

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Committee Meeting
August 22, 2023

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Victor Hebert
Stephen Acosta (remote participation)
Mayanne Briggs
Dr. Leah Flynn Gallant (remote participation)
Cailen McCormick (absent)
Christopher Polito
Laurie Twomey

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

Nan Murphy, Superintendent
Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
Matthew Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance
Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment (absent)
Dr. Heather Smith, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum (absent)

Meeting Location:

O'Brien Meeting Room

School Committee Meeting commenced at 7:00 pm.

Open Meeting

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

Pledge of Allegiance

PUBLIC COMMENT

Andrew Czazatsy, 118 Sprague St., believes that building the new school at the site of the old Oakdale School will create inequities in the Manor area of Dedham. People with families will not want to move to the Manor area and this will cause the demise of that area.

Nicole Homire, Greenlodge St. registered complaints about the size of school. She said even though the building will hold more students, at the same time it seems it will not be big enough for projected enrollment.

Jim Maher, 22 Sherman Road, president of the Manor due to the lack of feedback from the Greenlodge community. He said that there are so many people on vacation that this is not a good time for a vote. He feels that due to the name of the project, Greenlodge/Manor families had no idea about the

Greenlodge closing. He thanked Supt. Murphy for her attempts to change the name of the project to be more inclusive of the Greenlodge/Manor community.

Peter Zahka, 216 Greenlodge St. feels that the SBRC recommendation is the wrong decision. He feels that the School Committee needs to be informed that a significant number of Town Meeting members will not vote for the project. He would like to see all the elementary schools retained. He thinks more people would support a stand alone school at Oakdale.

Josh Langmead, 12 Border St. PTO President of Oakdale School thanked John Tocci and the other SBRC members for all the work they have put into this project. He said he doesn't necessarily agree with the decision, but he does not want to go backwards at this late date. He agrees that neighborhood schools are the fabric of Dedham, but our buildings are failing our teachers and students. Change is difficult, but our priority should be the progress of our students.

Lindsey Galvaz has lived in Dedham since she was 10 years old. She felt welcomed into the community as a fifth grader and now her kids attend the Greenlodge School. She would like to see the Town fix the schools that exist, rather than building bigger schools.

Elizabeth Doris Gustin, 8 Walker Lane lives in the Riverdale district. She said the Riverdale School is 100 years old and she feels that the faster Oakdale/Greenlodge School is built, the quicker that Riverdale can be upgraded. She is amazed that Dedham has erected three schools in such a short period. She noted the importance of having new schools to enhance security and safety.

Superintendent's Update

Highlights from Superintendent Murphy's update include:

- Dedham Public Schools are now on Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) and LinkedIn. The Superintendent thanked Sara Errickson for her role in launching this program. This will allow more people to know what is happening in the district and allow better communication within the school staff and faculty.
- New migrant families are coming into Dedham. The state and Dedham have a contract to add 200 families. 30 new students will be registered in the district. Dedham will be getting state funding for each student by the number of days spent in the district.
- Diversity Equity and Inclusion Coordinator is still posted. The job has been open since May. Extended the posting in order to look further to find a candidate with experience working with students.
- 3-day Leadership Retreat was held at Curry College. The Retreat was called Aligning Systems, Structures and Instruction.
- Upgrades to the Turf Field have not been completed due to the inclement weather. All the games have been scheduled to be away until later fall.

Ms. Briggs asked about the turf situation at DHS. Mr. Wells said the track had some water problems draining from the Concession Stand, but drainage was added to pull water away from the field.

Mr. Polito asked if we could have a hard deadline on the turf/field so we can still use the field in fall. Mr. Wells said the topcoat needs to cure for three days and then the paint needs to cure and all the rain has affected that project. Mr. Wells said he is still confident that the project can be completed by the fall.

Mr. Polito asked how we are doing on staffing. Murphy said there are Paraprofessionals positions like crossing guard and music positions but classrooms are 95% staffed.

Reports/Updates/Requests

- Presentation by Vertex – Building Project Manager

Steve Theran, Vertex Project Manager, showed the scheduled timeline.

He reviewed the process to date. He said the Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) deadline to MSBA is August 31, 2023. The final preferred solution and cost will need to be submitted to MSBA by the end of December in order to get approval in time for the Spring Town Meeting. Then the Design Process takes a year. He is hoping to have a project bid by Spring 2025 and building completion in September 2026 at the earliest.

- Discussion & Vote on the PSR Submission to MSBA

Mr. Hebert said Mr. Theran and Tocci will discuss the Preferred Schematic Report (PSR) process.

Mr. Polito said he has to recuse himself because this vote affects the site selection and he lives within 300 ft. of the Oakdale site.

In response to Mr. Polito's recusal and its effect on the vote, Ms. Briggs read the State's Open Meeting Law. The law states that remote votes are allowed until March 31, 2025. Mr. Polito's recusal will not affect the quorum.

Mr. Theran recounted that the SBRC gave permission to submit Option D to the MSBA for the PSR. He displayed slides that showed the Option D space and design structure. He noted that the gym may be moved to provide better community access. He said that the design allows for each grade to be separate, lower at one end, upper at other end. Second floor view was shown. He reported that the MSBA comments on the Preliminary Design Plan were mainly about process. The PSR that is submitted will include all presentations and minutes.

Mr. Hebert said that School Committee members have received emails with pros and cons of the process and he said members will continue to work to help the community understand the process. The submission of the PSR is a step to get the proposal to Town Meeting so the community's voice can be heard.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Mr. Acosta apologized for having to participate remotely. He thanked the committee and board members, the administration and the community for their participation in the project. He agrees with Mr. Zahka's comments, but he feels strongly that the new school is in the interest of the students. As a life-long Dedhamite, he and the four generations of his family have seen a myriad of changes in Dedham. He said that 700 o

Four elementary school students are in substandard facilities. He has listened to all comments and read all emails he has received and he is assured that the new school has the potential to improve student academic experiences. School building costs are escalating and we need to take advantage of the support from MSBA because we don't know that we will have that opportunity again. He feels this

decision was not made lightly and many factors were considered. For these reasons, he will vote Yes on the PSR submission.

Dr. Flynn Gallant said she will vote Yes on the PSR so that the process can be moved ahead to Town Meeting for the community to weigh in on the project.

Ms. Briggs reminded people that 550 students is an average sized school in Mass. She said the School Committee pushed back on the SBRC to make sure there were six classes per grade to maintain the small class sizes. She pointed out that the small class size is very important to the School Committee members. Ms. Briggs said the staff and faculty will care for our students as always. The schools will also allow Dedham to fulfill ADA compliance requirements.

Ms. Twomey said the members have received emails and had many conversations with the community. She reminded people that whether they oppose or agree with the consolidation, it's apparent that Dedham schools are highly regarded by the community. There are still some difficult decisions to be made, but they are being made with concern and care for the future. She feels we need to make the decision to submit the PSR with Option D in order to get this project to Town Meeting for further review. She feels we can't run the risk of not voting after all the hard work of the boards, committees and the school administration. She said she will vote YES for the PSR submission and, as such, is putting trust in all the people who worked to get the project to this point.

Motion was made to approve the Owner's Project Manager submission of the Preferred Schematic Report to the MSBA detailing the 550-student enrollment at the Oakdale site utilizing Design Option D, including any minor edits proposed by the SBRC through its Chair or the School Committee through its Chair or other project team members. Motion was approved by a roll call vote of 5-0. (Ms. McCormick was absent from the vote and Mr. Polito recused himself due to conflict of interest.)

- Discussion and Potential Vote on Building Project Interim Name

Supt. Murphy talked about the community's request for a more inclusive name for the project. Last night, at the SBRC meeting, the group suggested "Greenlodge/Oakdale" for the project name.

Mr. Polito commented that it was late in the process to change the name so he disagrees with the change.

Mr. Hebert said the scope has changed, and it now affects the whole town. Mr. Hebert prefers Greenlodge/Oakdale.

Mr. Acosta and Ms. Briggs said they are in favor of the Greenlodge/Oakdale name.

Motion was made to refer to the new school building project as the Greenlodge/Oakdale project. Motion was approved by a Roll Call vote of 4-1. (Ms. McCormick and Dr. Flynn Gallant were absent and Mr. Polito voted against the motion).

Subcommittee Updates

- Budget

No updates.

- Communications

No updates.

- Curriculum Advisory

No updates.

- Policy

No updates.

- SBRC

Updates provided previously.

- Traffic Circulation

No updates.

- Negotiations

No updates.

- Parks & Recreation

No updates.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve the June 21, 2023 meeting minutes by a roll call vote of 4-0. (Ms. McCormick and Dr. Flynn Gallant were absent from vote; Ms. Twomey abstained because she was not a School Committee member at the time of the meeting.)

Motion was made to approve the July 17, 2023 meeting minutes by a roll call vote of 4-0. (Ms. McCormick and Dr. Flynn Gallant were absent from vote; Ms. Twomey abstained because she was not a School Committee member at the time of the meeting.)

Motion was made to approve the August 2, 2023 Retreat meeting minutes by a roll call vote of 5-0. (Ms. McCormick and Dr. Flynn Gallant were absent from the vote.)

Old/New Business*

Mr. Hebert announced that he is working with the Town to secure the O'Brien Room for future meetings. They are trying to get the O'Brien Room either every other Tuesday or Wednesday. When availability is established, then he will announce the 2023-24 meeting dates.

Mr. Acosta requested updates to the Subcommittee memberships. He noted that at the School Committee Retreat it was decided that a Facilities Subcommittee would be added. Mr. Hebert said that will be on the agenda of the next meeting.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Mr. Acosta thanked the Transportation Working Group for their success in securing a grant for the new mural on Needham St. that was painted to calm the traffic. Ms. Briggs said the mural seems to be slowing drivers down.

Mr. Polito wished good luck to all the sports teams at the beginning of the school year.

Motion was made to adjourn from public session, move to Executive Session and not return to public session. Motion was approved by a roll call vote of 5-0. (Ms. McCormick and Dr. Flynn Gallant were absent from vote).

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary