



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES January 15, 2019

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	January 15, 2019
Location:	MERMHS Learning Commons
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Rachel Fitzgibbon, Co-Chairperson Ken Warnock Ann Cameron Sarah Wolf Caroline Weld Julie Riordan
Absent:	
Guests:	Patricia Puglisi, MERSD HS Principal Spencer Meek, Student Representative
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

A. Call to Order – Ms. Erdmann called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

Public Comment – Ms. Teresa Holland, 25 Woodholm Rd., Manchester expressed concern regarding class size at Memorial Elementary School, noting that each year one of her children has been at Memorial School a teacher had been dropped and the class size of 44 students had resulted in 22 students in 2 classes. On the other hand, her second child was in a class with 44 children and there were 3 separate classes. Ms. Erdmann stated the guideline for class size is 24 to 25 maximum. Currently the Elementary Schools are experiencing a decline in enrollment while the District has larger than usual

classes in the Middle High School (MHS). Resources have been moved to address the increased enrollment in the MHS. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated she had spoken with Principal Willis regarding the enrollment issue and distribution of staff – she assured Ms. Holland the class size would not be increasing, and her concerns had been heard.

Ms. Weld encouraged Ms. Holland to keep coming to the School Committee meetings stating she has a child in one of the “bubble classes” and class size was one of the reasons she became an active School Committee member.

1) Consent Agenda –

- Acceptance of Warrants
- Minutes December 4, 2018, December 12, 2018 and Amended Minutes September 4, 2018
- Gym Equipment Donation from Grid Iron Club

Ms. Cameron moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Cameron moved to approve the donation from the Grid Iron Club dated November 15, 2018, Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The School Committee acknowledges the generous gift from the Grid Iron Club and thanks the Club on behalf of all athletes for their support of District athletic programs. Thank you only begins to express the gratitude we feel for all you have done and do!

2) Chairman’s Report

Ms. Erdmann stated she had communicated with a School Committee member from Dover-Sherborn regarding later start times for High School students. The Committee member indicated their District was studying the issue and was interested in knowing if MERSD was studying the issue. Ms. Erdmann learned that 6 of the top 10 Boston Magazine rated High Schools had moved forward with implementing later start times for High School students and 2 other schools were about to implement later start times. Ms. Erdmann also informed the Committee, Chun Lim, MD, PhD, a cognitive neurologist at Beth Israel will be speaking at Sudbury Public Schools regarding medical research related to later start times – his talk will be live streamed and available on line. She concluded by asking if the Committee was interested in studying the issue.

Ms. Weld stated the Committee has talked about later start times for long enough and it may be time to form a Task Force to comprehensively study the issue. Ms. Cameron stated she was not interested – neither Administration nor parents were lobbying for later start times and there were other priorities before the Committee. Ms. Riordan stated she was interested, and MASC has a long thread and links to research addressing the issue. Ms. Fitzgibbon stated she had been in communication with friends in Newburyport and their attempt to change to an earlier start time had failed at the School Committee vote. The friend indicated they had significant research on the subject and would be willing to share the information.

The Committee took a straw vote to further study the issue and the vote passed 5 to 2. Ms. Riordan will forward the MASC thread. Ms. Fitzgibbon indicated the communities that have passed the later start time have also had overrides to fund operating expenses, unlike the financial constraints MERSD would likely face. Superintendent Beaudoin concluded the Committee will ask some area communities to come to a Committee meeting to share their research.

3) Student Report

Mr. Meek, a junior at MERHS, joined the Committee meeting for the student update. Mr. Meek stated he was about to head home to start studying, he is in the middle of Quarter 2 tests. He takes 3 AP classes and has assessments in all his classes. He is feeling a little stress related to the amount of work he is being tested on but feels he is managing. He has had 10 assessments this week which includes several AP practice tests.

Ms. Erdmann asked how he manages his stress – he feels stress is new to him and it is a little overwhelming. He lives in Beverly and commutes he utilizes “Power Block” and believes that helps him. He does not struggle with the workload; however, he has friends who reach out for help from counseling for support.

Ms. Erdmann asked about RULER and asked if Spencer felt RULER was taking seed in the school? Spencer replied he is a peer mentor and believes RULER is beginning to work – freshmen are less likely to speak up and discuss challenges with upper classmen, but RULER is being discussed. Overall his classmates are doing well and utilizing RULER.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked what Spencer thought about a later start time for the school day? Spencer thought it would be helpful for lots of his friends to get an extra 15 minutes in the morning. Plus, with an extra 15 minutes there would be no excuse to be late for school.

4) Sub-Committee Reports

a) Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Ms. Weld and Ms. Cameron)

Ms. Cameron stated the Building Committee is finalizing the Design Development phase of the building and working on the MEP systems. Additionally, there are robust schedules moving forward on permitting and the Sub-Committee working on permitting are meeting all deadlines. Ms. Cameron indicated there are design experts on the Building Committee who are following all design decisions and informing the Committee when and why specific decisions are being made, the Committee is confident in the process. Ms. Cameron encouraged Committee members to review the design updates on the website.

b) Finance Sub-Committee (Ms. Cameron and Ms. Erdmann)

The Sub-Committee met with the Budget Collaboration team to review funding proposals. According to Mr. Urbas the goal at this point is to take advantage of good interest rates and bond

\$35M of the total now leaving \$5M outstanding to be addressed once MSBA has finalized their portion of funding. The group is reviewing level principle funding to confirm payments will be in line with what voters approved at Town Meetings. Ms. Cameron confirmed the borrowing process – it is the District’s responsibility to borrow for the new building and is being negotiated in concert with the Finance Committees of the Towns.

Mr. Urbas stated the final decision on funding would be brought to the Committee for vote at the first meeting in February. Anticipated issue date of bonds is February 14, 2019.

Superintendent Beaudoin updated the Committee on upcoming meetings regarding the building:

February 27, 2019 possibly March 13, 2019 to be confirmed – General Community Meeting updating construction plans and process.

May 8, 2019 – Parent Meeting at Memorial School with Principal Willis and John Rich of W.T. Rich to provide parents with information regarding the process of entering the building and safety steps taken to assure ongoing safety of children, parents and staff.

c) Policy Sub-Committee (Mr. Warnock and Ms. Fitzgibbon)

The Policy Sub-Committee held a kick off meeting with the 5th Grade Task Force. The purpose of the meeting was to set a time line for meetings, review the history and define objectives of the 5th Grade Trip. The meeting included principals, teachers and parents from both Essex Elementary and Memorial Elementary with Mr. Warnock and Ms. Fitzgibbon. Memorial School’s history with the 5th Grade Trip dates to 1970 with Essex’s involvement more recent. There was interest expressed in saving the trip while the goal of the Task Force is to define the trip’s relevancy in light of curriculum and program goals. Mr. Warnock is positive that the Task Force will come to an objective decision regarding the 5th Grade Trip.

d) Negotiation Team (Ms. Wolf and Ms. Riordan)

Negotiations are continuing with sub group meetings.

5) Continued Business

- HS Program of Studies – Principal Puglisi

Foreign Language Change: Update introduction to include the Seal of Bi-literacy. Additionally, the District will award eligible students the MA State Seal of Bi-literacy.

Ms. Cameron asked if this was a MA achievement and how this would help students who were going to colleges outside of MA. Principal Puglisi stated it was a student achievement to receive the Seal of proficiency in a second language at a demonstrated level. She said she will add the Seal of Bi-literacy to the school profile for students attending colleges outside of the State.

Science Change: Added AP Physics 1: AP Physics 1 is an algebra-based introductory college-level course.

Social Studies Changes: Added a new course: 9/11 and the War on Terror that will alternate every other year with Facing History and Ourselves.

Math Change: Update description of Life Skills for the 21st Century.

Ms. Erdmann asked about the Life Skills class which is under Math. Principal Puglisi indicated the teacher who developed the class was a Math teacher and the focus of the class was financial management and responsibility – the class continues to have a deep financial literacy component.

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked about AP Physics I and was there a push to add calculus B/C for students who achieve that level. Discussions are ongoing about the next addition to the course of study and Calculus B/C is being considered.

Ms. Cameron asked about technology integration across the curriculum. Principal Puglisi stated she thought technology integration was a tool for delivering or practicing growth in the area and conceded that technology integration could go deeper. Ms. Cameron would like to see where integration is effective and how integration is showing up as a 21st Century skill and how the District's students are leaving with highly developed technology skills and utilizing those skills moving forward.

Ms. Wolf asked about class size in the High School. Principal Puglisi indicated the class size was around 24 with some PE classes as high as 28 students. PE class size is being addressed in 2019-2020 with the addition of 2 sections. She will know more in February and March when she has final class numbers and will optimize sections with electives offered.

Ms. Wolf moved to approve the Program of Study, Ms. Riordan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- HS Administration Restructuring – Principal Puglisi
HS Athletic Director and Dean of Students Job Descriptions

The Athletic Director job description was developed by the Athletic Task Force after reviewing job descriptions of Athletic Directors from surrounding communities and identifying the most meaningful aspects of the positions to meet the District's needs. It was important that the educational aspects of athletics be included along with coaching and teaching other coaches.

The Dean position was first implemented as an oversight position for in school suspensions. Over the past several years students are coming into school having witnessed school shootings and the current onset of depression and anxiety has moved from age 29 to age 14½. The person in the Dean's position needs to be skilled in counseling on a first-tier level as well as assuming some administrative responsibilities that have been assumed by the Principal.

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked who the Dean would be supervising. Principal Puglisi would like the person who assumes the position to be able to supervise and evaluate teachers as well as counsel students.

Ms. Cameron stated she likes the job descriptions and how the positions focus on the Mission and are tied into Social Emotional Health. She asked what the budget implications were for the positions? Principal Puglisi stated the PE sections are in place – moving from the elementary schools. The other pieces are a 1.0 staff person available and 2 long-term substitutes are no longer needed in the upcoming year. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District is adding \$50K to \$67K to cover the new positions and the positions are a reinstatement of previously existing positions. Ms. Cameron also asked about the Professional Development Budget and if the proposed positions would be fully supported through the current budget. Principal Puglisi feels these position will be fully supported and noted the positions are required to take trainings to maintain licenses.

Ms. Cameron moved to approve the job descriptions of the Athletic Director and Dean of Students, Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Fitzgibbon stated she would like to see how the Behavioral Dean’s position plays out prior to adding the SRO position. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated the District was still in the discussion phase of the SRO position.

- FY 20 Budget – Update & Discussion

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the budget has not changed since December with an overall spending increase of 3.3%. The gap of \$380K still exists – with assumptions of \$175K reduction in the Health Care line, make pre-payments of \$70K, attrition through retirements, M5 hiring plan and long-term substitute positions which will not be required in 2019-2020 for \$125K.

There is not a lot of new news since the presentation in December, however, Mr. Urbas has been able to run the preliminary apportionment formula. The apportionment formula is how the District splits assessments between two towns. There are four inputs to determining the formula: how the District spends money – instructional and non-instructional, enrollment, property values of the towns and total population. The preliminary formula has MBTS increasing at 3.21% and Essex increasing 3.48%. Mr. Urbas does not see a significant difference from what the split is now.

6) Superintendent’s Report –

- Mid-Year Goals Update

Superintendent Beaudoin believes progress has been made on the big items listed in her goals and several smaller items will need attention.

Under District Improvement – Launch Clear Gov transparency tool to make budget more accessible is in process behind schedule. The issues appear to be around data entered and

differences between classification of information. A lot of Districts do things differently, but all is within a norm, according to Mr. Urbas.

Under Professional Practices – Utilize interest based bargaining methodology to successfully negotiate a multi-year META contract. According to Superintendent Beaudoin the negotiations are moving forward, and a final contract will hopefully be approved April 9, 2019.

Under Student Learning – NEASC in year 2 with Principal Puglisi lead and the preliminary feedback is exceedingly favorable. The District will be working on developing The Vision of the graduate. Also working on program quality reviews and implementing recommendations outlined in the reviews. Everything is in play and implementation of recommendations is ongoing.

Pass the Memorial building project and move forward into implementation phase. Achieved.

Working with Yale to identify an assessment tool that involves high school students. Superintendent Beaudoin believes RULER is doing well.

Ms. Wolf would like to see one of the new staff positions filled with a diversity candidate, Superintendent Beaudoin agrees.

7) Public Comment

Ms. Nina McKinnon, Essex – would like to see cell phone use be defined in a District policy. Cell phones are not technical integration – that is I pads and computers. Cell phones allowed in the cafeteria means students are not talking to each other and some students are likely more isolated as a result. Superintendent Beaudoin thanked Ms. McKinnon and will ask the policy sub-committee to review.

8) School Committee Comment

Ms. Weld stated she thought the High School had done away with mid-terms because there were too many tests at the same time. After listening to Mr. Meek, it appears there are still mid-terms. Superintendent Beaudoin will follow up with Principal Puglisi.

Ms. Cameron attended a Sierra Club meeting and thought the District might develop and implement some energy goals. She would like to follow up with the Committee on this issue noting Mr. Federspiel also attended the meeting and it would be a good effort for both communities.

Superintendent Beaudoin spoke to the State moving forward with recommendations and the Promise Act – it means different things for different communities; however, the District may receive \$20K to \$70K from the Act. This will not solve the transportation funding issues.

The other area of State funding is the SPED reimbursement circuit breakers which go back to 1993. With health care costs out of control and SPED populations growing it is impossible to solve the problems without additional funding.

C. Adjourn

Ms. Cameron moved to adjourn the School Committee Business meeting, Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

School Committee Next Meeting – January 29, 2019 at Essex Elementary School