

**DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Committee Meeting
September 6, 2023**

**HYBRID MEETING (O'Brien Meeting Room, 450
Washington St., and via Zoom)**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Victor Hebert
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

Meeting Location:

O'Brien Meeting Room

School Committee Meeting commenced at 7:00 pm.

Open Meeting (Public Meeting is recorded and can be accessed via Dedham Television)

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

Pledge of Allegiance

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Butler, 60 Clark St. commented that the grounds around the high school and Avery School were overgrown. She thanked the Superintendent for getting the area cleaned up. She asked that the School Committee and Administration make sure that the grounds continue to be improved. She also said that Riverdale's basketball net has not been working for two years.

Brian Keaney, 183 Grant Ave. asked about why the popular Greenlodge elementary would be shuttered. Even though Avery is the best school, they are one of the lowest performing schools in the state. He feels that they don't have the votes for the new school. If the new school project fails at Town Meeting,

it will not look good for Dedham. He wants the School Committee to reconsider the decision about the new elementary school building project.

Mary Ellen McDonough, 21 Heritage Hill, said that is not an average size MSBA project. She thinks 550 student enrollment is too large of a school, for the acreage. There seems to be a disparity between the Dedham elementary school populations.

Josh Langmead, 12 Border St. said that he is in favor of the Greenlodge/Oakdale project but now that we are moving forward with the project, we need to undertake the field project at the same time.

Superintendent Update

Supt. Murphy welcomed all students back to the buildings. She showed photos collected from the first day of school. She attended every school and made it into a majority of the school classrooms. She announced that the newest enrollment number is 2,719 students. She feels classes are manageable at this number. There may be a few new enrollees this week. She announced that there are 45 new school staff, and 11 are from the office of student support. There are also 14 new classroom teachers including 5 long term subs and 13 new paraprofessionals. If you are interested in becoming a paraprofessional, please apply. You can apply through the Dedham website.

She discussed the new social media that utilizes the same standard format that is updated every Monday. Includes a monthly Superintendent update that comes out on Friday. She announced that new Supt. coffees information will be included in the October update. She addressed the high heat this week and the precautions being taken in the older schools without air conditioning.

Mr. Wells noted that we don't have the power to be able to install air conditioning in the older buildings.

Dr. Kelly said he will get information about the new enrollment numbers and how they compare to last year.

Mr. Polito asked about the status of the turf on the High School field. Mr. Wells said they are doing the top coat now. The last piece is weather dependent and we are pushing hard to get this project completed.

Ms. McCormick applauded Sara Errickson for her work with social media updates.

Education Report(s)

Back to School Educator Professional Development Update

Dr. Heather Smith presented slides about Professional Development Day. She said the day offered an opportunity to recognize staff and faculty and to provide mandatory compliance training. This year they are trying to align work to make sure all staff and faculty are working on the same goals through the utilization of the District Improvement Plan for standardization.

Mr. Polito said it was great to see the enthusiasm of the educators on Professional Development Day. Dr. Smith agreed that people were excited to be back to school.

Mr. Hebert said the first day set the tone for a positive school year. Ms. Briggs said the message of the day was about relationships and that is a positive shift.

Summer Programming Update

Alyssa Freda, Director of Extended School Day and School Year Programming. She talked about the 2023 summer programs. Attempted to start a Middle School ESL training, but due to travel, they were not able to establish this but they still plan to work on this next year. Jump Start did not reach the necessary numbers to run the program. She talked about offering a more truncated program next year. The timing of the program was not convenient for families. However, all other programs had steady and increasing enrollment numbers. She showed slides on the budget. Four grants were available and the budget lined up with expenses and they should be within projections. The programs are all self-sustaining. Transportation services were available and food services were adaptable and accommodating. This year, the increased numbers at Avery required three lunch services. DPS partnered with ESY, Dedham Park and Recs, YMCA and Community House so that families had choices. She collaborated with Dr. Smith to build a summer LEAP website for incoming staff with a handbook. There was also onboarding training for staff.

Her goals for next year are to hold registration earlier next year. She also wants to continue to add new programs. They may need to spread out some of the program locations.

Dr. Flynn Gallant commented on the success of the programs and she commented that earlier registration will be helpful.

Ms. McCormick said that food services supplied breakfast and lunch. She said it is an accomplishment to maintain self sufficiency.

Mr. Wells applauded Ms. Freda on the job she had done with budget forecasting for the summer programs.

Ms. Briggs also commended Ms. Freda for building relationships between stakeholders. She commented on the Jump Start program and offered School Committee assistance to get the program up and running successfully.

Mr. Hebert said his kids are moving out of the Avery Institute, but his daughter enjoyed it so much that she helped out with one of the programs this year.

Dr. Kelly said we had talked about enhancing the summer program for years and through good leadership, the program has now been enhanced successfully. He announced that this is the first day of the in-house before/after school programming at Avery.

Ms. Freda said Dedham received a certificate of eligibility at Avery School that allows more financial assistance for students. Dr. Kelly noted that this was a major accomplishment.

Summer Programming Budget Review

Mr. Wells said the complete ownership of the Summer Program by Ms. Freda had made it easy to oversee the program. The Summer Meal Program from Project Bread was leveraged at Avery Institute.

Subcommittees

Discussion and Vote on Subcommittee reassignments

Mr. Hebert reported that subcommittee assignments were finalized at the Retreats. A list of the new subcommittee assignments was displayed on the screen.

Mr. Acosta said they created a Facilities Subcommittee to support the buildings under the School Committee purview.

Mr. Hebert said there are modifications that may be made in the future to one or two of the committees, but they will approve them as they stand currently.

Motion was made to approve the subcommittee assignments. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

o Budget

No updates.

o Communications

No updates.

o Curriculum Advisory

No updates.

o Policy

No updates.

o SBRC

Mr. Acosta said there will be a tent at Dedham Day for the community to get feedback on the models for the new school with SBRC and Dedham School Committee members.

Mr. Polito asked about the details of the schematic design. He asked about what will happen to the existing Oakdale School? What will happen to it? He also asked about the fields at the new school? Could we include the fields as part of the building project? Mr. Acosta said we are moving into the schematic stage and there will be more info about demolition and the fields as the project progresses. Mr. Polito asked if the School Committee could have a meeting with the SBRC about keeping the neighborhood schools and pivot to a stand alone school. Could we entertain that option still?

Ms. Briggs said we would need to vote to reopen the issue. Mr. Polito said we don't need to vote to have a discussion. Mr. Hebert said we cannot go back to MSBA now to change things until it is voted at Town Meeting. Backtracking on our vote would undermine the project. Mr. Hebert said we cannot have Conversations about a changed recommendation. He said the enrollment numbers are set and we have to let it play out.

Ms. McCormick said the goal is to build a new school and we need to stick with the process.

Mr. Polito said he wants a new building and he doesn't want to stop the process, but he is worried that Town Meeting members will not vote for the new plan.

o Active Transportation Working Group

See New Business.

o Traffic Circulation

No updates.

o Negotiations

No updates.

o Parks & Recreation

No updates.

Ms. McCormick wants to know if we can add Human Rights Commission updates to the subcommittees. Mr. Hebert said he would add the HRC to the subcommittee list.

Donations

Mr. Wells announced an anonymous donation was made to the Middle School for school supplies for Grades 6, 7, 8.

Motion was made to accept the donation to the Middle School. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve the August 8 and August 9, 2023 meeting minutes. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Motion was made to approve the August 22nd meeting minutes. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. Ms. McCormick abstained because she was not present.

Mr. Acosta noted that the May 17, 2023 School Committee minutes were amended by the public commentator. The reference from Fall of 2024 needs to be changed to read Fall of 2023.

Motion was made to approve the change to the minutes of May 17, 2023. Motion was approved unanimously to amend the minutes from May 17, 2023.

Old/New Business

Ms. McCormick said that Vicki Castagnola, district representative from HRC, reported that at the last meeting of the HRC that Committee roles were restructured. There are currently three open seats and one is a student representative. The HRC said they will be submitting an article of rights of the new immigrants to the Dedham Times and they said they will be available to help the schools with assimilation activities.

Ms. Briggs attended the Active Transportation Working Group along with Matt Wells and John Tocci and Heffernan from the SBRC. She reported that there were 21 people at the meeting and infrastructure and bike lanes were discussed. Request to reopen traffic study around the High School, Middle School and Avery. Daniella DeLuca, chair of the Working Group, asked if the schools could do a survey about walking or biking and why not? Could we include day cares as well? Ms. Briggs asked the Working Group to come to the next meeting to recognize them for their efforts in creating the Riverdale mural.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Ms. Twomey is excited that the new summer programs are drawing so much interest. This interest and success shows that “One Dedham” is alive and well. She announced that the community worked hard to clean up the Riverdale grounds this weekend. Participants included Noble and Greenough families as well. She thanked the administration and facilities for taking care of the grounds on the DHS, Middle School and Avery.

Motion was made to adjourn from public session. Motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary