

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

February 2, 2022

(Approved 2/16/2022)

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 - Arrived at 7:55 p.m.

Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Edward Gotgart, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location: Avery Elementary School

Meeting commenced at 7:01 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. White introduced Dedham High School Senior Olivia Hanley to the Committee. Olivia will be the student representative to the School Committee.

Reports/Updates

Teaching & Learning: Remediation and Recovery in Literacy

PK-8 Humanities Curriculum Coordinator Dr. Heather Smith, ECEC Principal Kimberly Taylor, ECEC Instructional Coach Kristen Cannon, ECEC Special Education Teacher Erin Kelley, Middle School Principal Karen Hillman, English Department Chair Michael Burd, Middle School English Teacher Andrew Patterson, Middle School English Teacher Pam Murray presented a report to the Committee

entitled *Data-Driven Instruction in DPS PK-8 Humanities*. The presentation can be found on the [district website](#).

Discussion & Vote on Safe Routes to School Grant

The details of the Safe Routes to School Grant was discussed at the January 19, 2022 meeting. A brief discussion took place regarding the look of the signs.

Motion

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept the "Safe Routes to School " grant, Dr. Pearrow second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0.

Discussion & Vote of School Calendar

There has been no change to the draft of the calendar since the last meeting. Ms. White reviewed that September 6, 2022 and November 8, 2022 are voting days and should be full days of professional development for the safety of the students.

Motion

Mr. Polito motioned to approve the 2022-2023 School Calendar, Ms. Briggs second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0.

FY22 Second Quarter Budget Report

Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance Dr. Edward Gotgart presented the following report to the Committee.

FY22 SECOND QUARTER BUDGET REPORT

The second quarter expenses appear to be in line with expectations across all schools and departments. The one line item that appears to be significantly in the negative is Pupil Tution in the Special Education Department. As you may remember, we have three primary sources of revenue that get applied to the tuition and transportation for special needs students in out of district placements. The Operating Budget provides the lion's share of funds needed for these expenses, but we also receive Circuit Breaker funding from the state as well as grant funding (Grant 240 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a Federal Special Education Entitlement Grant) that are used to cover these costs. Because of timing unique to each of these funding sources, our practice is to use Operating Budget funds first (available July 1), then Circuit Breaker (which comes in quarterly from the state), and then the 240 Grant once it is approved by DESE (late fall/early winter). As a result, the lag in receipt of these last two funding sources then requires us to place all the expenses (including encumbrances) into the Operating Budget that in turn causes us to show a negative balance in that line item at any given time during the year. Once received, however, the expenses are then journal entried back into Circuit Breaker and the 240 Grant as needed.

When looking at the available balances for a school or department, it is important to remember that the encumbered amounts are also still available, but are not counted as "available" in MUNIS. Thus, to see what the actual available balance is, we add the encumbrance amounts to the available amounts to get a

better sense of how the school or department is faring. Doing that for our overall budget balance available results in us having a 52.8% available balance instead of 47.3% without encumbrances, which is about where we would expect to be at this point in the budget year.

We will closely watch the Special Education Tuition and Transportation for Out of District Placements line item as well as the custodial overtime line item in the School Facilities budget to ensure that we are able to fund these line items adequately and appropriately. All other accounts appear to be well paced to finish the year within budget.

Discussion & Vote of FY23 Operating Budget

The Budget was presented to the Committee at the January 19 public meeting and can be found on the [district website](#).

Motion

Ms. Briggs motioned to approve the Superintendent's proposed FY23 Operating Budget as presented, Mr. Polito second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0.

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Welch presented the following report to the Committee:

Yesterday was the 95th day of classes for the 2021-22 school year. Today was a full day of professional development for all DPS employees. A review of today's professional development offerings from around the district can be seen [HERE](#).

As everyone is aware, this past weekend's major snowstorm presented a series of enormous challenges for the district and the community. Luckily, this blizzard occurred on Saturday! I am very thankful for the tremendous efforts of our facilities/maintenance staff and our custodians for their many hours of work over the weekend to clear the schools in order to prepare for opening on Monday. These men and women came into work at 6:00 AM on Saturday and worked all day and into the evening on Saturday during the height of the blizzard. They then returned on Sunday to continue their cleanup work all day to make sure everything was ready for Monday. It was a HUGE effort, and we all appreciate their work, and the work of the town's DPW crews to support our schools!

On Monday, January 24 I convened the winter meeting of PTO officers across all Dedham schools. This seasonal gathering has become a valuable tradition to share ideas, communicate district happenings, and provide support and appreciation to the parent leaders for each school. This winter meeting had 24 officers in attendance representing all 7 district schools. The agenda and supporting materials for this and past Townwide PTO meetings may be seen [HERE](#).

Last week Fine Arts Director Eytan Wurman informed me that after discussions with DHS Principal Jim Forrest, it was decided that it would be best to cancel the planned music/drama trip to New York City later this spring. This decision was based upon the urgency with which a commitment decision had to be made, and the current challenges and ambiguity of the COVID-19 pandemic. All families will receive full refunds and it is hoped that the trip can be rescheduled for next year.

On Monday this week I had a phone call with MSBA Project Director Jennifer Flynn. We discussed the upcoming release of the MSBA's enrollment certification for the upcoming Oakdale rebuilding project. Shortly thereafter, I received the MSBA's enrollment estimates, and these important documents will need to be reviewed and signed off on by the Town Manager, School Committee and me in order to ensure the district's application is on track to be reviewed by the MSBA at their next board meeting scheduled for March 28, 2022. At that meeting I expect Dedham's project will be voted into the feasibility stage of the process.

On Wednesday, January 26 I presented the annual "[State of the Schools](#)" message to the community. I am very grateful for this opportunity and appreciate the Committee's willingness to support this concept over the past eight years. This gives the community a sense of the district's efforts of the past year, and a vision for where the next 12 months of work will take us.

Over the weekend our District HR Administrator Kathy O'Leary announced that she would be leaving the Dedham Public Schools to accept a position as Director of Human Resources for the City of Framingham. This is a great opportunity for Kathy and we are all very happy for her, but it is a huge loss for our district. Kathy's patience, kindness, knowledge and vision for serving our DPS family will be sorely missed. We all wish her the best in this next career challenge! Her last day in the district will be Friday, February 11, 2022.

Over the past two weeks DMS Principal Karen Hillman, DEIJ Officer Dr. Oneida Fox Roye, and HR Administrator Kathy O'Leary have continued our ongoing participation in meetings with the [MA Department of Education's Teacher Diversity Professional Learning Community](#). Our district team has been meeting monthly with this group over the course of the year as a part of this DESE cohort that shares ideas and investments in how to diversify the teacher workforce in Massachusetts and in Dedham. This effort is in addition to the work Dr. Fox Roye and I have been engaged in with [DESE's Influence 100 Program](#). This work has similar goals to the Teacher Diversity PLC, and Dedham is one of only 12 districts in Massachusetts selected to join this group. This fits in nicely with our district's efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Today I received from the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents an overview of the preliminary estimates for the FY23 State Budget and its impacts on educational funding for cities and towns in Massachusetts. The email I received from MASS can be seen [HERE](#), and the preliminary estimates of allocations for Dedham can be seen [HERE](#). My initial impression is that Dedham will fare relatively well in this assessment, but it is important for the Committee to remember that Chapter 70 monies from the state are sent to the TOWN of Dedham, not the schools. So we (the school department) do not have the ability to directly access Chapter 70 funds.

Just as a reminder the annual [TEC Legislative Breakfast](#) is this Friday, February 4 beginning (virtually) at 9:00 AM. All TEC member districts' School Committee members are invited to attend this annual event, and if you would still like to attend you should [Please RSVP using this link](#). You will be sent a zoom link and password to access the meeting. The current list of TEC School Committee attendees from all districts can be seen [HERE](#). The meeting agenda and topics to be covered can be seen [HERE](#). A list of the Legislators attending can be seen [HERE](#).

Superintendent's District Covid Update

Superintendent Welch presented the following report to the Committee:

Over the past two weeks we have seen positive COVID-19 case numbers come down, but we have also seen somewhat of a “plateauing” of cases for students and staff. However, as you can see from the actual data below, the overall number of positive cases is much lower than in early January. This mirrors the case counts recorded by DPH data for the Dedham community as a whole. Cases have been scattered across all 7 schools and the data clearly shows infections happening within households and among siblings and parents in virtually all cases.

This week's pooled testing at all schools reveals how much overall case counts have dropped. This week we tested a total of 384 pools that included 1326 individuals. We received 7 positive results out of those 1326 individuals for a percent positivity of 0.5% positivity. There were NO positive pools at Greenlodge this week, with 2 pools each at Riverdale and Oakdale, and one each at DHS, DMS, and ECEC.

I continue to meet weekly with the Dedham Health Department to review cases counts and trends, and to discuss upcoming initiatives and mitigation measures. Our nurses, principals, administrative assistants, and COVID coordinator Emily Kadehjian continue to work extremely hard to test, monitor, and track cases in the schools.

On Monday, January 10, 2022 DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley extended the state's mask mandate through February 28, 2022. Details about this mask mandate extension may be found in this [1/10/22 DESE memo](#).

As the Committee is aware, on Tuesday, 1/18/22 Governor Baker and DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley announced a new program to distribute COVID-19 rapid tests to consented staff and students in all K-12 Massachusetts public schools. In Dedham, staff were [asked to “opt-in” last week](#), and we distributed the first wave of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests to STAFF last Friday for at-home use later this week (Thursday or Friday). Families were asked to return participation commitments this week and STUDENTS will be issued their test kits beginning on Monday, Feb. 7. So far, 325 of our ~600 staff members have opted into this program. Student opt-in's are ongoing this week.

The most recent data regarding COVID cases in Dedham and the Dedham Public Schools are shown below:

[COVID-19 data for Town of Dedham](#)

[COVID cases in MA schools](#) (For comprehensive statewide results, click [HERE](#))

[Positive COVID Cases in DPS Schools](#)

[DPS Pooled Testing Participation and Results](#)

Subcommittee Updates

Budget

None

Communications - Mr. Donati

None

SBRC- Ms. Briggs

None

Traffic - Ms. Briggs

None

Negotiations - Ms. White

None

Policy - Dr. Pearrow

The Policy Subcommittee met to review Policy [BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings](#). The suggested changes can be found on the [district website](#) and at the end of the minutes.. The changes are to align Policy BEDH with [Policy BEDH-E - Guidelines for Public Comment](#).

Mr. Polito disagreed with the policy changes limiting the length of time of the Public Comment and limiting the topics to agenda items.

The Policy Subcommittee (Dr. Pearrow, Mr. Donati, Ms. McCormick) reiterated that the policy changes are to align with the policy guidelines and that meetings are business meetings and should focus on the tasks at hand. The School Committee can always be reached via email or office hours to discuss other topics.

Donations

Motions

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation in the amount of \$5,437.50 from Dedham Institute for Savings Foundation to purchase 250 Chromebook covers for incoming Grade 6 students, Mr. Polito second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0.

Dr. Pearrow motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation in the amount of \$20,550 from the Dedham Education Foundation to support Fall 2021 grants, Mr. Donati second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0.

Minutes

Motion

Ms. Briggs motioned to approve the minutes from January 19, 2022 as presented, Ms. McCormick second, no discussion; motion passed 6-0.

Dr. Pearrow motioned to approve the minutes from January 26, 2022 as presented, Ms. McCormick second, no discussion; Mr. Donati abstained, motion passed 5-0.

Old/New business

Supt. Welch noted that there is still a pending Memorandum of Agreement with the Parks and Recreation Department that he would like them to review and take into consideration.

Public Comment

Rebecca Gates, 35 Goshen Road, disagrees with the changes to the Public Comment Policy.

Jason Brogan, 5 Ware Street, disagrees with the changes to the Public Comment Policy.

Acknowledgements & Announcements

None

There is no need for an Executive Session.

Motion

Mr. Polito motioned to adjourn the meeting of February 2, 2022, Mr. Donati second, no discussion; motion passed 7-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

File: BEDH - PUBLIC COMMENT AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the Dedham School Committee shall be open to the public. Executive sessions will be held only as prescribed by the Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The School Committee desires citizens of the District to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of our local public schools. A School Committee meeting is a meeting of a government body at which members of the body discuss and deliberate over public business. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of the public as it conducts its regular business meeting. If the Committee believes that an issue requires a dialogue with the school district community, the Committee may schedule a separate public hearing on that issue. Special meetings are defined in Policy BE – School Committee Meetings.

In order that all citizens who wish to be heard before the Committee have a chance and to ensure the ability of the Committee to conduct the District's business in an orderly manner, the following rules and procedures are adopted:

1. At each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals or group representatives will be invited to address the Committee.
2. Speakers will be allowed three (3) minutes to present their material. Public Comment shall be for a period of 20 minutes. Any citizen wishing to speak before the Committee shall identify themselves by name and address.
3. Topics for discussion must be limited to those items listed on the School Committee agenda for that meeting. The Chair shall rule out of order any individual who fails to honor the guidelines or who addresses a matter inappropriate for public comment.
4. Improper conduct and remarks will not be allowed. Defamatory or abusive remarks are always out of order. If a speaker persists in improper conduct or remarks, the Chairperson may terminate that individual's privilege of address.
5. All remarks will be addressed through the Chairperson of the meeting.
6. Speakers may offer such objective criticisms of the school operations and programs as concern them, but in public session the Committee will not hear personal complaints of school personnel nor against any member of the school community. Under most circumstances, administrative channels are the proper means for disposition of legitimate complaints involving staff members.
7. Written comments longer than three (3) minutes may be presented to the Committee before or after the meeting for the Committee members' review and consideration at an appropriate time.

8. Any Committee member may direct questions to the speaker through the Chair in order to clarify comments of the speaker, not to exceed the three-minute time limit.

CROSS REF.: [KE](#), Public Complaints, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter [30A Section 20](#)

BELOW IS FOR COMMITTEE REFERENCE: Not in the policy

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter [30A Section 20](#)(f) governs public participation at open meetings covering all public bodies.

Chapter 30A:20 [Notice, Remote Participation, Public Participation, Certification]

(f) No person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the chair; and all persons shall, at the request of the chair, be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting of a public body. If, after clear warning from the chair, a person continues to disrupt the proceedings, the chair may order the person to withdraw from the meeting and if the person does not withdraw, the chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person from the meeting.