

**DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**School Committee Meeting Retreat**  
**August 9, 2023**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Victor Hebert, Chair  
Stephen Acosta  
Mayanne Briggs  
Dr. Leah Flynn Gallant  
Cailen McCormick  
Christopher Polito  
Laurie Twomey

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Nan Murphy, Superintendent  
Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment  
Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services  
Matthew Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance

Chair Victor Hebert called the School Committee meeting to order.

Maureen LaCroix, from the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) introduced herself and explained that she would be a mentor for the new superintendent, as part of a MASS program called the new Superintendent Induction Program (NISIP). She will be helping to shape the direction of Nan Murphy's leadership for the next three years. She said that all the NISIP coaches are retired superintendents. She retired from Bedford Public Schools after an 11 year tenure. The two main parts of her mentorship will be: Induction Training and a series of Content Days that include off-site meetings. She will also function as a coach.

Mr. Hebert noted that there are three new members on the School Committee and he is a new Chair and training opportunities are very important.

Mr. Hebert asked each member to write down one thing they would like to learn from this Retreat meeting. Members shared what they wrote through email.

District Goal Review and Setting

The District School Committee goals from 2022-23 were displayed on the screen.

Ongoing areas were highlighted and they reviewed each goal and modifications for the coming year.

Budget development for 2024

Mr. Polito said that the most important question is whether they feel they achieved the budget goals from last year. Mr. Wells said building renovations still need to be made, and some ADA upgrades have not been completed. The Covid-based funding from ESSER 3 will be fully depleted by the end of the

2023-24 school year. Mr. Wells cautioned that we will now be in a post-Covid environment and cannot expect extra federal/state funding subsidies. Even though Dedham was careful to try to use the ESSER funds as one time expenses, there may have been some overlap. They discussed that an important goal this year will be to change the budget outline to include the new post-ESSER environment.

Mr. Polito raised the issue of safety in the schools. Mr. Wells said that the schools are currently in need of more traffic directors.

Ms. Twomey asked if traffic safety could be delegated to other groups in Town like Traffic Circulation. But first we need to determine how much we are going to spend on traffic safety. Ms. Briggs noted that even if we use ADA as an overarching goal, we still don't have total control of capital requests. The group discussed the ADA issues and decided that the budget should still include a line for ADA requirements in the section about inclusive environments.

Dr. Kelly said we should continue to put forward what we need in the budget, whether we think we will get it or not. The group agreed that it is important to advocate for the budget requests even when they think that they will not be approved.

Superintendent Murphy said we have to look at previously prioritized items and see what is sustainable in the new budget. She talked about supporting ongoing initiatives and ELA curriculum in a strategic way. She also noted that they will need to set expectations for operational costs.

Ms. Briggs said that since they need to have a full budget for Town Meeting, they should make sure the budget is clear and streamlined. Mr. Wells announced that this year the Town has asked that facilities be folded into the bottom line of the schools' budgets. This means that DESE funding will be included in the budget and it will make the budget easier to manage.

The group discussed the importance of focusing on separating the ESSER and post-ESSER funding.

Discussion continued about what should be included in the statement about the budget. Dr. Flynn Gallant said we have to make sure that the budget coincides with our agreed upon future goals. Ms. Briggs suggested that it may be a good idea to have another Retreat in January. Mr. Polito asked how we measure success. Mr. Kelly said we need to set Goals and Objectives. Objectives are the steps we need to take to achieve the goal. Mr. Acosta commented that he would like to see the members establish overarching goals first and target objectives that would achieve those goals. He thinks that approach would also make it easier when reviewing the goals next year. They talked about using the SMART approach for goal setting (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). They agreed that the Budget Subcommittee can tease out the objectives, once the full School Committee establishes the major goals.

Discussion continued about how ADA upgrades should be addressed in the budget. Ms. Briggs suggested that the phrase "upgraded infrastructure" could be used instead of making specific reference to ADA.

### Long Range Infrastructure

Discussion centered around whether SBRC and construction issues should continue to be included as a goal for the new year.

Superintendent Murphy suggested that they need to make sure that long term infrastructure goals focus on actionable items. She thinks we need to focus on the action that will target getting the 2/3 Town Meeting vote and 50% Town vote on the new school building project at the Oakdale site. Now that all the information and input has been received, the focus will be on securing the funds for the new school. The group agreed that they will have to launch a careful campaign. Dr. Flynn Gallant and Ms. Twomey said it will be important to make the process visible.

Mr. Hebert said we should be careful to not initiate conversation about redistricting if we don't have the facts yet. All questions about redistricting will be directed to the map that was presented by Dr. Kelly in response to the enrollment and site decision.

Mr. Acosta read the edited infrastructure goals and the group agreed on the changes.

#### Safe, Supportive and Inclusive Environment

The group discussed changes to this section. Ms. Briggs suggested that "safe and supportive" should be defined. The group talked about maintaining the same goal except removing the Superintendent Search.

Superintendent Murphy noted that we need to add a statement about safe schools. She feels that safety will be a big focus this year. Decreasing liability increases productivity in schools. Discussion continued about the language to use in reports and how to leverage the reports.

Mr. Hebert asked if there are any other anticipated goals that can be included. He noted that they have to be careful about redundancy between School Committee and Administrative responsibilities. Last year, the School Committee newsletter overlapped with the school newsletter.

The group talked about adding a fourth goal.

Mr. Hebert said the three goals should be adequate to cover what we anticipate. Mr. Hebert said that they will be voting about repurposing the Greenlodge building.

Mr. Acosta asked what the School Committee can do to support Superintendent Murphy's mission?

Ms. Briggs said another important goal this year is to build an infrastructure for the Paraprofessionals.

Discussion centered around adding a section about supporting the new superintendent. They talked about the importance of using measurable tools to evaluate the superintendent's progress. Mr. Hebert asked if we should educate the community about ways in which the superintendent will partner with the community. Ms. Briggs added this change to the goals and read the new goal statement.

Superintendent Murphy asked if there was ongoing feedback for superintendent performance in the past. She suggested including opportunities to check in on her progress. Maureen LaCroix stated that MASS has a process for superintendent evaluation. Suggestions were made that an informal evaluation of the superintendent's performance could be done informally at the January retreat. Supt. Murphy said she would like more language about her expectations. Mr. Hebert said we need to develop a communication structure that will operationalize the work between the superintendent and the School Committee. Supt. Murphy said she visualizes doing this with a flowchart.

#### Superintendent Goal Review and Setting

Supt. Murphy displayed a draft of her three goals for the coming school year. She said she tried to connect all the goals to safe and supportive environments' theme because she feels that is an important focus.

Her goals were grouped under the headings of 1) District Improvement, 2) Professional, and 3) Student Learning.

Within the above group her action items were broken down by 1) Action Item, 2) Timeline and 3) Evidence groups.

She said she will present her entry plans to the School Committee in September and will present her Findings in February.

Maureen LaCroix, from MASS commented that it would be beneficial for the new superintendent to follow the DESE guidelines. Year 1 should focus on learning goals for Supt. Murphy. Superintendent Murphy said she would also like to focus on developing consistency in the teacher evaluations.

The group discussed the fact that only one person on the School Committee was here three years ago. Mr. Polito thinks that this is an opportunity for flexibility and a time to embrace change.

Ms. McCormick said she appreciates the Action Items in Supt. Murphy's goals. Supt. Murphy added that she is still editing the goals section. Ms. Briggs cautioned her to not add too many goals because her first evaluation will be in March.

#### 2023-24 Subcommittees: Subcommittee Review and Possible Restructuring

Mr. Hebert suggested tabling subcommittee changes to another Retreat meeting. The group agreed to table subcommittee assignments to another Retreat meeting and when subcommittee memberships are assigned, that time commitments and School Committee tenure will be taken into consideration. They talked about doing a Doodle poll to see when the next Retreat meeting was most convenient to schedule.

Mr. Acosta thinks they need to start talking about excess property. He said any repurposing of school property is bound to galvanize a lot of feedback.

Ms. McCormick offered to be the Policy subcommittee chair.

The issue was raised that the union wants Mr. Polito to step down from the Negotiations Subcommittee. Mr. Polito said he feels that the concern is unjustified. He feels that there is benefit to him being on the Budget and the Negotiations Subcommittees. Mr. Hebert said he would rather not remove a member who is effective. Mr. Polito said he did some self reflection and he did not feel that he did anything disruptive or inappropriate during the union meetings.

Mr. Acosta said we have been successful during the past year with our contracts, but negotiations will ramp up again in a few weeks. Mr. Hebert said we need to know why the unions feel this way about Mr. Polito in order for us to address the issue. Supt. Murphy stressed that she will need partnering during her first year and talked about the importance of formulating a process for working with the unions. She feels that new leadership teams bring opportunities for a shift in culture.

Dr. Kelly reminded everyone that the Paraprofessional contract needs to be completely restructured and structural changes impact the budget. The group talked about Polito staying on the Negotiations Subcommittee with Briggs, Flynn Gallant and Twomey and if there is specific actionable feedback then he can be removed later. Mr. Polito said they are currently preparing all contracts: Unit A, B, Paraprofessionals, Interventionists and Cafeteria workers and there will be a significant time commitment for members.

The group agreed that it may be a good idea to establish a new Facilities Subcommittee.

#### Approval of meeting minutes

Approval of meeting minutes from previous meetings will be tabled to the August 22, 2023 School Committee meeting.

***Motion was made to adjourn the School Committee Meeting. Motion was approved by a unanimous vote of 7-0.***

*Submitted by*

*Virginia Quinn*

*Recording Secretary*