



Cohasset School Committee Meeting

School Committee Minutes

Wednesday, November 16, 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
Susan Skeiber, Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Call to order and Roll Call-Chairman Astino called the meeting to order at 7:30 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-None

Approval of Warrant-Motion by Mrs. Zani to approve Warrant 17-09S, seconded by Mrs. Stefan. Roll Call Vote; Barbara Stefan-Aye, Katie Dugan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Amanda Zani-Aye. Ellen Maher abstained from the vote.

Superintendent's Report-Try It-Cassandra O'Brien-INST Specialist K-5 was present. Ms. O'Brien gave an overview of what she has been working on with the teachers and showed the SC examples of what they are using in their classrooms. They have been working on Google Classroom and Google Drive. She has also set up some video resources for teachers. They are working on different options for communicating with parents. Mrs. Demas added that Ms. O'Brien has been very valuable in all aspects of technology.

Finance-Monthly Update-Mr. Tuffy reviewed the monthly summary budget report with the Committee and advised them that nothing is dramatically different from this year to last year. He spoke of a couple of small changes they may have to make in the budget going forward. He discussed grants and how the receipts come in differently due to changes in the State.

Bus Maintenance Update-Mr. Tuffy advised the SC that the overall bus maintenance looks good. They did have one bus with a serious problem that had to be towed to the dealership. He expects it will be covered under warranty.

Fee Review-Pre-K and Kindergarten-Mr. Tuffy stated the sub-committee has met and have started looking at fees. They will look at other districts and facility use fees and decide if they should be adjusted.

FY18 Budget Process Updated-Mr. Tuffy stated he is trying to fill in some blanks on the budget. The renewal for the bus leases are coming up. He spoke with the lease company and it makes sense to extend the lease to the end of June 2017 under the same terms and conditions. That will allow some time to think about the next decision on transportation. We also need to reassess exactly what is the appropriate size for our bus fleet.

Camp Wing-Mrs. Demas gave the Committee an update on the trip to Camp Wing on October 5th-7th. The overall participation rate was 99%. A couple of kids did go home. It is a solid program with resourceful counselors and a great opportunity for staff to work with children. There was a lot of positive energy. Mrs. Demas has not heard any negatives about the program.

AP Results/Scholar Awards-Ms. Skeiber discussed the results from the Spring 2016 AP tests. A total of 148 students participated in 276 exams. This is an increase of exams taken since 2012. The scores of the Cohasset students have also consistently exceeded both state and global scoring. Ms. Skeiber reviewed the AP courses offered in Cohasset and the different levels of AP Scholars. Ms. Skeiber read aloud the names of students and level of scholar they received. Mrs. Demas added that all AP Scholar students received a certificate and letter of recognition. Cohasset does not place restrictions on which students can take AP classes, unlike some other districts. The College Board strongly advocates for open enrollment for AP classes. Ms. Skeiber commented that DESE does not report scores for cohorts of less than 10.

Professional Development Update-Mrs. Demas stated the teachers participated in "A Day of Google" on November 8th. Ms. Skeiber reported that it was a great day that started in the auditorium. Everyone was introduced to the technology committee. There was an overview of the teacher, student and public networks. There were 10 different workshops offered that day. It was an extremely productive day for everyone. The teachers did evaluations at the end of the day that will be brought to the technology committee to review and see what was good and what can be improved. The next professional development day is in March. Ms. Skeiber stated she is looking to get 3 or 4 teachers to pilot the Bring Your Own Device program. She has already received interest in participating from teachers. Mrs. Zani asked if they could possibly put out updates for parents to know what happens during professional development days. Mrs. Dugan agreed and asked if they could also let Capital Budget know as well since they approve funding for technology. Mrs. Demas advised the Committee they have opened email accounts for students in grades 9-12 to have direct access to communicate with teachers. Mrs. Demas congratulated Marilyn Haraden-Food Services Director on getting her Level I certification in Nutrition.

School Committee Comments and Communications-Superintendent Update-Chairman Astino stated the Committee needs to discuss and update the public about where they are headed with the process of hiring a Superintendent. Chairman Astino stated since July 1 when Mrs. Demas stepped into the role as Interim Superintendent, and through a transition period prior to that, they have all seen some great progress. Chairman Astino stated the way she has handled items in the district has been strategic and supportive of the people in the district. She has been very professional on many different levels. They are all delighted at the direction they have seen the district take. The people in the buildings are happy, the School Committee is very happy. Chairman Astino added there has been the good, bad and the ugly as there always are in school districts. There are difficult situations and there are causes for celebration and Mrs. Demas has handled all of them very well. They appreciate the expertise and professionalism that she has brought.

Mrs. Maher stated she has been particularly impressed with Louise's' scope of ability in the operational area coming out of curriculum. Her focus has been curriculum and teaching and she has been able to jump in and handle operational situations quickly, effectively, and efficiently with parents, townspeople and people in the district and it was a pleasant surprise. The SC in the past did not have visibility to Louise. Mrs. Maher stated she sees that Mrs. Demas gets it, knows how to handle it, and is interacting

with the people in the district. Cohasset is a small community and these relationships with the Town, which the SC as a group is trying to foster and is working on very diligently, is most important in a small district. The Town will never be big and the pot of money is finite and one of the most important traits is how to communicate with and treat people. The words respect, transparent and honest have come to the forefront several times in conversations regarding Mrs. Demas. Chairman Astino added their major concern for the SC is having stability in the district and they have been taking a hard look at that since July. To echo what Mrs. Maher said Mrs. Demas's expertise and professionalism is great. She has staffed positions or lead staffing of positions that are key to the district and she has really gone above and beyond with helping the district move forward.

Mrs. Stefan stated that from sitting in the audience for several years before she joined the SC she realized there are a lot of things that could take years to learn before being on SC. By going to so many meetings and seeing what the superintendent's job entails, she knows it is a challenging job. No one is going to be happy with their superintendent every single day. Someone will always have a gripe, that is the nature of having a lot of students and a lot of buildings. She has been really pleased with the way Mrs. Demas has handled things. She has great management skills that were untapped or unrecognized because it wasn't her job. The new staff she has brought in including John Tuffy and Sue Skieber have been fantastic. She has the ability to attract good staff and that is one of the things that most impressed her when she came on as Interim Superintendent. Mrs. Demas is very democratic in her hiring process. Mrs. Stefan added that she loves that Mrs. Demas is a curriculum person and that she can also handle the operational side of the job so well. At the end of the day, it is all about educating the students and coming from an educational background allows her to connect with the teachers and understand their lives. Mrs. Stefan finished by stating that the SC couldn't do any better.

Mrs. Dugan stated in preparing for tonight she went back to a conversation about superintendent's searches and reflected on what it is that this district needs and what is the criteria that they are looking for in the next superintendent. She would echo what others have said tonight about Mrs. Demas's ability to listen. The entry plan she put together in terms of pinpointing the challenges the district faces and incorporating those challenges into her goals for this year are great. It is comforting that she has a vision for the future to move the district forward and it is not just building on what is being done well but realizing there are also areas that need to improve. Mrs. Demas has developed great trust with the staff and the teachers union, a deficit prior to her appointment as Interim. She appreciates that Mrs. Demas is able to bring those positive relationships to the table. Last but not least, is Mrs. Demas's moral compass as it relates to diversity. This may not be a diverse community but there are other ways to bring diversity in through staff and classes and show how we as a district are focused on all students and the UDL initiative. She really thinks that continuity is the fastest path forward to making big changes in the district. Mrs. Demas has a great personality and a vision for the district for the future.

Mrs. Zani echoed what every else has said. She is tremendously happy with all the changes she has seen already. What means a lot to her is that Mrs. Demas wants what is best for the kids. At the end of the day, that is what is most important. She is impressed with Mrs. Demas's ability to empower the staff and they seem really invigorated. Mrs. Zani added that Mrs. Demas has tremendous institutional knowledge that cannot be found anywhere. Chairman Astino stated the SC wanted to have a public discussion to set the stage for the next step. They would like Mrs. Demas to stay on and maintain and continue the great progress that they have seen in such a short time. The SC will consider voting on at the next meeting but they wanted to have the discussion tonight to show their intent. For the first time in a very long time they would like to promote within. Mrs. Demas stated she respects all of the members of the SC as she does the district and doesn't want to minimize that. She also has a finish

compulsion and that was her reason for stepping up. She would like to get to the finish line on the plans. They started on a mission to complete the technology vision. One of her concerns when she first started was that they were not reaching all children. There are some very bright, highly achieving children and some that have been identified as having needs. They cannot ignore that they are a diverse community. It does not have to be ethnic, color or socioeconomic, everyone is different and diverse. She does care about the children and what is good for them and protecting teachers. In many of her decisions it is not just about what is good for the kids but also what can she do to protect the leadership and the teachers. She wants them to feel respected and she respects them greatly. Mrs. Maher stated just so the community knows they are not going to do a search, not going to hire a consultant because they feel they have the best candidate now. Mrs. Demas stated she respects that they will not vote until next meeting so the public has a voice.

Reports from sub committees of school committee-Chairman Astino asked the Committee to think about how they can have a more productive update without taking up a long time. She would like to make the meeting itself more fluid. She suggested they discuss everyone's ideas at the next meeting. Mrs. Maher reported that she and Mrs. Zani attended Capital Budget meeting. They were asked about the bus lease. They discussed having the Capital Budget spreadsheet more user friendly. They discussed the security film for the windows. John Tuffy had all the first floor windows measured and sent the specs to Brian Joyce and Mark Kelly to begin costing out. They discussed Chromebook leases and equity devices. Capital Budget was looking for some clarification on the survey from parents. Mrs. Dugan stated the equity number was based on free/reduced lunches before the surveys went out. Chairman Astino stated Chris Senior has asked if the SC would like to weigh in and vote on any warrant articles for Annual Town Meeting that involve the schools. The SC agreed that it would make sense. Chairman Astino advised the Committee that the BOS would like Mrs. Demas to present the her goals at the 12/13/16 meeting. Mrs. Maher offered to be the SC liaison on the 250th Committee. Chairman Astino stated the SC needs to have a member of the SC for the Master Plan Committee as well. She has reached out to see if they would meet on another night as they have been conflicting with SC meetings. Mrs. Maher attended, along with Mrs. Demas the biannual Emergency Management Team meeting. CERT, Cohasset Police and Fire participated in a Missing Person/Mass Casualty Drill at Wheelwright Park in September. Mrs. Maher attended the Safe Harbor meeting with Duxbury High School Principal where he discussed things that have and have not worked in Duxbury. Mrs. Maher took notes and forwarded to Mrs. Demas and Mr. Tuffy. Mrs. Maher reminded everyone of the Hall of Fame Induction night on 11/25/16 at the Cohasset Golf Club. Tickets are \$70 for anyone interested. Mrs. Zani drafted a flyer for the upcoming Special Town Meeting and the articles to support the schools. She will ask if it is possible to distribute through PSO and CEF.

Approval of Minutes-Motion by Mrs. Maher to approve the minutes of 10/19/16 as amended, seconded by Mrs. Stefan and the vote was unanimous (5-0). Motion by Mrs. Maher to approve the minutes of 11/1/16 as amended, seconded by Mrs. Zani and the vote was unanimous (5-0).

Mrs. Astino asked for a motion to go into executive session for Exception #3-Strategy related to collective bargaining with union personnel; Bus Drivers. The Committee will come back into public session for the purpose of adjourning. Motion moved by Mrs. Maher and seconded by Mrs. Dugan. Roll Call Vote; Barbara Stefan-Aye, Katie Dugan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Amanda Zani-Aye.

The Committee entered into executive session at 10:33 p.m.

The Committee adjourned executive session at 11:50 pm on motion by Mrs Maher, seconded by Mrs. Stefan all Aye, roll call.

The Committee adjourned the public meeting at 11:51 pm on a motion by Mrs. Maher, seconded by Mrs Astino, all Aye.

Documents used at the Meeting

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