



**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES May 4, 2021**

<b>Meeting:</b>	School Committee
<b>Date:</b>	May 4, 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>	
<b>Guests:</b>	Patricia Puglisi, Principal HS, Jason Waldron, Facilities Manager
<b>Recorded by:</b>	Gail Hunter

**AGENDA**

- A. Call to Order** – Ms. Wolf called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.
- B. Business Meeting Open Session**
  - 1) **Public Comment** – There was no public comment this evening.
  - 2) **Chairman’s Report** –

*“School has been back in session full-time for a few weeks now, and by all reports, things are going very well. Regular business is underway, and we look forward to hearing about progress on the Essex Playground, the new elementary school building in Manchester, and improvements to our technology across the District. Tonight, we will also hear about some more typical year-end activities at the high school. Also, we are starting to plan for next year and moving forward into the future with our Strategic Planning process.*

*But before we move ahead with our business meeting, I must take a few moments to recognize the contributions of Annie Cameron. Tonight, is Annie’s last meeting. When I was considering a move to Essex about eleven years ago, my real estate broker put me in touch with Annie. “She’s really involved in the community and she will be able to answer all of your questions about the schools.” Of course, this was true, because at the time Annie had four children in the District and was serving as President of the PTO. It took me a while to learn that Annie is actually the beating heart of our community. Sure, she serves on the board of the Manchester Essex Education Fund and on the Town of Essex Strategic Planning Committee. She was on the Building Committee for the Middle and High School and is currently on the Building Committee for the new Manchester Memorial School. And I do not even know how many years she has contributed to the School Committee. But in addition to being a dedicated public servant, Annie is at work behind the scenes. For example, during COVID, she worked with a team of volunteers to prepare and deliver meals to families in need. She does so much more that no one really even knows about. If there is a good deed done in Essex, you can bet that Annie’s behind it. We will surely miss Annie’s presence on the School Committee, and we appreciate all the time and effort that she has given and continues to give to our schools and our communities. So, thank you Annie, and we look forward to your continued mentorship and support in the years ahead.”*

Ms. Cameron replied that she is proud of the work we do as a Committee. She has been active in the effort for 22 years starting with regionalization. Ms. Cameron stated she believes it is time for others to come forward to add their vision to the District. She reiterated how proud she is of the work that has been accomplished, how much she loves the people she has worked with and values the friendships developed during her tenure.

### **3) Student Report –**

Lukas wished the Committee a happy May while pointing out AP exams were taking place this week and it was a stressful time for many students. Lukas stated spring sports started last Monday. He also shared the Junior class is sponsoring a fundraiser with the sale of flowers. The junior class fundraiser presents an opportunity for many to place their orders in time for Mother’s Day. He will add the information in the chat box for interested individuals.

Return to in person classes originally at about half of the student body is becoming more popular and Lukas plans to return to in-school following AP exams. Ms. Wolf asked Lukas how many AP classes he was taking, Lukas is taking 6 AP classes. Superintendent Beaudoin asked if Lukas was aware of the student body’s interest in getting vaccinated. Lukas indicated the majority of his friends were getting vaccinated but he could not speak to the entire student body. She asked if the vibe was positive around vaccination, Lukas thought that generally it was.

#### 4) Consent Agenda

- Minutes –
- Acceptance of Warrants, Voucher #1041, 1042, 1043 and #1044

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

Ms. Cameron stated there appeared to be a lot spent on filters. Mr. Urbas replied it was not significant it was a quarterly expense and the new filters are smaller and need to be changed more frequently which is a good thing.

#### 5) Sub-Committee Reports

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – Report

The Building Committee met briefly following the last School Committee meeting and confirmed signage for the new Memorial School and the addition of the language *a MERSD School* and MERSD logo to school signs. Ms. Cameron stated the project remains on time and on budget.

- Finance Committee (Anne Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – Report

The collaborative Group met and discussed signage and the proposed fiber loop. Ms. Erdmann indicated it was a brief meeting. Ms. Cameron encouraged all to attend Essex Annual Town Meeting to approve the District Budget and vote on Planning Board Articles. Ms. Erdmann encouraged participation the Manchester Annual Town Meeting scheduled for June 21, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. on Highland Field. She also reminded residents Town elections are on May 18<sup>th</sup> at the MHS.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Theresa Whitman) – Report

Ms. Wolf indicated drafts of other District donation policies were included in the School Committee meeting packets and asked if any members had comments. Superintendent Beaudoin pointed out the MASC policy recommended putting donation decisions in the hands of School Committees. The sub-committee will come back with a full draft for the Committee review.

Ms. Erdmann stated she liked the Medway policy and thought it was an appropriate model for the District. Ms. Whitman agreed noting the bulleted points made the information easy to access. Ms. Erdmann also thought the language around a disproportionate advantage for one school versus another was appropriate for the District.

Ms. Cameron asked about Memorial Gifts. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated there are separate policies for some types of gifts like Memorial Gifts and naming and those specific policies can be included in separate sections.

Ms. Cameron stated there was a group in Essex asking for time on the School Committee agenda. Superintendent Beaudoin suggested the group have time on the June 2<sup>nd</sup> agenda allowing time for the School Committee to review the first draft at the May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. There are some questions around design and approach. Mr. Urbas stated the Committee will need to review and approve the design and if there is a contractor or donated labor the District will manage the project. Ms. Cameron stated her objection to the design that called for a walking path bisecting the playground. Mr. Urbas stated he understood that design element has been removed.

Ms. Erdmann asked about funds remaining from donors who gave to a specific aspects of the build. Mr. Urbas clarified that a designated gift was for a specific purpose and could not be allocated to a different part of the project.

- Negotiation Committee (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – No Report

6) **Superintendent's Report –**

- Monthly COVID Report
  - ❖ COVID Metrics – Essex and Manchester are in Green and there has been no evidence of in-school spread. < 1% Student Positive Reported to Date, 7.5% Staff Positive Reported to Date with 0 Student to Staff or Staff to Student transmission. Through the pandemic 15 students and 17 staff have notified the District they tested positive.
  - ❖ Testing – Ongoing with MHS Students – but waning and MedBot is down to two daily questions. There have been no new incidences of a pool testing positive beyond the one overlap noted during prior meetings.
  - ❖ Staffing – is stabilizing to the usual absences due to illness.
  - ❖ No Cape Ann communities are in red with the majority of local communities in yellow and green. This metric impacts school sports participation with other communities.
  - ❖ Covid expenses, the District is still planning on using \$960K of reserves to cover Covid in person learning.

Planning for the future and more normal activities the World Cafés are upcoming. In two weeks, there have been 700 responses to the survey primarily from parents, with 40 – 50 responses from members of the communities and about 100 from students. Initial reports on responses will be available in mid-May. Superintendent Beaudoin encouraged everyone to participate. There will be three questions poised around the future of learning plus all 3<sup>rd</sup> Party reviews will be presented to focus groups. Consideration of mission, visioning and core values plus high level target areas for the District Improvement Team to focus on over summer. This is exciting work and an opportunity for us to take what we have learned to develop a path to the future.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the US News and World Report rated Manchester Essex Regional High School at 624<sup>th</sup> out of 7,000 high schools in the United States. This rating includes all high schools private, public and charter. Manchester Essex Regional High School placed in the top 5% of all US high schools, and first on the North Shore. Principal Puglisi indicated the rating likely considered the 100% graduation rate and college ratings which indicate our graduating students are academically inclined.

Superintendent Beaudoin had a *public service announcement*. The MHS will have a half day on May 18<sup>th</sup>. It is Town Election Day in Manchester and with construction at the Memorial School elections will be held in the gymnasium.

Graduation is scheduled for June 4, 2021 with the last day of school on June 16, 2021.

The School Committee was provided with the initial calendar for school year 2021-2022. Superintendent Beaudoin stated there will be no remote learning during the coming school year, the District is returning to in-school learning. Ms. Erdman asked for confirmation of February and April breaks neither appeared on the calendar's first draft. Superintendent Beaudoin confirmed February break would be the week of February 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> and April break would be April 18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Ms. Cameron asked if the District had heard from the two Towns about the possibility of their sharing CARES dollars with the District. Mr. Urbas stated the Towns were in the process of reconciling their spending and the District has received no specific update around sharing of CARES dollars. Ms. Cameron asked if the District hears after the close of business on June 30<sup>th</sup> can the dollars be retroactively applied to spending. Mr. Urbas replied yes there is a lot of flexibility around spending CARES dollars.

Ms. Cameron asked, in relation to the US New & World ranking, how the District chose its ranking criteria and what we consider successful. Superintendent Beaudoin stated kids have different measures of success and the High School ranking reflects the District's programs grade K-12.

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

- SEPAC Update – There was no update this evening.
- Essex Tech School Committee Appointment

The School Committee and Town Moderators appointment for Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School is Alva Ingaharro. Ms. Cameron stated choosing Ms. Ingaharro was a brilliant idea. She served six years on the School Committee and also served on the School Building Committee. Ms. Cameron stated what we value about Alva is the way she approaches a challenge, she asks good questions on budget and as a Project Manager she understands deliverables. Those who work with her value her perspective, she has a good sense of humor and is kind. This is a perfect place for her to serve. Ms. Wolf added she understands Ms. Ingaharro is a graduate of a Vocational High School.

*Mr. Warnock moved to approve the appointment of Alva Ingaharro to the Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School Board, Ms. Cameron seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- High School End of Year Activities

Principal Puglisi stated the Senior Class Party/Prom will take place at Castle Hill on May 28, 2021. The site was booked last year. Maximum number of people attending is limited to 150, there are 127 students in the class and 10 chaperons. There have been a number of requests from seniors to bring a date but that is not possible this year.

Senior class beach day with chaperons is scheduled for June 1, 2021. Baccalaureate on Highland Field is scheduled for June 2<sup>nd</sup> each senior may have two guests. The event will be live-streamed and the Senior Slide Show forwarded to families. Thursday June 3<sup>rd</sup> Car Parade following the same route as last year. Seniors are not allowed to drive.

Graduation is June 4, 2021 with a rain date of June 5, 2021 in accordance with DESE guidelines. Guests need to pre-register. Principal Puglisi stated she wished we could do more. Ms. Wolf stated it sounds amazing and the kids did a good job putting together their plans. Principal Puglisi stated there had been requests to hold the Prom after graduation but the District has no responsibility for the seniors after graduation and the date will remain May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Superintendent Beaudoin informed the Committee that Principal Puglisi was blazing the trail with planning for end of year events and at the next School Committee meeting K- 5 and MS Principals will present their plans for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students moving on.

- Student Representative for School Committee

Principal Puglisi discussed the role of student representative to the School Committee as part of student government. Ms. Wolf concurred indicating MASC suggests student representatives to School Committee are meant to follow the rules of the elected group of students and students elect the person to participate in School Committee.

Principal Puglisi stated this is a good opportunity to revamp the Student Council structure with an additional four members elected to Student Council as part of a Regional Student Council. She believes this will give more voice and provide for more input from a larger group of students. Superintendent Beaudoin suggested monthly meetings with students participating.

Ms. Cameron asked if students would become voting members. (This question remained unanswered.) Ms. Wolf suggested students might participate in the full meeting and the role could grow to include discussions. Ms. Whitman asked if there was interest among students to participate in School Committee meetings. Principal Puglisi indicated there has been a struggle with interest but if the students were given a voice, they might appreciate the opportunity and the District could create a culture of participation. Principal Puglisi stated in other schools it works both ways and participation is grown and built over time. The High School will have a new Student Council Advisor and this could be part of their mission.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated she was all for the recommendations and will include in future planning expanding the voice of students. Principal Puglisi will advertise the opportunity for students.

- School Choice FY22

This evening Superintendent Beaudoin would like the Committee to take a formal vote to accept school year 2021-2022 School Choice recommendations. Superintendent Beaudoin stated all sibling groups have been honored this year. With Middle School enrollment numbers coming down the District will be able to accept School Choice students there as well as the elementary schools. Mr. Harrington asked how many school choice have been enrolled in the past. Mr. Urbas stated at the peak there were 150 School Choice students with revenue of \$750K.

The FY22 budget projected School Choice revenue at \$325K from 65 students. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the ideal use of School Choice is filling excess capacity at the first grade with students participating from 1-12. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated that in planning for School Choice this year she went back enrollment numbers for fall 2019. Current enrollment estimates are the best educated estimates assuming some students who departed for private schools will remain there in the coming school year.

The Committee discussed capacity throughout the District and decided to accept Superintendent Beaudoin's School Choice Plan for school year 2021-2022.

*Mr. Warnock moved to approve School Choice Plan, Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

- FY22 Budget
  - Confirmation Vote – Use of E&D

Mr. Urbas stated he was asking the School Committee for a confirmation vote on Excess and Deficiency. This vote is in anticipation of the Department of Revenue's certification of forecasts providing that \$335K in funds be utilized as a revenue source from FY20 to support FY22.

*Ms. Erdmann moved to approve the certification of forecasts that \$335 funds be used as a revenue source from FY20 to support FY22, Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

- Confirmation Vote -- Non-META Personnel COLA

The Confirmation Vote for Non-META Personnel COLA was deferred to the June 2, 2021 School Committee meeting.

- Technology Update – Capital Improvements

Mr. Urbas stated the Essex Playground work has begun and the project is on time and on budget for completion at the end of May for the end of the school year. The District has committed \$300K to equipment and \$50K to pre-construction preparation.

### **Instructional Technology**

- Migration to 1:1 for student devices completed with iPads for K-2 and Chromebooks for grades 3-5. There was a \$70K cost of units utilizing a favorable three-year lease to insure budget funding for eventual replacement.
- Summer 2021 plan to replace classroom Instructional Boards (\$130K) utilizing reserves for Essex Elementary. Memorial has newer version of classroom Instructional Boards.

### **Network Infrastructure**

- Fiber Optic Installation
- Network Switch Gear – utilizing a Federal E-rate Grant which will provide 40% reimbursement to offset bigger ticket items. The Fiber Optic installation is eligible for this reimbursement.
- MERSD – Essex Fiber Project – Total Cost \$122K with \$73K from Federal Grant. The Fiber Optic Installation will support 12 bundled lines connecting MHS and EES. This matches the capacity at Memorial Elementary which was achieved by connecting Memorial School to the MHS at no cost. Benefits – speed – replacing antiquated Verizon copper lines with new technology.
- Why Now – E-rate Grant and Potential Partnership with MBTS. Manchester is interested in connecting to regional services available through an Essex connection and would require the Fiber line to achieve the Town’s full participation in regional IT services and possibly dispatch.
- Project in place this summer with \$73K from reserves.

Mr. Warnock asked if Mr. Zubricki, the Essex Town Manager was on board with the proposal. Mr. Urbas indicated the project had been discussed with the Collaborative Group and both Town Administrators were on board believing the installation was good for the District and possibly helpful for the Town of Manchester. Additionally, to have Essex Elementary on the same platform as the District was a positive plan.

Ms. Whitman asked for more detail on the Instructional Boards and was essential to invest \$130K in new Instructional Boards for Essex Elementary. Mr. Urbas replied the current Instructional Boards in Essex Elementary are 8-10 years old. Superintendent Beaudoin added lap top connections to the Instructional Boards are no longer being supported with upgrades and current Boards require ongoing tech support. Superintendent Beaudoin believes it is essential to upgrade the Boards in Essex.

Mr. Harrington asked about Switches and were there any other anticipated ancillary costs. Mr. Urbas stated switches were not required for the upgrade. However, Switches allow for all devices to be connected and for data to collectively move through. The cost of Switches is \$27K with a District investment of \$16,615 and the balance coming through E-rate grant. There were no additional ancillary costs anticipated.

### **Security**

MMES Project includes security upgrades that will be replicated District-wide – including video camera software, swipe card access and visitor digital log. With camera and swipe hardware

already District-wide, expected costs will be for software upgrades of 2010-2012 installations. Price estimates TBD will be brought before the School Committee later this summer.

Mr. Urbas stated with the Memorial project close to conclusion it is likely time to submit a Statement of Interest to MSBA. MSBA is a rigorous process and with the Essex Elementary building now 60 years old it is time to consider investing in a new building.

Mr. Warnock thanked Mr. Urbas for his use of Green Grant funding, stating it is a positive engagement between the Towns. Ms. Cameron thanked Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas for keeping their promise to maintain parity around software and security. Additionally, she thanked them for collaborating with the Town Administrators to get grants and reminded all that additional funding will be available from the Federal Government and any and all funding resources should be taken advantage of.

Ms. Cameron would also like to plan a site visit of Essex Elementary School and to go through the school building with someone like Mr. Oldeman who can point out what needs to be done and how soon things need to be done. Ms. Cameron continued the Essex Elementary building is costing the District money. It is an old failing building and the new School Committee members will benefit from hearing from people who have been around for awhile on how it is important to be strategic in planning with the communities to invest in infrastructure.

Ms. Erdmann thanked Mr. Urbas for thinking ahead given the supply chain around all things technological has been disrupted. Additionally, Ms. Erdmann suggested it was time to update the Habib Report which is now ten-years old. It is important to have current estimates for the maintenance plan when filing an SOI. Superintendent Beaudoin agreed and suggested including the MHS, the building is close to 20 years old. The roof on the MHS building may require replacement and an updated report would help with Capital Planning.

*Ms. Cameron moved to approve the use of reserves for funding the non-E-rate portion for Active Boards at Essex Elementary, a Fiber Optic Loop and Switches, Ms. Whitman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

Ms. Wolf reminded the Committee that at the end of the school year the School Committee completed self-evaluations. Ms. Wolf would be forwarding the survey like form to the Committee.

## **8) School Committee Comment**

Ms. Whitman stated a reminder the Committee needs to discuss sub-committee positions. Additionally, she thanked Ms. Cameron for being assessable to her over the year. Mr. Bourke thanked Ms. Cameron and suggested with her departure the Committee could consider meeting at 7:00 p.m. instead of 6:00 p.m. Not sure what was being implied but everyone laughed!

Ms. Cameron concluded that the School Committee was a great Committee and it was the best volunteer job she has ever had.

**9) Adjourn –**

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