



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES May 18, 2021

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	May 18, 2021
Location:	Via Webex
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Sarah Wolf, Chairperson Shannon Erdmann, Vice Chairperson Ken Warnock Eric Bourke Theresa Whitman Matt Harrington Kate Koch-Sunquist
Absent:	
Guests:	Jennifer Roberts, Principal Essex Elementary, Joanne Maino Principal, Middle School and John Willis Principal, Manchester Memorial School, Jason Waldron, Facilities Manager
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

AGENDA

- A. Call to Order** – Ms. Wolf called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.
- B. Business Meeting Open Session**
 - 1) **Public Comment** – Ms. Cameron, no longer serving on the School Committee, had a comment. Ms. Cameron stated she knows this evening is Ms. Erdmann’s last night on the School Committee and she wanted to thank her for her advocacy on behalf of kids and

sharing her financial experience with the Committee had been a great help. Ms. Cameron mentioned Ms. Erdmann worked on behalf of both Towns, helped us get to where we today, has a steady hand and measured approach. She has been a good friend and trusted colleague.

2) **Chairperson's Report –**

“We would like to thank the voters of Essex for supporting our budget at the Town Meeting on Saturday. The 3.5% increase is slightly above the 5-year average of 3.17%, and slightly below the previous multi-year assumption estimate of 3.7%. We acknowledge that we have a standing request from the Town of Essex to adjust the assessment should we receive state or federal funds that allow us to reduce costs to our member Towns and, we look forward to our member Towns finding a way to distribute federal funds from both the CARES Act and America Rescue Plan to defray the reserve fund usage we have experienced as a result of COVID.

We were surprised to hear some last-minute opposition to this plan from Board Members, as it had been agreed upon in good faith in our collaborative working group. There is, perhaps, some misunderstanding that we hope to resolve among the Essex Board Members regarding the long-standing successful collaborative process.

This week I distributed Self-Evaluation forms to the School Committee members. We will be reviewing our own: governance, operations, member relations, strategic planning and fiscal management, community relations and conduct of our meetings. I hope that this systematic self-reflection will help us to set our goals for next year and improve our performance. My goal is to discuss the results of the self-evaluation at our retreat over the summer, when we will also have a presentation from Dorothy Presser, our MASC Field Director.

On a bittersweet note, tonight is Shannon Erdmann's last meeting. Shannon has served on the School Committee for the last 8 years. She spent several of those years leading us as Chairperson of the Committee and she was able to work collaboratively with both Towns as a member of the Finance Subcommittee while always advocating for the District guiding principles to ensure best experience for the children and teachers in the District. Shannon has taken on the role of mentoring new members, including myself and we feel lucky to have benefited from her guidance over the years. We thank Shannon for her dedicated service to the School Committee.

Tonight, we welcome our new member, Kate Koch-Sunquist. We are delighted to have Kate on the team and look forward to working together.”

3) **Student Report –**

Lukas believes at this time most students have returned to in-school learning. AP exams are taking place during the next two weeks. Next week seniors will have completed their classes by the end of the week and be off campus. Ms. Erdmann thanked Lukas for keeping the School Committee informed over this crazy year and his reliable participation in the meetings was appreciated.

4) Consent Agenda

- Minutes – March 16, 2021
- Acceptance of Warrants, Voucher #1045, 1046 and #1047

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

5) Sub-Committee Reports

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

Ms. Erdmann and Ms. Cameron will remain on the Elementary Facilities Sub-Committee through the completion of the Memorial School building project. Ms. Erdmann reported the project remains on time and on budget. At the last meeting FF&E (furniture, finishing's and equipment) were discussed including some large machinery to help extend the life of the building. Due to some confusion the Memorial School sign was not included in the building budget and is projected to cost approximately \$45K. The Sub-Committee is planning to find a way to source the sign at a savings. WT Rich shared a drone video with the Sub-Committee and Ms. Erdmann stated the building is awesome.

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

Ms. Erdmann thanked the residents of Essex for their support of the District budget and mentioned there appeared to be some confusion and misunderstanding around the open collaborative process. The collaborative process takes place with members from both BOS and Finance Committees along with both Town Administrators. Throughout the year all books are open and discussed so there are no surprises. Apparently, there was some dissatisfaction with the agreement reached by the parties involved in the process, the process were defined as intransigent and intractable. Ms. Erdmann stated she was not sure where the disconnect occurred. Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas are going to provide the School Committee with an update and recap the process to address some of the issues raised. Mr. Warnock stated he believes the budget process is managed well but there are three parties in the process and multiple stake holders and that can sometimes result in tensions.

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

Ms. Whitman stated the donation policy is in process and the Sub-Committee is working to develop a recommendation for the Committee. Some of the sample policies being referenced do not apply to MERSD specifically around the centralization of donations. Both MERSD elementary school's PTOs work to raise funds for specific projects and the language from the sample policy is more centralized. The donation policy work will continue through the summer. The Eagle's Nest project funding will be discussed separately.

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

6) **Superintendent’s Report –**

Superintendent Beaudoin recognized Shannon’s commitment to the School Committee over 8 years and thanked her for her time, energy, financial expertise and most importantly her support for kids. Superintendent Beaudoin also welcomed Kate to the Board acknowledging it was a time of change. Superintendent Beaudoin will be reaching out to Kate and the new Manchester Board member to meet and explain the Committee process.

Additionally, Superintendent Beaudoin would like to thank the residents for their support and take some time to clear up any misconceptions put forth on Saturday at the Essex Town Meeting. She assured the Town she would work to find efficiencies to lessen the burden on taxpayers and the District takes the collaborative process seriously.

Mr. Urbas reviewed the five-year assessment history for the District and how the assessment broke down with the apportionment formula developed at the time the Towns agreed to a District School system.

FY22 Budget & FY21 COVID Cost Update May 18, 2021

% Increase to Towns Over Time

	FY18	FY19	FY20*	FY21	FY22	5-Year Average
Manchester	3.71%	3.34%	2.76%	2.94%	3.24%	3.20%
<u>Essex</u>	<u>2.28%</u>	<u>3.20%</u>	<u>3.02%</u>	<u>3.61%</u>	<u>3.96%</u>	<u>3.22%</u>
Increase in Cost	3.20%	3.29%	2,85%	3.18%	3.50%	3.20%

Assessment = cost of school budget to member Towns

Apportionment = split of assessment between Towns based on relative enrollment, property values and population per Regional Agreement

FY20 growth of 3.30% reduced to 2.85% by utilizing \$100K of MERSD reserves to lower cost to Towns in response to after-budget request from the Town of Essex.

A statement was made during the Essex Town Meeting that the District would be receiving a great deal of money from the Federal government, at this time the District is not aware of such funding. Superintendent Beaudoin provided the School Committee an Update to CARES Funding Estimates indicating MERSD has absorbed \$1.6M in estimated Covid costs with no increase to the Towns.

ESSER 1 (80% of Title 1) \$54,198, Remote Learning Technology Enhancement \$48,250 and CVRF School Reopening (\$225/student) \$303,300. **Phase 1 CARES Act \$402,748**

ESSER 2 \$206,931, and Coronavirus Prevention Fund \$45,050 **Phase 2 CARES Act Total \$251,981**

Total CARES to Date \$654,729

Phase 3 CARES Act – ESSER 3 (DESE estimate) \$442,280

CARES FORECAST \$1,097,009

MERSD COVID Costs to Date \$1,615,200

Net Cost – to be funded by MERSD Reserves **(\$518,191)**

Town CARES Funding

Manchester-by-the-Sea \$2,289,856

Town of Essex \$1,684,878

Total Town Cares Funding \$3,974,734

An additional comment made during the Essex Town Meeting was the apparent concern the School Committee and District express around the District’s bond rating. Ms. Erdmann indicated the District has an excellent bond rating and that rating has a direct correlation with the District’s ability to borrow for building projects at a desirable rate. Mr. Urbas stated the District saved \$2M on financing for the Memorial School and over time and through refinancing the debt for the High School has saved \$17M. This lowers costs to the taxpayers and helps to improve the District’s borrowing capacity.

Ms. Erdman stated using reserves impacts the District’s borrowing capacity and there is a right way to use reserves and at this time the District needs to develop an exit strategy for the use of reserves.

Ms. Whitman stated when she joined the School Committee she was overwhelmed and intimidated by the budget process. She has overtime heard and begun to understand the process and thanked Superintendent Beaudoin, Ms. Urbas, Ms. Erdmann and Ms. Cameron for the time they spent helping her to develop her knowledge of the process.

Superintendent Beaudoin recommended **amending Local Policy to align with revisions to State level guidance.**

DESE COVID GUIDANCE UPDATE

- Effective **Tuesday, May 18**, students no longer have to wear masks when outdoors, even if distance cannot be maintained. Adults must continue to wear masks outdoors if distancing cannot be maintained. **At this time, adults and students must continue to wear masks inside schools.**

- Students can now share classroom materials.
- In alignment with State guidance, the gathering limits for school events with outside participants will be lifted starting May 29, 2021.

NOTS: Face coverings remain required indoors for staff and students of K-12 schools and early education providers.

MIAA Guidance Update

- Athletes on spring teas in active play outdoors **are not required** to wear a mask/facial covering.
- Athletes when they are on the bench or in a dugout **are not required** to wear a mask/facial covering.
- Athletes in low-risk sports when indoors where a distance of at least 14 feet or more is consistently maintained between each participant, **are not required** to wear a mask/facial covering.
- Spectators and chaperones, coaches, staff, referees, umpires and other officials who can social distance while outdoors, **are not required** to wear mask/facial covering.
- Visitors, spectators, volunteers and staff while indoors **are required** to wear mask/facial covering.

Mr. Warnock moved to amend local Covid Policies to align with DESE and MIAA Guidance as presented in the Updates, Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Vision of the Graduate & Strategic Planning

- Timeline
 - ✓ Training & Document Review – March 2021
 - ✓ Survey
 - ✓ Data Review Meeting – April 28, 2021
 - ✓ World Café Focus Groups May 5, 2021 (4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.)
 - ✓ Synthesize Inputs & Generate Recommendations – May 19, 2021
 - ✓ Convening: School Committee, Administrative Team, Steering Committee meet is a facilitated goal setting session draft strategic plan informed by the work of the Steering Committee, May 24, 2021, or May 25, 2021.
- Outcome – A Vision of the Graduate & Strategic Plan that provides a District wide framework from to guide the annual improvement process undertakes by all Schools and Departments.

General Updates

- Graduation Day – June 4, 2021
- Tentative Last Day of School – June 16, 2021
- School Committee Meetings
June 1, 2021 – Regular Business Meeting

Looking Ahead to 2021-2022

- Begin year with in-person structure similar in structure to our current model
- Will be prepared to offer a continuum of learning models should there be fluctuations in Covid conditions
In-Person – Hybrid – Remote and back
- MERSD will not offer a remote only option in the fall – All students will be expected to enroll for full in-person learning

7) Continued Business

- SEPAC Update – SEPAC Parent Survey

Q1 – Which school does your child attend?

EES 21.5%, MMS 34.6%, Middle School 24%, High School 15.38% and OOD 4.81%

Q2 – How is your child doing this year, academically? (Scale of 1-6, 1 = in crisis and 6 = thriving)

In crisis 7.62% (8), Worse than expected 19.05% (20), Slightly Below Baseline 23.81% (25), Slightly Above Baseline 12.38% (13), Better than Expected 30.48% (32), Thriving 6.67% (7)

Q3 – How is your child doing this year, emotionally? (Scale of 1-6, 1 = in crisis and 6 = thriving)

In crisis 5.71% (6), Worse than expected 20% (21), Slightly Below Baseline 15.24% (16), Slightly Above Baseline 16.19% (17), Better than Expected 34.29% (32), Thriving 8.57% (9)

Q4 – How is your child doing this year, emotionally at home? (Scale of 1-6, 1 = in crisis and 6 = thriving)

In crisis 2.86% (3), Worse than expected 19.05% (20), Slightly Below Baseline 20% (21), Slightly Above Baseline 12.38% (13), Better than Expected 36.19% (38), Thriving 9.52% (10)

Q5 – How is your child doing this year, socially? (Scale of 1-6, 1 = in crisis and 6 = thriving)

In crisis 2.91% (3), Worse than expected 22.33% (23), Slightly Below Baseline 31.07% (32), Slightly Above Baseline 17.48% (18), Better than Expected 20.39% (21), Thriving 5.83% (6)

Q6 – How is your child doing this year, in terms of physical health? (Scale of 1-6, 1 = in crisis and 6 = thriving)

In crisis 0.94% (1), Worse than expected 14.15% (15), Slightly Below Baseline 27.36% (29), Slightly Above Baseline 18.87% (20), Better than Expected 22.64% (24), Thriving 16.04% (17)

Have you attended a SEPAC meeting this year? YES 23.81% (25), NO 76.19% (80)

Q7 – What additional needs are you anticipating when your child transitions back to full time, in-person learning?

<u>Answer Choices</u>	<u>Responses</u>
▪ Counseling services (individual, small group, or check-ins)	19.35% (18)
▪ Social skills groups or other social supports	22.58% (21)
▪ Support with separation anxiety	3.23% (3)
▪ Support with school refusal	1.08% (1)
▪ Incentives for attendance	1.08% (1)
▪ Organizational check ins with teacher	41.94% (39)
▪ Plan with school to minimize transition-related anxiety	9.68% (9)
▪ Individual or small group orientation in August	1.08% (1)

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- K-8 End of Year Activities

Principal Roberts – Essex Elementary

ESSEX FIELD DAY

- Adjusting the plan as conditions change
- Smaller groups over the course of the week

ESSEX MOVING ON CEREMONY

- Adjusting the plan as conditions change
- June 14, 2021 – 4:00 p.m. @Essex Elementary
- June 15, 2021 – 4:00 p.m. Rain Date
- Modified program – not singing/slideshow

EES PLAYGROUND

- Progressing
- Hoping it will be ready for end of year use!

Principal Willis – MEMORIAL SCHOOL

MEMORIAL FIELD DAY

- Adjusting the plan as conditions change
- Smaller groups over the course of the week
- Working with PTO on some potential extra “fun”

MMES CROSSING THE BRIDGE

- Adjusting the plan as conditions change
- June 14, 2021 – 6:00 p.m. @ Hyland Field
- June 15, 2021 – 4:00 p.m. @ Hyland Field
- Modified program – no singing /slideshow

MMES MOVE

- Staff housed in ole building – packing up June 14th
- June 16 – Last Day of School
- June 17 – Moving Truck coming to move items to temporary, off site storage
- June 18 – August – MMES Demo
- August – November – site work, drop-off loop, main playground, landscaping etc.
- Note Footbridge will be closed summer through Oct/Nov

Principal Maino – MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Grade 8 Moving On-Ceremonies
 - June 15, 6:00 p.m. Hyland Field (June 16 Rain Date)
 - Pre-registration and Check-In required
 - Students spaced six feet
 - Families spaced six feet
- Grade 8 Carnival
 - June 15 during the school day
 - A variety of carnival-style games, activities and prizes
 - Lawn games
 - Pie the Principal and Dean competition
 - Pie eating contest
 - Carnival foods
- Grade 5 Move-Up Day
 - June 10 from 8:45—10:45
 - Students will come to the Middle School to meet teachers & learn about the Middle School
 - Small groups will receive student-led tours of the building
 - Summer reading brochures will be shared with students
- Grade 5 Parent Orientation
 - June 10 from 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. on Zoom
 - Overview of what to expect from Grade 6 Middle School in general
 - Parents will receive online link to the summer reading with live links to recourses as well as information on the summer math work
 - Open Q&A session at the end of the presentation

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- 2021-2022 District Calendar
 - FY22 School Committee Calendar

Ms. Koch-Sunquist asked about Columbus Day and suggested changing the name to Indigenous People Day. Ms. Wolf suggested adding the change as an agenda item in the fall providing classroom teachers enough time to plan for the change. Mr. Warnock suggested the change could be added to the summer retreat. Superintendent Beaudoin stated a name change is also a policy change suggesting SCAR students could help implement the change. Further discussion will be planned.

Mr. Warnock moved to approve dates on the calendar subject to revisions, Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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- Essex Elementary Playground
 - Construction Update

Mr. Urbas stated the project is moving along well and the site work is being completed prior to the poured in place surface. Like most construction projects when you get in the dirt all the unknowns begin to surface including soil vs. chips, stone, ledge and water. There is more water than expected but that is being dealt with. The completion date is likely going to be later in May to early June. Mr. Urbas will be providing the School Committee with additional updates through the end of the year.

- Landscaping Enhancements Proposal – Design, Project Proposal (Scope and Cost)

Mr. Foster and Ms. Yurwitz presented the information below. Mr. Foster stated he was excited to walk the site with Mr. Urbas and Mr. Waldron and is looking forward to working with the community volunteers to support the project.

Working Group Vision

A dynamic area and structure for a variety of play opportunities – Incorporating structures and surrounding play space.

Continuation of a values community resource and gathering area including community involvement in its development.

Full playground concept design

The design presented is from March, The inner ring will not be a loop – paint on the hot top will only be provided for the exterior loop. No pathway will be designated on the PIP surfacing. The working group visited the site with Mr. Waldron on Thursday to discuss how the installation of the structures, slope at the rear of the site and water drainage issues may impact the design budget.

Scope of work: current and proposed

Kompan MERSD current scope includes

- Playground structures
- Poured-in-place surfacing under structures
- Connect existing single path
- Prepare front and side seating areas

To complete the playground

- Excavate and provide crushed stone ring paths, rear seating area
- Furnish and install benches and tables
- Furnish and install decorative trees, shrubs and perennials

Rough anticipated budget to complete design

- Rough estimates based on the March concept design
- This assumes all services and materials are full purchased and contracted
Grading/excavation \$11K, Pathway Stone (base and surface) \$5K, Benches and tables \$17K, Tree, Shrub and Perennial Plantings \$13K, Overhead and Contingencies \$18K.
Estimated Project Costs \$64K

Potential strategies to complete work ... at no additional cost to the District.

All contingent on School Committee approval.

- PTO contribution long held Eagle's Nest maintenance funds \$35K
- Material donations (from local companies or individuals)
- Donation Labor
 - Contractors coordinated through District as was done with the rear down and clean up
 - Community member volunteers (coordinated event) for light-duty items , such as planting shrubs, assembling benches and spreading grass seed

Impacts of not completing the full playground

- Minimal access without pathways
 - Particularly given persistent water on site
 - Pathways are a potential solution to help address water drainage
- No place for supervision adults to sit, or for students to take a break
- No shade around the structure – it gets hot in warm weather.

The policy question for School Committee

Can EES Playground Working Group accept contributions to the effort?

- EES PTO's long-held Eagles' Nest maintenance funds \$35K
- Material donations (from companies or individuals)

- Donation of labor
 - Contractors coordinated through District, as was done with the tear down & clean up
 - Community member volunteers (coordinated event) for light-duty items, such as planting shrubs, assembling benches and spreading grass seed.

Mr. Urbas thanked Ms. Yurwitz and Mr. Foster for their long term involvement and commitment to the project. He stated there had been some unique constraints but they were resolved and the Working Group has come up with creative goals. Whatever logistical and operational goals need to be met will fall on Mr. Waldron's shoulders, he is in charge of the project from an administrative and operational standpoint.

Mr. Warnock stated this has been a huge amount of work and the Working Group has done a fantastic job of addressing a lot of complexity. Ms. Whitman stated she appreciated everyone's work on the project and asked for clarification around hearing this was not a finished project. It was her understanding the plan currently being worked on is a complete project.

Mr. Urbas stated the project is a complete project and the playground is fully ADA compliant. Additionally, he stated the water issue will be addressed and resolved by the contractor and there will be adequate drainage. Ms. Whitman is concerned around the language and believes the additional work should be referred to as beautification and enhancements.

Mr. Foster stated the Working Group does not view the project that way. Ms. Yurwitz believes seating, additional pathways, a connection to the gaga pit and garbage disposal are all important and essential elements of the project. Ms. Whitman indicated the District planned on providing benches and garbage disposal. Mr. Urbas stated words are important and the District does not plan on leaving the site without all essential items in place.

Ms. Erdmann moved to accept the plan of the Working Group as presented. The project will add no additional costs to the District. The project will be managed by the District Operational Team and no work will be initiated until all donations are committed to and a plan is in place for proposed work. Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8) School Committee Comment

Ms. Erdmann expressed her thanks to everyone and indicated she had enjoyed all eight years she served on the School Committee. She recognized Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas for their leadership, nimble and creative problem solving and making it possible for the District to get through this past year. She concluded serving on the School Committee has been a stellar experience.

Ms. Whitman stated she had heard summer school was going to be mandatory for all MHS students. Superintendent Beaudoin stated she did not know where that was coming from but it is

not accurate. The District is working with the Y and targeting elementary students with no summer school plans for the MHS.

Mr. Warnock thanked Shannon and pointed out Ms. Cameron was no longer on the line and this was an opportunity for her to get the last word.

9) Adjourn –

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