

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
DARTMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

July 20, 2020

The warrants for bills payable were reviewed and signed by the School Committee.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Chris Oliver at 4:00 p.m. and was held remotely via Zoom Technology. The Chair stated the meeting is streaming live on the DHS Media YouTube channel and noted the meeting was being videotaped for future broadcast over DCTV. The Chair advised viewers that comments can be emailed to the recording secretary at kathleengenthner@dartmouthschools.org to be read during Public Comment.

Present were the following members: Mr. Oliver, Dr. Jenkins, Mrs. Waite, Mrs. Amaral and Mr. Nunes.

Also present: Dr. Gifford, Ms. Roy, Mr. Kiely and Mrs. Genthner.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. David Ehrens emailed: "I hear people discussing putting the decision of "rebranding" to a Diversity Committee – instead of holding a public meeting, virtual or otherwise. Can we hear this answered clearly- will there be public hearings on the mascot?"

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Amaral moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins to approve the Regular Session Minutes of July 6, 2020, with corrections of a non-substantive nature being made. On a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0: Mr. Oliver – Yea; Dr. Jenkins – Yea; Mrs. Waite – Yea; Mrs. Amaral – Yea and John Nunes – Yea.

PRESENTATION

Dr. Gifford introduced Tracy Oliveira, the District's Director of Teaching and Learning, who presented information on curriculum the District is currently using as it relates to diversity. Dr. Gifford added that in the fall we will take a "thoughtful" look at our curriculum and initiatives to see what else can be done to ensure that all students feel respected, welcome and supported.

Mrs. Oliveira shared her "screen" with the Committee in order to project her PowerPoint presentation – Culturally Responsive Education - which was provided to members in their meeting packet.

Mrs. Oliveira informed the Committee of curriculum pertaining to race, diversity and equity currently being implemented.

Mrs. Oliveira explained that the presentation is broken down in to two parts: what is currently being taught and how the District will increase “this work” around diversity.

Mrs. Oliveira further explained how the District teaches diversity “explicitly” through some standards (i.e. social studies and health) and how it integrates diversity through other standards.

Mrs. Oliveira stated there has been an increase of books addressing cultural and racial diversity in the school libraries as well as being included in the curriculum.

Mrs. Oliveira pointed out the strong social emotional programs in the District.

Mrs. Oliveira concluded stating the District has focused on cultural diversity noting the recent DEF grant that the DeMello School received but that there is always more work to do around improving curriculum as well as professional development particularly as it concerns matters of cultural diversity and equality.

Mrs. Amaral thanked Mrs. Oliveira for her presentation and commented that she liked that she highlighted the District’s “growth mindset” toward improvement.

Dr. Jenkins commented she hopes the community sees - through this presentation - how the District has “woven” cultural and racial awareness throughout the whole curriculum.

Mrs. Waite stated she is looking forward to hearing more about “student ownership” projects once school begins in the fall.

Mr. Oliver stated he as well as other Committee members received numerous emails over the past weekend concerning the District’s use of a Native American symbol with requests that the Committee revisit the discussion and consider changing “it” and to address the matter under this agenda item.

Mr. Oliver asked the Committee to share their thoughts on the District’s continued use of a Native American symbol.

Mr. Oliver reminded the Members that the matter of the Native American symbol was taken up by the Committee at a meeting last fall when it was decided no action would be taken on the matter.

Mr. Oliver stated his position is the Committee’s number one priority at this time is to establish the District’s plan to re-open schools in the fall.

Mr. Oliver stated he is not opposed to revisiting this issue and offered “rolling” it into our Equality and Diversity Committee.

Dr. Jenkins stated she is not a “fan” of the mascot but she is fine with not making a decision on the matter tonight because it was not clearly stated on the agenda.

Mrs. Waite agreed the priority is to get students back to school but added that “we” do not want to miss this opportunity to embrace inclusivity.

Mrs. Amaral agreed the immediate priority is to get students back to school; however, the District’s logo deserves to be part of the dialog and agreed that it should be included in the proposed Equality and Diversity Committee.

Mr. Nunes agreed on what the Committee’s immediate priority is and stated that his feelings on the matter of the District’s logo are known and have not changed.

Mr. Oliver concluded the discussion stating “we” need to get a committee “off the ground” in Dartmouth that considers equality and diversity which includes the matter of the “Dartmouth Indian” logo.

Mr. Oliver commented he would like a formal presentation made by a committee made up of all stakeholders (students, parents, faculty, School Committee members) with a formal vote being taken in the fall (after school has begun) on whether or not we are going to “rebrand” ourselves.

Dr. Jenkins recommended LeSella Hall, President of the New Bedford MA Chapter of the NAACP, to be part of the proposed committee.

Mrs. Waite agreed with Mr. Oliver’s proposal.

Mrs. Amaral stated her support of Mr. Oliver’s proposal.

Mr. Nunes expressed his concern about “boxing” ourselves into a time frame that we might not be able to meet.

Mr. Oliver asked the Committee if it was in favor of forming one committee (Equity and Diversity Committee) which will include discussions concerning the Dartmouth Indian logo.

The Committee agreed to the formation of one committee.

Mr. Oliver asked that the formation of the Equality and Diversity Committee be placed on the agenda for the next meeting in order to formally vote its establishment.

OLD BUSINESS

Superintendent’s Update on Matters Affected by COVID-19: Dr. Gifford provided updates relating to matters affected by COVID-19.

Dr. Gifford reported that teams of administrators and faculty are working hard drafting the 3 back to school plans to be submitted by July 31st as required by DESE¹: full return to school, hybrid, and full remote.

Dr. Gifford explained how teams developing back to school plans are considering variables as they pertain to the plan type (full return, hybrid, fully remote) such as facility logistics, technology, availability of appropriately qualified teachers, special education placement and transportation.

Dr. Gifford reported that teachers have volunteered to be part of the Remote Learning Task Force; each education level has a task force to draw up a more “robust” remote learning plan including student assessment.

Dr. Gifford stated that bargaining dates have been set with the Union as all teaching changes must be negotiated; we are meeting this Thursday and Mr. Nunes is welcome to sit in on that meeting.

Dr. Gifford commented she needs more information from DESE as to what the District can and can’t implement if we don’t come to an agreement with the Union.

Dr. Gifford noted that a final draft of the 3 plans as well as a decision as to what plan the District will be implementing must be submitted to DESE by August 10th.

Dr. Gifford stated that more detailed information of the hybrid plan as well as highlights of the remote learning plan will be formally presented at the August 3rd meeting adding School Committee support is needed for whatever plan we think we will implement by mid-August.

Mr. Oliver asked when parents are going to know the District’s final decision.

Dr. Gifford responded not before the second week of August: if we are going to implement the hybrid plan we may be able to provide information sooner.

Dr. Gifford shared results and some responses from the parent survey which will be reposted on the District’s Facebook page with more information.

Dr. Gifford shared results from the staff survey.

Dr. Gifford reported that DESE released a lengthy guidance report *Protocols for Responding to COVID Scenarios* which needs to be reviewed adding that “we” are waiting for DESE’s transportation guidance.

Mr. Nunes asked if we will need to hire additional staff when thinking about splitting classes and do we have the money in the budget.

Dr. Gifford responded that for the reasons stated by Mr. Nunes splitting classes in order to implement a full return is really not an option that would work.

Mrs. Amaral asked if the infographic included the special education survey results.

Dr. Gifford responded that it did not and added that Mrs. Townson would be making a presentation of those results at the next meeting of the School Committee.

Mrs. Waite asked if the back to school plan implemented is full return or hybrid whether or not there will be a remote learning option for parents who are not comfortable sending their child back to school.

Dr. Gifford responded that the State is looking at learning management systems which would be a remote learning platform but that the District would still be “responsible” for these students.

Mrs. Amaral asked Dr. Gifford to speak to homeschooling.

Dr. Gifford responded that she would not recommend parents choose homeschooling their child at this time; the State and the District are looking at virtual learning platforms as options.

Recommended M.A.S.C. Resolution – Anti-Racism: Mr. Oliver referred to the Massachusetts School Committee Association’s (M.A.S.C.) resolution regarding Anti-Racism which was provided to members in their meeting packet.

Mr. Oliver recommended referring the matter to the Policy Sub-Committee for review.

Mr. Nunes stated that he cannot support the resolution as written.

Mrs. Waite supported the recommendation to send the resolution to the Policy Sub-Committee but also to commented, in light of Mr. Nunes’ objections to some of the content, that perhaps the full Committee should review the resolution.

Dr. Jenkins stated that she would vote for the resolution in its present form but added the Administration needs to review the resolution and provide input.

Mrs. Amaral agreed with Dr. Jenkins in supporting the resolution as written and agreed with the resolution being sent to the Policy Sub-Committee.

Mr. Oliver asked that the resolution be sent to the Policy Sub-Committee for review by them and the Administration and to provide feedback to the full Committee at a later date.

Dr. Jenkins moved, seconded by Mr. Nunes to send the M.A.S.C. Resolution – Anti-Racism to the Policy Sub-Committee and the Administration for review and to report back to the full Committee at a later date. On a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0: Mr. Oliver – Yea; Dr. Jenkins – Yea; Mrs. Waite – Yea; Mrs. Amaral – Yea, and Mr. Nunes – Yea.

Town Charter Review Committee Appointments: Mr. Oliver reported that the Town Administrator confirmed the School Committee appointees to the Town Charter Review Committee do not need to be Committee members only residents of Dartmouth.

Mr. Oliver recommended Heidi Brooks as a School Committee appointee to the Town Charter Review Committee noting that he has not spoken with Mrs. Brooks; however, with the Committee’s approval, he will reach out to see if she would be interested in serving.

The Committee agreed to Mr. Oliver’s recommendation.

Mrs. Waite agreed to serve as the Committee’s second appointee to the Town Charter Review Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent's Update: Dr. Gifford reported on the following:

- The Chair of the Finance Committee has reached out looking to meet with members of the Budget Sub-Committee in August.
- Members of Central and District Administration recently attended the M.A.S.S. Executive Institute virtual conference.
- The District recently received a \$12,000 Summer Vacation Learning Program grant to offer a four day camp in February and in April for STEM related enrichment activities.
- MIAA set a tentative September 14th start date for fall sports.
- The Strength and Conditioning sessions scheduled to start today at the stadium were cancelled today due to the heat; hopefully the program can start tomorrow.
- The District applied for a remote learning grant which is a tech grant.

Report of the Chair: Mr. Oliver asked if the Committee would like to return to in-person sessions.

The Committee agreed to keep meeting remotely.

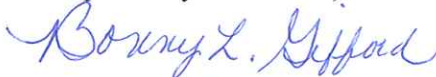
Other Matters that May Not have been anticipated at the time of the Agenda posting.

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The next regular session of the School Committee will be Monday, August 3, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom Technology.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Waite to adjourn from Open Session at 5:23 p.m. On a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0: Mr. Oliver – Yea; Dr. Jenkins – Yea; Mrs. Waite – Yea; Mrs. Amaral – Yea, and Mr. Nunes - Yea.

Respectfully submitted,



Bonny L. Gifford, Ed. D.
Superintendent