

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

April 27, 2022

(Approved 5/18/2022)

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael J. Welch, Superintendent
Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Edward Gotgart, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PRESENT:

Olivia Hanley

Meeting Location: Avery Elementary School

Meeting commenced at 7:03 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

None

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Post-Election School Committee Reorganization

Ms. White expressed her sincere gratitude to the School Committee and many community members for being the Chair of the School Committee this year (the following is Ms. White's statement):

Good evening,

As my last act of being the Chairperson of the Dedham Public Schools. I would like to take a moment to thank the voters for allowing me to continue to serve as an advocate for the students, families, and entire staff of the Dedham Public Schools.

I have been lucky enough to have had the pleasure to work with many different Chairpersons of the School Committee; Tom Ryan, Steven Bilafer, Susan Butler Walko, Kevin Coughlin, and Lisa Laprade.

They each taught me so much, whether they are aware or not. I learnt patience, how to listen, how to be a better writer, to be more organized, how to be a better committee member by working together on projects big and small, and to support each other, and be respectful of others, especially when you do not agree.

At times this past year was difficult however it was a very rewarding experience. Students and staff came back full time in person. We were able to offer not to wear masks, if that was your choice. We began to offer in person and via zoom community office hours and started newsletters. Oakdale School was accepted into the MSBA grant program. We were able to have athletics with spectators again, plays, and concerts; our Field Hockey team won the TVL League, the girls soccer team went to the State Championship. We started a district wide Curriculum Advisory Committee and so many other fantastic things happen in our schools everyday with our students and staff. We even have a student that was nominated for an Emmy award.

All is not perfect in the Dedham Public Schools, there is nowhere that is, there is always room for improvement, however working together is the only way to make progress. If we are to show students how to be productive members of society then everyone needs to work together. We all love the Town of Dedham, or we would not live here. Working to make our schools the best they can be is better for everyone, students, staff, and every resident of Dedham.

I would like to thank the School Committee, Chris, Cailin, Josh, Mayanne, Victor, and Melissa, for having faith in me to be the Chair this past year. It is one I will never forget.

I would like to mention Dr. Gotgart for his vast wisdom and kindness, To his predecessor, Sam Rippin, for his years of service to the Dedham public Schools.

To Dr. Ian Kelly for being so knowledgeable, and always taking the time to teach me and to answer all the questions I had no matter how big or small. There is nobody that I have ever worked with more patience.

To Superintendent Welch there were many days we started with a 7:00 am call and ended with an 11:00 pm call. For your never-ending dedication to the Dedham Public Schools. You have put in so many hours and much for all our students and staff. The Dedham Public schools have come along the way in the past few years, and we owe that vision to you, you gave up so much time with your family for the betterment of our students and their families. I will not miss our 7am calls or texts, however I will miss working so closely with you as over the past years, I consider it an honor to have been one of the Chairs that got to work with you.

Amy Hicks, for the many hours that she puts in every day to make it easier to be a School Member and definitely as the Chairperson. Amy's tireless efforts do not go unnoticed, and I appreciate all that she has done to help me along the way. We are all the better for her assisting us along the way. I will forever be grateful for kindness and support for not only the past year, but for the past six years.

Ms. White asked to take nominations for the new Chair.

Mr. Donati motioned to nominate Dr. Melissa Pearrow as Chair of the School Committee, second by Mr. Hebert, no discussion, motion passed 7-0.

Dr. Melissa Pearrow asked the School Committee to solicit nominations for Vice Chair.

Ms. Briggs motioned to nominate Victor Hebert as Vice Chair, second by Ms McCormick, no discussion, motion passed 7-0.

Superintendent Welch thanked Ms. White for her dedication and service as Chair this challenging year.

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Welch provided the following update to the Committee:

Today was the 142nd day of classes for the 2021-22 school year. Students and faculty/staff were grateful for last week's annual 1-week April vacation. We have fewer than 8 weeks of school left. The last day of the school year is a half-day for students and is currently scheduled for Tuesday, June 21.

In December 2021, Governor Baker signed *An act concerning genocide education*. Beginning next school year, this legislation requires that districts provide instruction about the history of genocide to middle and high school students in a way that is aligned to the content standards laid out in the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework. The Department recently released a **Genocide Education: Frequently Asked Questions document** ([download](#)) which includes additional guidance about the legislation, examples of how genocide education might be provided within various middle and high school courses, and links to resources. Questions about genocide education requirements may be directed to HistoryCivicsDESE@mass.gov.

The district continues to aggressively pursue the appointment of district and school level administrative positions. As the Committee is aware, in the last week **Dr. Sara Stetson** was recently appointed as the district's Assistant Superintendent for Student Services beginning July 1, and **Ed Paris was appointed the new incoming Principal at the Avery Elementary School**. Updates and timelines with important milestones for additional pending hires/appointments are listed below:

Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance

Dedham Middle School Assistant Principal

Dedham High School Assistant Principal

I'm excited to announce that after 2+ years of pandemic cancellations, DPS will be bringing back the Aspiring Leaders Academy spring seminar next Tuesday, May 3 from 3:30 - 5:00 PM at the **MIT Endicott House**.

Some School Committee members will remember the top notch educators we've hosted in past Aspiring Leaders sessions including MTA President Barbara Madeloni, Diversity Educator Kalise Wornum, DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley, Teachers 21 President John D'Auria, and Chair of MA Joint Committee on Education Rep. Alice Peisch. Tuesday's session will feature guest speaker and **DESE Associate Commissioner Rob Curtin**. Rob is head of the DESE Center for District Supports, and is also in charge of designing the MCAS Accountability System for all MA schools and districts. He will talk about his own personal leadership journey then give us a window into the future of MCAS and accountability systems in the post-pandemic era. This will certainly be an interesting conversation. All School Committee members are cordially invited to attend.

As the Committee is aware, tomorrow night the Board of Selectmen will consider the approval of two additional MSBA "Statements of Interest" (SOI's) for the **Greenlodge** and **Riverdale** elementary schools. These are a

necessary requirement in the event of a consolidation of the Oakdale Elementary School with either of these buildings. The specific verbiage of this request is very important, and the last step of filing these complete SOI's is the signed letter from our Committee and the Town Clerk. These letters and the SOI's will be submitted to the MSBA by this Friday's deadline. More on this during the Subcommittee Reports portion of tonight's meeting.

Internally within the district we have been discussing the addition of language at the end of all district-issued emails that makes note of the "public record" nature of this form of communication. After consulting with legal counsel, we have proposed the following specific language for email footers:

"When writing or responding, please remember that the Secretary of State's Office has determined that email is a public record. This communication may contain privileged or other confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, or believe you have received this communication in error, please do not print, copy, re-transmit, disseminate, or otherwise use this information. Also, please indicate to the sender that you have received this email in error and delete the copy you have received." We expect to implement this prior to the end of this school year.

Questions and conversations followed regarding the MCAS standards.

Superintendent's COVID-19 Update

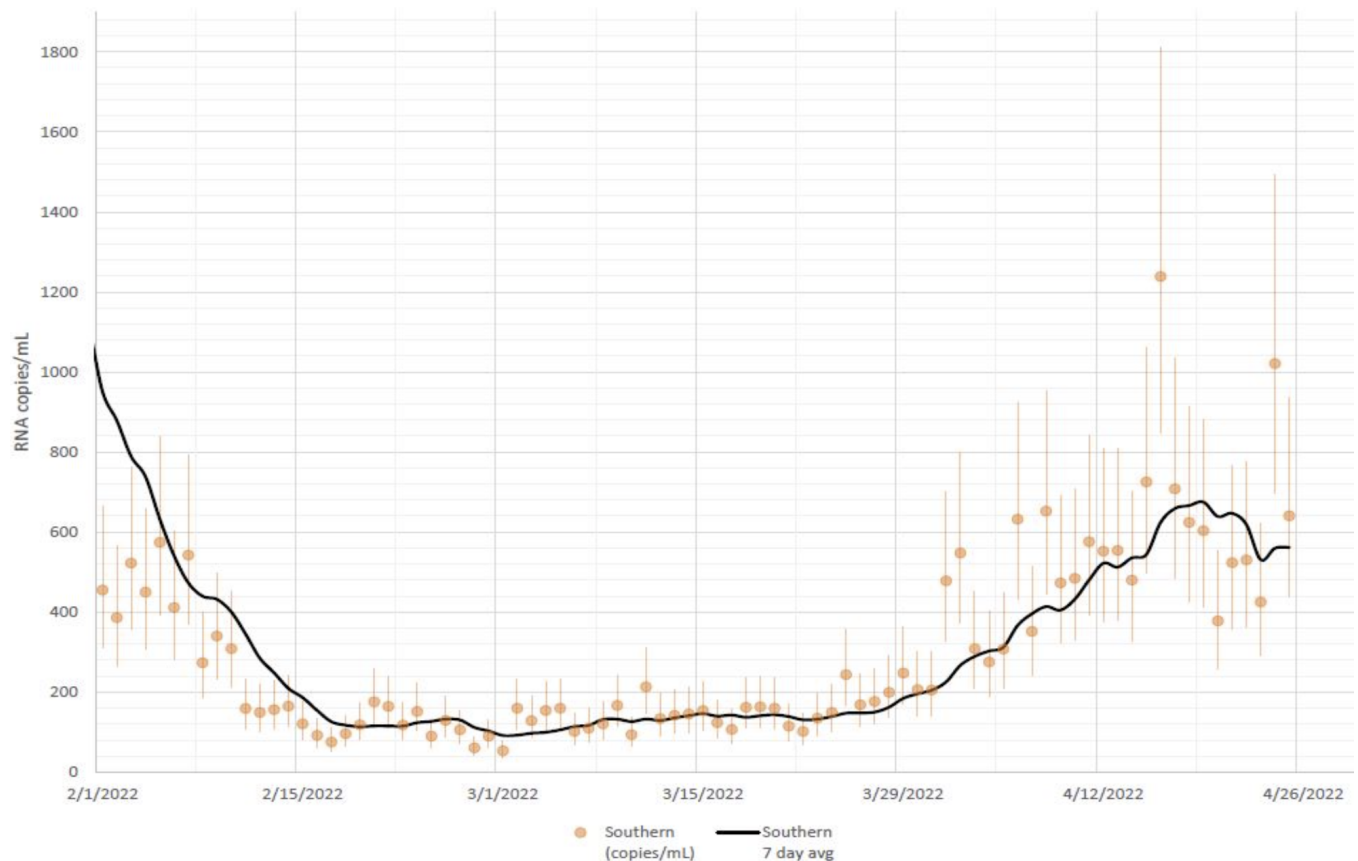
Superintendent Welch provided the following update to the Committee:

Since there was no school in Dedham last week, all schools are working to take account of any new COVID-19 cases that occurred outside of school. This is an imperfect process and depends upon the diligence of parents to continue keeping schools informed when their children test positive. We also know, based on conversations with Director of Health Services Maria Antonuccio and Dedham's Health Director Kylee Sullivan that allergies have been quite active lately and many parents may be believing that these are "allergy symptoms" rather than possible COVID-19.

This week's pooled testing at all schools showed FAR fewer positive test results than the week before our April vacation break. On Monday and Tuesday of this week we tested a total of **300 pools** that included **1416 individuals**. We received 3 positive pools out of those 1416 individuals for a percent positivity of 0.20%. 2 of the positive pools were at Dedham Middle School and 1 positive pool was at Avery. One of the positive pools at DMS actually turned out to be a student that had COVID-19 over April vacation and accidentally participated in testing within the 90 "do not test" window. There were **NO POSITIVE POOLS** from ECEC, Oakdale, Riverdale, Greenlodge, and Dedham High School this week.

The slight decrease in cases this week is consistent with reports of slight decreases in schools across the state. Recent wastewater COVID-19 concentrations mirror this cresting and slight downturn of COVID-19 concentrations in wastewater also. This reading has proven to be pretty accurate in predicting future cases 2-5 days in advance. A graph of this week's data from MWRA wastewater is shown below:

Recent South System Viral RNA Signal by Date



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

Please be aware that DPS Schools Data represents 2 weeks worth of cases due to April vacation.

[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](#)

Conversations followed regarding pool testing.

Reports/Updates

Special Education Report

Director of Special Education Elizabeth O'Connell thanked and acknowledged staff members and parents for their support over the years. Ms. O'Connell presented an update to the Committee regarding Special Education: Trends & Planning Considerations. [The presentation is available on the district website.](#)

The Committee thanked Ms. O'Connell for her presentation and her leadership in the Dedham Public Schools. Questions and discussions followed regarding the new Special Education website.

Summer Programming Update

Dr. Kelly provided information regarding the new summer programming for K-8 students which is now available on the Dedham Public School website. There are two programs; Academic Support Programs and Academic Enrichment Programs with descriptions of each and the registration is now live.

Superintendent Welch explained that this program is a 5 year ramp-up program coordinating before and after school programs for all Dedham children to participate in.

Discussions and questions followed.

Administrative Hiring/Searches Update

Covered in the Superintendent's report

Subcommittee Updates

Budget - Mr. Hebert

The transportation budget will be on the agenda at the next meeting to vote on. There will be a \$175,000 school budget cut, and recommendations will come back to the Committee soon.

Communications - Mr. Donati

The next meeting will take place in early May.

Curriculum Advisory - Ms. McCormick

Met last evening. Hopeful changes to the state curriculum.

Policy - Mr. Donati

First Reading of Policy BEDHA - Public Participation at School Committee Meetings. The Subcommittee has created the first draft. Mr. Donati read the draft. [The draft of the policy can be found on the district website.](#)

SBRC - Ms. Briggs

Met on Monday evening to review the request for proposals. Proposal packets will be ready May 25th. The timeline was discussed. The select board meets tomorrow night to approve the Statement Of Interests (SOI's)

Traffic - Ms. Briggs

No updates

Negotiations - Ms. White

Met on Tuesday, more information to follow.

DOSA

National Prevention Week, DOSA is hosting an event for mental health and substance use prevention fair on May 14th at 11:00 at 259 Washington Street.

Donations

None

Minutes

Motion

Mr. Polito motioned to approve the minutes from April 6, 2022 as presented, Ms. Briggs second, motion passed 7-0, no discussion.

Old/New Business

There are 2 sets of executive session minutes not approved yet.

Motion

Ms. White motioned to accept the MOA between the Dedham School Committee and AFSCME Council 96, Custodians and Maintenance. Mr. Hebert second, motion passed 7-0, no discussion.

Acknowledgements & Announcements

An Executive Session is scheduled to take place before next week's School Committee meeting at 6:00 PM to discuss candidates for the Assistant Superintendent of Finance.

Mr. Polito motioned to adjourn at 8:55 PM, Mr. Hebert second, motion passed 7-0.