

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

June 16, 2021

(Approved July 28, 2021)

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Tracey White, Chair

Dr. Melissa Pearrow, Vice-Chair

Mayanne Briggs

Joshua Donati

Cailen McCormick

Christopher Polito

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

Victor Hebert

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael J. Welch, Superintendent

Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent

Sam Rippin, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location: Dedham Middle School

Meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.

Recognitions

The School Committee recognized the New England Math League high scorers in Grades 4-8.

Avery School – Edward Murray, Ekaterina Rogacheva, Paul Shuley, Kirby Smink, Amelia Stephens

Greenlodge School – Ben Derti, Will Duckworth, Payton Vaughn, Michael Dunne, Sophia Kelly, Madilyn Lenane, Nicholas Moran, Catrine Salaun

Oakdale School – Andrew Driscoll, Adlai Elmore, Celia Fukushima, Marcus Fukushima, Ellis Privert, Reyansh Trikha, Nathaniel Morse, Eleanor Taffe

Riverdale School -Yousef Aamar, Monika Stintmane, Boris Urlanis, Elizabeth O’Dea, Dylan Priest

Middle School –Javier Castillo, Jeremy Chang, Alina Gutierrez, Hiroki Kudara, Eliot Moore, Allan Vo, Andrew Vo, Nathan Danquah, Corinne Elmore, Mason Piro, Sean Teahan, Tony Badawi, Haig Guzelian, Ara Kaladjian, Gregory Kaladjian, Jason Pearrow

The Committee also recognized the 2021 retirees from the Dedham Public School System:

Kathleen Carten, High School English Teacher
Elizabeth Condon, Greenlodge Paraprofessional
Donna DiMartino, ECEC paraprofessional
Rose Gianopoulos, Avery Secretary
Gail Kelley, Director of Health Services
Joanne Rasmussen, Middle School Technology Support
Annmarie Sheehan, Riverdale Lunch Aide
Sharon Weidenaar, Greenlodge EL Teacher
Elizabeth White, Avery School Adjustment Counselor

Ms. Condon, Ms. DiMartino, Ms. Gianopoulos, Ms. Kelley, and Ms. White were in attendance to personally receive accolades from the Committee and their peers.

Riverdale School John Raffa Library/Media Center Donation

Principal Ed Paris and Co-President of the Dedham Alumni Association Nancy Clement came before the Committee to recognize the passing of long-time (30 years) Riverdale Principal John Raffa. In his memory Ms. Clement organized a collection from former colleagues to be donated to the Riverdale Library in honor of Mr. Raffa. The generous donations totaled \$4,330. Mr. Paris, along with Library Media Specialist Ingrid Mayasi and the Riverdale School Council, will decide how the donation will be used. Mr. Paris will update the Committee on the use of the funds.

Mr. Polito motioned to accept with grateful appreciation the community donation of \$4,330 to the Riverdale School John Raffa Library Media Center in memory of his passing, Dr. Pearrow second; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Public Comment

Virginia Hickey, 264 East Street, asked the Committee to accept and vote on the statement made by Cailen McCormick at the June 2, 2021 School Committee meeting. She also asked that the Committee continue Zoom participation at its meetings

Superintendent's Update

Supt. Welch began his update by asking for a moment of silence to honor Dedham High School graduating senior Alonzo Polk, who died on June 10.

Supt. Welch provided the following update to the Committee:

Today was the 167th day of the 2020-21 school year. We have 3 school days left this year. Just as a reminder, the last day of school is Monday, June 21 and this is a half-day for students.

As everyone is aware, our hearts are heavy due to the tragic death last week of DHS Senior Alonzo Polk. We partnered with Riverside Crisis to provide counseling support for students, faculty, and staff last Friday and over the weekend at Dedham Town Hall. MANY students and families made use of these additional services. Trauma specialists from Riverside were again available at DHS yesterday during the final day of traditional classes (before the start of final exams) for both students and faculty/staff. I want to thank all our counselors and psychologists from DHS as well as Principal Forrest, Assistant Principal Kristy Yankee, and Director of Counseling Services Dr. Ashley Dube for their help with this very difficult sequence. Riverside Trauma/Crisis will be doing follow-up counseling this Friday for impacted faculty and staff from DHS. When arrangements or services for Alonzo are complete, we will provide notice to the community.

DHS had its last day of typical classes on Monday this week. Traditional finals exams will be taking place each day this week with make-up exams on Monday, June 21. Athletics Awards night took place on the turf field last night. Committee members may be interested in viewing the DHS 202-2021 WINTER VARSITY ATHLETIC AWARDS that was recently produced and posted by Athletic Director Steve Traister.

Our elementary schools are having promotion ceremonies for their 5th graders this Thursday and Friday in the mornings and Dedham Middle School will be having a drive-through promotion ceremony this Friday also. Remember, DMS students will have a half-day on Friday to allow for this ceremony. Dismissal at DMS will be at 11:35 AM this Friday.

We are close to naming a successor to replace Director of Health Services Gail Kelley. A committee has interviewed four candidates for the position and we are in the process of narrowing down finalists for an appointment soon. As typically happens at this time of year, we have a few other positions that will require searches and we will be pursuing those in the days ahead.

I wanted to take a moment to also recognize the many years of service of our Dedham High School Athletic Trainer Megan McColghan. Megan has been a fixture in all DHS sports and she will be moving on to pursue additional education and certifications in nursing. Megan's contributions to the students in Dedham went well beyond just their physical well being. She was a mentor, a counselor, and a life coach to so many young adults in the community. From her personal efforts to secure heart rhythm screenings for our athletes to her support for students who were experiencing challenges in their lives, Megan has always been there for anyone in need of help. Thank you, Megan, for your many years of service and commitment to the community. We wish you all the best as you pursue advanced education and training in the years to come.

I wanted to take a moment to thank Starbucks in Dedham for their “Global Month of Good” program. The Starbucks manager reached out to Dedham resident Dawn Sievers to ask how they could help support the schools. This turned into a donation option for Starbucks customers that generated a sizable donation used to purchase hand sanitizer dispensers for district schools. This is very much appreciated and I wanted to recognize Dawn and Starbucks for this gesture.

I also wanted to thank the Dedham Police Department for their donation of an Ice Cream Mart vehicle and free ice cream for Dedham Middle School students last Friday, June 11. After a VERY hot week last week, this gesture and donation was very much appreciated by DMS students and staff. Thank you to Officers Jay Sullivan and Neil Cronin and the Chelsea Police Department who coordinated the use of this vehicle!

I learned earlier this week from DPS Choral Instructor Sara Santos that Dedham’s All Town Elementary Chorus has two videos coming out on Thursday evening June 17 at 7pm on YouTube. Please feel free to attend "virtually" to watch them perform. It really has been a town wide effort with all 4 elementary schools having students in the 4th and 5th grade Chorus.

As Committee members are aware, the expiration of Governor Baker’s declared State of Emergency in Massachusetts on Tuesday, June 15 has implications for elected officials and organizations in terms of remote meetings and compliance with the state’s Open Meeting Law. I’ve provided a legal brief concerning this matter from our legal counsel (Murphy, Hessy, Toomey and Lehane) and would advise review of this by Committee members in the event this issue arises. UPDATE - I received word at about 12:30 PM today that the Governor has signed a bill into law with the following provisions:

Per MMA: The bill sent to the governor (S. 2475) would:

- Allow for remote meetings and hearings by public bodies through April 1, 2022
- Ratify any remote meetings held between the expiration of the state of emergency and the signing of the law
- Extend the ability to reduce the quorum at any town meeting through Dec. 15, 2021
- For towns with representative town meetings, extend their ability to hold those meetings using remote participation through Dec. 15, 2021

On Monday this week I met with folks from DHS and Facilities to discuss the pending renovation of the DHS library that was approved as a part of the Capital Budget process for FY22 (see page 18 of the FY22 Budget Book for a description of approved capital projects). Unfortunately, the lone bid received for this work was more than double the amount estimated and approved for this work. There was \$250,000 allocated for the demolition and construction, and the bid came in at over \$529,000. We decided the bid would be re-posted with some changes to criteria in hopes of receiving additional bids and a more reasonable price for the work. We will re-post the bid in July and hope for a revised schedule for this work by early August. At best we may be able to complete this project by January 1, 2022 or we may choose to push this back into summer 2022.

We are in the final stages of firming up summer programming options across the district. The TREK program is set to begin on Wednesday, June 23 (right after the last day of school on Monday), and our Extended School Year programming for students whose needs require this will begin just after the July 4th weekend. In addition, the Avery Institute and our Title One and English Learners programming will start just after July 4th also. The Kindergarten Jump Start program will begin its first-ever summer programming for students in need of introductions to formal schooling on Tuesday, July 6.

Mr. Polito asked if there was any update on the rental of facilities. Supt. Welch explained that the Dedham Police Department was allowed access to the gyms to hold its Fit Club using the criteria for summer camps. The outside fields are also being rented at this time.

Superintendent's COVID-19 Update

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

DPH COVID-19 Data Website									
MA Map	Total	Case Count	Average Daily Incident Rate	Relative			Total	Percent	Change In
Week Of	Case Count	Last 14 days	Per 100,000 Last 14 Days	Change In Case Counts	Total Tests	Last 14 days	Positive Tests Last 14 days	Positivity Last 14 days	Percent Positivity
Jun 10	2457	5	1.3	Lower	77107	1650		0.48%	Lower
Jun 3	2454	8	2.1	Lower	76222	1882		0.69%	Lower
May 27	2453	18	4.7	Lower	75475	2171		0.97%	Lower
May 20	2446	24	6.3	Lower	74484	2323		1.08%	Lower
May 13	2435	30	7.8	Lower	73386	2532		1.22%	Lower
May 6	2425	42	11.0	Lower	72092	2858		1.50%	Lower
Apr 29	2405	68	17.7	Lower	70771	3303		2.33%	Lower
Apr 22	2377	86	22.4	Higher	69150	3565	86	2.69%	Higher
Apr 15	2333	71	18.5	Higher	67606	3616	71	2.32%	Higher
Apr 8	2292	62	16.2	Lower	65649	3508	62	2.25%	Lower
Apr 1	2264	81	21.1	Lower	63966	3293	93	2.82%	Lower
Mar 25	2226	100	26.1	Higher	62140	3276	111	3.39%	Higher
Mar 18	2186	84	21.9	Higher	60528	3569	99	2.77%	Higher
Mar 11	2134	74	19.3	Lower	58867	3938	87	2.21%	Lower
Mar 4	2097	86	22.4	Lower	57033	3879	98	2.53%	Lower
Feb 25	2053	116	30.2	Lower	54861	3938	135	3.43%	Lower
Feb. 18	2013	157	40.9	Lower	52898	4147	181	4.36%	Lower
Feb. 11	1941	254	66.2	Lower	50926	4414	277	6.28%	Lower
Feb. 4	1866	349	91	Higher	48783	4979	377	7.57%	Higher
Jan. 28	1705	282	73.5	Higher	46410	4727	315	6.66%	Higher
Jan. 21	1518	274	71.5	Lower	43770	4773	306	6.41%	Lower
Jan. 14	1407	274	71.5	Higher	41732	4279	301	7.03%	Higher
Jan. 7	1242	182	47.5	Lower	38972	3412	203	5.95%	Higher
Dec. 31	1129	184	48	Lower	37177	3654	200	5.47%	Higher
Dec. 24	1040	188	49	Higher	35496	3951	202	5.11%	Higher
Dec. 17	941	176	45.9	Higher	33420	4055	190	4.69%	No Change
Dec. 10	850	141	36.8	Higher	30887	3329	154	4.63%	Higher
Dec. 3	760	93	24.3	Higher	28833	3058	100	3.27%	Higher
Nov. 27	700	69	18	Higher	27523	3313	77	2.32%	Higher
Nov. 19	655	52	13.6	Higher	25623	3132	60	1.92%	Higher
Nov. 12	622	38	9.9	Lower	23997	3296	43	1.30%	Lower

Dedham's COVID-19 positive case numbers continue to trend downward. We have not had a positive student case in three weeks, and the community COVID-positive case numbers are continuing to drop.

The district conducted its final round of pooled testing this week. DPS Pooled Testing Coordinator Emily Kadhejian supported over 1100 tests yesterday and Monday this week. We are scheduled to continue with pooled testing this summer during the TREK program, and we are currently evaluating the feasibility of pooled testing during the Avery Institute and Extended School Year programming. Depending upon this feasibility assessment, we will determine next steps.

DPS COVID Testing Summary To Date:

Totals To Date:		Positives	Percent
Pools	Tests	Cases	Positivity
1856	16079	7	0.04%

On Thursday, 6/17 the district will conduct the second and final comprehensive COVID-19 vaccination clinic for students who already received their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine three weeks ago. We are very grateful for the help we have received from the Dedham Health Department to complete this sequence. Over 100 students will receive their complete vaccination regimen through this initiative.

Tomorrow will be the final report of the year from DESE regarding positive COVID-19 cases in schools. The results of this reporting since January 2021 are here:

DESE Reported COVID-19 Positive Data				
	DESE Website For Positive COVID Cases			
	Statewide Public District Results		Dedham Schools Only	
	In-person/hybrid STUDENTS with reported positive cases	STAFF with reported positive cases and district building access	In-person/hybrid students with reported positive cases	Staff with reported positive cases and district building access
6/3 - 6/9	85	18	0	0
5/27 - 6/2	117	13	0	0
5/20 - 5/26	229	21	2	0
5/13 - 5/19	377	30	0	0
5/6 - 5/12	572	48	0	0
4/29 - 5/5	604	65	3	1
4/15 - 4/28	718	94	0	0
4/8 - 4/14	1095	184	3	0
4/1 - 4/7	821	157	8	0
3/25 - 3/31	801	244	3	1
3/18 - 3/24	682	228	0	0
3/11 - 3/17	476	193	0	0
3/4 - 3/10	377	146	0	0
2/25 - 3/3	343	133	0	0
2/11 - 2/24	373	209	0	0
2/4 - 2/10	457	194	6	2
1/28 - 2/3	552	275	1	1
1/21 - 1/27	583	300	2	4
1/14 - 1/20	507	333	2	2
1/7 - 1/13	505	355	0	0
12/24 - 1/6	171	208	1	2

Reports/Updates

Quarterly Budget Report, Projections for FY21 Fourth Quarter

Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance, Sam Rippin, presented the following report to the Committee:

Please accept this memo as my formal report to the School Committee of the financial position of the Dedham Public Schools Education and School Facilities Operating Budgets.

Fourth Quarter Overview

In summary, we have expended and encumbered \$34,412,992 of the \$42,576,992 Education Operating Budget or 80.83% of the total budget as of 6/14/21.

For School Facilities, we have expended and encumbered \$3,683,850 of the \$4,185,010* that Operating Budget or 88.02% of the total budget as of 6/14/21.

*Note that for School Facilities \$74,273 (\$52,801) of FY2020 encumbrances carried forward to FY 2021 were not segregated as in the Education Budget and rather were commingled with line items for FY 2021. This issue will be rectified for FY 2022 reporting purposes. The remaining \$21,472 was due to a budget transfer from Town Facilities that was referenced in my First Quarter report. Additionally, \$42,000 was transferred from Town departmental budgets to cover additional unbudgeted repair and maintenance expenses.

Budget Highlights

As of this writing, I am pleased to report that the Dedham Public Schools (Education Budget) is on track to finish FY 2021 in a balanced and fully expended position. As you can see from the accompanying spreadsheet, all of our seven schools are projected to be fully expended as of 6/30/21.

The School Facilities is on track to finish with a budget surplus of \$242,738 which is primarily due to a combination of projected utility savings (electricity) as well as HVAC contracted services due to expenses being ultimately paid out of other non-operating budget funding sources.

Additionally I am pleased to report that our School Nutrition program has been performing remarkably well during the 2020-2021 school year. Every employee has been working above and beyond to provide nutritious meals for all of our students as well as distributing meals and boxes of food to families in Dedham (provided free of cost by USDA). As I write this, USDA has authorized all students for the 2021-2022 school year to be classified as eligible for free breakfast and lunches. Additionally, we plan to run a robust summer feeding program during July and August as well. The resulting revenue will allow us to invest in our infrastructure (equipment) without relying on taxpayer dollars to do so.

Areas of Concern/Exposure

As I am sure you recall, FY 2020 was tighter than past years with respect to having excess capacity for end of year purchases as well as prepayment of Special Education Out-Of-District Tuitions. Unbudgeted cost increases in Out of District tuitions (planned for in our FY 2022 budget request) along with Out of District Transportation (planned for via anticipated Student Opportunity Act funds in FY 2022) are determining factors with respect to increased expenses that offset favorable budget variances noted above.

With that context in mind, any potential surpluses in the Education Budget for FY 2021 will be closed out against the following revolving funds to replenish monies drawn from them during FY 2020 and FY 2021 due to the pandemic. Special Education Circuit Breaker, Student Transportation, Athletic Revolving and PreSchool and Before and After School Tuition accounts.

In summary, we strongly believe that there are sufficient funds to close FY 2021 in both a fully expended and balanced position.

Old/New Business

Discussion and Vote on 2021-2022 School Committee Goals

The School Committee developed the following goals at its retreat held on May 26, 2021 and June 7, 2021:

Communications

The Communication Subcommittee will, by December 1, 2021, recommend to the full Committee a comprehensive set of School Committee strategies for communications to the Dedham community, in coordination with the District Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator. Once approved by the full School Committee, these agreed upon activities will commence beginning January 1, 2022. These strategies will include meeting formats, quarterly reports/publications, and annual listening goals for Committee members.

FY2023 Budget Development

By late January 2022, the School Committee will develop, communicate, and support a budget that strives to meet the learning and social emotional needs of all of the students, educators and staff of the Dedham Public Schools, given COVID-19 funds (ESSER-3, Norfolk County/ARP). This budget will also address the aging infrastructure and facilities including upgrades in ADA accessibility, safe and efficient traffic patterns in and around our schools, and upgraded learning environments for our students. This will include effective listening and communication with district educators and leadership, parents, appropriate Town committees and departments and collective bargaining units. The final FY2023 budget will support ongoing initiatives and previously prioritized commitments, and provide for district improvements planned during the budget cycle.

District Infrastructure

At the Fall Town meeting, the School Committee will submit a warrant article requesting funding for a feasibility study for the elementary schools' facilities. The School Committee, using input gathered from public hearings and forums, will develop and plan necessary facility upgrades for the high school to meet legal and safety requirements. By spring, the Committee will also review traffic study recommendations and offer a plan for ongoing improvements, in collaboration with Town departments.

Safe, Supportive, Inclusive Schools and School Environment

By October 2021, the school committee will review the district's mission, vision, and definitions around diversity, equity, and inclusion. The School Committee will then receive bi-monthly reports that analyze the equitable allocation of resources to support learning for all students and with a particular eye toward high needs and low incidence groups. These reports will evaluate any disproportionalities with regard to student engagement and success in academic and extracurricular experiences. This data will be used to make budgetary recommendations about future programming to support a more equitable climate for all students.

The goals will be available on the Dedham Public Schools website.

No further discussion occurred.

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept the 2021- 2022 School Committee goals as presented, Mr. Donati second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Discussion and Vote on The Education Cooperative Board Member Appointee

Dedham Public Schools is a member of the The Education Cooperative (TEC). The School Committee must approve one of its members or an Administrator to be a voting board member of TEC. Dr. Kelly has volunteered to sit on the board this year. No further discussion occurred.

Dr. Pearrow motioned to approve the appointment of Dr. Ian Kelly as the representative from Dedham to The Education Cooperative Board of Directors for the 2021-2022 school year, Ms. McCormick second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Discussion and Vote on Human Rights Commission Appointee

The School Committee must elect a representative to sit on Dedham's Human Rights Commission. At the School Committee retreat on June 7, 2021, Mr. Hebert volunteered for this role. No further discussion occurred.

Ms. Briggs motioned to appoint Victor Hebert to be the representative to the Human Rights Commission, Dr. Pearrow second, discussion: Mr. Polito asked if the Select Board had final say on the appointment. Ms. White stated that they would be notified of the appointment; Motion passed 6-0.

Subcommittee Updates

Communications

Mr. Donati announced the Communications working group has a meeting planned for July 12, 2021.

Donations

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation in the amount of \$1,000 from the Avery PTO to the Avery Library Media Center, Dr. Pearrow second, discussion: Dr. Kelly wanted to clarify the donation was to replace lost or stolen books; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Dr. Kelly noted the following donation was vetted through his office to ensure equity across the district.

Dr. Pearrow motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation in the amount of \$500 from the Anti-Racism Coalition of Dedham to the ECEC Library Media Center to purchase developmentally appropriate children's literature selections that highlight LGBTQ+ characters, stories, and topics, no discussion; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Dr. Kelly noted the following donation was vetted through his office to ensure equity across the district.

Ms Briggs motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation in the amount of \$500 from the Dedham Junior Women's Club to the Avery and Riverdale Library Media Centers to purchase bilingual books representative of student languages spoken at home, Mr. Donati second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Dr. Pearrow thanked the staff for working with community programs.

Minutes

Mr. Polito motioned to approve the minutes from May 19, 2021 as presented, Ms. Briggs second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Mr. Polito motioned to approve the minutes from May 26, 2021 as presented, Mr. Donati second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Ms. Briggs motioned to approve the minutes from June 7, 2021 as presented, Mr. Donati second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0 in favor.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

None

Mr. Polito motioned to adjourn the meeting of June 16, 2021, Dr. Pearrow second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.