



PEMBROKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, February 14, 2023
North Pembroke Elementary School Library

Call to Order

Mr. Kennedy called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

Present from Administration: Erin Obey, Superintendent; Marybeth Brust, Assistant Superintendent; Jessica DeLorenzo, Director of Student Services

Present from Committee: Lance Kennedy, Chair; Susie Scholl, Vice Chair; Susan Bollinger, Secretary; David Boyle and Michael Quinn

Acknowledge & Schedule Visitors

Mr. Kennedy welcomed the audience members.

Eagle Scout Project – Brenden Kanya

Brenden Kanya presented his project to the committee. He would like to renovate the PHS Booster Snack Shack at PHS. He would like to restore the outside trim, door, paint, and lettering. To fundraise he plans to hold a car wash and will also seek donations from Sherwin Williams and Sampson Lumber. The committee as a whole agreed it is a wonderful idea and complimented him on his presentation.

Senator Moran and Representative LaNatra

Senator Moran said for the past couple of years her focus has been on education and children. She worked on the Common Start Bill and the focus of the bill is to uplift children and teachers so that children get the attention they need. She said she will receive some numbers for the committee. Plymouth County has received \$90 million dollars and Pembroke has been allocated a total of \$818,000 in ESSER funds, and so far only \$81,000 has been claimed so there's some play there. Looking at \$100 million dollars for grants to public school districts for facility needs and repairs. \$105 million for a reserve account for additional funding for educational needs including \$10 million for compensatory services for special needs students that have aged out during COVID and \$10 million in grants to address workforce challenges in approved special education programs. Pembroke has received an additional \$1 million dollars from DESE's fiscal year 2021 State Coronavirus Prevention Fund program which was calculated based on \$25 multiplied by the 2021 foundation enrollment.

In looking toward the fiscal year 2023 budget, the new Administration is looking at cornerstone investments that look toward education, the Student Opportunity Act is expected at 50/50 between schools and transportation and it's looking at investing about \$6 billion in Chapter 70 funding for school resources. Looking at a strong commitment toward Early Education and of that \$6 billion in Chapter 70 funding Pembroke received \$13,852,952 for the fiscal year 2023 that's about a little less than a 1% decrease from the prior year due to a small decline in enrollment. There are increases in facilities components for reimbursements for charter school formulas. Looking at the nutritional aspects of school meals, studies coming out now are showing food insecure families and if kids don't come in with a good nutritional background it is very hard for them to focus on learning. Regarding vocational school accessibility, there's a focus on broadening vocational opportunities so they have a bigger importance going forward over the next decade and it's a conversation happening in Pembroke around the high costs and how it will affect the community and what the State can do. A proposal is coming out to look at the funding so it doesn't crunch the taxpayer. She has a meeting tomorrow with Lieutenant Governor to voice her community's concerns.

Representative LaNatra said she read in Commonwealth Magazine today and is always hearing about the funding for schools. She understands that Pembroke is looking for vocational options and the difficulty surrounding this. She added that the new administration is putting a lot more into education funding. She works in partnership with Senator Moran and education is very dear to her so she is here to listen and get to know the committee and see what they can bring back to the administration.

Mrs. Scholl said she looks forward to more conversations regarding vocational education and asked if they plan to revisit the Chapter 70 formula. She added that smaller communities like Pembroke are feeling the crunch so she hopes they will advocate for smaller communities. Senator Moran said her job is to fight for what people need and they will revisit the Chapter 70 formula to be sure it is doing what it was originally intended to do. She said there are two bills regarding vocational education. Senator Cronin established a blind lottery piece of legislation to be considered and Representative Cabral filed legislation that would establish a weighted lottery when vocational high schools have more applicants than seats. Representative LaNatra said with the passage of ballot question one that will be more funding for education and transportation. Mrs. Obey explained the situation Pembroke is experiencing with vocational education.

Mrs. Bollinger said she is hearing from many people in town that the vocational education issue is the biggest concern right now. The amount of money to put toward it is a lot for the town. She added that any advocacy would be greatly appreciated. Mr. Quinn asked if it would be possible to pause the rule stating vocational schools can only take students from their towns and Senator Moran said it can be looked into.

Mr. Kennedy said the need for vocational education is growing so continued support for additional opportunities would benefit Pembroke. Mrs. Obey said it would be beneficial if the rule was changed to allow each vocational school to make its own entrance criteria. Mr. Boyle said the rural communities need to come together and Representative LaNatra said there is a rural caucus this year. Mr. Kennedy asked if free lunches will continue, and Senator Moran said she believes so. He said the challenges for students and educators haven't gone away so continued help to get funding is appreciated. Senator Moran said the new administration is really focused on food insecurity, education, and housing so over the next several months you will start to see how that's rolling out. She said they work for Pembroke. Mrs. Obey said the 14% increase of the OSD tuition rates has caused \$450k that Pembroke was not planning on. She wants to make sure it is on their radar and Representative LaNatra said she is aware, and the House is starting the budget process.

Melissa Hooley asked if DESE has knowledge of the vocational issue and Mrs. Obey said she sent a letter to DESE regarding the change to the enrollment policy and how it affects Pembroke. Senator Moran suggested increased advocacy within the Town. Mrs. Hooley said she would like to find out if DESE would put any funding toward the cost of becoming a member town. She added that she would like more communication between the legislators and the School Committee/Town on this issue. She also asked about rescinding the policy referencing Silver Lake as the preferred vocational school and Mr. Kennedy said the committee will keep the policy until PPS becomes a member town of SSVT.

Adjustments to Agenda

None

Communications

None

Approval of Bill Schedule

Warrants were sent out electronically for signature.

Superintendent's Report

Special Education Budget Presentation

Mrs. Obey said the departmental budgets are written based on moving the school forward and some items are wish list items.

Ms. DeLorenzo presented the department budget. Current staffing includes five team chairs, 31 special education teachers. 1 Transitional Coordinator, 46 special education paras, four School Psychologists, five Speech and Language Pathologists, 1.8 Occupational Therapists, a .8 Physical Therapists, five Social Workers, four English Language Education Teachers and 5.6 Nurses as well as contracted service providers consisting of a teacher of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialist, teacher of the deaf and an educational audiologist.

For the 2022-2023 school year, the special education student population is 18% of total enrollment, which is an increase from 17% for last year but within the State range of 19%.

Special education placements in K-22 in full-inclusion general education classrooms make up the largest population, 77%. Partial inclusion is 7%, substantially separate is 9%, public out-of-district day students is 3%, private out-of-district day students is 3%, and residential out-of-district students is 1%.

Ms. DeLorenzo explained that a Section 504 Plan is for a student with a disability that affects the ability to access instruction and participate in an educational environment. There are 171 students on a 504 plan up from 150 in 2021-2022.

Ms. DeLorenzo informed the committee that the Special Education Department was found in full compliance with the Tiered Focus Monitoring of Special Education and Civil Rights Audit, for the first time in nine years. This audit is done by DESE every three years. The department also met the requirement for the DESE Accountability Level.

The Special Education Department budget requests include:

- An increase in weekly BCBS/LABA contracted services by 5 hours per week, which is required.
- A full-time paraprofessional based on the level of needs of students this year, which is also required.
- Other not required requests include a .3 OOD coordinator due to the increased level of need of the out-of-district students. This was a position from 2005-2017.
- DIBELS Universal Screener to help reading specialists.
- Contracted Registered Behavior Technician for 30 hours per week.
- Coordinator of Behavioral Health, Wellness and Counseling, with possible grant funding.
- An ELE Content Coordinator which is .75 teaching and .25 administrative duties to be filled internally.
- A Nurse Leader for growing department needs. Grant can part about \$40k for FY24 only.

Ms. DeLorenzo explained the continued social/emotional/behavioral needs of students resulting from difficulties around anxiety, depression, coping skills, and executive functioning skills. 21% of students present as having an emotional or health disability, up from about 5%. Around 300 students receive counseling needs, either in small groups or individually, from the mental health staff.

Ms. DeLorenzo said there are 73 English Language Learners this year up from 70 last year. An additional full time teacher was added last year. 49 students receive direct instruction, and 24 former English learners require formal monitoring. 31 families require interpreter/written translations. 14 languages are represented, and Arabic and Portuguese are the largest populations. Another accomplishment was the full compliance of the Tiered Focus Monitoring of English Language Education, this audit happens every 6 years.

Mrs. Obey said as it gets closer to spring there could be some money left over from ESSER II. Mr. Kennedy said the challenge is how to continue funding a position after the one year of grant funds is gone. Even though enrollment is declining the needs of the population are increasing.

Consideration for Approval: 8th Grade Waiver for Lacrosse and Softball

Mrs. Obey said there is a multi-step process for a waiver and softball has had a waiver for the last three years.

VOTE: On a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Susie Scholl, it was unanimously voted to allow a waiver for 8th girls to play softball.

Voting Yes: Lance Kennedy, Susie Scholl, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle and Michael Quinn

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

Mrs. Obey added that the Athletic Director is looking for a waiver for JV girls' lacrosse because the interest meeting had only 29 students, previously there were 40. PYL is not worried about pulling up 8th graders to play high school. The AD is also requesting a waiver for boys' lacrosse because there is a concern there will not be enough players to field a JV team. She said she is concerned about the level of physical contact when there are 13-year-olds against 18-year-olds. She will not move this waiver forward to the committee and her recommendation is to hold on the girls' waiver for a couple of weeks until sign-up numbers are available. It is not fair to approve one and not the other because the numbers are close. Spring season starts March 20th. The committee agreed to hold on the girls' waiver.

Future Meeting Dates and Topics

3/7, 3/14, 3/21

4/4, 4/11, 4/25

VOTE: At 7:55 PM, on a motion made by Susan Bollinger and seconded by Susie Scholl, it was unanimously voted to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Lance Kennedy, Susie Scholl, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle and Michael Quinn

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

APPROVED: March 7, 2023

MOTIONS

VOTE: On a motion made by David Boyle and seconded by Susie Scholl, it was unanimously voted to allow a waiver for 8th girls to play softball.

Voting Yes: Lance Kennedy, Susie Scholl, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle and Michael Quinn

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

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Voting No: none

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Absent: none