

**Dedham Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
May 3, 2023**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Victor Hebert
Stephen Acosta
Mayanne Briggs
Dr. Leah Flynn Gallant
Cailen McCormick
Christopher Polito
Tracey White (resigned)
Tara Duncan

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Dr. Ian Kelly, Interim Superintendent
Matthew Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance
Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
Dr. Heather Smith, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum

Meeting Location:
Avery Elementary

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Open Meeting

Mr. Victor Hebert, Chair, called the meeting to order.

Mr. Hebert announced that Tracey White resigned from the School Committee today. Mr. Hebert expressed his gratitude to her for her hard work on the School Committee. He commented that she was a great help to him when he first became a member of the School Committee. He applauded her strong advocacy for the students and the families of Dedham. Mr. Hebert announced that there will be a process put in place to replace her and he will inform the public more about that process in the near future.

Public Comment

Carla Foley, Old River Rd. asked that more emphasis be placed on history in our school system. She said Dedham is such an historical place and she hopes that the students are made aware of that history. She thinks there should be more exposure to the African-Americans that have contributed to our history. She noted that the first African-American senator was Edward

Brooks from Massachusetts and there are many other African-American role models who should be emphasized in our schools. She said we need to be reminded that we still live in the best country in the world.

Tracey White came to the podium to talk about the reasons for her resignation from the School Committee. She recounted that she was elected 7 years ago to the School Committee, but due to recent events, she feels she must resign to maintain her integrity. She feels that the School Committee always had open and honest debates that took into consideration the needs of the students, however, because of her opposition to the chairmanship of Victor Hebert, she has been labeled a “racist.” She stressed that her opposition to Hebert’s chairmanship had nothing to do with racism. The School Committee needs to return to a focus on the education of our students, not on politics. She expressed her strong support and respect for the staff and faculty of DPS.

Ann Flynn, 34 Savin St. expressed her strong support of Tracey White. She is very saddened that due to that support, they have both been labeled as racists. She thanked Tracey for her service to the schools and the Town of Dedham.

Mr. Polito stated his respect for Ms. White. He said her dedication to the Dedham Public Schools extends much further than her seven years on the School Committee. She deserves more credit than people realize. He said we will miss the strong role as an advocate of the students. She understood that the students are always our most important constituents.

Bill Walsh, 302 Milton St. asked for the resignation of Mr. Hebert. He does not think Hebert should be a member of the School Committee. He said it’s a disgrace that the School Committee is allowing him to continue in his position. He also suggested that the school curriculum should go back to basics and not surrender to “woke” agendas.

**Dedham Public Schools
Interim Superintendent’s Update**

Teaching and Learning



Principal for the day at Greenlodge. Throughout last week Principal McGowan hosted five students serving as principal for the day. These young leaders shadowed Principal McGowan throughout the day spending time learning all about what it means to be a principal. On Friday afternoon I was invited to a formal business lunch with Principal McGowan and her protégés to discuss teaching, learning, and their insights into the role of principal and the needs of the Greenlodge School.

New England Math League (NEML). In April, 109 of our 4th and 5th grade students across the district participated in the New England division of The Math League's nationwide problem-solving competition, also known as the NEML contest. This competition is designed to build student interest and confidence in mathematics by presenting them with opportunities to solve problems that are engaging and challenging. Each grade level contest has questions from different areas of mathematics that progress in difficulty from straightforward through moderate to very challenging in difficulty. Many students first develop an interest in mathematics through problem-solving activities such as this contest, so it is great to see so many students participate each year. This year we are proud to share that 46 of our participating 4th and 5th graders earned high scores for which they will receive Mathematics League Certificates of Merit. We would also like to note that 104 DMS students participated in the Grade 6-8 NEML competitions earlier in the school year and 38 of those students are high scorers who will be receiving Mathematics League Certificates of Merit. Certificates of Merit along with an invitation to be recognized for this achievement at the final School Committee meeting will be going out to families in the days ahead.



All State Treble. Five of our Dedham elementary students successfully auditioned, then were selected to participate in the Massachusetts Music Educators Association's All State Treble Chorus Festival on Saturday, April 29 at the Oak Middle School in Shrewsbury. Pictured from left to right, back row to front, are fifth grader Kamar Celestin, and fourth graders Alex Straghalis, Jeffrey Jr Geronimo, Mackenzie Auguste and Hailey Lepine. The Avery School, with music teacher Sara Santos, was among 24 schools represented across the Commonwealth. Students performed a varied and beautiful program: *Alleluia* (W. Boyce), *Oseh Shalom (A Prayer for Peace)* (Joan Beckow), *Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho (Traditional African-American Spiritual)* (arr. B. E. Boykin), *Nine Hundred Miles (Traditional American Folk Song)* (arr. Philip Silvey), *Icarus* (Paul Jarman), and *Jabberwocky from Join the Dance* (Carolyn Jennings). Students learned their parts with the help of Mrs. Santos, then put the pieces together under the direction of the acclaimed children's chorus conductor, K.C. Conlan, the Founding Artistic Director of the award-winning Hampshire Young People's Chorus. Students enjoyed learning a diverse repertoire, performing in different languages (Latin and Hebrew), refining their singing and ensemble skills and growing in confidence as young musicians. Kudos to Mrs. Santos and Mr. Paris for providing and supporting this opportunity!



Community Engagement



Grade 7 Asian Influence & Culture Experience. On April 27th, seventh grade students from DMS invited the public to the opening night of their Asian Influence & Culture Experience exhibit at Dedham Town Hall. This exhibit, which is a culminating exhibition of student learning from the Investigating History pilot on Central, South, and East Asia will remain open for the next three weeks. The event was well-attended by the community and students were recognized by the Dedham Select Board. Administrators from the [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#) even came out to see the exhibit!



Management and Operations

Trusted Learning Environment Seal

Hi all,

[It was just announced today](#) (open link and read) that we (i.e. the Dedham Public Schools) have earned the [Trusted Learning Environment \(TLE\) Seal](#) from the national technology's director's association (CoSN). We are only one of two dozen school districts in the over 16,000 in the country and the only one in the nine north Atlantic states to have earned this seal. The seal is earned by showing proficiency or better in five critical standard areas including Leadership, Business, Data Security, Professional Development and Classroom Practices.

Fundamentally this recognized the work of all of us in the area of protecting student privacy and cybersecurity. It doesn't mean we are perfect and it doesn't mean we can't get hacked; however it does mean we are doing a great job and strive for continuous improvement. Many members of the Central Office team (past and present) and members of the Technology Team should take a bow for their work on this. Fundamentally this is a credit to all of you! Congratulations!! Go Dedham!!!

Don Langenhorst

Data Privacy Team:

- Ian Kelly, Interim Superintendent

- *Amy Hicks, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent*
- *Heather Smith, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Assessment & Instruction*
- *Matt Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Business & Finance*
- *Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services*
- *Don Langenhorst, Director of Technology*
- *Denise Moroney, Director of Facilities*
- *Liz Simone, Human Resources Manager*

Technology Team:

- *Don Langenhorst, Director of Technology, Cybersecurity Team*
- *Judy Foley, District Technology Integrator*
- *Erica Scannell, Database Administrator*
- *Michael Yang, Network Systems Administrator, Cybersecurity Team*
- *Bob Tucker, District Technician, Cybersecurity Team*
- *Dalton Looper, Lead Help Desk, Cybersecurity Team*
- *Tim Bowen, Erin Fellows, Harry Smith - Help Desk*
- *Susan Hanney, Administrative Assistant to Director of Technology*

Dr. Kelly shared late breaking news that Jeanne Johnson, Food Service Director, was named Northeast Regional Director of the Year from the School Nutrition Association. He expressed thanks for her dedicated and hard work.

Mr. Polito asked if Greenlodge is the only school that holds the Principal for the Day event? Dr. Kelly said he would find out and get back to the School Committee. Polito brought up the Student Government Day that was so successful. He thinks that these types of events inspire students to share their voices and he thinks it would be great to have more events of this type.

Mr. Polito expressed his congratulations to Dr. Langenhorst and Jeanne Johnson for their well-deserved recognition.

Mr. Acosta thanked Dr. Kelly and Dr. Smith for providing comprehensive updates that highlight the academic excellence at DPS. He commented that it is good to see DPS receiving recognition by DESE.

Ms. McCormick appreciates the enrichments being afforded to our students.

Dr. Flynn Gallant asked about how accomplishments of the schools are shared with the public at large?

Dr. Kelly said that Sara Errickson and he are currently discussing plans about how the Superintendent's Updates can be safely disseminated to inform the public of the innovative programs being offered to our students.

Reports/Updates/Requests

• Solar Project Discussion

Mr. Hebert reminded the group that there is a Letter of Intent that needs to be signed in order to initiate the solar energy project.

Alan Giles from Solect Energy came to the podium. He reported that the primary role of Solect Energy is to help manage utility costs and to fulfill the mandates coming down from the state. Both the Town and schools have compliance requirements. He said that his company performed an evaluation of which school buildings could successfully be set up for solar.

Mr. Hebert asked about the Kilowatt Hour costs that are posted.

Mr. Giles displayed slides that explained the most cost efficient way to satisfy the renewable energy mandate from the state in the four Dedham schools (High School, Middle School, ECEC and Avery School). He explained that when solar roof top assets are not viable, they are looking for other places to conserve energy.

High School

Canopies placed over the DHS parking lot, can tie to the electric meter and reduce electrical costs for all the schools. He estimated that these canopies would produce over production credits gained from the concession stand savings and these credits can be applied to the elementary schools' invoices where solar is not viable.

Middle School

The Middle School has solar production but it only generates 50% of the electric load. The parking lot would be a good opportunity to put a spread canopy to produce electricity for the entire Middle School.

Avery School

Parking lot solar panels could be tied to the transformer to help conserve energy.

ECEC

ECEC is solar ready and Solect evaluated the effectiveness of solar panels on the roof. It was determined that a small canopy over the parking lot combined with the rooftop panels would create 100% renewable energy at that school.

PPA Savings summary

Slides showed comparisons between the rates that would be paid without the PPA rates and with the PPA rates for the High School, ECEC, Avery and Middle Schools. The numbers showed significant savings in Year 1 and even higher savings over the 25-year period of the agreement.

Alan Giles explained that historically electric rates increase 3 to 4%. The PPA forecast is at 2%. He said the project will not be completed until 2024-25.

SMART program

SMART program replaced the national certification program from the 1980s. The original program established rate incentives with penalties by KWH rate. The national certification program ended up becoming too lucrative for large corporations so the state of Mass. implemented the SMART program. Our utility companies now follow rules set by the state. The SMART program produces a revenue source that can be shared with the Towns, plus Solect receives incentives in the form of tax credits from the state. The balance of that estimated savings allows them to lock in the rate for 25 years.

Update from Vertex - Oakdale School Project Owner's Project Manager

[Mr. Polito recused himself from this discussion due to conflict of interest.]

It was announced that John Tocci, Chair of the SBRC, is in the audience to help with any questions.

Ms. Briggs outlined the current site location options:

- 1) Riverdale/Oakdale combination at Riverdale
- 2) Oakdale/Riverdale combination at Oakdale
- 3) Oakdale stand alone
- 4) Oakdale/Greenlodge combination at Oakdale
- 5) Greenlodge/Oakdale combination at Greenlodge
- 6) Oakdale/Greenlodge combination at Capen.

Since the site will determine the enrollment, the School Committee needs to vote on the sites by the June 7th School Committee meeting in order for SBRC to make the final recommendation and meet the deadline of the MSBA.

Dr. Flynn Gallant asked if Executive Session would be a viable vehicle for discussing the Oakdale project options. Ms. Briggs said that due to legal reasons and policy the Executive Session could not be used for discussing the site options.

Subcommittee Updates

• Budget

No updates

- Communication

Ms. Briggs asked if they could add the Oakdale project survey results to the next meeting agenda so that the SBRC could hear updates about enrollment. Tocci said the more info gathered, the better the estimates. He said that FinCom was invited to attend the May 23 SBRC meeting to discuss the Town's financial responsibility.

Mr. Tocci announced that the Dedham Museum and Archives currently has an exhibit on the history of the school system. A number of DPS students helped out with the exhibit

- Curriculum Advisory

Ms. Briggs said the Curriculum Advisory subcommittee met last night. She reported that the Great Vibe parent Zoom meeting was attended by 25 people. Sara Errickson will come to the next Curriculum Advisory subcommittee meeting to help review the information gathered from focus groups. The next step will be to develop an action plan.

- Policy

No updates

- SBRC

Updates already provided.

- Traffic Circulation

No updates.

- Negotiations

Mr. Polito said they started to discuss the contracts for Interventionists, Paraprofessionals and Food Service.

- Parks & Recreation

No updates.

- Donations

No donations.

- Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

No meeting minutes to approve.

- Old/New Business*

Ms. Briggs said that the subcommittee reorganization requires an update about what each committee does. The School Committee will need to review existing policies and to determine which committees are still relevant.

Mr. Hebert talked about holding the annual retreat in July. The new superintendent, Nan Murphy, wanted to bring in someone from MASC to run a workshop/training to update about communications, and limitations and roles of the DPS administration and the School Committee. Hebert said would like feedback from the School Committee about their availability before an exact date for the retreat is established. The retreat is usually on two consecutive weekday nights.

Ms. McCormick expressed her appreciation for what Tracey White did for the Town. She asked for information about the posting of Tracey's position and how the resignation will affect the reorganization.

Ms. Briggs said Ms. White's position will be posted by the Select Board and interviews will be conducted with the School Committee and Select Board. Each member of the two committees will have a vote.

Mr. Hebert said he will meet with Jim McDonald of the Select Board and Town Clerk to discuss the process. He thinks it still makes sense to schedule the subcommittee reorganization before the process is set in place.

Mr. Polito said he expects that the process will take more than 60 days.

Mr. Polito asked if the flag policy for the schools could be placed at the top of the list when the reorganization of subcommittees is discussed. The flag policy needs to be consistent with the Town flag policy.

Mr. Polito asked about the additional member that needs to be added to the HRC. Ms. McCormick said at the last reorg, they talked about the Chair appointing someone who lived in Town as the representative for the schools. She said she would report back at the subcommittee reorganization meeting about this issue.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

None.

Motion was made to adjourn the School Committee Meeting. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Ms. White did not attend the meeting due to her resignation.)

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary