

Dedham Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
Dedham Town Hall – O’Brien Meeting Room
January 31, 2024

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

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

Naila Hernandez, student representative (absent)

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

Nan Murphy, Superintendent
Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations and Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services

Meeting held at the Town Hall at 7 pm.

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

Ms. Briggs, Vice Chair of the School Committee, called the meeting to order in Mr. Hebert’s absence. She announced that this would be a truncated business meeting due to the frequency of meetings this month.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Andrew Czsatsky, 188 Sprague St. He expressed sentiment that the merged Oakdale School is no longer viable. He recognized the hard work of everyone who was involved in the process. Need to take decisive action and we need to envision a school that includes shared values.

Holley Redmond talked about the calendar and the discussion about having school on the religious holidays. She feels that removing Rosh Hashanah is not inclusive at a time when Anti Semitism is so high.

Jim Maher, 22 Sherman Road is hoping that the School Committee could prevent much conflict in the Town by making the right decision about the Oakdale School project.

Business Report

• Discussion & Vote on 2024-2025 School Calendar

Supt. Murphy said she sent out a survey poll that solicited feedback from DPS families about the observance of Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday. The feedback she received has guided her to make a recommendation that the calendar stays as originally presented with Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday remaining as observed holidays. She suggested that maybe next year, we can better utilize half days to attain the goal of an earlier release day in June.

Ms. McCormick said the overarching message should be inclusivity and she is in favor of keeping both Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday as observed holidays.

Motion was made to accept the 2024-25 School Calendar as presented. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Mr. Hebert was absent from the meeting.)

• Discussion & Vote on 2024-2025 ECEC Before/After School Fees

Dr. Kelly displayed a slide with a partial and full fee increase. He explained that the goal is to try to align the ECEC Before/After school fees with the LEAP fees. He said the ECEC fees have not been increased for eight years. He recommends a partial increase at this time to increase the fees gradually.

Ms. McCormick said she would be willing to vote on the increase, but she wants to ensure that the Administration communicates the annual percentage increases to families.

Motion was made to approve the 2023-25 Before/After school fees as proposed. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Mr. Hebert was absent from the meeting.)

• Discussion & Vote on Solar Panel Project

Dr. Kelly talked about the solar project and the mandate to move towards renewable energy. The current proposed projects are canopies at the high school at the end zone lot and recreation road, canopy at the Middle School and large canopy at the ECEC. The vote tonight would be to approve the projects and authorize the Town Manager to finalize the contracts.

Mr. Polito asked if the Planning Board has been involved in this project? Dr. Kelly said that the Planning Board has been working with Solect Energy to make sure clearance is permitted.

Motion was made to approve the solar project to move forward with Solect Energy and the Town of Dedham. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Mr. Hebert was absent from the meeting.)

• Discussion & Vote on FY25 Operating Budget

Supt. Murphy said the proposed 8% increase in the School budget does not reflect a level service budget and would include a reduction of 14 FTEs. Since last discussed, the Governor has released her state budget with a \$2.7M increase in Chapter 70 funds for Dedham. The funding is disbursed through the schools and then Town Management has to approve the use. If approved, the 8% increase would only be a 3% increase when offset by the Chapter 70 funding. Supt. Murphy cautioned that this extra funding doesn't change the need to make reductions. The Senate and House have to approve the funding and it will not be approved until early Fall.

Ms. Twomey asked if historically the Town of Dedham approves the Chapter 70 budget? Supt. Murphy said the town leadership is aware and understanding about our funding needs.

Ms. Twomey asked if the funding is allocated, could we increase our budget demands past the 8% increase? Mr. Polito said we could ask for closer to the original budget of 11% increase, but we need to be careful that we strike a balance with the Town and work as a partner.

Supt. Murphy concurred that in the budget subcommittee she made a recommendation to stay at 8% in order to maintain a healthy partnership with the Town.

Dr. Flynn Gallant and Mr. Acosta hope that the Town will do the right thing and appropriate the Chapter 70 funding to the schools.

Motion was made to approve the FY25 operating budget for \$58,826,432. (Mr. Hebert was absent from the meeting.)

- Review updated MSBA Enrollment Options and possible Vote to Certify Enrollment Options

Mr. Polito recused himself from this vote.

Ms. Briggs announced that today they received new numbers from the MSBA. The enrollment numbers are as follows:

- Standalone Oakdale approved for 360 students in grades 1-5.
- Consolidated Oakdale/Riverdale approved for 560 students in grades 1-5.
- Consolidated Oakdale/Greenlodge approved for 665 students in grades 1-5.

The vote tonight would allow Supt. Murphy, Victor Hebert and Leon Goodman to ask that these numbers be certified at the MSBA next board meeting.

Mr. Acosta said that these numbers come with additional classrooms.

Motion was made to authorize Mr. Hebert in his capacity as Chair, Ms. Murphy in her capacity as Superintendent, and Mr. Goodman in his capacity as Town Manager to sign and execute the study enrollment certification from the MSBA provided on January 31, 2024. Motion was approved by a vote of 5-0. (Mr. Hebert was absent and Mr. Polito abstained from the vote).

Subcommittees Updates

- Budget

No further updates.

- Curriculum Advisory

Ms. Twomey said the Curriculum Advisory subcommittee met this month and talked with Dr. Smith about the language pilot currently underway. Dr. Smith will join an upcoming meeting to update us about the language pilot. She said they also reviewed the district and school improvement plan and are planning to hold focus groups in March. The next meeting is February 27th.

- Facilities

Mr. Acosta said that the next stage of their analysis is a tour of the high school. The Finance and Warrant Committee will join them during that tour and the public is also invited.

- Financial Policy Review

Mr. Polito said the Financial Policy Subcommittee will be meeting again this week and hopefully finish the review this week.

- Parks & Recreation

No update.

- Policy

Mr. Acosta reminded the Chairs of the subcommittees to return their edits on the subcommittee descriptions.

- SBRC

Ms. Briggs said that there are no further updates but there will be a meeting this Tuesday, Feb. 6th at Town Hall at 6:30. No action can be taken until Feb. 28th when MSBA votes on the enrollment numbers.

Donations

Dr. Langenhorst is requesting approval of a donation by the Library Innovation Team (DELit) of \$3500 to support the townwide Dedham Reads Together program.

Motion was made to approve the donation from the Library Innovation Team for their donation of \$3500 to Dedham Reads Together program. (Mr. Hebert was absent from the meeting.)

Review and Approval Vote of Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve the minutes from the January 17, 2024 School Committee as presented.

Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Mr. Hebert was absent from the meeting.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Supt. Murphy announced that the Commissioner of Education noted the merits of Don Langenhorst in his accomplishments in securing data privacy in the Dedham Public Schools.

Dr. Flynn Gallant thanked the Dedham High Performing Arts groups for the sing-a-longs on Saturday morning.

Ms. Twomey attended the “Charting the Course” workshop open to newly elected School Committee members run through the National Association for School Committees. She said it was a great learning experience that covered many topics.

Ms. McCormick offered acknowledgement to Alyssa Freda for her work on getting the summer program registration out in a timely manner and to the teachers who will be running programs.

Executive Session – Exemption 3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining

Motion was made to go into Executive Session and not return to public session. Motion was approved by a vote of 6-0. (Mr. Hebert was absent from the meeting.)

Submitted by

Virginia Quinn

Recording Secretary