

**ROCHESTER SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
ROCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rochester, Massachusetts
16 Pine Street - Rochester, MA 02770**

**MEETING MINUTES
May 6, 2021
Meeting Held in Hybrid Format**

Regular meeting of the Rochester School Committee was held on Thursday – May 6, 2021 at 6:30pm.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sharon Hartley– Chairperson, Anne Fernandes – Vice-Chairperson, Robin Rounseville, Tina Rood and Katherine Duggan

OTHERS PRESENT: Michael S. Nelson, Superintendent of Schools; Jannell Pearson-Campbell, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Instruction; Howard Barber, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations; Craig Davidson, Director of Student Services; Derek Medeiros, Principal; Charles West, Assistant Principal; Diana Russo, Recording Secretary; teachers, parents and members of the press and public.

Meeting was called to order at 6:38 pm., by Chairperson Hartley. Ms. Hartley introduced the Rochester School Committee members and stated in accordance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the Agenda has been set, the meeting is being video-taped, and unless there are any emergencies that need to be added, the Agenda will be followed as outlined. Chairperson Hartley stated that this meeting is being conducted in a hybrid format and the School Committee and Administrators and attending in person at Rochester Memorial School, Cafeteria located 16 Pine Street, Rochester, MA 02770 and Public Access is available through zoom. Superintendent Nelson also introduced the school administrators in attendance.

SCHOOL CHOICE PUBLIC HEARING- Superintendent made the following statement:

On an annual basis – each Massachusetts school committee must hold a public school choice hearing to discuss their school choice status. Therefore – tonight this committee is fulfilling that obligation. In recent years – the Rochester Memorial School has not elected to be a school choice – school district based on various factors – including the size of the current study body and enrollment trajectories. At this point, I am happy to answer any additional questions anyone may have, encourage the committee to discuss, and then recommend that the committee hear any open comments for the public.

Feedback/Questions from the School Committee: NONE

Feedback/Questions from the Public: NONE

At this time the School Choice Hearing was closed.

RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT- Chairperson Hartley recognized School Committee member Tina Rood for her 15 years on the School Committee.

Chairperson Hartley made the following statement:

Tina, 15 years on the Rochester School Committee. We remember Tina as a dedicated, passionate, skilled and well, ALL IN leader. Over these years, Tina served our Committee and the Town of Rochester in many roles.

Over the years she represented us on most of our Committees -

- *For many years, she represented us on the Old Rochester SC –reports....*
- *She was a key member of the Budget Committee where she is particularly skilled and knowledgeable*
- *She represented us on the Capital Planning Committee*
- *She was our key contact for MASC during those key years prior to and during the building of our addition. She attended the MASC annual conference and made contacts and brought back important information and ideas.*

However, I think we remember Tina most fondly for her passion for RMS students. During decision making, can count on Tina to ground our decisions on what our students need, and when possible, Tina brought students to our meetings to perform, to explain a new program or to inform of us of their accomplishments.

In addition to celebrating our students, Tina was also always committed to ensuring that our students had opportunities in the Arts and Destination Imagination --- in create, to solve problems, to collaborate and to imagine. But these are my words. Let me share Tina's own words from past Town Reports: "A trip to RMS will reveal the ever-changing world our students are growing up in. The use of technology as a learning tool is evident throughout the building and is supported by our updated Media Center. The library now provides learning experiences that involve the safe use of technology. It provides the tools needed for students to know how to conduct research and collect information they need for projects. In the Maker Space students have a chance to explore, problem solve, and work on hands-on challenges. Computers, laptops, "eno" boards, and tablets are included in everyday education. These initiatives are important at our school because they provide students with the chance to explore, collaborate, create and become confident learners" Thank you, Tina, for all your contributions to RMS over all these years.

Ms. Rood made the following statement:

Good Evening, I never imagined there would actually come a day when I would attend my last RMS meeting as a committee member and now the day is here. First - the thank you's - I am so grateful to have been a part of this wonderful school and helping it to grow and look forward to seeing how it continues to grow in the years to come, I would like to thank all those I have been lucky enough to work with Superintendents, Principals, Assistant Principals, Fellow school committee members and all the people who work at our school - it is your dedication to our students that makes RMS the special place it was for my family and for every student that walks through our doors. To my family - for babysitting, listening to my crazy ideas and supporting me in what has been a lifelong passion. To my chosen sisters - Kerry, Beth, Jill, Jill, Sharon, Debbie, who stood with me on election day on Dexter Lane holding signs and were at my house to celebrate when I finally won my seat on this committee. To the voters who have allowed me to represent them on what has been a most fulfilling journey. To all of the volunteers - Judy, Kate, Andrea, Roz, Brenda, Tina, Sue, Sarah, Heather, Marissa, including this committee and many more, that I have had to pleasure to work with along the way - you are the unsung heroes of our school and remind our students through your actions that you believe their education is a number one priority. To the students - some that I have known from the day they were born - right through their return to our halls for the Senior Stroll - thank you for teaching me what is important and how I could best support the education you deserve. For reminding me that failure is a part of learning and getting back up is the important thing. As I reflect on my time here I am so proud of initiatives I have been lucky enough to work on and have learned a good deal along the way so I would like to leave some advice to those who follow along in my foot steps

1. *Even if you arrive with an agenda item be open to what is to come - there are so ways our schools lead the way on new initiatives. Our country is grappling with social justice and equity for all - it is our*

schools that will lead the way because the students we educate today are the future members of our community and future leaders. Listening to our students and their readiness to be a part of the solution is a step in the right direction.

- 2. Our job is to advocate for our schools and our students. It is important that our community hear the needs of our schools. If they don't hear it from our committee they will never know.*
- 3. Learn from adversity - I think I have learned the most this year in terms of what we can do when we are faced with processing new and changing information, while making major decisions quickly. We can do it!!! I hope all committee members will take time to reflect along with our school community on the past 15 months and what lessons we can take from it regarding education.*
- 4. You will not agree with everyone and you can learn the most from those you disagree with.*
- 5. Keep true to the Inclusion Model at our schools. Have a mindset that the work we do is for ALL OF OUR STUDENTS and that equity is the goal - this is not easy but it is worth it.*
- 6. Make sure to attend the events at our school - the Halloween dance, science nights, music performances, classroom presentations, vocabulary parades, art nights, plays, the last day of school; celebrating the achievements of our school community throughout the year, at all levels and in all areas - the joy in this is priceless. Taking opportunities at every turn to celebrate the work that is done here will remind you that the work this committee does is important.*

Thank you to all for the opportunity to serve as your representative.

Superintendent Nelson made the following statement:

I want to also personally thank Tina for her service as a school committee member – for 15 years! When I think of Tina's contributions to the school community and community at large what comes to mind right away is three things: Determination, Work Ethic and Passion

In my humble opinion – Tina embodies what it means to work hard towards a goal with extreme willpower and purpose. In all my conversations with her I am always struck by how passionate she is - about what she believes in and what she believes is best for kids. And what I have learned watching Tina as a school committee member is how important it is to contribute to the conversation – to share your perspective. Tina always encourages others to share what they know and what they can offer our schools and respects the power of the school community as a whole. I have truly appreciated collaborating with you Tina and wish you and your family nothing but happiness and continued success as you move towards your next chapter. During the superintendent search you asked me a very direct question when you were transporting me to my next school visit – you asked me very simply – will I do everything I can for our schools - to make them the best that they can be? What a question that was! Well – I promise you that the answer to that question will continue to be – yes. Our schools will miss you – and I thank you for all of your service.

Ms. Hartley presented Ms. Rood with a book that will be donated to the Rochester Memorial School Library. The name of the book is *The Big Orange Splot* by Daniel Pinkwater.

School Committee members Fernandes, Rounseville and Duggan also recognized Ms. Rood. Principal Medeiros also thanked Ms. Rood for her countless hours of dedication to the students and staff of Rochester Memorial School.

Ms. Hartley and the School Committee also wanted to recognize all teaching and instructional staff at Rochester Memorial School during Teacher Appreciation Week, the school committee left a basket filled with “goodies” for Mr. Medeiros to put in the teachers’ room for everyone to enjoy.

Mr. Medeiros thanked the school committee for their gesture.

I. Approval of Minutes:

A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Session: April 8, 2021

MOTION: by Ms. Fernandes to approve the April 8, 2021 minutes as presented

SECOND: by Ms. Duggan

(Roll Call Vote: Hartley: yes, Rounseville: yes, Rood: abstained, Duggan: yes, Fernandes: yes)

IV. General

A. Full In-Person Pivot Update

Superintendent Michael S. Nelson made the following statement:

I am happy to report tonight that our students, families, and staff members continue to settle nicely into this year's new normal. It has truly been great knowing that most of our students have returned to the classroom setting in-person on a full-time basis. Presently we have 460 students participating in full in-person learning model and 33 active remote students across the different grade levels. Totaling 493 students. As a reminder, all families have the right to choose remote learning for the remainder of this school year. Regarding COVID-19 data - as of today Rochester Memorial School has: 2 active positive cases, 10 individuals in quarantine, and 4 individuals awaiting test results after displaying covid-19 symptoms. We continue to track all available data points, but remain pleased with the trajectory of all data points. Our schools continue to implement safety protocols and mitigation strategies to keep all in our school healthy. Overall – our students and staff members continue to make learning happen! At this time, I would ask Mr. Medeiros to share his perspective on the current happenings in the school building.

Principal Medeiros reported that RMS has been full in-person for about a month, he reported that the RMS students are our calming force, he expressed the teachers and staff have done an amazing job preparing and they are always ready to pivot, he expressed that Ms. Murphy the school nurse has lead the school in keeping us calm and safe and making sure that all our all students and staff are safe every day. He expressed his very pleased with the way things are going so far, he expressed that the school is “back to life”, he reported that they are getting ready for their Spring MCAS assessment. He expressed that they are looking forward to the last six weeks of school and closing out the school year the right way, with end of year activities and student celebrations.

Feedback from School Committee: Chairperson Hartley thanked everyone for their hard work for making this a smooth and seamless transition to pivot, she expressed it's been “amazing”.

B. School Choice Vote

Superintendent Nelson made the following statement: *At this time – I am asking that the school committee to take official action regarding their school choice status for the 2021-2022 school year.*

MOTION: by Ms. Rood to not participate in school choice for the 2021-2022 school year

SECOND: by Ms. Fernandes

(Roll Call Vote: Hartley: yes, Rounseville: yes, Rood: yes, Duggan: yes, Fernandes: yes)

C. Literacy Presentation - Unpacking the Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines

Superintendent Nelson made the following statement: *At our recent school committee meetings the committee members and school administrators have discussed the importance of an updated literacy plan for Rochester Memorial School. As a result, we agreed that tonight the committee would hear a presentation from the administration that:*

Unpacks the recently released dyslexia guidance,

Highlights the literacy programming in place currently at RMS,

And identifies next steps regarding starting the process of examining and updating our literacy plans with stakeholder contribution.

At this time, I'd ask Dr. Pearson-Campbell, Mr. Davidson, and Mr. Medeiros to start their presentation.

Dr. Jannell Pearson-Campbell, Mr. Davidson and Mr. Medeiros presented “Unpacking the Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines” to school committee: (Please see attachment A)

Feedback from School Committee:

Ms. Fernandes asked if someone could give an example of matching a student need with an assessment. Mr. Davidson explained that there is a tiered approach, tier I is all about what's happening the general education classroom, tier II and III are more targeted instruction and broken down specifics for what the students are struggling with, he stated that on one of the slides coming up Mr. Medeiros will walk us through the benchmarking assessment that is being run through AIMSweb and we will be sharing more information about the AIMSweb platform. He explained that the platform breaks down by subtest by achievement level and from there that will allow classroom teachers to target specific areas of weakness for particular students and will also identify the students that are part of the screening process. Mr. Medeiros walked the school committee the AIMSweb monitoring slide.

Mr. Medeiros thanked Dr. Pearson-Campbell and Mr. Davidson for their support of this presentation and also thanked the Rochester School Committee for their support of adding an Academic Interventionist position for the 2021-2022 school year, he stated that it will be an important position to support our students not only in Reading but also in Math.

Ms. Fernandes asked if the district will consider have specialized instruction for some staff so that they become experts in the field of dyslexia. Mr. Nelson expressed that a good way to think about this is that everything is on the table now that this guidance is out, he expressed that this conversation is really unpacking to make sure that the school committee has a thorough understanding of it, and that we ourselves have a thorough understanding of it and now our school system needs to take on that same attitude and we all need to make sure we understand that dyslexia is not just a special education topic or issue anymore it has to be owned by each building. He expressed that when he thinks about that he envisions moving forward to June and through the Summer for a planning for success model being utilized, where we bring stakeholders together, we look at the most recent literacy plan of the three towns, which he reported is almost ten years old at this point and talk about what is being done well, what we need to change moving forward and all the questions that are coming up here need to be discussed and recommendations be made so that we truly have a published literacy plan for our elementary schools that drives right through the Jr. High and the High School. He expressed that this is a conversation that we understand the new guidance, what we're doing and also hearing feedback from all of you in terms of what you want to see from the administration moving forward, he expressed that in terms of making decisions, we haven't set anything in stone, because we want to make sure it's a process we all own.

Ms. Rood expressed that she appreciates the way that the reports are coming and the amount of information that the school committee is provided for our decision making, she expressed it's very helpful. Mr. Nelson expressed that he appreciates Ms. Rood's comment.

Ms. Hartley stated she wanted to do a summary, she expressed that at the last meeting the school committee had asked to have an unpacking of the dyslexia guidance, and she clearly that was done tonight and thank you for that, she expressed that during the presentation we also reported what was going on here at RMS, and then the school committee wanted to know next steps, what do we need to do, she expressed that she believes the last page is laying out some of the pieces. Ms. Hartley she believes it's important to come back in September and look at this again and see where we are and what we envision will be the next steps for the next year. Ms. Hartley asked for the information about the preschool screening to be repeated. Mr. Davidson reported that constant screening is down in preschool of all students. He expressed that the guidance matches a lot of what we are already doing, but of course during the stakeholder groups we will really dive into what pieces we do and when to them and it will be part of the timeline. He expressed that timelines are critical, he expressed from there you would go into Kindergarten screener done within the first few months of school before December and you do multiple screeners a year, and this is done for all students, and then three screenings a year in 1st grade and 2nd grade.

Ms. Rounseville asked if the screenings that Mr. Davidson is referring to are done by the regular classroom teacher. Mr. Davidson expressed that RMS teachers are using the AIMSweb platform to perform the screening, which is recommended by DESE.

Ms. Hartley thanked the administrative team for preparing the presentation, she expressed it was a lot of work and she and the committee is very appreciative.

Superintendent Nelson expressed that the next step is taking the ideology of planning for success model as it is described and creating an action plan and really start answering some of questions that everyone has including some questions here tonight from school committee. Mr. Nelson expressed that as soon as we have it ready we will share for feedback and start soliciting members of our school community to be participants.

V. New Business

1. Financial Report

Mr. Barber reported that as of April 30, 2021 the Rochester Memorial School currently has \$225,438 available of the general funds appropriated in the 2021 Fiscal Year. He also reported that per the Year to Date Budget Report by Department, we are able to identify how our funds are currently encumbered and expended. This report recognizes that of the \$6,609,831 appropriated to the District, including Special Bristol Aggie assessment. 84.85% is directly assigned and is spent/ encumbered to student instruction.

Mr. Barber also reported on facilities and food service. Mr. Nelson and Mr. Barber also gave a brief report on the Solar Project at Rochester Memorial School.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Ms. Hartley did not have a chairperson's report.

CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Nelson made the following statement on two updates:

The first update is regarding the solar project that this committee and the town has initiated. To update the committee, at this point the town of Rochester is currently reviewing the solar contract before formally executing. I am currently in the process of scheduling a meeting between town stakeholders and the solar company representatives to discuss the draft contract. I will continue to involve the school committee chair and brief the committee on developments.

The second update relates to the Old Rochester Regional School District. As four out of five of you heard last night at our Joint School Committee – the ORR school committee is working through a process to amend the Old Rochester Regional Agreement between the towns. The agreement has not been amended since 1986 and aims to provide necessary legal updates and language that meets our current and local needs regarding the budgeting process and capital needs. At this point in the process we the towns are currently reviewing the proposed regional agreement amendment and all three towns have indicated that they will place the needed articles on the summer/fall special town meetings warrant. In your back up information I have provided the agreement documentation for your review and reference. Although this school committee is not directly responsible for this work, I think it is important for all of you to be aware of this important work happening on behalf of our junior and senior high schools.

Mr. Craig Davidson – Director of Student Services reported the following:

Kindergarten - Transition Timeline

- On June 2 and 3 Kindergarten Meet and Greet will take place along with the traditional bus ride across all of the elementary school districts

Building Equitable Support for Children with Disabilities - Leveraged 298 Grant Fund • The Early Childhood Team will utilize the 298 Grant funds to support instruction around Equitable Supports and Anti-Bias practices

- The Early Childhood Team participated in the following:
 - 3 Statewide conferences,
 - 3 Regional (Southeastern MA) conferences
 - 3 individual coaching sessions with our TEAM
- The end result – this will allow a robust library in all our pre-school classrooms and at home materials that reflect inclusiveness and diversity
 - Final report will be out on June 4th
- The 298 Grant total = \$3,914.00, which will allow approximately \$1,300 per school to purchase materials for our youngest learners

Preschool Assessment has been completed as follows:

- It will follow the same format as the Kindergarten report card
- Priority Standards will be vertically aligned with Kindergarten
- Developmentally appropriate expectations and guidance has been completed for ages 3, 4 and 5

Connecting Families and Community Engagement Grant - CFCE

- The next Early Childhood Council Meeting is scheduled to take place on May 18th @ 6:00pm – at this meeting we will dive deeper in the Family Engagement.

The SAIL Program Brochure has been released, thank you to Mr. West and Mr. Letendre for their leadership.

Due to technical difficulties Mr. Nelson reported for Dr. Pearson-Campbell. Mr. Nelson reported that Dr. Pearson-Campbell presented the Professional Development Plan for the 2021-2022 school

year to the Joint School Committee on May 5th, he reported the plan was approved and now her office will start work on making plans for moving that work forward. He also reported that Dr. Pearson-Campbell is working the last Mentor meeting of the year which will be an end of year celebration. Mr. Nelson also reported that Mr. Davidson and Dr. Pearson-Campbell are both working on the Civil Rights, Special Education and ELL Audit.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT:

Mr. Medeiros reported the following: Below is our Spring 2021 MCAS testing schedule for the English Language Arts for students in grades 3-6:

May - 2021

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---------------|--|-----------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 16 | 17 | 18 Grade 5 ELA | 19 Grade 4 ELA | 20 Grade 3 ELA | 21 ELA Makeup | 22 |
| 23 | 24 *Grade 5 Remote ELA | 25 Grade 6 ELA | 26 *Grade 4 Remote ELA | 27 *Grade 3 Remote ELA | 28 ELA Makeup | 29 |
| 30 | 31 Memorial Day – No School | | | | | |

All incoming kindergarten families received a letter via email on Tuesday May 4th through the Family ID platform regarding the June “meet and greet” session. Our kindergarten team will be hosting incoming kindergarten students in June for an outdoor meet and greet session similar to our annual sessions.

On Tuesday May 11th at 6:00pm will be hosting a virtual parent/guardian informational session via zoom for all grades 6 families regarding end of year activities for our 6th graders.

- On May 17th our staff will participate in building based professional learning community meetings. The focus of the PLC meetings will be class placement in preparation for our June 7th half day which will consist of vertical placement discussions.

VIII. School Committee

B. Committee Reports

1. Budget Subcommittee- NONE
2. ORR District School Committee – Ms. Rood reported that they meet on May 12th. Ms. Rood did report that ORR was having graduation on June 5th and a Prom but not a Senior Stroll, but they will be having a Senior Parade.
3. SMEC- Ms. Fernandes reported that the next SMEC meeting is on May 25th.
4. READS- Mr. Nelson stated they have not met since the last meeting.
5. Tri-town Foundation- Ms. Rounseville reported that they met on April 26th, and welcomed Michelle Roy as their newest member, she also reported that they accepted a donation from Abington Bank for \$970. They also discussed the Lighthouse Book Awards. They have 3 grant applications and the they will be reviewed soon.

6. Early Childhood Council- Ms. Duggan reported this committee will meet again on May 18th.
7. Policy Sub-Committee- Ms. Duggan reported the Policy Sub Committee was meeting on May 17th.
8. Anti-Racism Sub-Committee: Ms. Duggan reported that the committee met on May 4th and reviewed DESE's document on new teacher recruitment guidance (a new project being launched through DESE), continue to work on creating a more inclusive calendar. The committee is also reviewing hiring practices. They also discussed creating an inclusive calendar for the district. She also reported that they reviewed Panorama Survey data.

IX. Future Business

A. Timeline

Chairperson Hartley reported:

The next meeting of the Rochester School Committee is Thursday – June 2, 2021 @ 6:30pm.

The next meeting of the Joint School Committee is Thursday – June 17, 2021 @ 6:30pm; held remote through Zoom.

X. Open Comments

MOTION: by Ms. Rounseville at 8:37 p.m. to enter executive session for the purpose of exception #3 and exception #7

SECOND: by Ms. Fernandes

ROLL CALL VOTE: (Hartley; yes - Rood; yes - Fernandes; yes – Rounseville; yes- Duggan; yes)

MOTION: by Ms. Rood to go come out of Executive Session at 9:45 pm and to adjourn

SECOND: by Ms. Fernandes

ROLL CALL VOTE: (Hartley; yes - Rood; yes - Fernandes; yes – Rounseville; yes- Duggan; yes)

MOTION to adjourn at 9:45 p.m. by Ms. Rood

SECOND: by Ms. Fernandes

ROLL CALL VOTE: (Hartley; yes - Rood; yes - Fernandes; yes – Rounseville; yes- Duggan; yes)

Meeting of the Regular Rochester School Committee meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm

Submitted,

Diana Russo, Recording Secretary