

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

May 18, 2022
(Approved 6/1/2022)

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

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

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PRESENT:

Olivia Hanley

Meeting Location: Avery Elementary School

Meeting commenced at 7:02 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

None

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Welch provided the following update to the Committee:

Today was the 157th day of classes for the 2021-22 school year. There are only 22 days of school left this academic year. The last day of the school year is a half-day for students and is currently scheduled for Tuesday, June 21. Remember, there is NO SCHOOL on Monday, June 20 in recognition of the Juneteenth holiday.

As the Committee is aware, the district's [FY23 Operating Budget](#) allocation was approved at the Monday, 5/16 Spring Town Meeting. This final approved operating budget represented a \$175,000 reduction in overall funding approved by the School Committee back in February. Based upon multiple meetings with the School Committee Budget Sub-Committee, we have assumed this additional reduction and potential risk within the Special Education Out-Of-District tuition budget line item for FY23. While we anticipate this to be an acceptable risk, it is nonetheless a risk overall, and we remain hopeful that tuition increases and possible additional outside placements do not force cuts in other areas to balance the budget next year.

This week in all of our schools was a full court press for 2022 Math MCAS testing, and the next phase of Science MCAS testing for designated grades in elementary and middle schools. The full MCAS testing schedule can be seen on the DPS website [HERE](#).

I have posted in tonight's School Committee folder the [confirmation from DESE](#) on our district's vote to NOT participate in the School Choice program for the 2022-23 school year.

This Thursday Dr. Oneida Fox Royce and I will participate in the 7th session of [DESE's Teacher Diversity Professional Learning Community](#) seminars and also the [DESE's Influence 100 Program](#) to promote greater diversity in school and district leadership in Massachusetts. Oneida and I also participated in the [Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity In Education \(MPDE\)](#) annual spring conference last Wednesday. These programs compliment our ongoing work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the district. Given the horrible and tragic racist events from this past week across our country it is clear that we have a continued need for investments in the educational community to work toward more equitable opportunities within our schools and our society.

Work in the DHS library continues to move along briskly with a target opening date of the first day of school in the fall. This work, supported by the Town's FY22 Capital spending appropriation, will make for a far more welcoming and inviting space for students and faculty. Current progress can be seen in photos [HERE](#).

We continue to make very effective progress at filling open administrative positions within the district. Over the past two weeks we have finalized appointments for [DMS Assistant Principal \(George Benzie\)](#), and [DHS Assistant Principal \(Kelly Cook\)](#). We have begun the Riverdale Elementary School Principal search and expect that the 15-member search committee will secure an appointment there prior to the end of this school year.

Ed Gotgart, Denise Moroney and I have continued our considerable effort to work with the SBRC to provide information to the many firms that have expressed interest in the Oakdale Elementary School Owner's Project Manager opening. Last Wednesday there were [more than 20 groups](#) that attended a site walk-through at Oakdale to gather more information about the scope of the project. This is a good sign, and for the next few weeks we will be working to narrow these proposals down for an eventual selection.

Student summer enrichment programming for children in grades PreK - 8 remains [open for registration on the DPS website](#). Please spread the word about the availability of these offerings!

Superintendent's COVID-19 Update

Superintendent Welch provided the following update to the Committee:

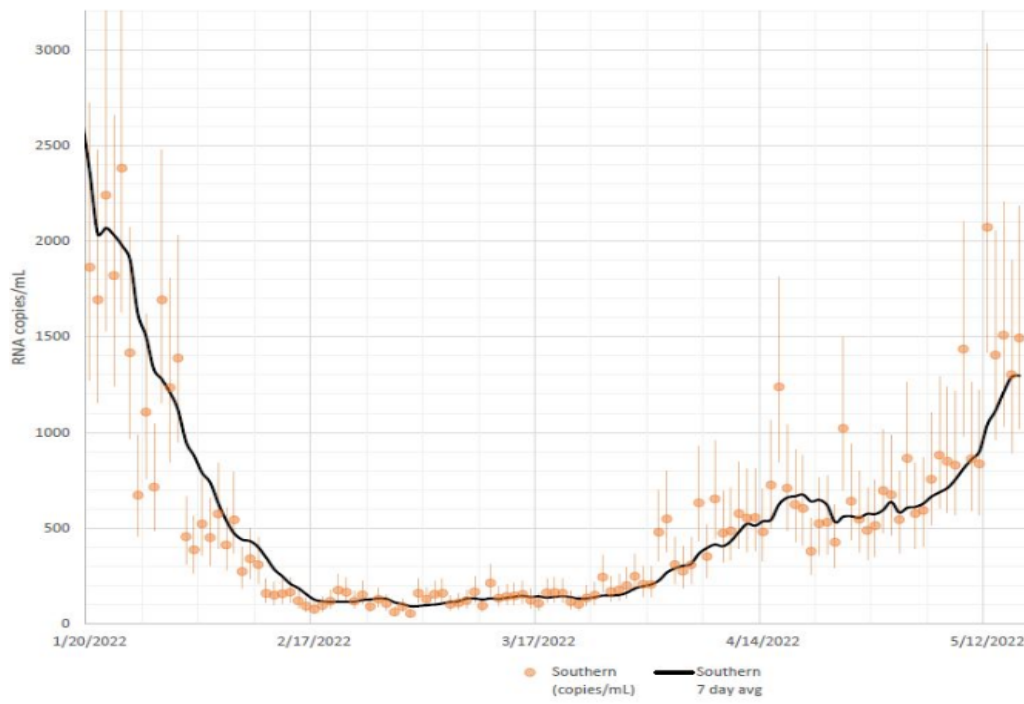
This week's pooled testing at all schools showed a continued increase in positive pools over last week's results, with positive pools being detected at 6 of the 7 district schools. On Monday and Tuesday of this week we tested a total of **334 pools** that included **1360 individuals**. We received 14 positive pools out of those 1360 individuals for a percent positivity of 1.03%. There was 1 positive pool at ECEC, Oakdale, and Riverdale. There were 2 positive pools at Greenlodge, 5 positive pools at Avery, and 4 positive pools at DMS. Results from DHS are still pending. There were also 3 inconclusive pools (2 at Greenlodge and 1 at Riverdale).

There was a 66% increase in [COVID cases in public schools](#) across the state last week. The total number of cases jumped from about 8,000 to well over 13,000 in one week.

The CDC has now listed Norfolk County in the "HIGH" category of its [COVID-19 risk by county rating system](#). The guidance from the CDC recommends mask wearing when indoors in counties rated as high community levels of transmission. This rating system is based upon hospital beds being used, hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area. At the Dedham Board of Health meeting last week this new information was discussed and no action was taken. In my conversations with Dedham Health Director Kylee Sullivan, she did NOT suggest mandating mask-wearing indoors in Dedham at this time, nor has the MA DESE recommended any changes.

Recent wastewater COVID-19 concentrations have shown a significant increase in COVID concentration in the past week. These readings have proven to be pretty accurate in predicting future cases 2-5 days in advance. A graph that includes this past 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.

[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](#)

Dedham Schools continue to increase ventilation and getting outside as possible. Masks are available and masks are still being recommended indoors.

Reports/Updates/Requests

Update on Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance Search

Superintendent Welch announced that the candidate for Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance, Liam Hurley has withdrawn his candidacy from the Dedham Public Schools. The second candidate who had been recommended to the Committee last week is Matt Wells, who has tentatively agreed to move forward with Dedham. Superintendent Welch stated he was unavailable to attend tonight's meeting and is expected to present himself at the June 1st meeting and is fully expecting to reach an agreement pending the Committee's endorsement.

Discussions followed with suggestions to vote Mr. Wells tonight.

Motion

Mr. Polito motioned to bring Matt Wells into contract negotiations for the Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance, Ms. Briggs second, no discussions; motion passed 7-0.

Presentations from the Superintendent's Search Firm Consultants – NESDEC, MASC and The Collins Center at UMass Boston

NESDEC Presenters - Carolyn Burke, Nancy Mara, and Christopher Malone

MASC Presenter - Tracy Novick

Collins Center at UMass Boston Presenter - John Brackett

Ms. Burke, Ms. Novick and Mr. Beckett presented an overview of the Superintendent's search process, the services they can offer, the advertising and recruitment process, and the phases and timelines that would take place if chosen.

The Committee members asked questions pertaining to the make-up of the screening committee, asking about the average tenure of a Superintendent, how to involve the town's stakeholders, focus groups, and creating a diverse pool of candidates.

Review of Superintendent's Strategic Planning Review/Goals

Superintendent Welch encouraged the Committee to look over the draft of overall goals that he presented at the last meeting and to provide feedback to him and also at the retreat on June 6th at 6:00pm at the MIT Endicott House.

Subcommittee Updates

Budget - Mr. Hebert

Met this evening and touched base regarding the transportation bus contract. Town bylaws state that any contract over 3 years needs to be approved by town meeting. The committee was not able to get it on the agenda this week. The Administration was able to go back to the company and restructure that contract into a standard 3 year contract. In the fall they will see if they will accept a 5 year contract but for now there's a 3 year contract. Proposed budget cuts were previously mentioned by Superintendent Welch in the Superintendent's Update.

Communications - Mr. Donati

Met last week and had a great conversation about ideas for next year. The final newsletter will be ready by the end of the month. The MCAS letter was not discussed during the meeting, it will be added to the next meeting.

Curriculum Advisory - Ms. Briggs

None

Policy - Mr. Donati

Mr. Donati shared slight edits from the attorney regarding the third reading & vote on Policy BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings with respect to start times, time limits and how many speakers. Discussions followed with a recommendation from the Chair for the Policy Sub to come back with a recommendation after reviewing the policy and attorney's recommendation.

SBRC - Ms. Briggs

Had the OPM meeting last Thursday to review the Oakdale site, approximately 12 people attended. The final bids are due May 25th at 1:00pm, at which time they will meet to open them and choose 3 finalists.

Traffic Communications- Ms. Briggs

None

Negotiations - Ms. White

The next meeting will be on May 31, with more information available at the next School Committee meeting on June 1st.

Donations

Motion

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation of \$2,000 from the Endicott Community Greenhouse for each elementary school Principal to receive \$500 for each school to sponsor field trips or any other areas that supports the environment, Mr. Donati second, motion passed 7-0, no discussion.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion

Ms. White motioned to approve the minutes from April 27, 2022 as presented, Mr. Hebert second, motion passed 7-0; no discussion.

Motion

Mr. Polito motioned to approve the minutes from May 4, 2022 as presented, Mr. Hebert second, motion passed 7-0; no discussion.

Old/New Business

Upcoming School Committee Retreat will take place at the MIT Endicott House on Monday, June 6, 2022.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Ms. Pearrow was able to visit the Avery Science Fair at the Avery gym that will take place tomorrow.

High School student Olivia Hanley updated the Committee regarding student thoughts about MCAS testing and also thanked Dr. Gotgart and Superintendent Welch for allowing her to attend the School Committee meetings.

No Executive Session needed tonight.

Motion

Mr. Polito motioned to adjourn at 9:08pm, Ms. White second, motion passed 7-0; no discussion.