



Cohasset School Committee Meeting

School Committee Minutes

Wednesday, February 5, 2020
Cohasset Middle-High School
Community Use Room
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA

In Attendance: Ellen Maher, Chairman
Jennifer Madden
Paul Kearney
Ashley Colleary
Craig MacLellan

Also in Attendance: Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent
Dr. Leslie Scollins-Assistant Superintendent
Mary Buchanan, Director of Student Services
Michael MacMillan, Director of Finance & Operations

Chairman Maher called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. **Roll Call Vote; Paul Kearney-Present, Ashley Colleary-Present, Ellen Maher-Present, Jennifer Madden-Present, Craig MacLellan-Present.**

Public Comment-None.

Superintendent's Report-Student School Committee Representative-Update-Dr. Scollins gave the student update for Madeline Grudinkas who is not able to attend the meeting.

Senator Patrick O'Connor & Representative Meschino- Dr. Sullivan thanked Rep. Meschino and Senator O'Connor for all the work they do for the town and schools. Senator O'Connor gave a Legislative Recap that included the Look Bill, the Civics Education Bill and the Student Opportunity Act which were passed into law and the Breakfast After the Bell Act which is currently in the House 3rd reading. Rep. Meschino discussed the Governor's FY2021 budget. In the budget at this point, it looks like Cohasset will get in increase of 1.6% in Chapter 70 and 2.8% in UGGA. The Committee expressed concern that since Cohasset is considered an affluent community they are overlooked. The Town still needs help with Social Emotional Learning. Mr. Kearney asked about how Cohasset can provide free Kindergarten like other towns. Senator O'Connor stated that is a conversation between the School Committee and the Administration. Rep. Meschino stated she attended the Safe Harbor Open Mike night which was a great event and well attended. Mrs. Madden asked how much help Cohasset would get for out of district transportation. Senator O'Connor said he could send some estimates to the SC from DESE. Mrs. Madden stated the district is having difficulty finding funding for a middle school teacher in computer

science due to OPEB. She asked if other districts were having issues. Rep. Meschino responded this is the first she has heard about it. Senator O'Connor stated OPEB is a big issue everywhere. The state is working on it. His fear is that after the OPEB is finished in 2033, they have to deal with pensions. Mrs. Maher stated the district is having a real issue hiring and keeping bus drivers. Is there anything that they can suggest? The Senator and Representative agreed to look into.

Technology Update-Chief Information Officer Ron Menard discussed the reduction in training, Network 3rd party services, surveillance licensing and application licensing totaling a savings of \$7900. He discussed better solutions for the same level funded expenses budget including Aspen SIS and RelanPro LL software. Right now, the big issues are in personnel. He currently has a staff that has increased their performances which has allowed a reduced need for 3rd party services. Technical Support staff has obtained certifications that are immensely helpful while cutting costs and improving response times. They have better in-house support. He is asking for the FY21 Budget to adopt a salary schedule and adopt a two-year plan to move some positions to a competitive salary. He has done two wage and classification studies showing insight to disparate wages. Loss of these technology specialists would be significant for the Cohasset Public Schools. Finding the skillsets for the current salaries would be impossible. It would cost more money to hire and retain new staff. The goal is to work closely with teachers to bridge technologies they use with the curriculum they offer students. Mrs. Maher stated she appreciates that he wants a salary schedule for growth. It is a great motivator.

Student Services Update-Director of Student Services Mary Buchanan advised the committee they received 38 preschool applications. There are 16 positions so there will be a wait list. There is a SEPAC meeting tomorrow at 6:30 p.m. at the Paul Pratt Library.

Kindergarten Registration Update- Dr. Sullivan stated there are currently 112 kindergarten students that are registered. Mr. Kearney asked how much the fee is for Pre-K. Dr. Sullivan stated there is no fee for Pre-K. Mr. MacMillan stated there are financial waivers for Kindergarten students. The Committee had a brief discussion about the number of Kindergarten teachers needed.

Director of Finance and Operations Search-Dr. Sullivan stated the Michael MacMillan will be leaving the district for a job closer to home. Dr. Sullivan reviewed the search process and the proposed search committee. The search committee includes a member of the SC. Mrs. Maher asked if anyone on the Committee was interested. Mr. MacLellan offered to be the SC representative.

Approval of Warrant-Motion by Mr. Kearney to approve Warrant 20-14S, seconded by Mr. MacLellan. Roll Call Vote; Paul Kearney-Aye, Ashley Colleary-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Jennifer Madden-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.

Finance-FY21 Budget Discussion-Mr. MacMillan stated the Student Opportunity Act has been approved which may help a little. The Charter School enrollment was lower than they predicted this year, so there will be approximately \$80,000 in savings. The South Shore Vo Tech enrollment was lower as well. IT needs \$67,000 more for securing the email systems. There will be some savings with Special Education transportation however, at this point they don't know how much. Dr. Sullivan stated they received three notifications of retirements this year. Right now, the budget is showing an increase of 5.3% and they need to be at 3%. The SC had a lengthy discussion on what the priorities are in order to get to 3%. Dr. Sullivan stated they will continue to work on the budget and see what they can do.

School Committee Comments and Communication-Vote to Approve Whitman-Hanson Membership into South Shore Educational Collaborative. **Motion by Mrs. Maher to approve Whitman-Hanson into the SSEC, seconded by Mr. Kearney. Roll Call Vote; Paul Kearney-Aye, Ashley Colleary-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Jennifer Madden-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.**

Legal Counsel RFP-Chairman Maher stated it has been brought up that some members would like to explore other options for counsel. She doesn't have any issues with the current counsel; however, she will do what the SC would like. She will need help with the RFP process. Mr. MacMillan will help with the process. Dr. Sullivan stated he works with the current counsel on a regular basis and feels she is incredibly supportive and responsive. He has nothing negative to say. Mrs. Maher added that they have ongoing legal issues and they should keep the current counsel. The SC needs to decide what they are looking for. Mr. Kearney stated the SC current counsel is not professional, and he doesn't like that the SC never knows what something will cost in advance. There are many other options for counsel out there and he would like someone new. He would like to be able to trust this person and with the current counsel that is not the case. He is only one vote but, that is how he feels. Mrs. Colleary stated she doesn't have a passionate opinion about the current counsel, but it does make sense to go through the process. There is value in taking inventory and see if there is something better for the district. Mrs. Madden stated the idea of changing counsel midstream is very concerning. That said it is never a bad idea of looking at inventory and seeing what is out there. It is a healthy thing to do. Mr. MacLellan stated it is good practice to evaluate other counsels from time to time. He stated the current firm has showed expertise in education, but he does have some concerns. He agrees that they should keep the current counsel for matters that are currently open. There are other important things coming up and he would like to have a new counsel for. He believes it is a worthwhile endeavor to go through the RFP process.

Motion by Mr. MacLellan to construct and issue an RFP for legal counsel, seconded by Mr. Kearney. Roll Call Vote; Paul Kearney-Aye, Ashley Colleary-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Jennifer Madden-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.

School Facilities Committee-Mrs. Maher advised the SC that there is a procedure in place for the School Facilities Committee. The Moderator, Selectmen and School Committee each appoint three members. Anyone interested should submit a committee application. **Motion by Mr. MacLellan to reconstitute the School Facilities Committee as outlined in the town bylaw, seconded by Mr. Kearney. Roll Call Vote; Paul Kearney-Aye, Ashley Colleary-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Jennifer Madden-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.**

Reports from Sub-Committee and Liaisons-Mrs. Maher stated she attended the Capital Budget meeting on January 27th along with Dr. Sullivan and Mr. MacMillan. They presented their requests for Annual Town Meeting. Their presentation was well received. She thanked Dr. Sullivan and Mr. MacMillan for their impressive work. Mr. Kearney attended the School Council meeting where they discussed the Middle School Handbook. Mrs. Colleary advised the Committee there was a great article in Life on Rocks about the Diversity Committee. The next Diversity meeting is Wednesday, February 12th at the library. Safe Harbor has three events coming up, Ground Level Café, parent coffee and movie night. She also attended the high school council meeting where they talked about changes in curriculum.

Minutes-Motion by Mrs. Madden to approve the minutes of 1/6/2020 as amended, seconded by Mr. MacLellan and the vote was unanimous (5-0).

Motion by Mr. MacLellan to go into executive session, seconded by Mrs. Colleary. Roll Call Vote; Paul Kearney-Aye, Ashley Colleary-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Jennifer Madden-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.

The Committee went into executive session at 10:50 p.m for Exemption #3, strategy related to negotiating with union personnel.

The Committee exited executive session at 11:04 pm.

The Committee adjourned open session at 11:05 pm on a motion by Mrs. Madden, seconded by Mrs. Colleary, All-Aye.

Documents Used at the Meeting

Director of Finance & Operations Search	D-1
SSEC Membership Vote	G-1
School Facilities Committee	G-2