

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

June 1, 2022

(Approved July 10, 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. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Edward Gotgart, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location: Avery Elementary School

Meeting commenced at 7:06 p.m.

Open Meeting

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

None

Donations

DEF Recognition - Mr. Mark Reilly, President, Dedham Education Foundation Donation, presented to the Committee a spreadsheet of the grants that have been approved by the DEF totalling approximately

\$25,000 emphasizing on the social/emotional learning and STEM program grants. Mr. Reilly acknowledged the outstanding contributions from Brad at General Dynamics Systems and also thanked Monica De Winter for her tremendous work organizing the grants committee. Discussions followed by the Committee and thanking Mr. Reilly's partnership with the DEF and the children of Dedham Public Schools.

Motion

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept the \$24,470 DEF donation with grateful appreciation, Ms. McCormick second with grateful appreciation, voted 7-0; no further discussion.

Superintendent's Update

Today was the 166th day of classes for the 2021-22 school year. There are only 13 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 we head into the last couple of weeks of the school year, there are MANY end of year activities and events marking these significant milestones. Members of the top 30 students from Dedham High School's Class of 2022 had a wonderful evening celebrating their accomplishments at the Superintendent's Annual Dinner at the MIT Endicott House on Tuesday last week, and also the annual Class Night Academic Awards on Veterans Field last night. Everyone is looking forward to the Class of 2022 Graduation this Saturday at 11:00 AM. Our fingers are crossed for good weather! At this point all signs point to a wonderful day.

One issue that so clearly illustrates the educational commitment of the Dedham community is the annual awarding of scholarships to our graduating seniors. Coordinating the equitable selection and distribution of scholarships is an involved and difficult task. This effort is headquartered in our DHS Counseling Department through Director of Counseling Services Dr. Ashley Dube. Our College and Career Counselor Ashley Mansfield and Guidance Assistant Amy Norwell coordinate a committee that works with all our counselors and administrators and in conjunction with the Town's Trust Funds Commission to evaluate applications based upon merit, achievement, and need. This year I have learned through the Ashley's that they have been able to award 220 scholarships worth over \$230,000 to 118 seniors in the Class of 2022! Many thanks to all those involved.

As everyone is aware, last week's horrible tragedy in Uvalde, Texas has left us all in shock. All our schools have worked to address concerns of students, parents, and faculty and have done their best to explain the inexplicable. On the evening of this tragedy I sent a [community wide message](#) acknowledging the event and providing resources for all members of the district. I have spoken and met with all of our building principals to help better understand our students' needs and reviewing our protocols for reminders of best practice. We will continue to help support students in families in the days ahead.

Last Thursday I attended the MA Association of School Superintendents annual meeting in Marlboro. The entire day was devoted to districts' work around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion across the state. Information and slide presentations from the day's workshops are included in your folders [HERE](#). It was a very enlightening discussion amongst educational leaders from across the state, and I was again very proud of the work we are doing in Dedham. This was particularly meaningful when our work in Dedham was shown to be in close alignment with the [MASS REDI \(Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion\) strategy](#). It is clear that we are doing important and meaningful work in this area, and I am re-energized for additional progress in the days ahead.

This week we are wrapping up the final stages of annual MCAS testing with Science exams and make-ups taking place at most schools. The full MCAS testing schedule can be seen on the DPS website [HERE](#).

Members of the School Committee will recall one year ago when High School educators came before us to ask permission to pilot a work-study program to try and encourage student attendance and incentivize high school completion. I asked Principal Forrest and DHS Alternative Program teacher Kathy Megan to provide a [review of the year's work study program effort and their synopsis can be seen here](#). While the overall impact was modest this past year, I sense that this opportunity was quite meaningful for those that took part, and I hope that the years ahead will see increased participation in this program.

We continue to make very effective progress at filling open administrative positions within the district. We were pleased to FINALLY announce that the district has successfully recruited a **Human Resources Administrator** to replace Kathy O'Leary who left the district back in January. A final announcement on this to this important district position will be made shortly once all paperwork is complete. Our last district wide position is the Riverdale Elementary School Principal role and that 15-member search committee interviewed 4 candidates yesterday and will interview another 4 candidates tomorrow before selecting finalists for site visits next week. I am VERY proud of the efforts of MANY search committee members for our recent searches, and we have some fantastic educators joining our district for the 2022-23 school year.

Denise Moroney and the SBRC have continued to progress on the selection of the Oakdale Elementary School Owner's Project Manager. I know School Committee SBRC members will provide more information during the Committee updates portion of tonight's meeting.

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

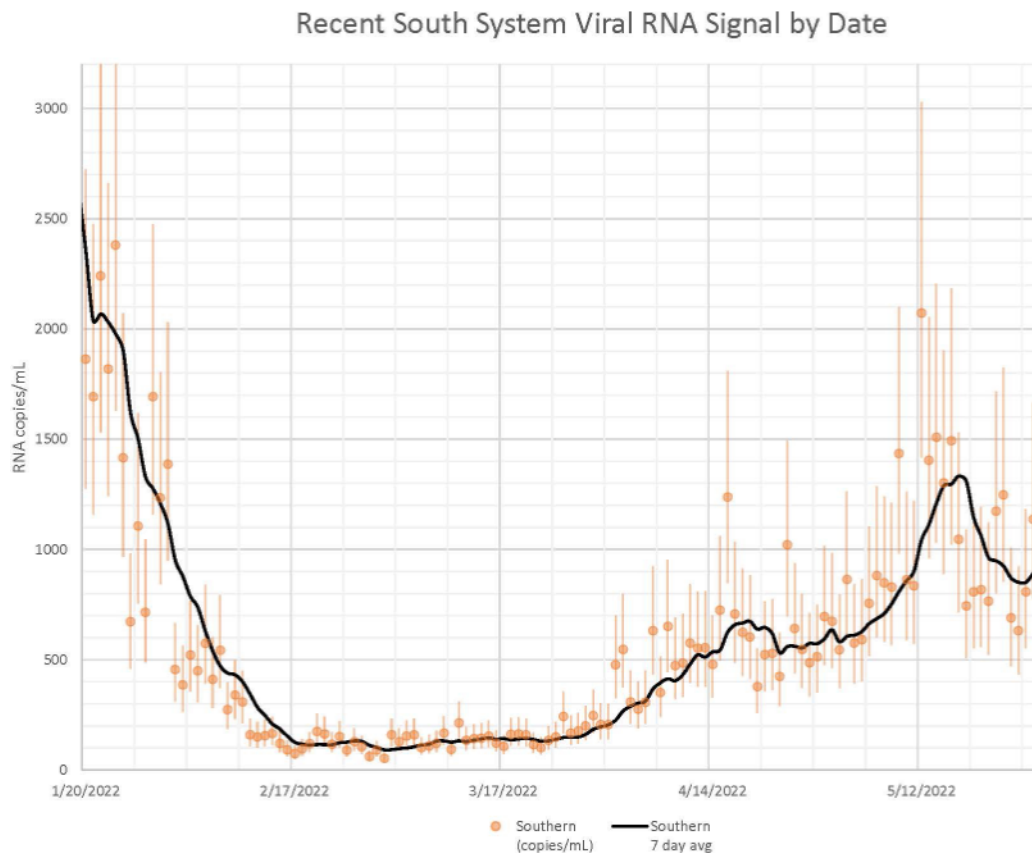
Total cases are down very slightly in comparison to last week. While overall cases reported Townwide were up in comparison to last week, the schools showed a slight downturn in cases. Interestingly, there were NO POSITIVE CASES reported in the past week at Greenlodge School. This week's pooled testing revealed positive pools at 5 of the 7 district schools. On Tuesday of this week (no testing on Monday due to the Memorial Day holiday) we tested a total of **310 pools** that included **1283 individuals**. We received

9 positive pools out of those 1283 individuals for a percent positivity of 0.7%. There was one positive pool at Greenlodge, and 2 positive pools at ECEC, Oakdale, Riverdale, and DMS. There were NO POSITIVE POOLS at Avery or DHS. There was also 1 individual inconclusive pool at Riverdale..

On Wednesday, May 24, DESE sent districts an [update on the statewide K-12 COVID testing program for this spring, summer, and fall](#). The same day, the Department of Public Health published [updated quarantine and isolation guidance](#) for children in child care, K-12 schools, out-of-school time programs and recreational camp settings. Also on May 25, DESE held a webinar to discuss the updates, and a recording of that webinar and slides from it are posted on DESE's [COVID-19 Testing Program](#) webpage.

The CDC continues to list Norfolk County in the “HIGH” category of its [COVID-19 risk by county rating system](#).

Recent wastewater COVID-19 concentrations show a bottoming out and a slight uptick in the past two days. 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:



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](#)

Reports/Updates/Requests

Update on Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance Search

Mr. Welch introduced Mr. Matt Wells, candidate for Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance to the Committee. Mr. Wells provided information to the Committee about his business and personal background and answered questions from the Committee. The Committee welcomed Mr. Wells.

Motion

Mr. Polito motioned to support Mr. Matt Well's appointment, seconded by Ms. Briggs, voted 7-0; no discussions.

School Improvement Plan Development

Superintendent Welch indicated that the School Improvement Plan will be back on track. Dr. Kelly followed by giving a broad overview of the rough draft of the goals that were provided to the Committee for review. The plan format will follow the 2018-20 cycle with four district goals and two additional school council goals. The rough timeline would be July into August with review of the plan in the fall. The Committee followed with questions and thanked Dr. Kelly.

Update on Proposal for Capen Building Use by Parks & Recreation

Superintendent Welch and Dr. Pearrow met with the Parks and Recreation Commission representatives, Bob Stanley and Leon Goodwin from the town hall last week to talk about the potential use of the Capen for the Parks and Recreation Dept. Mr. Welch stated he was not committing to using the Capen classrooms as permanent space at this point in case the schools needed the rooms for swing space in the future. The MOU was updated as of last week and may need some tweaking. Discussions followed.

Subcommittee Updates

Budget - Mr. Hebert

No new updates

Communications - Mr. Donati

The newsletter will be finished and available next week. Mr. Donati read the following MCAS letter to be sent to state leaders and suggested the Chair forward this letter to state leaders.

Draft Letter to State Leaders:

Dear Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Members,

We write to you today to express our serious concerns with the announced changes to the increased required passing standard on the 10th grade MCAS and the impact this will have on our student's ability to graduate with a high school diploma. We urge the board to reconsider their proposal, and at the very least postpone the implementation of these changes.

Of utmost concern is the timing. We are in year three of a once in a century pandemic, one that has had impacts on student academic engagement and performance and on their social emotional well-being. If the changes being proposed are enacted as planned, the requirements will be increased for our current 8th grade students, children who have not had a typical school year since they were in the 5th grade. If we were to use our current graduating class as a sample or gauge, approximately 30% of students would not have received a high school diploma under these new requirements. This is an unacceptable number of students that would be at a serious disadvantage as they enter their post-secondary lives. Additionally, as we know and as indicated by our state data of current MCAS performance, the impacts of such a change would disproportionately impact our students who are traditionally marginalized, thus exacerbating the opportunity and achievement gaps - precisely the institutional problems that we are otherwise working so tirelessly to eliminate.

We are also concerned by the fact that this appears to be yet another mandate from the state for which there is no guarantee of related funding to help with remediation efforts or intervention programs. Increasing these standards at this time, with no plan to help districts in any comprehensive way, is detrimental to everyone involved.

We hope you will reconsider this decision to reflect our current educational realities with a focus on our students.

Sincerely,

Dedham School Committee

Motion

Ms. White motioned to vote that the Chair send the above letter to state leaders, Ms. Briggs second, motion passed 7-0, no discussion.

Curriculum Advisory - Ms. Briggs

The next meeting will take place on June 21, 2022.

Policy - Mr. Donati

Next steps on Policy BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings, the recommendation to the full committee tonight - this will be the first reading with the final edits, the second reading will be at the retreat on June 6th and the 3rd reading will take place on June 15, 2022. The following is the updated draft.

(DRAFT)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the 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 members of the Dedham Public Schools community to attend its meetings so that they may become better acquainted with the operations and the programs of the Dedham Public Schools. In addition, the Committee would like the opportunity to hear the wishes and ideas of members of the Dedham Public Schools community on matters within the scope of their authority. These matters include the budget for the Dedham Public Schools, the performance of the Superintendent, and the educational goals and policies of the Dedham Public Schools.

In order that all members of the Dedham Public Schools community 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 consistent with state and federal free speech laws:

- 1. At each regularly scheduled School Committee meeting, individuals or group representatives who wish to speak will be invited to address the Committee during its 25 minute public comment period, which shall be known as Public Speak.*
- 2. All speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner.*
- 3. Speakers must begin their remarks by stating their name, town or city of residence, and affiliation. All remarks will be addressed through the Chair of the meeting.*
- 4. Public Speak may concern items that are not on the School Committee's agenda, but which are within the scope of the School Committee's authority. Therefore, any comments involving staff members or students must concern the educational goals, policies, or budget of the Dedham Public Schools, or the performance of the Superintendent.*
- 5. Each speaker will be allowed three (3) minutes each to present their material.*
- 6. Large groups addressing the same topic are encouraged to consolidate their remarks and/or select a spokesperson to comment at Public Speak.*
- 7. Speakers may not assign their time to another speaker, and in general, extensions of time will not be permitted. However, speakers who require reasonable accommodations on the basis of*

a speech-related disability or who require language interpretation services may be allotted a total of five (5) minutes to present their material.

8. *The Chair reserves the right to terminate speech which is not Constitutionally protected because it constitutes true threats, incitement to imminent lawless conduct, comments that were found by a court of law to be defamatory, and/ or sexually explicit comments made to appeal to prurient interests. Verbal comments will also be curtailed once they exceed the time limits outlined in paragraphs 5 and 7 of this policy and/ or to the extent they exceed the scope of the School Committee's authority.*
9. *Disclaimer: Public Speak is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee. Comments made at Public Speak do not reflect the views or the positions of the School Committee. Because of constitutional free speech principles, the School Committee does not have the authority to prevent all speech that may be upsetting and/ or offensive at Public Speak.*

SBRC - Ms. Briggs

The Sub Committee read through the 12 proposals and narrowed it down to 4 finalists, then developed and finalized the 10 questions. Hoping to move a finalist to the MSBA on June 8th for approval. Questions followed from the Committee.

Traffic Communications- Ms. Briggs

Have not met yet.

Negotiations - Ms. White

Seems to be going well thus far with the next meeting on June 15th.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion

Ms. White motioned to approve the minutes from May 18, 2022 as presented, Ms. Briggs second, motion passed 7-0; no discussion.

Old/New Business

Reminder - The upcoming School Committee Retreat will take place on Monday, June 6, 2022 at the MIT Endicott House from 6:00-9:00 p.m.

School News - Liaison Updates

None

Acknowledgements and Announcements

- Ms. White reminded the Committee how important it is at this time of year to take the time to be more kind and respectful as the year ends.
- The 2nd annual Dedham Celebration of Pride Event will take place at the Town Hall Friday evening, PTO's are hosting tables.
- Ms. Briggs acknowledged the 179 American Flags that have been planted at the High School by the School Committee members in honor of all the Dedham High School alumni that have been lost during their time of service to our country; Steve Bilifer started this event.

No Executive Session Needed

Motion

Ms. Tracey motioned to adjourn at 8:09pm, Mr. Hebert second, motion passed 7-0; no discussion.