



## **Cohasset School Committee Meeting**

### **School Committee Minutes**

Wednesday, November 30, 2016  
Cohasset Middle-High School  
Community Use Room  
143 Pond Street  
Cohasset, MA

**In Attendance:** Jeanne Astino, Chairman  
Katie Dugan  
Ellen Maher  
Barbara Stefan  
Amanda Zani

**Also in Attendance:** Louise Demas, Interim Superintendent  
John Tuffy, Interim Business Manager  
Sue Skeiber, Interim Assistant Superintendent

**Call to order and Roll Call**-Chairman Astino called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. **Roll Call Vote;** Barbara Stefan-Present, Katie Dugan-Present, Jeanne Astino-Present, Ellen Maher-Present, Amanda Zani-Present.

**Pledge of Allegiance**-Recited.

**Invitation to Speak**-Bianca Bersani of 40 Forest Avenue read aloud a prepared statement about the School Committee's decision to offer Louise Demas the position of Superintendent without a competitive search. Mrs. Bersani stated her issue is not with the person but the process. She stated the public was told on a couple of occasions that the Committee would have a search process which would involve a third party consultant with input from the community. Chairman Astino thanked Mrs. Bersani for her comments and stated the Committee would be discussing the Superintendent position later in the agenda.

**Approval of Warrant**-Motion by Mrs. Stefan to approve Warrant 17-10S, seconded by Mrs. Zani. **Roll Call Vote;** Barbara Stefan-Aye, Katie Dugan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Amanda Zani-Aye. Ellen Maher abstained from the vote.

**Finance FY18 Budget Process**-Mr. Tuffy stated he will be meeting with budget sub-committee along with Mrs. Demas next week. They have started the process internally. They have started meeting with the building principals to go over requests.

**Superintendent's Report-School Resource Officer**-Sgt. Lopes was present and introduced Officer Jay St. Ives as the new school resource officer replacing him. Officer St. Ives is a great fit for the schools. He has been a police officer for 17 years and 8 of them have been in Cohasset. His wife is a teacher and he has children of his own. Sgt. Lopes will be working with Officer St. Ives in a prolonged transition. Officer St. Ives stated he is excited about this new opportunity and is looking forward to mentoring the kids. He is very fortunate to have Sgt. Lopes during the transition. He has already met with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, principals and teachers. Chairman Astino stated that it will be great to have the students interact with two officers. Mrs. Maher suggested that she and Mrs. Zani meet with Officer St. Ives as the

security sub-committee. Chief Quigley arrived and discussed Officer St. Ives background and experience. He stated Officer St. Ives is ready to move into the position.

**MCAS-**Mrs. Demas thanked Mrs. Skeiber for all of her hard work on MCAS results to prepare for tonight. The tests are always changing and it is hard to look at scores and compare year to year. Mrs. Skeiber discussed the changes in the MCAS that were made in 2012, Cumulative Progress & Performance Index, Assessing MCAS by subgroups, baseline CPI in 2011 and 2017 goal, student growth percentiles, district profiles and overall results. Mrs. Skeiber added that the State has realized that some math questions in grades 6, 7 and 8 were not appropriate for that level and that fact should be taken into account when analyzing the results. Currently the Math and ELA frameworks are under review by the state. Science frameworks did change and the teachers have been reviewing the curriculum to align with the new frameworks. Mrs. Stefan asked is there is a way to get information to parents about what is being done with the results and what the district is doing to help with the learning deficiencies. Mrs. Skeiber discussed the next steps which they have already started addressing. They have started to analyze the results, set goals, support assessment, develop individual improvement plans, align new science standards, literacy review and prepare students for computer based testing in grades 4 and 8. Francesca Arnold of 20 Flintlocke Ridge Road and Cohasset Middle/High School liaison to SEPAC challenged the district to look at the group of Deer Hill students that did not meet target. There is a big deficit and it should be addressed. Mrs. Skeiber stated they are looking very closely at it and will address. The Committee had a lengthy conversation and Mrs. Demas advised the Committee that they would have the school principals as well as Mary Buchanan at next week's meeting to discuss how they specifically address the score results in their buildings.

#### **School Committee Comments and Communications-Superintendent Update-**

**Chairman Astino** apologized to everyone that tried to watch last week's meeting as there was a problem with the audio. There is a good copy of the recording that will be posted on the website. Chairman Astino addressed some of the questions from Mrs. Bersani during invitation to speak. In April they approached Mrs. Demas about becoming an Interim Superintendent beginning in July. After some discussion Mrs. Demas did agree but made it clear she was not interested in a permanent position until she was in the position with students in the classroom for some time. Mrs. Demas has been with the district for 8 years. Since she has become Interim Superintendent the SC has developed a great level of confidence in her work and the SC wants stability and positive, forward motion for the district.

**Mrs. Maher** added that when they met with MASC in June, one of the things that resonated with her was what was said about hiring a superintendent that was a good fit.

**Mrs. Dugan** stated she was impressed by Mrs. Demas's detailed review and entry plan that she put together. She felt it was incredibly thoughtful. In a very short time, Mrs. Demas articulated the strengths and weaknesses in the district and understood what was needed to move the district forward. The strategic plan and technology plan showed the vision she has for the future.

**Chairman Astino** added that the confidence level that the staff and building leadership currently have is a great thing. It is best practice to have an internal candidate become a superintendent.

**Mrs. Stefan** stated she is not in favor of settling for leadership in the district. She realizes it was not the best of process but Mrs. Demas has the in-district experience and has the ability to attract great staff.

**Chairman Astino** stated that each member of the committee came to the same conclusion individually.

**Mrs. Zani** stated she wants the best for the district and Mrs. Demas is the right person. There has been a positive change in the district which helps principals feel empowered and that goes down to the teachers.

**Laura Soderberg** of 16 Blackhorse Lane asked if there would still be time in the process for community input. She also asked if there will be additional coffee with the superintendent and parents.

**Mrs. Demas** stated she is more than happy to schedule more time for coffee with parents.

**Chairman Astino** stated that part of the School Committee's responsibility is finding and retaining a superintendent is their main focus; they plan to vote on it tonight. The SC is more than happy to listen to feedback and input. Mrs. Demas is very approachable and members of the SC are always available.

**Francesca Arnold** of 20 Flintlocke Ridge Road stated that feedback from residents about Mrs. Demas has been very positive. Since the audio wasn't clear at the last meeting maybe they can reach a middle ground. They are not looking to stall the process.

**Cindy Matheison**-155 Sohier Street agreed that the more communication the better. She has had the benefit of knowing Mrs. Demas for many years and have never found her anything but open for communication.

**Bianca Bersani**-40 Forest Avenue stated her earlier statement was absolutely not directed at Mrs. Demas but the process itself. The School Committee led the public to believe there would be a process. Duxbury is doing their search tonight and they have 5 candidates and this community is missing an opportunity of having a process.

**Chairman Astino** stated she was involved in the last superintendent search and she strongly believes it isn't the best way to go in this instance.

**Mrs. Dugan** stated in September Mrs. Demas was not interested in being considered a candidate until the students were back in session and she was running the district. Therefore, in September they were still planning on doing a search process. Everyone here on the Committee believes Mrs. Demas is the best candidate for the district. She is confident this is the right decision and they have to have the community's trust.

**Mrs. Stefan** wanted to clarify the Committee was planning to have a search. Mrs. Demas had not expressed interest in being a candidate. She is also confident this is the right decision.

**Mrs. Maher** stated the Mrs. Demas presented her timeline of goals on November 1<sup>st</sup> and her entry plan and that is when they started to notice how well she was doing.

**Mrs. Zani** stated it was unfortunate that the audio was not clear at the last meeting. She attended PSO leadership on Wednesday and communicated that she was available to answer any questions. She has not received any calls or emails about the process.

**Dr. Paul Schubert**-155 Sohier Street thanked the Committee for making a great decision. He has worked with Mrs. Demas in many capacities. He has full confidence in her ability. She is extremely approachable and deliberate in her decisions.

**Laura Soderberg**-16 Blackhorse Lane suggested maybe the SC could prepare a statement to the public so the larger community is aware of their decision.

**Motion by Mrs. Maher to appoint Louise Demas as Superintendent of Cohasset Public Schools subject to successful negotiations, seconded by Mrs. Dugan. Roll Call Vote; Barbara Stefan-Aye, Katie Dugan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Amanda Zani-Aye.**

**Chairman Astino** stated the Committee will keep the community informed as negotiations progress.

**Mrs. Demas** thanked the Committee and stated she is always available to speak to anyone. She clarified that she would not have accepted the position months ago and had let the SC know that.

**Budget Message for Fiscal 2018**-Mrs. Maher and Mrs. Dugan have worked on many iterations of the message. Last year they retro-fitted budget priorities at the end of the process and wanted to get it properly positioned at the beginning of this year's process. Based on Mr. Tuffy's experience the committee and leadership will work with a needs based budget. John Chapman-100 Pond Street and liaison from Advisory Committee stated a needs based budget may not be understood by the community. He would recommend a zero based. The SC had a lengthy discussion about why they chose the term needs based budget (based on needs vs. wants).

**Motion by Mrs. Dugan to adopt the Budget Message for Fiscal 2018 as amended tonight, seconded by Mrs. Stefan. Roll Call Vote; Barbara Stefan-Aye, Katie Dugan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Amanda Zani-Aye.**

**Report from sub committees of school committee**-Mrs. Stefan asked Mrs. Demas for an update on enrollment. Mrs. Demas will have for the next meeting. Mrs. Dugan complimented Mrs. Demas and staff for the recent Facebook posts which are great. Mrs. Dugan stated the next Long Range Planning Group meeting is 12/1/16. She went over some of the items they will discuss. SEPAC is having a presentation by Linda Price-Social Thinking on 12/6/16 from 7-9 p.m. in the Community Use Room at the Cohasset Middle/High School. The workshop is free and everyone is welcome. Capital Budget is meeting on 12/5/16 and Mary Gallagher will have a presentation. Mrs. Maher attended the Cohasset Middle/High School council meeting. They discussed one of the goals this year is to improve communications and information to parents. They also discussed iPass, teacher pages on the website and the level of completeness. Mrs. Zani attended the Allergy Committee meeting. They are working with Mary Buchanan and are hoping to add a policy.

**Chairman Astino asked for a motion to go into executive session for Exemption #3-Strategy related to collective bargaining with union personnel-bus drivers. The Committee will return to open session for the purpose of adjourning. The motion was moved by Mrs. Maher and seconded by Chairman Astino. Roll Call Vote; Barbara Stefan-Aye, Katie Dugan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Amanda Zani-Aye.**

The Committee went into executive session at 10:30 p.m.

**Motion by Mrs. Maher to adjourn executive session at 11:38 p.m., seconded by Chairman Astino. Roll Call Vote; Barbara Stefan-Aye, Katie Dugan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Amanda Zani-Aye.**

**Motion by Chairman Astino to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Zani. Roll Call Vote; Barbara Stefan-Aye, Katie Dugan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Amanda Zani-Aye.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:39 p.m.

**Documents used at the Meeting**

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|------------------------|-----|
| Monthly Update         | F-1 |
| Bus Maintenance Update | F-2 |
| AP Scholar Awards      | G-1 |
| AP Results             | G-2 |
| 10/19/16 Minutes       | I-1 |
| 11/1/16 Minutes        | I-2 |