

Regular Meeting
KILLINGLY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Wednesday, March 13, 2024
7:00 PM
Killingly Town Hall, 172 Main St.
2nd Floor, Community Mtg. Room

MINUTES

Present: Ms. Laura Dombkowski, Ms. Laura Lawrence, Ms. Misty Murdock, Ms. Meredith Giambattista, Mr. Kevin Marcoux, Ms. Kelly Martin, Mr. Kyle Napierata, Mr. Danny Rovero, & Ms. Susan Lannon.
Student Board members, Ms. Anya Oliverson, and Mr. Phillip Purcell.

Others Present: Dr. Sue Nash-Ditzel – Superintendent, Mr. Jeffrey Guiot – Assistant Superintendent, Keely Doyle– Recording Secretary, S & G Legal Counsel, Rebecca Santiago.

1. **CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
2. **ROLL CALL-** Please see above.
3. **BOARD SHOUT-OUTS-** Mr. Napierata gave a shout out to Joe Boulanger (JB) transportation supervisor who has done a wonderful job since he came on board as transportation supervisor.
4. **REPORT BY STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS**
Anya Oliverson and Phillip Purcell shared information about district-wide events.

GECC: Parent Teacher Conferences are tomorrow Thursday March 14th.

In honor of Read Across America many guest readers visited classrooms to share their favorite children's books in recognition of Read Across America.

KCS: A thank you to all guests who attended kindergarten orientation. Families are encouraged to continue to reach out with any additional questions and to visit the KCS website to view the presentation.

KMS: Parent/Teacher conferences take place next Tuesday and Thursday.

The Azul String Quartet will perform at musical on Monday, March 18th for students in grade 3.

Tuesday, March 19th KMS hosts Pirate School, Follow Your Compass Assembly. This assembly helps students explore the reasons why children bully and to identify the different types of social and physical behaviors.

KIS: On March 8 the 7th and 8th grade students had their Winter Ball. This Friday is the 5th and 6th grade Social. Family Fun Night is on Thursday, March 21st. All those belonging to the KIS community are invited to attend.

KHS: Mr. Durand and the students from KTV are on a trip to California to participate in the Student Television Network Convention and Competition. KHS juniors will participate in the CT SAT School Day on March 19th. Musical auditions for the spring musical “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying” took place this week. The production will be in late spring. Juniors are invited to attend a tour of UCONN on April 11th .

5. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

A. Friends of Learning in Killingly (FOLK)

In 1998, Janice Ahola-Sidaway, Chair of FOLK and Bob Beauregard Co-Chair and several others members of FOLK were in attendance. FOLK originally included members of the Class of 1966. Friends of Learning in Killingly help support Killingly Public School’s teacher’s by awarding them mini-grants to support innovative enriching initiatives. The endowment is a way to give back to their original school community. FOLK is now in their 25th year of grantmaking and is now a public charity organization. Ms Ahola-Sidaway, along with Mr. Ted Haveles, announced the 2024 recipients of FOLK grants. Ms. Susan Lannon thanked Janice Ahola-Sidaway for her support to students, & teachers. Ms. Lannon shared that all the school libraries will have plaques put in their libraries to honor Ms. Ahola-Sidaway acknowledging the difference FOLK has made in the Killingly Public Schools. There are 13 recipients of mini grants this year, totaling \$7,365. Recipients of FOLK mini-grants for 2024 are listed below.

- \$763 to Mandy Jarvis at GECC, funds to go towards 3 STEM Wall Stations for Playground
- \$500 to Lorie Nordman at GECC to go towards re-painting Playground Pavement Games –
- \$750 to Alexandria Grigg at KCS for Adaptive & Language Enriched Teaching Aids
- \$200 to Sarah Parsell for Family Art Project Kits
- \$387 to Brittany Varone at Killingly Memorial School for the Koala Choir Music Library
- \$400 to Kimberly Vincent at Killingly Memorial School for 2 VEX Go Kits for Robotics & Code
- \$400 to Kelly Andrews-Babcock at KIS, to support Habits of Work Recognition to purchase bracelets as incentives to encourage perseverance, organization & social awareness.
- \$800 to Patti Smith & Eric Bryant at KIS to support the Forgive and Forget Initiative & Peer Mentor Program, an initiative to discourage bullying and to foster community & global awareness
- \$415 to Lisa Finkelman at KHS for whiteboards & magnetic planes & tiles for Algebra 1 Class
- \$400 to Lisa Higgins at KHS for Servsafe Certifications for Students in the Transition Program
- \$800 to Jim Hutson at KHS to support Technology Student Association Competitions
- \$800 to Robert “Dr Po” Polselli at KHS to help purchase mobile engineering challenge kits to mentor and encourage younger students in the field of robotics.
- \$750 to Mike Wuenschler & Abby Durling at KHS for AP Science Enrichment Wildlife Conservation Project

Ms. Lannon thanked Janice Ahola-Sidaway and members of FOLK for thier support to students, & teachers. The KPS schools will have plaques put in their libraries to honor Ms. Ahola-Sidaway acknowledging the difference FOLK has made in the Killingly Public Schools.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tammy Wakefield, whose daughter could not attend tonight, read a letter from her daughter addressed to the Board regarding bullying. Her daughter Abigail, was a member of the Class of 2010.

Bullying was not addressed then and still isn't addressed. This must be addressed. Ms. Wakefield said she sent this letter to Board member, Kelly Martin.

Jasmine Davis, expressed her concerns regarding the Board, mostly with the democratic members. Some of the concerns are: Why are there so many executive sessions without answering the public's questions. Why did the the Board Chair have the Board take a vote for new legal counsel without all Board member reviewing the contract? Why is there a lawyer at every meeting and how much does it cost to have a lawyer at each meeting? How are you going to combat bullying? Ms. Davis will be requesting a FOIA for all communications between the Board's democratic members and all lawyers between August 2022 to today's date.

Ariana Kamm and Shamona Kamm. Ariana is a former Killingly student and now a mother of a child who attends KIS. Her child is bullied at KIS along with other students and there is no discipline for the students who are doing the bullying. Her child does not want to attend school due to the bullying. Something needs to be done to stop the bullying.

Jason Anderson shared that the recent attention regarding the mental health of our students is something he is grateful for. He asked the Board why is there no action taking against bullying? There is a severe problem in the schools. The Board needs to address the root and cause of the problem. The Board cannot allow this amount of bullying to continue. The board is being complacent. It is time for action.

7. TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

Michelle Murphy shared that at last night's Town Council meeting, council members presented several awards of appreciation to community members. Killingly will not offer trash service. Members of the Solid Waste Committee determined that their rates will increase, and the price of trash bag stickers will increase. The total mill in the grand list has not been determined yet. Ms. Murphy asked if the KHS new door project was put out to bid, which Superintendent Nash answered yes, it went out through State bidding. Dr. Nash explained why the Town Council has not been receiving the full monthly budget reports.

8. BOARD CHAIR AND COMMITTEE & LIAISON UPDATES

March is Board Appreciation Month. At this time, Board Chair Susan Lannon thanked all the Board members for everything they do and all the time they commit to as Board members. Plant arrangements were made by students in the Vo-Ag department and were given to each Board member.

- A. Curriculum Committee-Trying to get a meeting together shortly.
- B. Facilities Committee- No report
- C. Fiscal Committee- Board members have been meeting as a whole for budget workshops
- D. Personnel Committee-Misty Murdock reported that negotiations continue for Nurses and Paras.
- E. Policy Committee- Superintendent Nash said that will try to get a meeting scheduled for early April.

9. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO FORM AN ADHOC COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS DISTRICT-WIDE BULLYING

Ms. Lawrence thanked all those who spoke up during public comments about bullying and thanked them for being brave. No child should be going to school feeling unsafe. We need a committee to focus on how to stop bullying. We should be putting in more work. We want all students going to school to be happy.

Ms. Dombkowski said that tonight's speakers during public comment said it all. The Board should consider what parents and students, and staff have to say and ask them what they want us to do. Misty Murdock stated that it is not just bullying that's a problem, but behavioral issues too. The Board should look at what is and what is not working.

It was asked if there way a way to have students, staff members report bullying incidents without there being repercussions. Some children are afraid to report bullying and this contributes to the problem. The accountability level is much worse now then it was in the past.

Ms. Lannon shared that the definition of bullying needs to be looked at. The AdHoc committee will need to have a vision and goals. The AdHoc committee will be comprised of Board members only.

MOTION: by Mr. Marcoux, seconded by Ms. Lawrence to form an AdHoc Committee to discuss district-wide bullying.
No vote taken.

It was clarified that according to Bylaw 9130, duties of an AdHoc committee shall be determined as a committee is formed.

MOTION: by Ms. Martin, seconded by Ms. Lawrence to waive Bylaw 9130 or purpose of tonight's meeting only.
Yes- 9, Motion Carries

MOTION: by Mr. Marcoux, seconded by Mr. Rovero to form an AdHoc Committee to discuss district-wide bullying and behavioral review.
Yes- 9, Motion Carries

Ms. Lannon asked that those who are interested in serving on this AdHoc committee, to email her by this Friday evening and share in their emails, thier visions & goals for this Adhoc committee.

10. REVIEW AND POSSIBLE ACTION OF FEBRUARY 2024 CHECK AUTHORIZATIONS

Ms. Martin asked if checks are currently being reviewed and said that this was done by the previous Board Chair and Vice Chair. Mr. Rovero answered that he and Ms. Lannon do review checks.

MOTION: by Ms. Murdock, seconded by Mr. Marcoux to approve the February 2024 Check Authorizations.
Yes 9, Motion Carries

11. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF TRANSFERS FROM DEC. 2023 THROUGH FEB. 2024 AND REVIEW OF SYSTEM OBJECT/EXPENDITURE REPORT

This is an informational item only which was included in Board. No action is needed.

12. SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

A. DISCUSSION AND ACTION OF THE 2024-25 RECOMMENDED OPERATION BUDGET

Assistant Superintendent, Jeff Guiot summarized estimated revenues. Board members were given this document to review. Total estimated revenue projections for 2023-24 is \$18,407,943 and for 2024-25 estimated revenue is \$18, 224,171

Superintendent Nash-Ditzel gave a comprehensive PowerPoint of the Superintendent's budget with 6 options. Tonight, the budget will switch from the Superintendent's Budget to the Board of Education's Budget. Superintendent Nash-Ditzel explained the need to come up with creative solutions, mostly due to the ARP ESSER ending soon. A zero-based strategy was applied to the Supplies and Communication line accounts. At this time, the 2023-24 projected surplus is \$699,300.07. This amount is included in many of the Superintendent's budget options. Changes to the Superintendent's preliminary budget includes reductions and adjustments made earlier in the budget process. Principals and department leaders were asked to reduce their initial budgets by 15%.

Rationales for decision packages were communicated. KMS Math Interventionist will be switched into Title I. In 23-24, the Director of Mental Health, Student Wellness & Family Engagement position was funded in the Behavioral Health Pilot grant, which expires on 9/30/24.

Salaries and benefits line items show a surplus at this time and this surplus can be used for some pre-spending. Dr. Nash explained that most of the time, the surplus in these line items are due to employee breaks in service, meaning retirements, resignations, etc.

Dr. Nash's presented six options for Board members to choose. Those options are reflected below.

Option 1= Budget amount, \$48,699,886.87. An increase of \$1,894,768.87 or 4.05% increase. (no decision pkgs.)

Option 2= Superintendent's proposed budget amount \$48,985,458.90. An increase of \$2,180,340.90 or 4.66% increase (includes all decision pkgs.)

- KHS Trainer
- KHS .45 Spanish Teacher
- PPS (2) SEL Paraprofessionals
- CO Director of Mental Health
- PPS .5 BCBA
- 2nd Shift KMS Custodian

Option 3= Budget amount \$48,901,081.35. An increase of \$2,095,963.35 or 4.48% increase. Includes

- PPS two SEL paraprofessionals
- CO Director of Mental Health
- PPS .5 BCBC

Option 4= Budget amount, \$48,286,158.83. An increase of 1,481,040.83 or 3.16%
Reduce budget through utilization of 23-24 surplus and includes all decision packages.

- KHS Trainer
- KHS .45 Spanish Teacher
- PPS, two SEL Paraprofessionals
- CO Director of Mental Health
- PPS .5 BCBA
- O & M .5 2nd shift Custodian at KMS

Superintendent's Budget= \$48,699,886.87 – Surplus or pre-spending (\$699,300.07) Dec. packages =\$285, 572.03

Option 5= Budget amount \$48,000,586.80. An increase of \$1,195,468.80 or 2.55%
Reduce budget through 23-24 surplus (\$699,300.07)no decision packages

Option 6= Budget amount \$48, 201,781.28. An increase of \$1.396,663.28 or 2.98%
Includes

- PPS two SEL paraprofessionals
- CO Director of Mental Health
- PPS .5 BCBC

Discussions took place and several different calculations and adjustments were suggested by Board members to the options provided by the Dr. Nash-Ditzel.

Mr. Marcoux's preference is option 4.

Ms. Lawrence prefers option 5, but she would like it to include the KHS trainer, Spanish teacher and custodian.

Ms. Lannon prefers option #4 which allows Dr. Nash-Ditzel to support the district's needs.

Ms. Murdock prefers option 4.

Mr. Napierata prefers option 5 but to include the KHS .45 Spanish Teacher, 2nd shift .5 KMS custodian and KHS trainer. He would like to see it go below a 3% increase.

Mr. Rovero prefers option 4 but nothing lower than option 6. The district needs the Director of Mental Health.

Ms. Giambattista prefers option 4.

Ms. Dombkowski asked about SEL paraprofessionals.

Mr. Marcoux asked if the full amount of the 2023-24 surplus was being considered in the options. Superintendent Nash-Ditzel does not want to use all of the surplus because of unknown variables related to possible new in-coming students.

Ms. Martin shared that there are ways of savings positions in other ways. Ms. Martin noted that the Board needs to consider the taxpayers and reminded the Board about the recent assessment and how that doesn't help. Ms. Martin would support option 5 and communicated the importance in having a 9, yes vote in support the budget.

It was asked if the KHS .45 Spanish Teacher could be funded by the Non-lapsing account.

Attorney Santiago located the non-lapsing agreement electronically and confirmed that the non-lapsing agreement would allow this.

After much discussion and after many different variations were considered, the Board made the following motion.

MOTION: by Mr. Marcoux ,seconded by Mr. Rovero to adopt Option 4 (below), minus the.45 KHS Spanish Teacher and minues 1 SEL paraprofessional, equaling a 3.01% increase. (The adopted budget amount would be \$48,212,561.22 & increase of \$1,407,443.22 over 2023-24)

Yes- 9, Motion Carries

The FY 2025 budget includes the following decision packages:

- 1.0 Athletic Trainer - In the past, this position was a contract service.
- SEL Paraprofessional
- .5 BCBA - In 23-24, this position was funded in the ARP ESSER Grant.
- Director of Mental Health, Student Wellness & Family Engagement
- KMS .5 2nd Shift Custodian

13. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING KILLINGLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS' EDUCATOR DIVERSITY PLAN.

Mr. Guiot shared information of why this plan needs to be put into place. The Increasing Educator Diversity Plan requires Board of Education approval prior to the state's submission date of March 15, 2024. A committee of eight was formed to draft the plan to increase our recruitment pool. The Commissioner of Education reviews each Diversity Plan and may approve or return the plan with instructions to revise. The goal is to increase the number of diverse candidates applying for certified positions at our schools. There are strategies included in the plan to support the goal. Mr. Guiot shared that Killingly will develop partnerships with Regional Education Service Centers, increase marketing efforts, attend more job fairs, expand our outreach, especially into Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The Plan would be effective July 1, 2024.

MOTION: by Mr. Napierata, seconded by Mr. Marcoux to adopt the KPS Educator Diversity Plan.
Yes- 9, Motion Carries

14. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING CONNECTICUT STRONGER CONNECTIONS GRANT (SCG)

Mr. Guiot shared information regarding the grant and the application process. Connecticut was awarded \$9.12 million in funding to distribute competitively to "high need" local education agencies. Goals are to create safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments; and foster a sense of belonging and engagement in school; and improve academic outcomes and reduce violence and disciplinary actions. KPS will focus on safety and well being of the school community, improving the effectiveness of our security profile. Killingly will partner with a security consultant to conduct an All-Hazards Risk Analysis and Physical Security Assessment to help in improve our emergency procedures in accordance with state and federal requirements. Equipment requested will be room # signage and installation at each building , additional security cameras and 2-way radios. Killingly's application is for \$88,200.

Ms. Martin asked for clarification of third goal, "*...and reduce violence and disciplinary actions.*" Mr. Guiot will re-word the sentence for clarification.

MOTION: by Ms. Murdock, seconded by Mr. Napierata to accept the application the Connecticut Stronger Connections Grant.
Yes- 9, Motion Carries

15. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. February 28, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes
- B. March 1, 2024 Student Enrollment
- C. March 2024 Employee of the Month Nominee
- D. KHS Field Trip Request to Roger Williams University
- E. KHS Field Trip Request to Eric Carle Picture Book Museum in Amherst, MA
- F. KHS Vo-Ag Field Trip Request to Foster Parrots in Hope Valley R.I
- G. KMS Field Trip Request to Ecotarium in Worcester, MA

Ms. Giambattista temporarily left the room.

MOTION: by Mr. Marcoux, seconded by Ms. Murdock to approve the consent agenda.
Yes-8, Motion Carries

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS EMPLOYEE SICK BANK REQUEST

MOTION: By Mr. Marcoux, seconded Ms. Murdock to enter into executive session to discuss a sick bank request, with invite to Dr. Nash-Ditzel and Mr. Guiot
Yes-8, Motion Carries

Ms. Giambattista returned to the meeting.

The Board entered executive session at 9:50 p.m.

The Board came out of executive session and resumed the Board meeting at 9:59 p.m.

17. POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING EMPLOYEE SICK BANK REQUEST

MOTION: By Ms. Murdock, seconded by Ms. Lawrence to approve a sick bank up to 30 days for H.H.
Yes-9, Motion Carries

18. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: By Mr. Napierata, seconded by Mr. Marcoux to adjourn at 10:00 pm.
Yes- 9, Motion Carries.

Respectfully submitted by,
Kecly Doyle
Recording Secretary