

BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
APRIL 20, 2022
MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Brookline School Board was conducted on Wednesday, April 20, 2022 at 6:02 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy.

Kenneth Haag, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present: Karen Jew, Vice Chairman
 Alison Marsano (arrived at 6:04 p.m.)
 Kelly Zakar

Members of the Board Absent: Colleen Micavich, Secretary

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
 Gina Bergskaug, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
 Lauren DiGennaro, Director of Student Services
 Donna Smith, Assistant Business Administrator
 Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School
 Patricia Bouley, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

**MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG THAT THE BOARD, BY ROLL CALL, GO INTO NON-PUBLIC SESSION PURSUANT TO RSA 91-A:3, II (a) THE DISMISSAL, PROMOTION OR COMPENSATION OF ANY PUBLIC EMPLOYEE AND 91-A:3, II (c) TO DISCUSS A MATTER, WHICH IF DISCUSSED IN PUBLIC, WOULD LIKELY AFFECT ADVERSELY THE REPUTATION OF A PERSON, OTHER THAN A MEMBER OF THE BODY OR AGENCY ITSELF
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Karen Jew, Kelly Zakar, Kenneth Haag

3

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The Board went into non-public session at 6:03 p.m.

The Board came out of non-public session at 6:25 p.m.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

Superintendent Corey requested the agenda be adjusted by adding a deliberative item to address the communication from the Business Manager, provided to the Board at last month's meeting, concerning a recommendation to increase the Pre-Kindergarten tuition rate.

An additional request was made to allow for discussion of the curriculum tool EPIC, following the Principals Report.

There being no objection, the agenda was adjusted as requested.

CORRESPONDENCE/RESIGNATIONS/NOMINATIONS

Superintendent Corey informed the Board of a Letter of Resignation received from Thomas Elmer. In his letter, Mr. Elmer commented lessons he has learned at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy (CSDA) will remain with him for the remainder of his life, and he is a better educator for his time here.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT, WITH REGRET, THE RESIGNATION OF THOMAS ELMER AS A CASE MANAGER AT THE CAPTAIN SAMUEL DOUGLASS ACADEMY, EFFECTIVE AT THE END OF THE 2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

The Board was informed of a Letter of Resignation received from Christina Catino from the position of Music Teacher at CSDA, effective June 30, 2022. In her letter, she states it has been an absolute pleasure serving the Town of Brookline and the student population at CSDA for the past 15 years, and an exceptional learning experience for her.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT, WITH REGRET, THE RESIGNATION OF CHRISTINA CATINO AS A MUSIC TEACHER AT THE CAPTAIN SAMUEL DOUGLASS ACADEMY, EFFECTIVE JUNE 30, 2022

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

A Letter of Resignation has been received from Brittany Hicks from the position of 6th grade teacher at CSDA, effective at the end of the 2021-2022 school year. She remarks the decision was a difficult one to make, but necessary to meet the current needs of her family.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT, WITH REGRET, THE RESIGNATION OF BRITTANY HICKS AS A 6th GRADE TEACHER AT THE CAPTAIN SAMUEL DOUGLASS ACADEMY, EFFECTIVE AT THE END OF THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

The Board was informed of a Letter of Resignation received from Kiana Brown from the position of 3rd grade teacher at the Richard Maghakian Memorial School (RMMS), effective June 30, 2022. In her letter, she comments, as a first year teacher, she appreciates the opportunity given her to begin her teaching career within this district.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF KIANA BROWN AS A 3rd GRADE TEACHER AT THE RICHARD MAGHAKIAN MEMORIAL SCHOOL WITH AN EFFECTIVE DATE OF JUNE 30, 2022

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MARSANO

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

Superintendent Corey informed the Board of receipt of a letter of Intent to Retire from Monica Boisvert, Music Teacher, RMMS, with an effective date of June 30, 2022.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE LETTER OF INTENT TO RETIRE RECEIVED FROM MONICA BOISVERT, EFFECTIVE JUNE 30, 2022

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

Superintendent Corey informed the Board of his nomination of Emma Danais for the position of 3rd grade teacher at RMMS. Ms. Danais has her bachelor's in educational studies in Spanish and her masters in elementary education from the University of New Hampshire. She would join the district at a masters step 2 and a salary of \$47,999.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE SUPERINTENDENT'S NOMINATION OF EMMA DANAIS FOR THE POSITION OF THIRD GRADE TEACHER AT A MASTERS STEP 2 AND A SALARY OF FORTY SEVEN THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED NINETY NINE DOLLARS (\$47,999)

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

Sara Getchell was nominated for the position of 6th grade teacher at the CSDA. Ms. Getchell has her bachelors in elementary education in Spanish from Keene State College. She would be at a bachelors, step 1, and a salary of \$40,030.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE SUPERINTENDENT'S NOMINATION OF SARA GETCHELL FOR THE POSITION OF 6th GRADE TEACHER, AT A BACHELORS, STEP 1 AND A SALARY OF FORTY THOUSAND THIRTY DOLLARS (\$40,030)

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

The Superintendent's nomination for the position of 2nd grade teacher is Heather Hoefs. Ms. Hoefs comes to the district with a bachelor's in psychology and child development from New England College and her masters in elementary education from Southern New Hampshire University. She would join the district at a masters, step 7, and a salary of \$55,645.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE SUPERINTENDENT’S NOMINATION OF HEATHER HOEFS FOR THE POSITION OF 2ND GRADE TEACHER AT A MASTERS, STEP 7 AND A SALARY OF FIFTY FIVE THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED FORTY FIVE DOLLARS (\$55,645)

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

Nominated for the position of 5th grade teacher at CSDA was Melissa Palmer. Ms. Palmer comes to the district with her bachelors in elementary education and sociology and her masters in elementary education from Bridgewater State. She will join the district at a masters, step 10 and a salary of \$60,804.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE SUPERINTENDENT’S NOMINATION OF MELISSA PALMER FOR THE POSITION OF FIFTH GRADE TEACHER AT A MASTERS STEP 10 AND A SALARY OF SIXTY THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND FOUR DOLLARS (\$60,804)

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

Superintendent Corey nominated Caroline Prudhomme for the position of 2nd grade teacher at RMMS. She has her bachelors in elementary education from Rivier College and would be at a bachelors, step 1 and a salary of \$40,030.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE SUPERINTENDENT’S NOMINATION OF CAROLINE PRUDHOMME FOR THE POSITION OF SECOND GRADE TEACHER AT A BACHELORS, STEP 1 AND A SALARY OF FORTY THOUSAND THIRTY DOLLARS (\$40,030)

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

Superintendent Corey informed the Board of a review of art and music being conducted. As there is an opening in each building, being considered is having one art teacher and one music teacher serve both buildings. The district has been doing that with 4 part-time people, and periodically encounters a situation where it has trained and prepared them only to have them leave the district for a full-time position elsewhere. The Administration will bring forward a recommendation for the May meeting.

Superintendent Corey informed the Board of receipt of a Notification of Intent to Bargain from the Brookline Teachers’ Association NEA-NH.

“Dear Mr. Haag,

This is to inform you that the Brookline Teachers’ Association NEA-NH desires to bargain a master contract for the contract school year beginning July 1, 2023. This notification is in accordance with the requirements of RSA 273-A:3.

Members of the negotiations team would like to gather with the representatives from the School Board to set the ground rules and dates for meetings.”

Karen Pillion, President, can be contacted in May or June.

Chairman Haag requested the Board be provided with an updated organizational chart (perhaps over the summer).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brookline School Board – **Organizational Meeting** [March 23, 2022](#)

The following amendments were offered:

Page 6, Line 43; insert a period at the end of the sentence.

Page 8, Line 30; insert a “)” at the end of the sentence.

Page 9, Line 11; replace “is not” with “not being”

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

PUBLIC INPUT

Candice Cunha, 1 Baldwin Drive

Wished to discuss the EPIC application. This is used in classrooms as an aid for reading. She has and continues to see a large value in this fun tool, so much so that a few years prior she invested in the full use of the app as she found it really helpful. During COVID it was particularly helpful as it was easily accessible to use books tailored to the students’ reading level.

Recently learned is that within a few clicks of EPIC content, one can access what can be classified as inappropriate and borders on sexual in nature. She is shocked that this is being presented to young children. It seems those who produce EPIC have thrown all modesty and values out the window by permitting the content.

She wished to address her thoughts on why the use of EPIC and possibly other things the district has previously approved need to be scrutinized more carefully. EPIC is a one-size fits all program and we have a diverse community of parents where not everyone is comfortable with the content available. EPIC had a book with a target audience of 0-5 that goes over the ABCs where it states, “S is for sex and T is for transgender”.

Ms. Cunha remarked she has previously submitted this and other books to the Board via an email. Any content of a sexual topic of which includes this fantasy idea that anyone, never mind a child, can choose their gender does not belong in a school setting. Another example of a book with gender choosing of a child was also submitted via email to the Board. The book was titled “Jack not Jackie”.

There need to be safeguards in place to protect the students. Aside from anatomical education in health class, which has no place in our younger classrooms, no student should be presented with any sexual identity information, heterosexual or otherwise.

For this information to be shown to students via books and other media about sex and sexuality borders on sexual harassment.

She understands this is not being shown, is not part of our curriculum, but it is available via this 4,000+ e-library that is EPIC. She believes there may be other district approved e-content where data is pushed on a regular basis from the publishers and others that need to be reviewed again.

She stated her point to not be to disapprove of someone's lifestyle or personal choices. If a parent chooses to read some of the books available on EPIC in this topic to their child, they can do so in their home setting.

Access to these e-books on EPIC specifically as well as other similar books and media of this nature are for three things: 1) grooming a sexual preference, 2) sexual harassment for the discussion of sexual topics to minors, and 3) supporting gender dysphoria. She knows none of these three topics are the intent of our teachers, Principals, staff or district. However, that is essentially what is happening.

She hopes the Board will take a firm stance against offering such content and other media such as the one presented on EPIC, in our classrooms, and that we stand together in this. We do not promote any other mental health disorders in our schools so why are we promoting gender dysphoria?

She questioned how often previously approved data is reviewed. Online content gets pushed often. Do we have a policy in place where we regularly look into new content? Who reviewed the privacy policy for the EPIC app? To what extent does the data mining occur in here for our children? What are the guidelines for approval? What are the personal agendas, if known, of the people who are pushing such content? She assumes EPIC and similar apps have an approval process of their own similar to that which we use to vet our tools. How pure are their intents? What parental consideration, if any, is taken into account in reviewing this content?

Ms. Cunha questioned the impact of EPIC, e.g., are the students better off with or without it?

Nancy Dulac, 151 Old Milford Road

Echoed the remarks of the previous speaker. She commented on the excellent schools in Brookline, and requested the district stick to the academics and leave the social issues aside.

Matt Murray, 6 Rideout Lane

Spoke of having moved to Brookline a few years ago, and that his children will be entering the school system. They were excited with the prospect, however, over the past few years there have been many changes, which are concerning to him and his wife. They have gone the route of homeschooling.

The indoctrination that has been pushed into school systems over the past several years is concerning to him. A lot of the content students are seeing is concerning.

Jessica Hartman, 51 Mountain Road

Worked as a substitute in the schools during COVID. She had the pleasure of teaching and using EPIC. Most of the time, the teacher specifically creates a library for the students and is choosing specific books. She provided the example of her child working on a research project and their teacher putting in the library certain non-fiction research materials. It is like their first entry into doing research without having to do it on their own. She never witnessed any of the books being discussed. It was very helpful during the pandemic as it provided access to books to a lot of students who did not have access to them at home.

PRINCIPALS' REPORT

Daniel Molinari, Principal, RMMS, highlighted items from the report provided as part of the [agenda](#) packet. Current enrollment in Brookline is 587 students. Included as part of the report was a listing of upcoming events. Principal Molinari extended gratitude to the PTO, Brookline taxpayers, Public Library, teachers, and parent volunteers for the support received in providing opportunities for students to get back to normal (pre-COVID).

Upon return from April vacation, the New Hampshire Statewide Assessment System (NH SAS) will be administered (grades 3-8). Kindergarten Zoom orientation will occur on May 6th.

Patricia Bouley, Principal, CSDA, spoke of staffing needs; RMMS is seeking two MTSS Paraeducators, 3 Paraeducators and 2 Custodians. CSDA is seeking 1 MTSS Paraeducator, 1 Paraeducator, and 1 Custodian.

The report included some photos depicting the CSDA touch flat panel in action. The panel has two points of touch (would permit two students to solve two math problems at the same time). It is a built in computer eliminating the need for plugging a computer into it or a projector on the ceiling. It is interactive with the students' Chromebooks.

The PTO donated a wolf mascot to CSDA. A naming contest will be conducted upon the students' return.

Chairman Haag questioned the issue with the bus schedule, e.g. has experienced changes in recent weeks. Principal Molinari spoke of the nationwide shortage of bus drivers. Our district does a great job of employing drivers and continues training. A question he has fielded from families is why it does not rotate, why is it always a particular bus that is delayed. The answer is that drivers know certain routes and there are some drivers that do multiple routes. If we change a driver and do it on a rotating basis, the driver may not be familiar with the route.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug added, some routes are longer and cannot be doubled with another. Bus 8 is a high density of students in a few stops. It is an easier one to have as a second run if there has to be doubling.

Chairman Haag questioned if there is a way to address the consistency, e.g., perhaps if it were to be expected on particular day(s). Superintendent Corey responded the issue comes back to the labor force. We are facing a shortage, the potential for COVID cases, normal sickness, and normal leaves. At the start of a week it is not known what will occur during the week. He spoke of being aware of districts that are not provided any notice of a doubling of runs (parents are informed so that they can drive their child to school if able). From his standpoint, although he does not like the doubling, etc., they are done because it provides a little more consistency than a situation where a child is at the bus stop before the parent is notified our buses are not running. There could be a scenario where the parent has already left for work.

He and the Assistant Superintendent are in constant contact with the transportation company and working towards stabilization from week to week. Applications are ticking upward, and the State is doing some work to assist with certification of drivers and background checks. In the near future, once a bus driver is certified in Hollis Brookline, they are a bus driver certified for the State of New Hampshire.

Getting through this school year will be challenging. There will be struggles with some fieldtrips towards the end of the year. There will likely be an update in May.

DISCUSSION

- EPIC

Principal Bouley commented on the concern around EPIC. A review was conducted, the results of which were presented. EPIC is a free virtual library application with access to over 40,000+ books that has been used by Brookline teachers and students since 2016. It was heavily used particularly during remote learning. Students and teachers may access EPIC during school hours. Families have the ability to purchase their own account to access it beyond those hours. Students log in with a class code or through their Google account access.

When teachers set up their classroom account, they set up the grade and Lexile levels (readability levels). Teachers can create differentiated assignments based on the following: look at the student's needs, high/low interest and readability, word tracking (words are highlighted) or the read aloud audio book. Teachers can track progress by daily reading minutes as well as view the books the students are reading. Teachers can personalize collections of books that students can search such as sports, transportation, animals, etc.

There are high interest series included in it such as I Survived, Boxcar Children, National Geographic Weird But True, Captain Underpants. These books are also available in our library, but we have 1 or 2 copies. Through EPIC, teachers are able to assign it to groups of students so that they are all reading the same book.

Principal Molinari noted the comments of teachers. In Kindergarten, Mrs. Everett shared that "Without the read to me books through EPIC, there is no easy way to let a classroom of kids learn about a subject of their choice." In 1st grade, Mrs. Dillon shared "EPIC has been helpful during science when starting or wrapping up a new topic. For example, when finishing the unit on light and sounds, students were allowed to explore EPIC to learn more about light and why we need light." In 2nd grade, Mrs. Laflamme shared "We are currently learning about poetry and EPIC has a great collection of poetry books." In 3rd grade, Mrs. Wirth commented "EPIC is the primary resource for partner and small group reading. Multiple students can access the same text."

At CSDA, Mrs. Matylewski, Special Education Case Manager, shared "She can assign audio books on her EPIC for students to listen to in the classroom during independent reading time." Mrs. David, grade 4 teacher, stated "EPIC allows for students to listen to proper reading fluency, which is great for struggling readers. It provides excellent resources for various resource topics. It has allowed students to foster personal relationships with other students in the classroom setting as it can give them a commonality to talk about when it comes to those high interest books." She added students love the genre tool and will sit with students to help them pick out books they might like. She knows that she can then go on and assign those books to children during that time. She is constantly circulating to ensure that students are on proper material." Ms. Meehan, grade 4 teacher has stated "Audio books are great for struggling readers to follow along with as it uses real voices instead of robotic monotone. We use it for our animal projects in science back in September, biography projects, fantasy unit, non-fiction text features and structures." Mr. Putnam, grade 6 teacher identified "In helping students to find books, he is teaching students how to develop systems and strategies for interviewing books by understanding their purpose. For specific units of study, he will create with students collections of texts for students to choose books from."

Superintendent Corey noted when a teacher wishes to utilize an app or some other technology, a formal request is made, which is reviewed through multiple lenses. Committee membership includes the Business Manager to identify the cost, the Assistant Superintendent to see how it relates to curriculum and how it will be used, and the IT individual to ensure it lines up with our protocols, matches the corresponding age, etc. They vet what the publishers indicate for an age. It is understood that in a collection of 40,000 books just like in a collection at the

public library, there are items that do not mesh with every family. It is not our intent to be pushing any agenda. At the same time, it is our intent to support everybody who sends children to our schools.

The program itself has been made aware of the concerns and they are looking into the possibility of a hide feature of sorts and how that could be utilized by a teacher to set more parameters. All of the details are not yet understood. The programs are regularly reviewed. Everything used by the district is listed on the website. A permission slip is sent home at the start of the year identifying what will be used. He commented, as a parent, he has signed that document and sent it back in without having had the time to look at all 40,000 books that exist in this library. He assured the Board that the concerns have been heard and that it was put out tonight to be addressed quickly and in a public setting. The Administration will continue to review this and go back to the teachers and approval committee and take a close look at this to see what other features it offers. The district may not have this program in a few years as it is believed they will start charging for it and continuing with the program will be cost dependent.

Right now the value of how it is being used by the district to enhance the Board approved curriculum allows for interaction with children. Superintendent Corey provided the example of two students in the same class; one a struggling reader whose book (same as the other student) is reading to them. Both students are gaining the same content and understanding, following along, and learning the process. Prior to features like this, the students may have had separate books. That in itself can allow a child to feel isolated as they are not reading with their peers. Sometimes that snowballs into the image that I am not a good reader. We just do not all read at the same pace and same time.

Chairman Haag reiterated a request came in. With the desire for transparency, the item was included on the agenda. The process will be reviewed. Good feedback from the teachers was received and is appreciated. He requested if there are specific questions, based on the overview, that they be stated, and that the Board consider the need to visit this again. He can appreciate some content being of concern and understands that. He also looks at a library of 40,000, which appears to be a good tool that generated good feedback.

The content in question is not the curriculum that is being used in the classroom.

Vice Chairman Jew spoke of her appreciation of parents being involved, guiding their child's reading and being actively involved in their child's education. Knowing what they are reading and have access to is important. She questioned if there are mechanisms for parents to opt out or hide from their child materials that relate to assignments that are curriculum aligned, but a parent feels is not appropriate for their child.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded "Absolutely". Any parent can object to curricular resources. She provided the example of a concern around a book that was read in 8th grade. A committee was formed and reviewed the book, made recommendations, and put changes in place. If there is a specific concern for an individual child, a different resource that meets the same standards is put in its place. The first step would be to reach out to the teacher. The next step would be to the building Principal. Those requests are managed regularly.

Member Zakar commented on having spent time on the EPIC website and in discussion with her wife, who is a 1st grade teacher in MA and someone who used EPIC a lot during the pandemic and continues to. She appreciates some of the benefits, e.g., a child with visual disturbance can change the font of the book, etc. She spoke of the ABCs book and Principal Bouley's statement that books are assigned to students based on their reading groups. Even though the book says it is for students 0-5, the Lexile is actually 40, which would be a 3rd or 4th grade reading level. Not only is it not being assigned, but it would not be assigned to kids who are 0-5.

In the version that can be purchased by a parent, you are able to hide titles. She has done some research into this understanding there are concerns. It is not accessible during the school day, is not part of the curriculum, but is something accessible through browsing and searching.

Member Marsano questioned if parents are able to, outside of the school day, view what students are looking at in their assigned curriculum. Principal Bouley responded that would be based on if collections were put together, e.g., typically teachers link it to their Google Classroom. She will verify that they are listed there. Member Marsano felt that would be a good frame of reference for parents. Perhaps teachers could send out a notification identifying they would be accessing EPIC and suggest parents speak with children about getting onto Google Classroom and showing them what books they are looking at. If there is an objection, it can be made known.

Vice Chairman Jew commented while at home, her child had a login, and she was able to view everything that was assigned to her collection. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug noted that is only available from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Chairman Haag commented you get one book outside of school hours and after the first one you are shut out of EPIC until school hours.

Member Marsano remarked she is a huge advocate of teaching mental health in schools. She will assume that at all levels, we are still teaching Choose Love. Superintendent Corey stated that to be the case. Asked if the district continues to use anything like Zones of Regulation at RMMS, Principal Molinari acknowledged it does. Member Marsano went on to say we are teaching about how to manage our emotions, how to deal with when we are not feeling great, when we are feeling sad and how to deal with our friends when they are feeling sad. We do deal with mental health, because that is one of the most critical things we can deal with. If our kids are not mentally healthy within our school, they cannot learn. It is critical. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) is not here because it is not appropriate. Unless you have your ID, you should not be using it. It is not appropriate in here.

To be teaching Social Emotional Learning, we should have access for the parents to know what their kids are learning. She does not object to parents limiting what their students are learning just as she believes they should have access to all sorts of reading materials. Whether she believes in the religious beliefs of other cultures, she thinks they should have access to it. If they cannot learn about it, they cannot know anything more. She does not have to agree with it. Should it be based on their age level, absolutely. This is where parents need to be involved so the school is not the only one sitting there monitoring everything all the time. She does not want to censure anything.

Chairman Haag suggested the takeaway to be that there is more opportunity, being outside of the COVID environment, for the Board to spend more time on curriculum. This is a great topic to start with and should continue during Board meetings. What jumps out to him is the transection of the digital literacy and the capability of kids being online. Here is another example of it, and there is the desire to ensure we are navigating that properly.

Member Zakar asked if librarians are part of the review committee. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the committee referred to is the Data Governance Team that works with the Data Governance Plan. All resources are provided on the technology page and parents sign off. The team reads every privacy policy and terms of service each Thursday. They say no to a lot of requests, and when saying no provide an alternate resource. For curricular resources within a grade level team; there are grade level teams working sometimes

with the librarian. With new reading materials we ask that the team is on board with that so there is a level of awareness and agreement that it is appropriate content for the grade level and intended purpose of the reading material. It is not one person making decisions in isolation.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the level of parental involvement and reiterated if an issue of concern is brought forward, an alternative assignment will be provided.

- Committee Appointments

Liaison

Brookline School District Policy Committee	Karen Jew
Brookline Finance Committee	Allison Marsano
Teacher Luncheon	Colleen Micavich/Kelly Zakar
SAU41 Governing Board Contract Committee	Karen Jew
SAU41 Governing Board Policy Committee	Karen Jew
SAU41 Governing Board Budget Committee	Allison Marsano
School and Town Services Committee	Ken Haag
Construction/Renovation Projects Working Group	Kelly Zakar
Negotiating Team – BTA	Ken Haag/Colleen Micavich
Superintendent Performance Evaluation Cmte. (SPEC)	Kelly Zakar

- Revenue and Expense Update

When last reviewed, the projected fund balance was \$84,271 prior to funding the trusts and retained fund balance for FY23. By maintaining the budget freeze and being able to close some of the encumbered purchase orders, the district has been able to reduce overall expenses this past month by about \$30,000. Although expected revenue looks to be increasing from what was budgeted, we currently have an anticipated Unreserved Fund Balance (UFB) of \$106,557.

With this amount, the district is able to fund the FY23 trusts approved by the voters (\$75,000 to the Maintenance Trust Fund and \$25,000 to the Special Education Trust Fund), which would leave \$6,557 to fund the Retained Fund Balance leaving no remaining funds to return to the tax base.

At the March meeting, the Business Administrator’s recommendation was to utilize \$125,000 from the Special Education Trust Fund to address some of the unexpected special education costs. A Public Hearing will be scheduled for May to determine the amount to be utilized to offset the FY22 expenses.

- Special Education Trust Fund Update

Superintendent Corey stated the Public Hearing will be scheduled and a final update will be available prior to the start of that hearing. Approval to utilize an amount “up to a number” will be sought understanding there remain unfilled positions and time before the end of the fiscal year for additional savings to be realized. The goal is to fund the Retained Fund Balance as that is the safety net should an unanticipated expense come about during the course of the year. In prior years, the district had a contingency fund for such unforeseen circumstances. That was dissolved when the community adopted the Retained Fund Balance.

- Facilities Updates

Provided with the agenda was a list of FY23 summer projects (SAU-wide). The Administration is looking to balance the different projects and tie some together to gain economies of scale where possible, e.g., parking lot refinishing/paving.

In Brookline, for the elevator, security office, library, classrooms, and 2nd floor above security office, the Board will receive drawings in May. The architect sat down with the Administration to identify specific details of the areas. The Construction/Renovation Projects Working Group will meet prior to the May meeting. There are a few final pieces of information remaining to gather. When RMMS was constructed, there were two ways to pour concrete. Next week, during vacation, an x-ray will be taken of the wall to identify the construction method.

Superintendent Corey went over the items identified on the list.

The summer programs will be moved from RMMS to CSDA because of the amount of construction occurring. Superintendent Corey and Principal Molinari have reached out to the Brookline Afterschool Program, which also runs the summer program to try to coordinate that.

Asked if the Lulu lift is safe to be utilized by a student having an instability such as being on crutches. Superintendent Corey stated it to be an old fashioned elevator. It is called a Lulu lift because it is not built to hold 8-10 people.

Asked if the mulch at RMMS is rubberized, Superintendent Corey stated it is. Asked, Principal Molinari stated it holds up better than the wood chips, which wash away. The rubberized mulch provides a better cushion. Where wood chip mulch has to be replaced yearly all that is required for the rubberized mulch is a top seal.

Asked if contractors are already lined up for the summer projects, Superintendent Corey spoke of the current schedule; when school lets out, the new wall will be placed in the current library to divide that into two classrooms. There will then be a period of standstill and the major work on the lower level will begin in July. With supply chain issues, he would not be surprised if work continues into the school year. If a safety concern, a second shift would be used.

- Strategic Plan Update

Superintendent Corey stated the information provided with the agenda packet is the first draft for the evolution of the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is the master roadmap that is followed. It drives the work of the Administrators each year at the Administrative Retreat.

They work off of SAU goals and identify implementation goals for the district. This is the first update to the five-year Strategic Plan since Superintendent's Corey's tenure with the SAU. What is being done is a realignment of the major goals. By keeping those constant we have the stability to move forward so that when there is a change in leadership or school board the process does not start again.

The plan goes from a goal to a priority area; address what the Administration and Board feel are the greatest needs and balance that with the budget. What we have been doing since his time in the district is maintain a Strategic Plan of what we want to do educationally and then fit the budget to meet those priorities. When there is the need to make cuts, it is based on the Strategic Plan.

The only goal that has been added since the original Plan was around rich co-curricular activities. That is a huge piece of the two towns. The Plan will be discussed further at the SAU 41 Governing Board meeting, will likely come back before this Board in May. It is hoped approval of a final draft will occur in the July timeframe.

- School Calendar 2022 – Last Day of School

The last day of school will be a half day on June 17th. Brookline teachers finish on Monday, June 20th.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the new Federal holiday, June 19th, and how to approach that in the future (this year falls on a Sunday). There have been preliminary discussions with the union. It was addressed in negotiations with the support staff union. They wanted the day around the winter break. If you are a support staff person, that is your longest stretch without a paycheck.

Chairman Haag questioned what a half day means in terms of timing. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated it is not the same time as an early release. Early release we serve lunch, and this is a lunch free day. Specific times will come out once finalized with the transportation company.

Member Zakar spoke of a request for consideration of Jewish holidays in terms of when exams are scheduled, field trips planned, etc. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug noted that was discussed earlier in the day with the Leadership Team. They ensure open houses are planned around the holidays, and the information that goes out to teachers is to remind them of the dates and to be flexible and not schedule exams, etc. It is historically more of an issue with homework and larger exams at the COOP district.

Asked, Superintendent Corey stated there to be a number of local clergies, from a variety of faiths, who assist the SAU. If there is someone having a concern, he wished for them to email the Administration to make them aware so that it can be taken into consideration. Teachers are asked to be respectful of religious holidays.

DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the Business Manager's recommendation to increase the Pre-Kindergarten tuition rate

As was noted at the last meeting, the Business Administrator has recommended an increase in the pre-kindergarten tuition rate of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) in each of the next three years. The increases will help offset increases in cost. A five-year review would be conducted thereafter.

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO APPROVE THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION TO INCREASE THE PRESCHOOL TUITION RATE BY ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$100.00) PER YEAR OVER THE NEXT THREE (3) SCHOOL YEARS AND A REVIEW EVERY FIVE YEARS BEGINNING IN THE YEAR 2030
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

ON THE QUESTION

Asked if families have already enrolled for the 2022-2023 school year, Principal Molinari stated the current three-year-old group will automatically go as a cohort to the four-year-old group. The preschool program is dependent upon the special education population. Referrals are being reviewed. They tend to let families know

some time in June if they have a place in the program. The district currently has wait lists out to 2026. Information regarding tuition rate has not yet been shared with new families.

Asked if there is a percentage of families that have difficulties with the tuition, Superintendent Corey stated the district has encountered financial hardships after people have been enrolled. He and the Principal have worked with the families as their child has already developed that sense of belonging. They have been very fortunate, and parents have been willing to work with the district. Principal Molinari commented a lot of times what is seen is that the families wishing to enroll in the preschool are ready to pay for that or, if there is no opening, they are ready to pay for a private preschool.

Asked, principal Molinari agreed, the cost is considerably less than that of a private preschool.

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the Superintendent's recommendation regarding the nomination of school administrators

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE NOMINATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ADJOURN

SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

The April 20, 2022 meeting of the Brookline School Board was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____

**Brookline School District
Review of EPIC**

- EPIC is a free virtual library application with access to over 40,000+ books that has been used by Brookline teachers and students since 2016.
- Students and teachers may access EPIC during school hours. Families have the ability to purchase their own account.
- Students log in with a class code or through their Google Account access.
- When teachers set up their classroom account, they set up the grade and Lexile levels (readability levels) grade levels (Prek – 7+).
- Teachers can create differentiated assignments based on the following: student needs, high-low interest and readability, word tracking, and read-to-me audiobook.
- Teachers can track progress by daily reading minutes and view books read.
- Teachers can personalize collections of books that students can search through such as sports, transportation, animals, the water cycle, the American Revolution, biographies.
- High interest series include: *I Survived*, *Boxcar Children*, *National Geographic Weird but True*, *Captain Underpants*, *Wings of Fire*, *Beverly Cleary* series.

What Brookline Teachers are saying about EPIC:

- Ms. Wirth stated that EPIC is their primary resource for partner and small group reading (multiple students can access the same text).
- Mrs. Everett shared that without the read-to-me books, there is no easy way to let a classroom of kids learn about a subject of their choice.
- Mrs. Dillon shared that EPIC has been helpful during science when starting or wrapping up a new topic. For example, when finishing the unit on light and sound, students were allowed to explore EPIC to learn more about light or why we need light.
- Mrs. Laflamme shared, we are currently learning about poetry and EPIC has a great collection of poetry books.
- Mrs. Matylewski mentioned that she can assign audio books on EPIC for students to listen to in the classroom during independent reading time.
- Mrs. Davis shared EPIC allows for students to listen to proper reading fluency which is great for my struggling readers. It provides excellent resources for various research topics. It has allowed students to foster personal relationships with other students in the classroom setting as it can give them a commonality to talk about when it comes to those high interest books. She also loves the genre tool and will sit with students to help them pick out certain books that they might like. She notes that she can then go and assign those books to children. During that time, she reports she is constantly circulating to ensure that students are on proper material.
- Ms. Meehan has stated, the audiobooks are great for struggling readers to follow along with as it uses real voices instead of robotic/monotone. We used it for our animal projects in science back in September, biographies projects, our fantasy unit, nonfiction text features and structures.

- Mr. Putnam identified that in helping students to find books, he is teaching students how to develop systems and strategies for interviewing books by understanding their purpose for selecting specific texts. For specific units of study (non-fiction), I will curate collections of texts for students to choose books from.