

**DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
REMOTE MEETING**

MINUTES

April 28, 2021

(Approved 5/19/2021)

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT via REMOTE PARTICIPATION:

Tracey White, Vice-Chair

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>

Supt. Welch opened the remote meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Supt. Welch 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.

School Committee Inductions

The Committee gathered in the District Learning Lab at Dedham Middle School for the induction of the newly elected Committee members. Town Clerk Paul Munchbach was present to officially swear in Victor Hebert, Cailen McCormick and Christopher Polito.

Supt. Welch took a roll call attendance:

Mayanne Briggs - Present
Joshua Donati – Present
Victor Hebert – Present
Cailen McCormick - Present
Christopher Polito – Present
Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair – Present
Tracey White, Chair - Present

School Committee Reorganization

Ms. Briggs nominated Tracey White to be the Chair of the School Committee, Dr. Pearrow second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes
Joshua Donati – Yes
Victor Hebert – Yes
Cailen McCormick - Yes
Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes
Christopher Polito - Yes
Tracey White- Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Supt. Welch turned the meeting over to Ms. White.

Ms. White temporarily stepped down as chair to nominate Dr. Melissa Pearrow to be the Vice-Chair of the School Committee, Mr. Donati second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes
Joshua Donati – Yes
Victor Hebert – Yes
Cailen McCormick - Yes
Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes
Christopher Polito - Yes
Tracey White, Chair - Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Public Comment

Colleen Hynes, 137 Quincy Avenue, expressed support for AP classes for underclassmen and hopes Dedham will not eliminate accelerated courses before Grade 11 like what is occurring in Virginia.

Lisa Moran, 78 Lower East Street, congratulated the new members of the School Committee Board on their appointments.

James Maher, 22 Sherman Road, expressed concern that wrestling would not take place this school year. Supt. Welch read a statement from his update explaining that the MIAA had just approved wrestling to take place and that Dedham would support a wrestling program.

John Alessi, 215 Vincent Road, expressed support for AP classes for underclassmen and hopes Dedham will not eliminate accelerated courses before Grade 11 like what is occurring in Virginia.

Superintendent's COVID-19 Update

Supt. Welch provided the following COVID-19 update to the Committee:

Dedham remains in the “Yellow” category of the state’s color-coding system. There has been a subtle increase in cases over the past two weeks since the lowest readings were recorded during the week of April 8.

Over the April vacation break, the district received word of a total of five positive COVID-19 cases with connections to the Dedham Public Schools. This included three students who attend DMS, one student from Riverdale, and one adult from Avery. None of these cases suggested any degree of transmission within the schools as each of them was tied to exposure within the household with a positive case.

Pooled COVID-19 testing continues at all seven DPS schools. We continue to urge parents to sign consents to have their children participate in this voluntary program, as it is another effective layer of protection for all faculty, staff, and students. Especially as students in Grade PreK-8 have now returned full time, this is an excellent opportunity. Parents can visit the DPS webpage info on pooled testing in the district. There is a direct link to the consent form for parents.

To provide an additional check on possible COVID-19 cases after the April vacation, all students who have provided consents will be tested twice this week. Data for the testing pools and individuals tested at each school on Monday this week is shown below.

DPS has now conducted COVID-19 pooled testing for the past eight weeks in the district. This began at one school and one grade and gradually ramped up to all seven schools at all grades over a 4-week period.

Overall statistics for the district’s COVID-19 Pooled Testing Program are shown below:

DPS Testing Summary To Date:			
Totals To Date:		Positives	Percent
Pools	Tests	Cases	Positivity
696	6018	4	0.07%

Emily Kadehjian and Gail Kelley continue to provide excellent leadership in this project along with our nurses and school secretaries.

Just before the April vacation we learned that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has reached an agreement with the state to cover the cost of all testing materials and lab fees for the remainder of the school year. It was especially important that the district's current provider, Concentric by Gingko, was also selected as a preferred vendor. This will save the district a significant amount of money (in the range of \$150,000) over the course of the remaining eight weeks of the school year. We are hopeful that this will continue into the summer months to serve students in our ESY (Extended School Year) Programs, TREK (Grade 6 DMS transition program), and the Avery Summer Institute.

On April 20 we learned via an email from DESE that new quarantine guidance for close contacts was approved by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services after consultation with the Governor's Medical Advisory Board on COVID-19 and other medical advisors. These modified quarantine regulations are for close contacts within classrooms and on school buses only. The new guidance advises that:

*"Close contacts who were exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual **in the classroom or on the bus while both individuals were masked** do not have to quarantine unless they were within 3 feet of distance of the COVID-19 positive individual for a total of 15 minutes during a 24-hour period. This does not apply if someone was identified as a close contact outside of the classroom or bus (e.g., in sports, extra-curriculars, lunch, etc.) or if masks are not worn by both persons at the time of the exposure. All other close contacts must follow the standard protocol for when a close contact may return to school."*

Superintendent's Update

Supt. Welch provided the following update to the Committee:

Today was the 132nd day of the 2020-21 school year. We have 38 school days left this year. The 170th and final day of the school year will be a half-day on Monday, June 21. This year we had one "regular snow day" on December 17 that needs to be made up, and one "remote learning snow day" on February 2 where students stayed home but learning was conducted remotely. Therefore, the February 2 "remote learning snow day" officially "counts" as one of the districts' required 170 days.

I wanted to take a moment to recognize some of the most loyal, dedicated, and valuable employees in the Dedham Public Schools. And by that I mean our school and central office administrative professionals/assistants/secretaries.

Awkwardly, National Administrative Professionals Week/Day (the last full week in April) typically falls within the April school vacation week in Massachusetts. For the 2020-21 school year, this date was Wednesday, April 21. This timing tends to have many of us on vacation during what should be an opportunity to praise their work. The contributions of our administrative professionals, assistants and school secretaries are far too numerous to mention. We all know who really runs the schools, departments, and offices occupied by various administrators around the district. It is the person who provides the first cheerful voice to an anxious parent, the person who soothes an upset child, and the person who dispenses more psychological wisdom on an average day than most professional psychologists. Able to juggle more tasks and avert more catastrophes than one could ever imagine, the School Committee and I want to take just a few minutes to extend our appreciation for your tireless, critical contributions to our district. You are the glue that holds all of us together. Thank you for everything you do.

On Monday this week we welcomed back all Grade 6-8 students to full time, in person learning. I want to thank all of our custodians and food service workers for their extra efforts to accommodate the social distancing requirements necessary to configure our middle school for lunches with 6 feet of physical distance between all students. This required the addition of 80 desks in the cafeteria and another 140 desks to cover the entire gym in order to accommodate the 210+ eighth graders who need to eat lunch at the same time. These desks were reclaimed from storage in the basement of Dedham High School and cleaned/refurbished to be installed at Dedham Middle School.

DMS In Person Status as of 4-7-21						
GRADE	6		7		8	
	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT
DMS	180	21	182	23	215	27
DHS						
TOTALS	180	21	182	23	215	27
Responses =	201		205		242	
% In Person =	89.55%		88.78%		88.84%	
Enrollment =	201		205		244	
% Responding	100.00%		100.00%		99.18%	

The high school is continuing to work on the logistics to bring back all students with a target date of Monday, May 3. Yesterday, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced a mandatory return date of May 17 for all high school students. Current DHS student/parent preferences are listed below:

DHS In Person Survey Results - 4/28/2021												
GRADE	9		10		11		12		TOTALS		TOTALS	
	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT
DHS	132	20	122	35	129	27	131	24	514	106	82.90%	17.10%
TOTALS	132	20	122	35	129	27	131	24				
Responses =	152		157		156		155		620			
% In Person =	86.84%		77.71%		82.69%		84.52%					
Enrollment =	163		173		165		180		681			
% Responding	93.25%		90.75%		94.55%		86.11%		91.04%			

There is a LOT of changing guidance and information regarding high schools and end of year activities. Yesterday there was updated guidance from Governor Baker. Last night I sent out a DPS District Update to all parents, and DHS also sent DHS Information to seniors on Tuesday, 4-27-21, and to all DHS students on 4-27-21.

At their Wednesday, April 14 meeting, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) voted to approve Dedham's application to replace/renovate the 120 year old Oakdale Elementary School and invite Dedham into the state's school building grant program! This process started well over a year ago with a 20+ page application to the MSBA. Oakdale was one of only 15 school projects selected by the MSBA this year from over 70 applications statewide. This initial selection starts a series of phases that will hopefully culminate in a new elementary school for Dedham. The process will likely take six years to complete, but this first step is the key requirement to start this sequence in motion. It is a huge victory for Dedham, and a validation of the School Committee's long range facility planning process.

All Dedham Public School PTOs are co-sponsoring and funding a virtual community screening of the documentary "SCREENAGERS: Uncovering Skills for Stress Resilience," on Wednesday May 12, 2021, at 7:00 PM. The film is about an hour long followed immediately by a Q&A Session with Dr. Don Langenhorst, DPS Director of Technology, Dr. Ashley Dube, DPS Director of Counseling Services and Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Dedham School Committee member. Participants must register in advance.

On Monday, May 3 the Town of Dedham, the Select Board, and the Human Rights Commission (HRC) will be co-hosting "Courageous Conversations About Race in Dedham", a community event about race and ethnicity. This virtual event will begin at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome to participate! If interested, please register using this link: https://zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tJEocuyqrTgpGtyOK0PrGZ2pKf_VQLmwS6Bk. To review the event program, please visit the event listing on the Town Calendar. The deadline to register for this event is 4:00 p.m. on Monday, May 3. I will be hosting a breakout session and welcome you to join us!

Yesterday I was invited to a meeting with Planning Board Chair John Bethoney, members of the Dedham Conservation Commission, and Town Planner Jeremy Rosenberger regarding a PRD (planned residential development) that is under consideration on land adjacent to the Thomas J. Curran Early Childhood Center. There is a possibility that some land may be donated to the Town of Dedham. This may allow for a possible collaboration whereby there could be access for ECEC students and residents to this property through the ECEC site. I indicated in general we were supportive of this concept (with a host of stipulations), and the district would be willing to provide a letter of support for this idea.

On the Friday afternoon before the April vacation break (April 16) I received an email from the MIAA that the MA Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) changed their March 22, 2021 EEA guidelines to include an update to the high risk sports/level of play section. Specifically, the EEA guidelines (pages 3-4) were changed to say that if feasible, conduct Level 2 and 3 wrestling activities outdoors, but wrestling may be conducted indoors. This was a bit of a surprise and we were informed by the MIAA that the next steps in the MIAA modifications/approval process will take place following the vacation week (this week) with information disseminated to membership as it is readily available.

As SC members are likely aware, wrestling is a winter season sport and was not approved for competition this winter. Similarly, restrictions on indoor track prevented Dedham from having an indoor track season this past season. Given this late breaking news, I met with DHS Principal Jim Forrest this week and he will be working with Athletic Director Steve Traister to develop opportunities for interested DHS students to participate in wrestling during this modified spring season window. I will keep the Committee updated as this develops.

Each year DPS submits a summary report of activities in the schools to be included into the 2019-20 Annual Town Report. I want to thank former ECEC Principal Dr. Paul Sullivan for his outstanding summary and editing skills in compiling this report.

Mr. Hebert asked Supt. Welch to elaborate on the land adjacent to the ECEC. Supt. Welch explained there is approximately 70 acres of privately owned land adjacent to the ECEC some of which will be developed and some set aside for open space. Twenty of these acres are potentially being donated to the Town of Dedham. There is a planning board meeting tomorrow night to further consider the issue. Supt. Welch and Chair White were asked to support this donation as access to the land would be via the ECEC. The land would be donated to the Town not the School Department. The schools were included in the conversation as an abutter with direct access to the land and its potential use by the ECEC. Supt. Welch noted his support of this community project with the stipulation that it does not interfere with the safety or educational learning of the students.

Out of State Field Trip Request

Foreign Language Department Chair Alison Guifarro, Science Department Chair Amy Richard Hill and Biology Teacher Abigail Zuckerman came before the Committee requesting permission to plan a nine day field trip to Costa Rica during February break of 2023 (February 16-24). The formal written request was as follows:

We are writing to express interest in leading a student trip to Costa Rica over February vacation week in 2023. The trip will appeal to different students because it will combine the interests of a student that would like to learn about the culture and language while having some opportunity to explore the biodiversity that Costa Rica offers.

The cost of the trip would be approximately \$3500 for a 9 day trip. We would depart Boston on February 16th and return on February 24th. We are asking the School Committee to consider allowing us two field trip days for travel and so that the high school students may be excused from classes on Thursday and Friday, February 16th and 17th, for travel.

The foreign language national standards that would be covered on this trip are:

- Cultures: 4.14 – identify interactions, patterns of social behavior and social norms, customs and 4.15 – identify and use verbal and non-verbal cues appropriate to the target culture in a variety of situations
- Comparisons: 6.7 – compare and contrast examples of music, visual arts, dance, and theatre from the target culture with examples from their own culture
- Connections: 7.1 – obtain information and knowledge related to other disciplines from sources in the target language, obtaining information on maps, travel guides, arts, etc
- Communities: 8.1 – applying knowledge of the target language and culture beyond the classroom setting, conversing with speakers of the target language

This trip would support students' understanding of the MA DESE STE 2016 frameworks high school life science ecosystems strand: interactions, energy and dynamics essential question of "How and why do organisms interact with their environment, and what are the effects of these interactions?" Within the strand, students on the Costa Rica trip will have experiences that will deepen their understanding of how human activities can impact biodiversity and the environment. Specifically the experience will support student learning in standard "HS-LS2-7: Analyze direct and indirect effects of human activities on biodiversity and ecosystem health, specifically habitat fragmentation, introduction of non-native or invasive species, overharvesting, pollution, and climate change. Evaluate and refine a solution for reducing the impacts of human activities on biodiversity and ecosystem health."

Again, we look forward to helping the students of DHS gain a new cultural perspective and expand their learning beyond the classroom. Dedham High School students always return to the community more globally minded and we have no doubt that they will return with a new sense of confidence in themselves as global citizens. Thank you for your consideration.

Ms. White called for a motion to allow the field trip to Costa Rica in February 2023. Ms. Briggs motioned, Dr. Pearrow second. Mr. Polito called a point of order asking if the Committee were voting on the additional days. Ms. White asked for an amended motion to include the approval of two travel days before February break 2023, Ms. Briggs motioned, Mr. Polito second, no further discussion; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati – Yes

Victor Hebert – Yes

Cailen McCormick - Yes

Christopher Polito – Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair – Yes

Tracey White, Chair - Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Mr. Polito motioned to allow students to travel out of the country, Ms. Briggs second, no discussion; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati – Yes
Victor Hebert – Yes
Cailen McCormick - Yes
Christopher Polito – Yes
Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair – Yes
Tracey White, Chair - Yes
Motion passed 7-0

Reports

Overview of Ongoing and Upcoming Curriculum Improvements

Dr. Kelly provided an update on this year's MCAS schedule as well as a broad overview of curriculum enhancements. The presentation can be found on the district website. The review included the current status of MCAS as of April 20, education for all students, a review of the district restructuring from 2017, and curriculum improvements.

The Committee discussed how all students are different and getting them back into the building is the first step in moving forward with testing and analysis of their current learning level and emotional well being. Some students have never even entered their current school building. They also talked about the need to for staff flexibility with the curriculum and the need to support staff through this pacing as gaps in the classroom will be wider than ever.

Mr. Donati noted he would like to see a future presentation on the relationship between Curriculum Coordinators, Coaches and teachers and how they are working together. The Committee discussed the science curriculum at DMS and the need to teach students on different paths. Department Chair Amy Hill was in attendance and elaborated on the spiraling curriculum which teaches around real world problems. The Committee inquired into adoptions to the curriculum for this year. Dr. Kelly explained that dialing in the curriculum would create a downstream problem. There will be no changes to long term plans only changes in areas.

Ms. McCormick suggested polling parents for input on student status. Ms. White would like to see "Shadowing Day" returned to DMS.

Old/New Business

None

Donations

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation of hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and face shields (valuing \$24,000) from Ocean State Job Lot Foundation to the Dedham Public Schools to aid in the fight against COVID-19, Mr. Polito second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati – Yes

Victor Hebert – Yes

Cailen McCormick - Yes

Christopher Polito – Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair – Yes

Tracey White, Chair - Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Mr. Polito motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation of supplies from The Home Depot to the High School Performing Arts Company to assist in the building of the “Macbeth” set, Dr. Pearrow second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati – Yes

Victor Hebert – Yes

Cailen McCormick - Yes

Christopher Polito – Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair – Yes

Tracey White, Chair - Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a Red Oak Tree from the O’Brien Family to the Greenlodge Elementary School in memory of Paraprofessional Pamela Vicente, Mr. Hebert second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati – Yes

Victor Hebert – Yes

Cailen McCormick - Yes

Christopher Polito – Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair – Yes

Tracey White, Chair - Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Subcommittee Updates

Policy Subcommittee

The next Policy Subcommittee meeting will be on May 4

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Negotiations Subcommittee

There will be a need to restructure the negotiations subcommittee at the upcoming retreat. The Secretary and Clerks contract as well as the Facilities and Maintenance contract are up for renewal. Supt. Welch would also like to get a jump-start on negotiating the Unit A contract as they will be entering in the last year of the contract.

Minutes

Ms. Briggs motioned to approve the minutes from March 31, 2021 and April 7, 2021 as presented, Mr. Hebert second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati – Yes

Victor Hebert – Yes

Cailen McCormick – Abstained as she was not a member, thus not present at the March 31, 2021 and April 7, 2021 meeting

Christopher Polito - Abstained as he was not a member, thus not present at the March 31, 2021 and April 7, 2021 meeting

Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair – Yes

Tracey White, Chair - Yes

Motion passed 5-0

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Ms. White thanked the staff for all of their hard work getting students back to school.

Mr. Polito motioned to adjourn the meeting of April 28, 2021, Mr. Hebert second; a roll call vote was taken:

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati – Yes

Victor Hebert – Yes

Cailen McCormick - Yes

Christopher Polito – Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair – Yes

Tracey White, Chair - Yes

Motion passed 7-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.