

School Committee Minutes
Virtual Meeting
Monday, September 13, 2021
6:15 p.m.

Members attending: SusanMary Redinger, Shannon Molloy, Abby Besse, Sharlene Cronin, Suzanne Allen, Maureen Babcock.

Others in Attendance: Linda Dwight and Ingrid Nilsson

SusanMary Redinger called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Abby Besse read the vision statement.

Public Commentary

Rachel Kopay – Littleton County Road – In support of vaccination requirement

Montachusett Tech Representative Opening - Tabled

Superintendent Update - Attached

Update of Covid Testing and Vaccination Status for Harvard

SusanMary Redinger reported that the vaccination rates in Harvard is high at approximately 84%. Testing continues to be conducted at both Bromfield and Hildreth with good participation. Dr. Dwight will continue to report out to the community the results of those tests on a weekly basis.

Review of Vaccination Requirement in Schools

Dr. Dwight shared that she has worked with the HTA as well as the School Committee/Policy Subcommittee to draft policy language that would require employees of the Harvard Public schools to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Two draft policies were presented. One policy contained model language that would require proof of vaccination for all employees by October 17th. The other policy would require proof of vaccination or the option for participation in weekly testing provided by the district. Employees who are not vaccinated or approved for an exemption as of October 17th shall be granted an unpaid leave of absence for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year or until such time, that they are fully vaccinated and approved by the district for return.

The Committee reviewed the two policies and would like to remove student references from the policy at this time. The Committee revised language in both policies to create one policy requiring all employees to be vaccinated unless an exemption for religion or medical exemption is obtained. The policy will be effective immediately for all non-union employees and will be bargained with the teacher's union at a date to be determined.

Suzanne Allen made the motion and Sharlene Cronin seconded to move that we accept this draft of Policy EBCFAA "Employee Covid-19 Vaccination and Testing Requirement" contingent upon bargaining for unionized employees only.

VOTE: Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

The student testing piece of the policy will go back to the Policy Subcommittee for review and revisions and brought back an upcoming meeting.

Maintenance Needs at Bromfield

Dr Dwight reported that an inspection of the wet fire sprinkler system found significant issues with the underground piping. The cost to repair, test and replace an outdated underground pressure gauge is estimated to cost \$9,850.

In addition, an inspection of the fire alarm panel revealed outdated parts that will require an emergency repair. Pat Harrigan recommends that we proactively secure bids to replace the panel before it fails. He estimated the replacement costs at between \$20,000 and \$30,000. Dr. Dwight requested that the committee approve funding for maintenance needs at Bromfield for \$9,850 for the sprinkler system and \$30,000 for the fire alarm panel.

Sharlene Cronin made the motion and Abby Besse seconded to approve the request for up to \$10K for replacement of the fire sprinkler system pressure gauge and up to \$30K for work on the fire alarm panels as requested by Dr. Dwight and to be funded by the Devens account.

VOTE: Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

School Committee Operating Norms –

The Committee reviewed the School Committee Operating Norms.

Sharlene Cronin made the motion and Suzanne Allen seconded to approve the Operating Norms as presented.

VOTE: Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

ESSER Grant Recommendations Review

Ingrid Nilsson reviewed the ESSER II and III grants to show expenses designated to be funded by the grant in year one and year two. These grants can be amended if we need to change anything. The Grants will be submitted to the Department of Education for expected approval at the beginning of October.

Superintendent Evaluation Presentation

On behalf of the School Committee, SusanMary Redinger extended appreciation and thanks to Dr. Dwight for the extraordinary job she has done over the last year. Members were able to see the tremendous amount of work that was done over the past year and give Dr. Dwight and overall rating of exemplary. Dr. Dwight thanked the School Committee and recognized the team she works with. For the future, there is a need for Dr. Dwight to give the School Committee members more insight into the curriculum instruction piece as well as the day-to-day work of the Superintendent that will be valuable for the School Committee to understand.

Custodial Personnel Request Review

Dr. Dwight requested to hire an additional custodian to be funded by the ESSER II grant. The majority of their responsibility would be outside work to include landscaping, field maintenance, mulching, mowing and snow removal. The DPW will still maintain the mowing of the playing fields.

SusanMary Redinger made the motion and Suzanne Allen seconded to approve the use of ESSER III funds to hire an additional custodian as outlined for two years.

VOTE: Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

Superintendent/School Committee Goals Planning

SusanMary Redinger presented the School Committee/Superintendent shared goals for 2021/2022. The four goals presented are Strategic Planning, Contract Negotiations, Budget Development and School Committee Best Practices. The Committee agreed to remove Contract Negotiations as one of the four goals as it a requirement and may not be considered as a goal. Members will work in groups to bring back the goal statements and measures to the next meeting
Strategic Planning Goal – Abby Besse, Suzanne Allen and Linda Dwight.
Budget Development Goal – Sharlene Cronin, Shannon Molloy and Ingrid Nilsson
Best Practices Goal – SusanMary Redinger, Sharlene Cronin and Maureen Babcock.

Change School Committee Term in Town Charter

SusanMary Redinger reviewed with the Committee a proposed change to be submitted as a warrant article at the fall Special Town Meeting. The change would be to propose an addition to the Charter that would change the terms of membership on the School Committee to July following the election. This way a new committee member does start during a superintendent evaluation, and it gives them time to get into the swing of things prior to their start. It also allows outgoing members to attend graduation and other end of year celebrations. This practice does have precedence in town with other boards.

Sharlene Cronin made the motion and Abby Besse seconded to approve the change to the School Committee Term in the Town Charter as presented.

VOTE: Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

If approved at town meeting the amendment has to then be approved by the legislature. It would hopefully be able to go into effect by July 2022.

Grant Approval – None

Future Meeting Dates

All Board – September 21

Report back to the Finance Committee

Agenda Items

Policy

Curriculum Presentations

Graduation Requirements

Complete Streets Input

District Improvement Plan

Superintendent Goals

Student Representatives-SAC meeting and topics

Minutes

With no objection, SusanMary Redinger approved the minutes of the September 7, 2021 meeting as presented.

VOTE: Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

With no objection, SusanMary Redinger approved the minutes of the August 25, 2021 meeting as presented.

VOTE: Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

School Committee and Subcommittee Reports

Suzanne Allen – reported that she attended the Transportation Advisory Committee meeting.

The Committee has met 3 or 4 times and is tasked to look at road transportation around town and make travel safer. Currently the state is funding a project to widen Ayer Road and the Committee is working on collecting feedback and including as many traffic calming measure as possible in the project that runs from Route 2 into Ayer. The Boxboro project is going on at the same time and will include a shared use path. The Committee is also working on the Complete Streets project that will create a map to show connect sidewalks throughout town. The Committee is also looking to identify dangerous intersections.

Sharlene Cronin reported that the Budget Subcommittee met this morning and put together a game plan to bring the budget priorities document to the full committee and work on how to move the priorities forward.

Abby Besse – reported that the Parks and Recreation Committee has met and had questions regarding field use. There are several teams practicing on one field. Although there is access to fields at Devens it is not easy to get the kids there. Parks and Recreation has four plans of how to fix the fields. The custodian we hired tonight would be part of that plan.

Shannon Molloy reported that SEPAC met and they are planning a fall social for parents, students and caretakers. The event will be held on September 29th from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Westward Orchards and will include apple picking and pumpkin decorating. SEPAC is exploring opportunities for adaptive sports and may collaborate with another district to offer programs.

Shannon Molloy reported that the Safer Teachers Safer Students state group is meeting weekly and will begin to move to a bi-weekly meeting soon. Discussion around how things are looking in various school districts, and how the year is starting. The District Testing Advisory group is

focusing on maximizing testing participation. They have worked with Dr. Dwight to get information out to parents and students. We have had a very good start but have room to grow.

Maureen Babcock reported that DEAC has not met but needs to meet and are waiting for something to be set up and will update. DEAC is made up of 4 Devens members and 3 School Committee members. There are 4 Devens members and 3 school committee members other officially 6 members terms are 2 years.

SusanMary Redinger– reported that the building project is on line to be completed at the end of October. The remaining work to complete is mostly field work. We are out of the woods with soil and boulders. There may be a delay in the finishing of the playground due to shipping delays. The punch list is down to dozens of items. Members are welcome to tour folks around the building on September 29th. The next

CPIC met for the first time this week. Nate Finch and SusanMary Redinger are the only returning members to the Committee. BOS and FinCom have new members and they are still looking to find a community member to complete the membership.

Our OML violation has been resubmitted to the Attorney General's office. The complainant did not agree with the ruling and kicked it back up to the attorney general's office.

Public Commentary - None

School Committee Commentary

Maureen Babcock – we were able to go through the Superintendent evaluation very quickly because it was a positive response – it is a shame that we couldn't have shared more about the exemplary superintendent rating and that we are so fortunate to have her.

SusanMary Redinger is happy to make the presentation available to the public and will send it out to the press. It is worth highlighting and Linda deserves to be recognized.

Adjourn

With no objection SusanMary Redinger adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Mary Zadroga