

**DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**School Committee Meeting Retreat**  
**September 5, 2023**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

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

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

Nan Murphy, Superintendent  
Dr. Ian Kelly, Deputy Superintendent  
Matthew Wells, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations  
Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services  
Dr. Heather Smith, Director of Teaching and Learning (absent)

Vice -Chair Mayanne Briggs called the School Committee meeting to order, in Chair Hebert's absence.

AGENDA:

Review of Retreat Sessions 1 & 2

Ms. Briggs asked if there were any questions from the previous retreats. No one had questions.

The Selected Massachusetts General Laws 2023 for School Committees and School Personnel was distributed to the attendees of the Retreat.

Discuss Agenda Format – Planning and Meeting Norms

Ms. Briggs announced that the future schedule for School Committee meetings will be established by the School Committee Chair and Vice-Chair. They are currently reviewing previous agendas and schedules with Amy Hicks.

Retreat training held this summer informed members about agenda formatting and setting time limits for speakers at meetings. Members talked about having a designated person during meetings to help make sure that the meetings are kept within an established timeframe.

Mr. Acosta said that the training included sample agendas and advised that the meetings be limited to 1 ½ hours. Accurate agendas are necessary so the community will know which meetings will be important to attend. Mr. Polito thinks that setting a restricted time for the meetings may not be a good idea. Supt. Murphy would like to set time limits on the faculty/staff presentations. She would like to see updates be

limited to five minutes and reports by district personnel be limited to 10 minutes. Supt. Murphy feels that If School Committee members or the public want more info, then they can ask for a followup report. Mr. Polito would like to receive the presentations at least a day before the meeting for review. Ms. Twomey and Ms. McCormick think that reports/presentations could be sent out to School Committee members a week before the meeting. Mr. Polito would like to receive reports/presentations the Friday before the meeting.

The group continued to talk about the format of the meetings. Mr. Polito expressed the importance of limiting the use of acronyms because the public do not always understand the meaning of them. Dr. Flynn Gallant commented on the frequent number of updates from the SBRC on the building project. Supt. Murphy suggested that the SBRC update be included in the Subcommittee updates. Ms. Briggs suggested that updates from the Greenlodge/Oakdale building project could be a monthly agenda item for Vertex to deliver. In the absence of major SBRC related events, the updates could be included in the SBRC Subcommittee update. The group also discussed including a statement about public recording in the agenda. Mr. Acosta thinks that scheduling more student and faculty/staff presentations will increase community attendance at the meetings. The group discussed changing the agenda so that Acknowledgements and Recognitions are at the beginning of the meeting so that parents who are attending for specific recognitions do not have to stay for the entire meeting.

They all agreed that donations will be continued as a separate agenda item.

Ms. Briggs read the Communication norm from the School Committee Norms document (updated September 18, 2023).

Ms. Briggs feels that communications need to be centralized. Supt. Murphy commented that in her previous role as Principal in another district, she did not have contact with School Committee members without the direction of the Superintendent. She talked about the importance of keeping the School Committee Chair and Superintendent's roles autonomous. Mr. Polito thinks that sometimes there needs to be direct communication between members and the Superintendent and/or administration. Supt. Murphy feels that updates can be done in response to specific questions raised between the Chair of the School Committee and the Superintendent. Ms. Briggs revised the communication norm and said we will start out with the norm, as written, and then revise, if necessary.

After revision, the new communication norm reads:

General communication goes through the chair. If doing subcommittee work, then CC the Superintendent and Chair in email to Assistant Superintendent. Direct phone calls to administration (Asst. Supts) should be scheduled in advance.

Ms. Briggs felt a guideline about turnaround time may be necessary to add. Dr. Flynn Gallant suggested a 48 hour turnaround. The group agreed that this protocol can be revisited at the January 2024 Retreat. The group discussed Jim Hardy's guidelines from the training. Mr. Hardy noted that not everything the Chair and Superintendent discuss has to become part of the School Committee agenda. Ms. Twomey said that there could be issues that impact Superintendent Goals but do not come under the purview of the School Committee. Ms. Twomey said it may be a good idea to review the Open Meeting law

parameters. The group discussed the appropriate times to talk directly to the Superintendent. Discussion centered around using texts for emergency situations only. Otherwise voice and e-mail is appropriate. Ms. Twomey raised the issue of an appropriate protocol for sensitive issues. Supt. Murphy said that they will need to define “urgent.” She would like to see the definition of urgent focus on potential danger to students. The initial emergency announcement should be broadcast once and secondary communication should probably be done by email. Everyone agreed that responding through Facebook to urgent issues is not helpful

Ms. Twomey thinks that each School Committee member’s personal goal should be to change the perception of the School Committee. Members need to make sure that personal and professional issues are always handled separately. Issues not under the purview of the School Committee should be directed to the Superintendent.

#### Personnel/Policy/Budget.

The group talked about wearing different hats as a parent and School Committee member. They talked about situations that required listening instead of talking.

Supt. Murphy said if information is sent in advance of meetings as suggested, then the School Committee needs to read the information and come prepared to the meetings. She suggested that if Assistant Superintendents are not directly involved with the agenda, that they should have the option to not attend the School Committee meeting.

#### Continued Discussion of School Committee Goals

Ms. Briggs read the School Committee 2023-24 goals for discussion.

She said the goals will be voted on at the September 20, 2023 meeting.

#### Finalize Superintendent’s Goals

Supt. Murphy talked about the District Improvement Plan. She said her entry plan that she will share at a subsequent meeting in September will help her inform the District Goals. She said in her Improvement Plan she plans to focus on Safe Schools because the District needs to plan for crisis management.

#### Reorganize Subcommittee Assignments

The group discussed subcommittee assignments. They talked about which subcommittees Ms. Twomey would be suited for. Ms. Twomey said that due to time constraints she doesn’t think the SBRC and Negotiations Subcommittees would be a good choice for her. Dr. Flynn Gallant said she will remain on the Budget Subcommittee. The Financial Policy Review Subcommittee only has two more meetings. Ms. Briggs said they need a voting member to be on the TEC Collaborative that meets once a month on Friday mornings. She said she could remain on the TEC Collaborative. She said that the Collaborative focuses on SPED services and professional development. Dr. Kelly said he would also stay on the TEC Collaborative. Ms. Twomey offered to be on the Facilities Subcommittee. They discussed redefining the goals of each subcommittee. Supt. Murphy offered to be on the Policy Subcommittee in order to help familiarize herself with district policies. Ms. Twomey offered to be on the Curriculum Advisory Subcommittee and DOSA (substance abuse awareness). Dr. Kelly said he will provide the group with more details about the Joint Labor Negotiations requirements.

### Discuss Future Meeting Dates and Locations

The group talked about the 2023-24 School Committee meeting schedule being on the first Wednesday of month at Town Hall. Since they are not sure of the availability of the Town Hall and they typically meet on the first and third Wednesday of each month, Supt. Murphy asked if the calendar could be developed without location.

They discussed changing the start time of the meetings to earlier than 7 pm. Mr. Polito said he likes the 7 pm start time so that any subcommittee meetings can be scheduled prior to the meeting. They talked about adding a third meeting when necessary and making sure meetings are not held during vacation weeks.

### Old/New Business

Dedication of the Practice Field will be held on Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Dedham Day is Sept. 23rd. The School Committee plans to set up a tent. The tent will need staffing with shifts of two people from 12 to 5 pm.

Run for the Fallen is this Saturday at Memorial Field.

Ms. Twomey talked about what successes could be highlighted at Dedham Day. The group talked about including the Fall sports schedule, updates on the new social media choices and information about the Greenlodge/Oakdale project.

***Motion was made to adjourn and approved by a vote of 7-0.***

*Submitted by*

*Virginia Quinn*

*Recording Secretary*