

# GREATER LOWELL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

August 19, 2021 – 6:30 P.M.

### CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Giggey called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded.

Chairman Giggey stated in accordance with 940 CMR 29.10 (remote participation) adopted by the Greater Lowell Technical School Committee April 17, 2014, Committeeman O'Hare will be participating at tonight's meeting remotely.

### ROLL CALL

Members

Present: Mr. Bahou, Mr. Tatseos, Mr. Morin, Mr. O'Hare, Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Gitschier, Mr. Giggey

Members Absent: Mr. LeMay (not present at the time of roll call, arrived @ 6:35 p.m.)

Also

Present: Jill Davis, Superintendent-Director  
Michael Barton, Assistant Superintendent/Principal  
Michael Knight, School Business Administrator  
Recording Secretary

### PUBLIC APPEARANCE

There was no public appearance.

### SCHOOL COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

There were no School Committee communications

### REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

There was no report of the student representative.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Gitschier, seconded by Mr. Tatseos to approve the minutes from the meeting of June 17, 2021.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 7 Yes, 1 Absent (Mr. LeMay)

## **REPORT OF DISTRICT TREASURER**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Gitschier, seconded by Mr. Sheehan to waive the reading of the warrant.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 7 Yes, 1 Absent (Mr. LeMay)

**MOTION:** by Mr. Bahou, seconded by Mr. Tatseos to approve expenditures for the sum of \$7,926,575.29 allocated as follows:

Warrant 2097-A	dated 07/02/21	Payroll #805	442,530.59
Warrant 2097-B	dated 07/16/21	Payroll #807	294,287.07
Warrant 2097-C	dated 07/30/21	Payroll #809	351,882.91
Warrant 2098-A	dated 08/13/21	Payroll #811	375,086.06
Warrant 2096-1	dated 06/25/21	Accounts Payable	865,191.25
Warrant 2097-2	dated 06/29/21	Lowell Five Debit Card	2,191.08
Warrant 2096-2	dated 07/01/21	Middlesex Retirement System	1,453,154.00
Warrant 2097	dated 07/09/21	Accounts Payable	572,998.96
Warrant 2097-3	dated 07/09/21	Mass Bay Health	736,804.59
Warrant 2097-1	dated 07/23/21	Accounts Payable	654,496.05
Warrant 2097-4	dated 07/23/21	Dotcom Communications	94.00
Warrant 2097-5	dated 07/23/21	Sales Use/Meals Tax	242.82
Warrant 2097-6	dated 07/23/21	Lowell Five Credit Card Fees	983.41
Warrant 2098	dated 08/06/21	Accounts Payable	1,063,976.65
Warrant 2098-2	dated 08/06/21	Lowell Five Debit Card	600.00
Warrant 2098-3	dated 08/06/21	Mass Bay Health	738,336.26
Warrant 2098-1	dated 08/20/21	Accounts Payable	373,669.59
Warrant 2098-4	dated 08/20/21	Dotcom Communications	50.00

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 7 Yes, 1 Absent (Mr. LeMay)

## **REPORT OF GENERAL COUNSEL**

There was no report of general counsel.

## **REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT-DIRECTOR**

Superintendent Davis began by informing the committee that Greater Lowell Tech has been awarded a \$90,000 grant to support the Pharmacy and EMT Training Programs on behalf of the Workforce Skills Cabinet.

Superintendent Davis informed the committee that Greater Lowell Tech has been awarded a FAFSA Completion Opportunity Grant in the amount of \$10,000.

The grant award will be used to increase the completion of the FAFSA and to expand access to post-secondary opportunities.

Superintendent Davis informed the committee that Greater Lowell Tech has also been awarded a Career Vocational Technical Equitable Access Grant of \$90,000 for English Learner recruitment.

Superintendent Davis informed the committee that Greater Lowell Tech has also been awarded a Civics Teaching and Learning Grant of \$25,020. This grant award will be used to equip students with civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions in order to prepare them to take on an active role in our democracy.

Superintendent Davis informed the committee that Greater Lowell Tech has also been awarded a WIOA Title I Youth Services funds from the MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board in the amount of \$55,644 to provide services to in-school at-risk youth.

Superintendent Davis asked for the committee's approval for Advanced Manufacturing instructor, Brian Cornellier to attend an out-of-state training in Connecticut. The Mastercam Advanced training is designed to help individuals advance from the level of manually programming, setting up, and machining using CNC machine centers, to producing more complex toolpaths and machining more advanced parts. She informed the committee that the training is fully grant funded; therefore, there is no cost to the district.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Morin, seconded by Mr. Gitschier to approve the out-of-state travel request for Advanced Manufacturing instructor Brian Cornellier.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 8 Yes

Superintendent Davis asked the Assistant Superintendent/Principal Michael Barton to present the proposed revisions to the Vocational-Technical Health and Safety Plan. Mr. Barton provided a brief summary of the changes which primarily included the addition of an Annual Shop Equipment Hazard Analysis & Management form, the addition of the Career and Technical Facility Evaluation form, and the addition of Painting & Design to the Department column in table 2 of the Respiratory Program. Mr. Barton provided a breakdown of how each of these forms will be utilized and with no further discussion, asked for their approval.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Gitschier to approve the revised Vocational-Technical Health and Safety Plan.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 8 Yes

Superintendent Davis asked for the committee's approval for an enhanced salary incentive for the JROTC instructor positions. She noted that we are currently offering the minimum instructor pay and are having difficulty recruiting instructors for our JROTC Program. After discussion with the Colonel, it was encouraged that adding an incentive could help to recruit officers, with many schools currently doing so already. The Colonel also noted that the Northeast is particularly more difficult to fill due to the higher cost of living. She noted the military reimburses one-half of the minimum instructor pay, but does not reimburse for incentives. Ms. Davis also informed the committee that there were

currently six (6) schools in Massachusetts who have JROTC Programs. Of the six (6) schools, five (5) schools still have vacancies and are currently offering no incentive. The City of Lowell is the remaining school who was able to fill their vacancy and offered an incentive. Incentive options included extended contract time over the 10-months, enhanced salary above the minimum instructor pay, and stipends (drill team and/or color guard) similar to coaching stipends which would add to the salary. Ms. Davis informed the committee that we are currently budgeting for two (2) instructors and would recommend adding the stipends option of \$5,700 for each position to entice more interest.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. LeMay to approve the addition of a \$5,700 stipend to the JROTC instructor positions as an enhanced salary incentive.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 8 Yes

Superintendent Davis provided the committee members an update on recent COVID-19 health and safety recommendations and guidance by health experts and reviewed the proposed General Health and Safety Practices and Protocols for approval. Protocols included checking for symptoms, mask policy and protocols, mask breaks, ventilation and HVAC system, medical response protocols, diagnostic testing, facility cleaning and disinfecting protocols, and cleaning response protocols. Ms. Davis also informed the committee that Greater Lowell has registered to be part of the Test and Stay program for asymptomatic close contacts who test negative can remain in school. Ms. Davis noted that all schools are required to be in-person full-time five days per week and remote learning is not an option by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Superintendent Davis reviewed the new regulations and guidance from health experts, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Mass. Dept. of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control, all of which continue to evolve regarding masking and protocols for responding to COVID-19. Ms. Davis reviewed information, such as the current COVID variant being 50% more contagious than the alpha variant, COVID-19 cases among children on the rise in the US since early July, COVID-19 cases in Lowell on the rise, as well as the state, and Lowell's vaccination rate 9% lower than the state average. Superintendent Davis continued with noting the increase in break-through infections in vaccinated individuals who may be contagious and may transmit the virus. Therefore, knowing that masks are effective at mitigating the spread, Ms. Davis recommends all mitigation measures should be utilized in our school. Ms. Davis also informed the committee that the Lowell Public Schools, Dracut Public Schools and Dunstable Public Schools have all voted to implement mask mandates and by Federal Public Health order, all staff and students are required to wear masks on school buses. In considering the recommendations and guidance, Ms. Davis proposed that Greater Lowell Technical High School return to indoor masking for all students, staff and visitors, regardless of vaccination status, as indicated in the proposed General Health & Safety Practices & Protocols document and asked the committee if there were any questions.

Discussion among the committee members included several concerns and questions surrounding the pros and cons of wearing a mask, pushback (if any) from parents and/or employees, other possible options or recommendations. Committeeman Gitschier spoke of communications he received that were not in favor of wearing a mask, as well as his frustration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for leaving the decision of a mask mandate to the schools and felt it is not up to the school committee to make this determination. Mr. Gitschier also questioned if the topic of mask mandate, should it be voted through, was going to be revisited monthly, if there was an end date, etc.

Chairman Giggey spoke about keeping the kids in school being our primary goal and the committee has the flexibility as things change to adapt the policy in a timely manner. Mr. Giggey added that recommendations being suggested may be in the best interest of the community and our school. Committeeman Sheehan voiced he does not feel it is his place to tell a parent whether their child has to be masked and does not support the recommendation. Committeeman Tatseos commented that despite his own believes, the main thing is to get the kids back in school and if the masking policy is what it takes, then that's what is needed. Committeeman Bahou noted his primary concern with the difficulties that could occur with presenting instruction while instructors are wearing a mask. Mr. Bahou spoke of instructors, who are vaccinated, should have the option teach without a mask if they're comfortable to be most effective teaching our children. Assistant Superintendent Barton spoke about the difficulty with such a decision and how part of their mask recommendation prevents the speculation of whose vaccinated and unvaccinated and potentially mitigates rumors. He also noted that allowing vaccinated instructors the option to teach without a mask may pose situations with students and parents who may not want to be in the classroom with an unmasked instructor; therefore, could create potential issues and/or problems that would not be able to be solved.

After further discussion amongst the members present, the following motion was made by Mr. Bahou.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Bahou to require masks of students and teachers, with the option for vaccinated instructors to teach without a mask during class time.  
Motion was unsuccessful with no second; therefore, no roll call vote taken.

**MOTION:** by Mr. LeMay, seconded by Mr. Tatseos to approve the proposed General Health and Safety Practices and Protocols with the condition to re-evaluate monthly during the School Committee meetings.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 6 Yes, 2 No (Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Gitschier)

## **REPORT OF BUSINESS MANAGER**

Mr. Knight provided a FY21 and FY22 budget update to the committee, noting the close out of the FY21 budget being favorable and close to meeting minimum net school spending. He added additional budget talks will be discussed at the September meeting, including the FY22 budget needing to be redone, as in the final stages of the state budget, Chapter 70 funding was increased by \$151,000.

Mr. Knight informed the committee that the IT Department has approximately 60 Chromebook carts that are no longer needed since we moved to a 1:1 Chromebook model for technology provided to students. He noted that these carts previously were kept in almost every classroom, storing 24 Chromebooks in them, regardless of the number of students in each class period. This required the purchase and maintenance of more Chromebooks than needed. Therefore, by moving to the 1:1 model for students, these carts are no longer needed. Mr. Knight asked the committee members for approval, following the disposal of property policy, to make these Chromebook carts available to our member communities schools at no cost and move to auctions or sale should they be uninterested.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. LeMay to declare the Chromebook carts surplus and follow the school committee policy for disposal

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 8 Yes

Mr. Knight provided an update on the FOB system that we're implementing to the committee. Mr. Knight noted we currently have six (6) clocks in the building, along with the software, and are continuing to work on the custom build to fit our needs. Mr. Knight stated we are on track with the implementation when the staff arrive on the first day, but will continue to use current method of payroll sign-in sheets for the first month. This will help ensure a smooth transition over to the FOB system completely and will give the time necessary to work out any unknown scenarios that could arise during full implementation.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Outstanding Items from Previous Meetings**

1. Policy Sub-Committee and the Superintendent develop a District Wellness Policy for the school that may include the distribution of condoms to students. (Boutin)
2. Athletic Hall of Fame (O'Hare)
3. Superintendent's Wall (O'Hare)
4. Superintendent examine feasibility regarding card swipe security for each employee and associated cost to implement same. (Giggey)
5. Superintendent research the probability of adding modular classrooms to the campus to develop comprehensive academic programs at Greater Lowell Technical High School.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

## **COMMITTEEPERSON MOTION**

Committeeman Gitschier asked for discussion on increasing the current daily rates of substitute teachers. He noted the request was made due to the difficulties of obtaining substitute teachers last school year and the increased use of the administrators in the classroom. Mr. Gitschier spoke of higher rates of a few surrounding communities and by increasing the rate may be more attractive to potential substitutes. Mr. Gitschier asked Superintendent Davis for her thoughts. Ms. Davis noted current rates are \$90 for non-degree individuals, \$100 for bachelor's plus degree, and \$105 for licensed or retired instructor. After further discussion, the members recommended increasing the rates to \$105 for non-degree individuals, \$120 with a bachelor's plus degree, and \$135 for a licensed or retired instructor and asked Superintendent Davis if she was comfortable with their recommendation. After including input from Assistant Superintendent/Principal Barton, Superintendent-Davis supported the increase.

**MOTION:** by Mr. Gitschier, seconded by Mr. Sheehan to increase the substitute rate to \$135 for licensed or retired instructor, \$120 for bachelor's plus, and \$105 for non-degree.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 8 Yes

## **REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

There was no report of sub-committees.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chairman Giggey requested a motion to enter into executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21(a)(2) – to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with the following nonunion personnel: nonunion personnel.

**MOTION:** by Mr. LeMay, seconded by Mr. Tatseos to enter into executive session.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 8 Yes

Mr. Giggey noted that votes on ratification of any contract(s) discussed will be taken in open session after Executive Session.

The meeting ended to go into Executive Session at 8:09 p.m. with a roll call vote of 8 present.

The meeting reconvened at 9:11 p.m. with a roll call vote of 7 present, 1 absent (Mr. O’Hare).

## **ADJOURN**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Morin, seconded by Mr. Sheehan to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** 7 Yes, 1 Absent (Mr. O’Hare)

Respectfully submitted,

  
Colette Edmonds  
Recording Secretary

### **Meeting Documents:**

Meeting Notice

Agenda

Minutes for Approval:

June 16, 2021

Copy of FAFSA Completion Opportunity Grant Award Notification

Copy of Career Vocational Technical Equitable Access Grant Award Notification

Copy of Civics Teaching and Learning Grant Award Letter

Copy of MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board Award Letter

Copy of Lowell Board of Health Chairperson Letter Regarding Mask Mandate

Copy of Proposed General Health & Safety Practices & Protocols

Memo from Mr. Knight regarding Chrome Cart Surplus

Year-to-Date Budget Report