



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES June 2, 2020

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	June 2, 2020
Location:	Via Webex
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Rachel Fitzgibbon, Vice Chairperson Sarah Wolf Ken Warnock Caroline Weld Ann Cameron Eric Bourke Lukas Shan, Student Representative
Absent:	
Guests:	Patricia Puglisi, Principal MEHS, Joanne Seaman and Abigail Donnelly Co-Presidents of META and Teachers
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

AGENDA

- A. Call to Order** – Ms. Erdmann 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 prior to the meeting.
 - 2) **Chairperson’s Report** –

Ms. Erdmann stated she would like to comment as a parent and member of the community on what is going on in the country and the world. At this time there is significant emotional reaction, upheaval, and anger; as parents it is up to us to explain and be examples for those around us. We are called upon to treat those around us like we would like to be treated with kindness and understanding. With our children at home we have a unique opportunity to send a message of equality, kindness, and empathy.

3) **Student Report –**

Lukas was unable to connect to the Webex meeting this evening.

4) **Consent Agenda**

- Acceptance of Warrants – None
- Minutes – 5.19.2020 and 4.4.2020

Ms. Weld moved to accept the Consent Agenda, Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed with all School Committee members present approving the Consent Agenda.

5) **Sub-Committee Reports**

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Caroline Weld/Ann Cameron) – Report

Ms. Cameron reported the School Building Committee has not met since the last School Committee meeting. The Covid-19 Sub Committee has scheduled a meeting. Everything has been moved out of the Memorial School building, the construction team is ready to start demolition and the project remains on budget and on schedule. Mr. Urbas stated the Memorial School building is sealed off and the safe demolition is expected to take place next week.

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

Ms. Cameron reported to the Collaborative Group that the School Committee had voted on the \$360K reduction based on anticipation of a 10% reduction in state aid. The group reviewed language of Warrant Articles relating to the District budget and apportionment for each Town. Ms. Erdmann stated the meeting was straight forward given the unknowns. The Collaborative Group will continue to meet weekly prior to Town Meetings.

Ms. Cameron stated we know what we know today but do not know what we will know on July 1, 2020. Ms. Erdmann indicated the District budget once approved at Town Meetings cannot be increased without a special Town meeting. The budget can be decreased but not increased and there are no plans to request special Town meetings to adjust the budget.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Rachel Fitzgibbon) – No Report
- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – No Report

6) Superintendent's Report –

- School Closure: School Operations & Online Learning Update

Superintendent Beaudoin took a moment to say she agreed with Ms. Erdmann that a lot of emotions are being expressed around the nation and wonders what that means for kids already in a state of turmoil from the Covid-19 pandemic. Parents and teachers need to connect with kids and see how they are feeling and understand if kids are getting what they need to cope with the turmoil. Parents see things that school professionals cannot pick up on. Superintendent Beaudoin wants parents to know that in addition to what teachers are doing in their classes the entire counseling staff is available to help in these difficult times.

- This would have been Senior Week. Students with their parents are having their pictures taken on Highland Field. A car parade is planned, and the senior celebration video will be released this week.
Principal Puglisi said it was awesome to see kids in their caps and gowns with their parents having pictures taken. The parade route will be posted on the web site and starts at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, June 5, 2020 the traditional Graduation Ceremony start time.
- Demolition of Memorial building is scheduled for next week.
- Students have been coming in to pick up their personnel items.
- It does not feel like the usual end of year rolling into summer and fall.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated at the last meeting Ms. Cameron had asked for the teacher's perspective on the online learning process. Ms. Seaman and Ms. Donnelly, META Co-Presidents and experienced teachers are here to provide the Committee with their thoughts at the end of this unique school year.

Ms. Donnelly, a high school history teacher indicated the majority of her students were juniors and are engaged in current events and justice issues. Their Zoom class this week was the most engaged class since the beginning of remote classes. She stated she was impressed with the student's compassion, concern and understanding of unfolding events.

Ms. Donnelly stated remote learning presented the staff with academic challenges, but the faculty loves their jobs, their students and the community who trusted us to meet the challenges and continue the academic year. She noted specialists like the Middle School Physical Education teacher have done an amazing job developing lessons for the students. Like all teachers we restructured lessons, adjusted to online learning and did it all without access to our base materials.

Teachers are now focused on how we come back in September to meet the challenges of the curriculum and how important it is to help students with 504 Plans and I.E.P.'s. It is part of the teacher's role to maintain student engagement, to maximize learning and promote student growth. In the process it is not the teacher's job to judge why students are not engaging.

Teachers are focusing on how we keep our standards high and how we encourage kids to perform. For older students we need to prepare them to be competitive for college and in their

AP classes while being gentle with rigor and sensitive to kids and families. We are sympathetic and empathetic to the new roles' parents are assuming. In these challenging times Ms. Donnelly believes the faculty has grown and learned to value our relationships with each other and with the community.

Ms. Erdmann stated she wished all parents could hear Ms. Donnelly's comments.

Ms. Seaman stated this has all been hard. On March 12th when we left our classrooms, we thought we would be out for a few weeks we never anticipated being out through the end of the school year. There were numerous worries and calls on how we could teach with only half of our materials. Teachers wondered how they would keep students engaged. Teachers had children of their own to home school and some teachers had babies.

Families were hit by illness, loss of loved ones, loss of income and were being asked to home school their children. The weeks were difficult.

But we did it and staff and faculty gave 150%. It might not have been perfect, but we gave it our best and, in the process, we learned a lot about ourselves, we have grown and become better people for our experience with Covid-19. All of the teachers are proud of the communities and the people we work with. Teachers put in 15- and 16-hour days, Ms. Seaman stated she was proud to part of the faculty.

Ms. Erdmann stated she appreciated and recognized that no one expected what would happen, but the teachers turned their classes around quickly and made it all possible. Ms. Seaman thanked Superintendent Beaudoin and the School Committee for their support. Superintendent Beaudoin stated she was grateful for the open and honest collaboration with Ms. Seaman and Ms. Donnelly.

Mr. Warnock thanked Ms. Seaman and Ms. Donnelly for putting into words what every family has experienced.

Ms. Cameron asked if Ms. Donnelly could speak to a silver lining and identify things that would work in a normal year. Ms. Donnelly stated all teachers learned how much we depend on personal touch. One of her students states everyday how much he misses school. We have all learned how much we value time together. Additionally, we all learned how to use innovative techniques and programs.

Some students stated they liked the time they had to spend with their parents playing games. Ms. Seaman stated the connection piece is huge. When she saw students coming in with their parents to pick up their belongings, she realized how much she had missed the students and the students missed their teachers.

Principal Puglisi stated she heard from seniors they never knew how much they liked school and their teachers.

Ms. Erdmann asked what do you need? Both Ms. Donnelly and Ms. Seaman would like more access to technology and more training. Ms. Seaman indicated teachers would like to know what they can expect in September they are worried about employment. Ms. Donnelly thanked Dr. Riley for her support and help with technology and training. Ms. Seaman thanked Ms. Cameron and Ms. Weld for their help with food for the community. Their efforts helped unemployed, elderly and many in the communities.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated we may have been apart physically, but we were together in spirit.

Fall 2020 and Opening the School Year

Superintendent Beaudoin opened by stating the District is beginning to get a sense of what fall will look like. It is time to re-energize, get ready and restructure around the State guidance. Fall 2020 will not be like a normal school year with a reliable calendar the virus is in charge of the timeline. Districts need to understand the high risk and be prepared to shift at the state's direction to remote learning.

The proposed hybrid program for fall allows for 50% of the school population in school and 50% of the school population to be engaged in the remote learning model; with one week in school and one week in remote learning. The Department of Education is planning this as a statewide model. Transportation, if operational, will allow for 20 students on a bus. Additional information and guidance will be released mid-June.

The District is brainstorming what the hybrid model will look like with the remote learning component along with the need to consider the possibility of pivoting to full in person or full remote learning.

Currently the District's consideration is focused on the technical aspects from what it will take to get students into the building, to eating lunch, and more. Through June the focus will be on preparing all the technical elements for school year 2020-2021. In July, the District focus will shift to curriculum. Initially the District will build a structure for the majority of students and plan for and consider exceptions individually.

There are three critical issues health, safety, and education. This is a complex exercise requiring significant problem solving without all the information. One of the District's objectives for fall is to develop a more robust online experience. To help with that we will be conducting a community survey. Additionally, we will plan for people who are not interested or able to return to school.

The need to be flexible and anticipate for shutdowns creates a sense we are on a roller coaster ride while we are all eager to get back to some type of normal. In the meantime, we are using our energy to help inform and build a better program not the traditional program.

Ms. Cameron asked about budget decisions the School Committee made without more detail and mentioned the late bus cut. Ms. Erdmann indicated the late bus was likely not an issue.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated we may not be able to transport children on a bus. The early childhood guidance provided calls for the same 10 children and 1 teacher to be together all the time to minimize mingling and allow for testing and contact tracing. Additionally, Superintendent Beaudoin indicated opening guidance does not allow for a lot of extracurricular activity.

Ms. Wolf recommended in preparing for the coming school year it was important to keep Universal Design for Learning in mind in order to meet the needs of every student in a classroom.

Mr. Warnock stated he loved the model and in the past 3 months we have learned a lot and it is important to get the perspective of parents and students. The survey will be a chance for all of us to share what we have learned. Thank you, great model.

Ms. Cameron asked about families with individualized concerns. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District is going to help parents find their way if they are not interested in coming back to school.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated coming back to school will not feel like school. Social interactions will be extremely limited. The state is putting structure around the school day and it will be different from previous years. Everything from coming into the building, to sitting in the classroom, eating in the classroom, and leaving at the end of the day will be unlike the normal school experience.

Mr. Warnock stated safety has taken on new meaning, but safety is first and foremost for everyone in the school community.

Ms. Weld asked if the District had connected with 1623 Studios to get the School Committee meeting recordings available. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated that was in process.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated 80% of the state guidance is non-negotiable and full guidance is expected to be received by June 15th. Ms. Erdmann indicated the Committee members did not know what to ask given the uncertainty and unknowns.

Superintendent Beaudoin went on to say Mr. Waldron and the leadership team are coordinating with the state DPH, local BOH, and District school nurses to develop a plan according to the guidelines for health and safety of the school community. Mr. Waldron is working to acquire a 3-month supply of PPE, safety masks for students, identify a quarantine area with N95 masks, booties, face shields and necessary provision for disposing of all items. These plans are not a local decision but a stated directive.

Ms. Weld stated the fall will be a vastly different educational experience and stressed the importance of that experience being consistent from teacher to teacher from elementary school through high school. She does not believe that is currently happening and indicated the need for a baseline for teachers and assurance that teachers are meeting the guidelines.

7) Continued Business

- FY21 Budget Workshop
 - FY20 Budget Update – Year End Projections

Mr. Urbas stated FY20 year-end projections include savings generated from building closures. The savings will help with one-time costs moving forward.

Mr. Urbas wanted to keep the School Committee to be informed about refund payments for the following programs.

- Refunds for spring sports programs, estimated total of \$35K
- Refund bus fees, estimated at \$6K.
- Pre-School program refunds (although there was an online component) fees will be refunded for an estimated \$2K-\$3K.

Mr. Urbas stated the refunds will be processed by the end of the FY20.

Ms. Wolf asked if the District could include an option for the refunds to be donated to a fund for school community members in need. Ms. Weld stated she supported Ms. Wolf's recommendation. Ms. Erdmann recommended the suggestion be taken up in the Finance Committee sub-committee and further reviewed by the Policy sub-committee.

Mr. Urbas stated the District is ending up close to budget on payroll with the possibility of realizing a \$50K savings. He went onto mention there are anticipated savings in supply expenditures and transportation. At the next School Committee meeting the Committee will vote to transfer funds and reconcile the FY20 budget.

Mr. Urbas informed the Committee as part of 2020 summer maintenance work Eagle's Nest playground will be raised. He wanted the community to be aware of the plan.

- Update on FY21 Budget Outlook and Timeline
 - Planning Scenarios

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the School Committee had passed a revised FY21 budget at the May 19, 2020 meeting based on anticipation of a 10% cut in state aid for a reduction of \$360K.

- 10% potential State Aid reduction = \$360K

To achieve this reduction – Operation Reductions \$273.5K, Revise FY21 HC Estimates \$120K, Eliminate Late Bus \$20K and Retirement Savings \$133.5K. Additional reserves of \$85K. FTE reductions (attrition and reorganization) 1 TA

- 10% including Federal = \$420K

To achieve this reduction – Operation Reductions \$333.5K, Revise FY21 HC Estimates \$120K, Eliminate Late Bus \$20K, Fund Annual Facility Small Cap via Stabilization \$60K, and Retirement Savings \$133.5K. Additional reserves of \$85K. FTE reductions (attrition and reorganization) 1 TA.

- Reduction of 20% = \$655K

The district's goal is to utilize resignations and retirements before turning anyone out. These losses are on top of 2-year reductions to staffing.

To achieve this reduction – Operation Reductions \$333.5K, Revise FY21 HC Estimates \$120K, Eliminate Late Bus \$20K, Fund Annual Facility Small Cap via Stabilization \$60K, and Retirement Savings \$133.5K. **Including Program Reductions of \$179.5K and Staffing Reductions of \$65K.** Additional reserves of \$85K. FTE reductions (attrition and reorganization) 3.5 FTE/1 TA.

- Reduction = \$1M (1/12th Budget)

To achieve this reduction – Operation Reductions \$358.5K, Revise FY21 HC Estimates \$120K, Eliminate Late Bus \$20K, Fund Annual Facility Small Cap via Stabilization \$60K, and Retirement Savings \$133.5K. **Including Program Reductions of \$179.5K and Staffing Reductions of \$330.5K and suspend mentor program \$25K.** Additional reserves of \$132K. FTE reductions (attrition and reorganization) 5.5 FTE/3 TA and 2.5 Admin/Support.

- Financial and Program Implications of Benchmark Budget

- Library media specialist defer with position lost through attrition.
- Foreign Language eliminate the Elementary School program (hopefully get it back in the future) a \$81K savings with the individual moving to another position.
- Consolidate elementary school music program and restructure free lessons as fee for service or contact with outside service. 1 FTE
- Special Education 2 TA's, reassigned due to program enrollment to 2 classrooms through retirements.
- 3 FTE facility rental management to .7 in Central Office.
- Administrative support eliminate and reassign athletic secretary due to retirement of admin support secretary.

- Full time athletic season trainer to .5 with possibility of returning to full time in spring and available for hours if needed for golf and cross country.
- If primary job is unavailable and the individual is available to assist the Covid-19 management team. That is planned.

The district's goal is to utilize resignations and retirements before turning anyone out. These losses are on top of 2-year reductions to staffing. Superintendent Beaudoin stated she is not anticipating a budget reduction of \$1M or more.

Mr. Warnock thanked Superintendent Beaudoin for sharing and for the thoughtful caring process utilized. It feels like the Committee has covered a lot of ground since the investment in social emotional learning. Superintendent Beaudoin thanked Mr. Warnock for pointing out social emotional learning and it helps with addressing our responsibility to the students and the community.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated in reducing the budget to meet the need she tried to avoid blanket or broad strokes like pink slipping all first- and second-year teachers. She and Mr. Urbas kept looking to minimize the impact on the staff and students. In the potential scenarios proposed 3 individuals have some kind of loss to their positions.

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked if there was an opportunity for furloughing employees. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District had met their legal obligation for rift or non-renewal. She reiterated all obligations were met and discussed with META regarding fine tuning employee groups going forward. The likely hybrid model negates furloughs. Ms. Fitzgibbon wanted to confirm the positions could be restored and individuals would be eligible for unemployment.

- School Choice

Superintendent Beaudoin spoke with a Department of Education representative who asked the District to register their position on accepting School Choice students. At a previous meeting, the Committee had postponed the decision on School Choice until August when final enrollment was known.

Ms. Cameron moved to keep School Choice open for determination in August when the District is fully aware of the State's budget, Ms. Fitzgibbon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8) **School Committee Comment** – There were no additional comments.

9) **Adjourn**

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

