



**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES January 5, 2021**

<b>Meeting:</b>	School Committee
<b>Date:</b>	January 5, 2021
<b>Location:</b>	Via Webex
<b>Attendees:</b>	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Sarah Wolf, Chairperson Shannon Erdmann, Vice Chairperson Ken Warnock Ann Cameron Eric Bourke Theresa Whitman Matt Harrington
<b>Absent:</b>	Eric Bourke
<b>Guests:</b>	Patricia Puglisi, Principal HS, Jordan Edgett, Athletic Director
<b>Recorded by:</b>	Gail Hunter

**AGENDA**

**A. Call to Order** – Ms. Wolf called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**B. Business Meeting Open Session**

**1) Public Comment –**

Paula – Gloucester – Called to encourage the School Committee to reopen School Choice. She has a child enrolled in MERSD who is participating through School Choice and would like that option available to her younger children. She is impressed with the high quality of education and

administrative support of the school principal. Paula would like to enroll her younger child through the School Choice option next year.

## **2) Chairman's Report –**

Ms. Wolf wished everyone online a Happy New Year and stated this evening's meeting was an additional meeting to develop final plans for MHS transition to hybrid.

## **3) Student Report – Lukas Shan**

Lukas stated coming back from winter break signaled the beginning of winter sports which at this time are going well. Students have been missing the social aspects of sports but even with that it appeared fewer students are participating in sports. He specifically mentioned swimming which is down several swimmers. Lukas indicated Quarter 2 ends on January 15, 2021 and things are busier moving into the second semester and the transition into hybrid.

## **4) Consent Agenda**

- Acceptance of Warrants, Voucher #1027

*Ms. Erdmann moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

Ms. Cameron asked about the cost of replacing the boiler at Memorial School. Mr. Urbas stated MIAA did not want to maintain insurance coverage for Memorial School through the second phase of construction and the District needed to go out to market and suffered from unfavorable pricing in the industry. Mr. Urbas is hopeful the Building Committee will add the cost of the replacement onto contractor expenses.

Ms. Cameron asked in terms of lessons learned could the District have done anything differently. Mr. Urbas responded he had made his opinion known to MIAA who frustratingly have recently added Builders Risk Insurance to their book of business. Ms. Cameron asked how old the boiler was. Mr. Urbas replied the replacement was for a circulator pump and other items. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated the loss was in the mid \$30K and indicated if the Building Committee could add the loss to Memorial School construction that would be a favorable option.

Ms. Cameron asked about Essex Elementary and if the risk of problems with that aging building was part of the FY22 budget. Ms. Cameron also inquired about Covid costs and what is being covered. Mr. Urbas replied he hoped to use CARES Act funding to cover the costs of microphones and ear buds and he is in the process of giving all funding sources thoughtful review and will prepare the analysis for discussion.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated there were areas in District programming that were underdeveloped, specifically mentioning technology and the with current investment in technology long term plans for improvement have been hastened and that is a positive gain.

Ms. Erdman asked if the Covid spending extension helped the District with funding. Mr. Urbas believes it will be helpful especially while the District sorts through FEMA reimbursements and the Towns evaluate their spending in January and February, which may add additional funds for the District.

#### **5) Sub-Committee Reports**

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – No Report
- Finance Committee (Anne Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – No Report
- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Theresa Whitman) – No Report
- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – No Report

#### **6) Superintendent's Report –**

##### Hybrid Transition Indicators – Monthly Report

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated there were no drastic changes to plans and as of today there are no changes to the timeline for implementing hybrid at the MHS. Communities are in the same positions they were in on December 15<sup>th</sup>, Manchester is in the red and Essex is in yellow. There is no concern that the schools are a risk to the communities, and we will continue with our regular weekly check ins with the Town. Over the break several staff tested positive, but those exposures were from external activities and contacts.

The District has met its goal with the Ginkgo contract and liability and consent agreements are with District Counsel. Training will take place at end of the week with the projected start date January 19<sup>th</sup>. Revised cost proposal will be ready next week.

Review of the Covid map indicates the majority of Essex County is in the red and a hot spot with some communities in yellow.

Staffing in the elementary schools is in the same place there are currently no staff shortages, but it is an ongoing battle, and the District needs additional substitute teachers. At any time if we lack coverage, we will need to go remote. Secondary faculty staffing is 93% resolved and we are waiting to get to 100%. It is anticipated the staffing budget will be over \$300K with funds coming from reserves.

Ms. Cameron asked if a child travels is the District requiring quarantining and testing. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District cannot discuss compliance it runs on the honor system. Nurses team is on top of any issues as much as they can be and will follow up with quarantining and testing when they can. The full testing budget will be discussed next week.

Ms. Cameron also asked about vaccines. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the flu shot was a soft mandate and some parents had opted out. If we are discussing the Covid vaccine, we may plan to take a harder line but still there will be exemptions for health and religious reasons.

#### **7) Continued Business**

- MHS Hybrid Planning Update – Discussed above
- Winter Athletics Update

Ms. Cameron asked for clarification around playing basketball while a community is in the red. Indicating it was her understanding if a community was in the red there was a no play mandate. Mr. Edgett stated that was true in September but was modified at the end of October as a result of specific outbreaks outside of communities citing college campuses within small communities. Ms. Erdman stated we live in a small community and we are currently red and red is worrisome. She asked if we were moving the finish line. Mr. Edgett stated the athletic program is following State guidance.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated interpretations have evolved and athletic programs are looking at school based spread. Ms. Erdman confirmed there were still no spectators at winter events. Mr. Edgett stated that was correct.

Ms. Whitman asked Principal Puglisi and Mr. Edgett what variables they were considering when making their decisions. Principal Puglisi stated they were following the State guidance in consult with BOH guidelines and reminded the School Committee there had been no issues with student athletes. Ms. Whitman was comfortable knowing the Boards of Health were informing the decisions.

Mr. Warnock stated knowing participation in activities outside of the classroom was positive for the social emotional health of students were other activities now active at the HS. Principal Puglisi stated debate and robotics were meeting in the building and several other teams were meeting virtually.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated there was not much more to update. In person orientation days for the MHS are being rescheduled from December and hybrid will be ready to start on January 19, 2021. The Y program will be relocated by January 19<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Cameron requested the calendar on the website be updated. Ms. Wolf asked about MCAS. Principal Puglisi stated as of the 10:00 a.m. notice from DESE today the 2021 graduates did not need to take the MCAS for graduation as long as they met the minimum criteria of four years of English and Math. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the lower grade will be taking the MCAS but with reduced time spent on the test.

- FY22 Budget

Superintendent Beaudoin stated there were no substantial changes from the December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. The January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting is a budget workshop meeting. The School Committee will review revised assumptions.

## **8) School Committee Comment –**

Ms. Whitman asked about School Choice for school year 2021-2022. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that would be part of the budget discussion.

Ms. Whitman asked as we head into spring would there be updates from the elementary school principals and had consideration been give to 5<sup>th</sup> graders transitioning to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Wolf stated parents had been asking about additional time in school and would that be a consideration.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated elementary principals will be making presentations to the School Committee and including information about transition plans for 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The School Committee will need to review space plans and mandatory six feet of social distancing before changing the current hybrid model.

**9) Adjourn –**

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