed our students to maximize in-person learning, and his forethought and planning prepared our students and educators for academic growth during remote periods of learning. He collaborated with educators and local boards to prioritize safety and science, including the purchases of PPE, air purifying systems, and pooled COVID testing. And desks. He supported the Departments that provide food services and counseling to ensure the basic needs of our students could be met. Also, his timely communications sought to keep families and the community informed.

Amid learning through this pandemic, Superintendent Welch continued to focus on “typical” district goals. He has continued to lead the Facilities Master Plan and seek state resources to address our aging elementary schools through the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). He continued to build the district’s capacity to meet the School Committee’s goals of an equitable and inclusive school community with the hiring of a DEI Coordinator. The Committee commends Superintendent Welch on navigating multiple challenges to situate our students to have the greatest success during this difficult year.

Supt. Welch thanked Dr. Pearrow and Ms. Briggs for coordinating his review. He noted it was a very difficult year focusing much more on day-to-day operations than on long term goals like the Strategic Plan. He thanked the Leadership Team and Central Office for their efforts this past year. He appreciated the feedback and suggestions from the Committee. He stated he is grateful to work in Dedham and is looking forward to getting back to long term planning.

Ms. Laprade stated it was an honor and pleasure to work together throughout this difficult year. She also noted if it were not for the pandemic this would have been the first year that the third graders would have had all the benefits of the restructure when taking the MCAS exams.

Discussion & Vote on Addendum to the October 29, 2020 Memorandum of Agreement between the Dedham School Committee and the Dedham Education Association

Supt. Welch stated an agreement has been made between the Negotiations Subcommittee and the DEA on a return to full in-person learning. The Committee voted in Executive Session to accept the agreement. Supt. Welch’s recommendation is to move forward with the MOA. No further discussion occurred.

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept the addendum to the October 29, 2020 Memorandum of Agreement between the Dedham School Committee and the Dedham Education Association, Ms. White second; a roll vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Subcommittee Updates

Policy Subcommittee

Dr. Pearrow stated the Policy Subcommittee met yesterday to discuss consistent signage on school properties. The next meeting will be on May 4 where they will look at sign samples.

Donations

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation in the total amount of \$2,000, \$500 to each elementary school, from the Endicott Community Greenhouse to be spent at each principal's discretion; Ms. White second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Minutes

Ms. Laprade noted the need to re-vote the minutes from February 3, 2021 to reflect a change to the public comments. Ms. Dianne Loud had reported that her recorded comments from that meeting were not accurate.

Mr. Donati motioned to approve the revised minutes from February 3, 2021, Mr. Hebert second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Tonight was Mr. Stephen Bilafer's final School Committee meeting as a member of the Board. The Committee recognized and thanked him for his many years of community service, leadership and friendship.

As his last act as a School Committee member, Mr. Bilafer motioned to adjourn the meeting of April 7, 2021, Ms. Briggs second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Regular Meeting ended at 7:47 p.m.