

**Dedham Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
September 21, 2022**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Victor Hebert
Mayanne Briggs
Joshua Donati
Christopher Polito
Cailen McCormick
Tracey White

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

Dr. Melissa Pearrow

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael J. Welch, Superintendent
Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent
Matthew Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance

Meeting Location:

Avery Elementary

School Committee Meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.

Open Meeting

Pledge of Allegiance

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Diane Loud, from Glenway St., Oakdale welcomed everyone back to a new school year. She expressed concern that a better future for our children is being threatened by a national trend of teachers leaving their professions. Ms. Loud listed reasons for this trend: • safety • lack of autonomy • lack of resources and personal support • increased pressure on students to perform well on standardized tests • increased pressure on teachers to achieve with fewer resources and more demands. Diane offered her gratitude to the School Committee for continuing to support our schools in a positive and constructive way. She looks forward to hearing about district plans for the upcoming year.

Andrea Griffin, resident of Benjamin St., Dedham and Boston teacher, participated in the Dedham summer programs as a teacher and was impressed by how well the program was run.

She commended the program for its successful interventions, excellent training and varied resources.

Introductions of new staff

Supt. Welch introduced Tara Duncan, the new student representative to the School Committee. She is a senior at Dedham High School. Tara introduced herself, and said she looks forward to bringing new ideas and a student perspective to the School Committee meetings.

Liz Simone, the new HR Administrator, introduced herself, and said she started July 1, 2002. She said she has worked in public school settings for the past ten years. She lives in Easton and her parents were educators.

Superintendent's Update

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

Today was the 11th day of school of the 2022-23 school year. There are only 169 more to go...

As students and families start settling in to the new school year, each of our schools will be having Open Houses to welcome families and introduce teachers and students. A schedule of the upcoming Open Houses is below:

Fall Open Houses			
<u>School</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
ECEC	Wednesday	October 12	6:30-8:00pm
ECEC	Thursday	October 13	6:30-8:00pm
Avery	Thursday	September 22	5:30-7:30pm
Greenlodge	Thursday	September 29	5:30-7:30pm
Oakdale	Thursday	October 6	5:30-7:30pm
Riverdale	Thursday	October 6	5:30-7:30pm
DMS	Thursday	October 13	6:00-8:00pm
DHS	Thursday	September 26	6:00-8:00pm

Another important date that will be coming up prior to our next School Committee meeting is the first Professional Development half-day on Tuesday, October 4. As always, the [district's 2022-23 school year calendar](#) is available on the district's website.

I also wanted to highlight the ongoing work of our new Bilingual Family Outreach liaisons. As the Committee will recall, we allocated resources as a part of the FY23 Budget to fund the recruitment and training of these liaisons in 5 different languages (Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Haitian-Creole, and Russian) to help form stronger relationships with families whose first language is not English. I am pleased to report that these district liaisons have initiated a series of "Parent Coffees" starting at the Avery School, and the early results have been VERY promising. Avery EL teachers Mary Gallagher and Alexis Tochka have worked with our EL

Department Head Jen Robins to coordinate and support new student/family registrations and other needs for our families. The photo below shows families whose first language is Arabic meeting with our DPS Arabic Liaison Samar Elliakis and Principal Ed Paris at Avery School:



Additional meetings for parents who speak other languages are scheduled for the next few weeks, and our DPS Liaisons will be present at Open House nights to assist with family connections and interpretation.

An exciting additional event in the next few weeks is the selection and distribution of musical instruments to 4th and 5th graders. I want to acknowledge and thank Avery Music Teacher Sara Santos for her work in coordinating this instrument distribution, and also thank the School Committee for their continued support of this new program. A huge number of students are getting the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument during the school year based upon the Committee's support of this initiative 3 years ago.

Committee members may be aware that the renovation of the Dedham High School library has been a long sought after upgrade. Last year, Town Meeting supported this effort with a \$600,000+ commitment toward this improvement, and the project is just about complete. We are hoping for the approval of an occupancy permit any day now and with any luck this will be granted in time to show off this space during the upcoming DHS open house. If this occurs I will ask Committee members to tour the facility just prior to our next meeting on Wednesday, October 5. This work has made a tremendous improvement to this space with new furniture, an open concept, and flexibility that will encourage visits from students and staff. You will be very impressed.

The district continues its ongoing work to keep our computer networks and servers free from cyber attacks. Technology Director Don Langenhorst has spearheaded a series of tutorials and training sessions for all faculty and staff to do our best to avert any of these attacks, and in the next month this training should be completed by every employee. I am pleased that Don has

aggressively pursued this work and we have thankfully not been the victim of any outside takeovers.

The next few weeks will be very busy during weeknights with the Oakdale Project, Superintendent Search, and the fall meeting of the Townwide PTO Officers. This weekend's Dedham Day will have a DPS informational tent set up for communicating these important dates in the weeks ahead.

COVID-19 Update

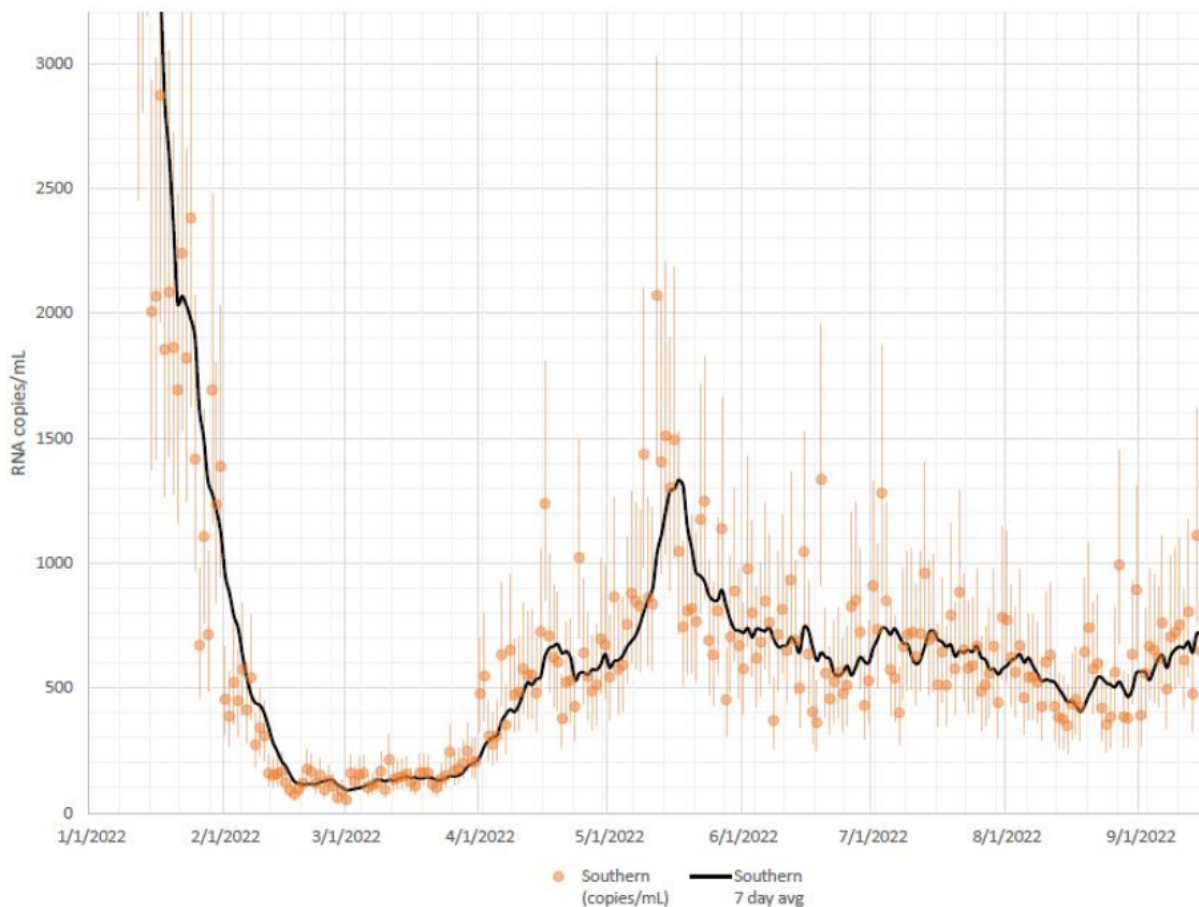
Information gathered over the summer as [COVID-19 data for Dedham](#) shows a continued up and down pattern in cases registered in the town over the past 2 weeks.

In speaking with Director of School Health Services Maria Antonuccio, there have been fewer than 10 COVID-19 cases reported among students and staff since the first day of school. Our school nurses are no longer conducting contact tracing nor are we reporting these positive cases to the state or the school community. In order to participate in any rapid testing when symptoms are present at school, faculty/staff or students must have a [newly completed consent form](#) on file at the school.

The [CDC continues to list Norfolk County in the “Moderate” community level category by their designation criteria.](#)

The MWRA COVID-19 concentrations in wastewater continue an intriguing up and down pattern also, but overall the past two weeks have seen a generally increasing level of virus. Please take a look at the graph below to be aware of the most current trends in the area and across the state.

Recent South System Viral RNA Signal by Date



Reports/Updates/Requests

Josh Donati said that four years ago a Dedham Public Schools audit advised that the schools needed to do more for ESL students and families. He is delighted to see this new program for ESL families. Test scores show that there are gaps in learning for ESL students. He also commended the establishment of the new elementary school music program. He encouraged Tara Duncan to speak up and ask questions as the newest member of the School Committee.

Tara said the students are excited about getting into the new library and out of the back gym!

Items for Fall 2022 Town Meeting Warrant

5-year school bus contract

Matt Wells reported that the language for the school bus contract is still being modified by legal. It is being combined with other five-year contracts for vote at Town Meeting and requires more time to get an accurate number for the proposed cost.

DHS Track and Turf Field Repair/Replacement

Mr. Wells reported that the Track and Turf Warrant Article requires closer review because it will include borrowing and that language is still with legal as well.

COMMENTS BY THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE about the Turf and Field repair

Tara plays field hockey, and she commented that during play, the ball bounces off the patched turf areas and it makes it difficult to gauge where the ball will bounce.

Tracey White said she hears that the turf and field condition is becoming dangerous. Students have gotten hit with balls. She hopes that Town Meeting members will take that into consideration and she stressed the importance of taking care of our facilities as well as our buildings.

Chris Polito asked Mr. Wells to be more specific about the modifications required for the Warrant Articles since the Town Warrants have already been printed. Supt. Welch replied to the question and explained that we need to get a better cost estimate before we finish the Warrants and often language is amended prior to Town Meeting.

Victor Hebert announced that the Warrant Article approvals above will be deferred to the next School Meeting.,

Mayanne Briggs said it is important to remind the public and Town Meeting members of the age of the field, the typical life of this type of field and the number of times the School Committee has asked for approval for repairs to the field.

Summer Programming Review by ESD/ESY director Alyssa Freda

Supt. Welch reported that they took advantage of ESSER funding and hired Alyssa Freda to run the Summer Program with a focus on assisting students most affected by COVID. Ms. Freda comes from Lexington Public Schools and since her hire in March 2022, she is moving Dedham forward dramatically in providing extended day and summer programs.

Ms. Freda showed a slide that described the summer programs held during summer 2022:

- Jump Start – kindergarten transition program (fee \$800). Dip in enrollment compared to last year.
- English Learners – English language learning program (free). Enrollment increased. Transportation was included.
- Elementary and Middle School academic intervention programs (free). Enrollment increased.
- Avery Institute – enrichment opportunities for elementary students (fee \$80). Enrollment was high. Alyssa said we may need to break up these programs next year and move to different locations to support safety.
- TREK – transition program for students moving from Elementary to Middle Schools. (fee \$375). Enrollment stayed steady even though sixth grade class size was smaller compared to last year.

Food services were included free of charge for all the above programs.

Ms. Freda said the goal is to target a 20% participation rate of the district population in all the extended day and summer programs. This year 32% of K-8 students took advantage of the summer programs. Wanda Woods from Connolly Transportation and Jeanne Johnson exceeded expectations and successfully supported the program's transportation and food service needs.

Family Surveys were distributed to every family who participated in the summer programs and 75 families responded. Responses were generally positive. Ms. Freda displayed some of the family comments from the survey.

Staff Surveys were distributed to every site coordinator and teacher. Alyssa noted the importance in getting different perspectives.

Ms. Freda reported that she had a tight timeline to implement the programs. She engaged stakeholders through a number of meetings. Parks and Rec and the Dedham Community House were excellent partners. She looks forward to building strong partnerships with them again. The 54 middle school and high school volunteers and TREK student counselors said they enjoyed building connections with the students. Isabella Solorzano, DHS junior, will be putting together a film that they will use for next year's marketing. Alyssa thanked all the people who helped run the program. She said they hope to become self-sustaining over the next two years and will be continuing to work on program implementation and researching software programs. She also hopes to have online registration for the programs live by January 2023.

COMMENTS FROM SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS about the Summer Programs

Mayanne Briggs congratulated Ms. Freda for the high district participation rate this summer. She encouraged Alyssa to feel free to come to School Committee meetings to provide regular updates on the programs.

Cailen McCormick commented how successful Ms. Freda was in getting the program up and running in such a limited time period. She expressed how important the programs are for people who need childcare. She feels that early registration will be an added enhancement.

Tracey White noted Alyssa's hands-on management style. She said Alyssa checked on the Swim and Gym program to see how it was working and she appreciated that. She also feels that early registration will be an asset. Ms. White also thanked Andrea Griffin for speaking tonight about the value and success of the program. It shows that teachers want to work in the summer program. This is fun learning, without the drudgery associated with typical summer schools. Josh Donati commented on the progress of the program. He hopes the Avery Institute registration will also be online soon. Alyssa replied that all registration for extended day and summer programs should be online for next year's programs.

Tara Duncan commented on how smoothly the programs went. She was one of the student volunteers and she said that participants and student counselors looked forward to the next day.

Victor Hebert said his children all participated in the program and he feels the programs build a strong community that crosses all school boundaries.

Tracey White reminded the group that the vision of Dr. Kelly and Supt. Welch was instrumental in making the program happen.

Supt. Welch said they are only at the beginning of this endeavor. He said the plan is to make this a financially self-sustaining program moving forward.

Equity Update – Student Demographic Report

Supt. Welch commented that this project included massive amounts of data and he will try to present a helpful summary of the statistics. He said the project was initiated by the request by the School Committee for monthly equity reports.

The 2023 School Committee goals included the development of safe, supportive, inclusive schools and school environment. Mr. Welch said it's important to make sure students get what they need from the schools. He showed a large chart that captured attendance trends from 1993 to 2023.

DESE uses publicly available info to identify the high needs classification for students in Massachusetts. High needs students include those students with a disability, ESL status, and/or low income level. These high needs students require Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

He reported that in Dedham only five of the thirteen school years are spent in neighborhood schools during the elementary school period. The neighborhood schools all have very different needs based on property values. He displayed a chart that reflected disability numbers broken down by elementary school.

Some key values shown in this chart include:

- Avery School is highest in ESL students.
- Oakdale has no disabled student or IEPs because the school's age does not allow the resources to service these students.
- All schools indicate a downward trend and this was due to the exodus of ESL kids during COVID period.
- The calculation for low income changed and this year captured more low income students.
- Avery's low income numbers are 55%. Greenlodge numbers are only 12%. He thinks that the inequity of this data needs further attention.
- Avery also has the largest high needs population.
- Riverdale is closest to the state average for high needs calculations.

COMMENTS FROM SCHOOL COMMITTEE about the disability/low income demographics

Chris Polito asked if these numbers were based on the school that students are being educated in or their district-assigned school. Welch affirmed that they are based on the schools they actually attend. Welch said that fewer than 50 total students are being sent to schools outside their district because of unmet needs in their district school.

Josh Donati stressed the importance of keeping sight of our goals. The goal is to address an inequitable system and we should be careful not to stray outside of that goal during the process.

Cailen McCormick said it's important to note the state average vs. our district average. She reported that Sara Stetson, the new Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, questioned why the Dedham percentages were higher than the state average.

Mr. Donati noted that students of color have been historically overidentified in the disability category. Supt. Welch said this can also happen with ESL students.

Mr. Welch showed another table that reflected the DPS student race distribution history in a line graph.

Some key values shown in this chart include:

- The white student population started at 94% in 1993, and declined to 67% in 2022. There has been a 1% reduction of white students in the past five years.
- The Hispanic population has increased over the past 30 years.
- The black population has been more consistent over the same 30 year period.
- The chart's results are affected by multi race, non-hispanic classifications that began in 2005.
- Dedham mirrors the rest of the state in race distribution numbers.

Supt. Welch displayed a chart that reflected the DPS teacher distribution by gender and race, over the past 15 years.

Some key values shown in this chart include:

- The Dedham teacher workforce is comprised of almost 80% women.
- Statistics for the last 15 years show that teachers are predominantly white.
- There are very few teachers of color in the DPS.
- Since 2010 the paraprofessional race statistics reflect slight diversification.

Supt. Welch stressed that Dedham needs to do a better job hiring teachers of color to reflect our changing student demographics.

COMMENTS FROM SCHOOL COMMITTEE about diversification of DPS workforce

Mr. Polito asked what the state workforce of teachers and paraprofessionals looked like. Welch replied that statewide statistics show that 90% of teachers are white. Welch reported that Charter Schools have done the best job of diversifying their teacher and paraprofessional workforce.

Mr. Donati commented that maybe Dedham does not appeal to the paraprofessional cohort. He thinks that Dedham needs to work towards being perceived as more supportive of teachers of color.

Mayanne Briggs said she feels the Dedham School Committee and the school teachers and administrators have been actively pursuing diversity in their teaching and paraprofessional workforce. She suggested the need to target colleges that provide paraprofessional education to students of color, and put in retention systems so that we can keep these paraprofessionals in our schools.

Tracey White said all the data is important, but she asked what the School Committee could do about this data? What should we be supporting?

Supt. Welch commented that he feels that the high needs disparity in Dedham elementary schools needs to be addressed. He feels that the Dedham elementary schools are inequitable. He knows that neighborhood schools are desirable in Dedham, but they don't contribute to equity. He suggested that this is an issue that needs to be discussed by the School Committee and the community. Mayanne Briggs thinks that when Dedham had eight elementary schools that equity was less of an issue.

Tracey White noted that Dedham no longer has neighborhood schools. Students don't walk to school. Children need to take buses and be driven to school. She feels the "neighborhood" term does not reflect the situation in Dedham's elementary schools. Ms. White strongly urged residents to attend the SBRC meeting next week. She said the SBRC has expanded their outreach and now is the time to provide input about the future of Dedham Public Schools.

Supt. Welch agreed that the decision to provide more equitability in the schools is up to the community.

Mr. Polito stated that the most important goal is for us to make sure kids are given the best education possible. He thinks the larger class sizes at Avery are a challenge. He agrees that the support systems for high needs students may need to be reevaluated to determine if they are sufficient enough to produce equity throughout the entire school system.

Mr. Hebert said that hopefully Dedham will tell us what they want. He stressed the importance of attending the joint School Committee/SBRC meeting on September 28 at the Middle School.

[ECEC Solar Panel presentation](#)

Mr. Welch announced that a representative from the Sustainability Advisory Committee and Solect Energy will join the meeting to discuss a proposed project to install solar panels at the ECEC. Denise Moroney, Facilities Director, will be joining us soon to discuss the project as well.

Andy Beldin, Dedham resident, member of the Sustainability Advisory Committee and Eversource employee, said the Sustainability Advisory Committee reviewed the solar project as proposed by Solect Energy. He reports that the ECEC Solar Program will save money for Dedham and will put us closer to our environmental goals.

Alan Giles, Senior Business Development Manager at Solect Energy came to the podium to discuss the proposed project. He said he will answer questions about concerns and talk about the economics of the project and its compliance with the Governor's request for CO2 reduction.

Some of the salient points of Mr. Giles's presentation were:

- Solect is a privately-owned company focused on construction and industrial installations. 80% of their work is with municipalities.
- Dedham belongs to Power Options which is an organization established so that nonprofits can benefit from green energy sources. As such, Solect Energy can bypass the RFP process as long as specific price levels set by Power Options are followed.
- A list of projects undertaken by Solect Energy was displayed, including references from other school systems.
- A rendering was displayed to show what solar panels would look like on the ECEC.
- Giles made reference to problems the Town has had with leaks from other solar panels and assured people that the solar panel installed by Solect is supported by a rubber system so it reduces wear. He said that Solect owns, operates, insures and maintains the system with a roof warrant process that includes regular inspections and remote monitoring.
- The proposed discount rate will be fixed over the period of the contract to ensure savings on electricity costs.
- Denise Moroney joined the discussion and talked about the proposed kilowatt hour rate amount and the impact of the demand charge. After discussion it was determined that the rate amount would provide .05 savings overall per kilowatt hour.
- Giles confirmed that the rate numbers were calculated using actual ECEC 2021 usage data. Denise Moroney clarified that we will still receive a bill from Eversource. The Eversource rates will be variable but the Solect Energy rate will be fixed over the period of the contract. Because Eversource rates are increasing, there is potential for additional savings with this project.
- Ms. Moroney explained that Dedham needs to start to move towards 35% solar energy levels by 2025 to fulfill requirements signed into law by Gov. Baker.
- Mr. Giles explained that the solar project he has proposed at ECEC is intended to cover the 35% solar requirement. However, he said, if the Town wants to increase the solar energy levels, more coverage can be provided by the installation of solar canopies. He

noted that the ECEC already has the infrastructure in place to increase the solar coverage there. The solar canopies are installed in parking areas and are connected to the school's power sources. Canopies can help to drive down the kilowatt per hour cost as well.

COMMENTS BY THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE about the ECEC Solar Project proposal

Ms. Briggs strongly believes that this request needs to go to the School Building Rehabilitation Committee (SBRC) before the School Committee can approve the request. She said that the abutters at the ECEC never approved this type of construction before the construction started. There will need to be neighborhood meetings before this type of project can be approved.

Denise Moroney said that she came to the School Committee for approval because typically, projects like this need to get School Committee approval first. Since the Town legal counsel wrote the Warrant Article and there is no need for an RFP because Dedham is a member of Power Options, she was under the impression that all that was needed was School Committee approval.

Mr. Polito said he would like to be apprised of upfront costs of the project. Mr. Giles replied that under the RFP conditions, Solect will pay for any upfront costs. Solect can take the investment tax credit because they are a for-profit company. That is the reason they are able to provide the fixed rate per kilowatt hour over the full length of the contract. Polito inquired about liability if the roof is damaged by the solar panels. Giles said his company would assume full liability for damage to the building.

Mr. Donati feels strongly that project approval cannot be supported in time for the November Town Meeting. He thinks the proposal is a sound idea, but more review is needed by stakeholders and committee members to determine the benefits. Donati asked why there is a rush for approval? Giles replied that the Massachusetts SMART program was set up for 10 years and we are already in year 7. The rate will increase if approval is delayed.

Victor Hebert feels that SBRC needs to be consulted about this project before any further decisions are made.

Tracey White said we owe it to the community to be as transparent as possible. The School Committee has procedures that need to be followed and if the School Committee makes a decision now, then Town Meeting members may voice their disapproval. She reiterated that the School Committee is not against this project, but more information is needed before it goes to Town Meeting.

Victor Hebert announced that this project will be tabled for now. If the project is initiated by the Town Manager, then we move forward.

Denise Moroney said she will get in touch with John Tocci of the SBRC to get it on their agenda.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Superintendent Search Subcommittee

Mayanne Briggs said that the Superintendent Search Committee is busy working on the public dissemination part of the search. Information and the survey will be available at the School Committee booth at Dedham Day. Focus Groups will be held next week on Tuesday and Wednesday. Information was also published in the Dedham Times. If people can't make any of the focus groups or take the surveys, Mayanne said she can set up a meeting for people to meet directly with NESDEC.

School Building Rehabilitation Committee (SBRC) Subcommittee

Ms. Briggs reminded the group that the SBRC community meeting will be held next Wednesday, September 28th. The meeting will begin with a video that gives an overview of the needs of the current Oakdale school.

Budget Subcommittee

[No updates.]

Communication Subcommittee

Cailen McCormick reported that the Communication Subcommittee met last night and discussed the superintendent search and Sara Erickson, website developer, shared the work she was doing on accessibility. The quarterly report for the subcommittee will be released in November.

Curriculum Subcommittee

Ms. McCormick said the Curriculum Subcommittee has not met in the new school year. Assistant Superintendent Kelly announced that the tentative meeting schedule for the subcommittee will be posted soon.

Policy Subcommittee

[No updates.]

Traffic Circulation Subcommittee

[No updates.]

Negotiations Subcommittee

Ms. White reported that the subcommittee's first meeting of the fall was held recently and they have another meeting scheduled in two weeks.

Donations Subcommittee

[No updates.]

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes from the September 7, 2022 School Committee Meeting were approved by a vote of 7-0.

Old/New Business

[NONE.]

Acknowledgements and Announcements

- Dedham Day is coming and there will be a joint table with literature on SBRC and the School Committee available.
- Joint meeting of the School Committee and the SBRC about the Oakdale school will be held on Wednesday, September 28, 2022.

Motion was made to adjourn to Executive Session and not return to public session. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Minutes submitted by

Virginia Quinn