

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

March 23, 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 Kathleen Amaral at 6:30 p.m. The Chair stated Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access the School Committee meeting but noted the meeting was streaming live on the DHS Media YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/dhstvmeida>) 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 and during the Public Hearing on the proposed FY21 Budget.

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

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Oliver stated there are approximately 30 viewers watching the live stream.

Lisa Arruda emailed asking if there was a way to switch the Agenda times to give parents or anyone time to "figure this out."

Mr. Oliver asked if we allow an opportunity for a brief public comment to give the public an opportunity to figure out this new process.

Christian Gwozdz-Silveira emailed a letter regarding student parking fees and asked that the letter be read. Mrs. Genthner read the letter.

An email was received from an individual called Kathleen who asked if there are any plans for clothing drives as the season changes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Mr. Nunes to approve the Regular Session Minutes of March 9, 2020. The motion carried with Dr. Karafotis abstaining.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver to approve the Executive Session Minutes of March 9, 2020, as written, with the stipulation that they be held until such time as the matter or matters for which the session was held have been completed. The motion carried with Dr. Karafotis abstaining.

PUBLIC HEARING
Proposed FY 21 Budget

Mrs. Amaral opened the Public Hearing on the proposed FY21 Budget at 6:58 p.m. with a roll call - all members being present - noting the matter was advertised in the *New Bedford Standard Times* on March 16, 2020. Mrs. Amaral invited those wishing to speak on the matter to email the recording secretary at kathleengenthner@dartmouthschools.org who will read the comments to the Committee.

While the Committee waited for comments, Mr. Kiely explained a video clip which was shown illustrating the Grab and Go program that began today at the Quinn School; 608 meals were served.

Mr. Kiely thanked Jeanne Sheridan, Director of School Nutrition and all the volunteers.

Mrs. Amaral stated there are 34 people viewing the live stream.

Lee MacGregor emailed "given the current situation with COVID-19 and the evolving nature of online schooling, is there flexibility within the budget to address the potentially new needs of developing online curriculum."

Mr. Kiely responded that in the proposed FY21 budget was developed without knowledge of the current situation we now find ourselves in and, as the "new reality" evolves, we are finding areas where we need to spend more money and where we could possibly save money however there is too much uncertainty, from the Town and the State, at this time to plan long term.

Mr. Kiely added we do have the resources available to allocate in order for educators to communicate with students and provide educational opportunities through this crisis.

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins to close the Public Hearing on the proposed FY21 Budget at 7:12 p.m. and to return to Open Session. On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

FY21 Budget: Mr. Kiely stated that Dr. Gifford and he continue to work with the Town side of government and we do not have any further information at this time. Mr. Kiely recommended not making any changes to the proposed FY21 Budget as it was presented at the February 10, 2020 school committee meeting: \$45,586,736 a 3.2% budget increase.

Dr. Jenkins asked if we should request from our local legislators to extend the budget time line.

Mr. Kiely responded it “depends” on how long the current crisis lasts; our Town Meeting is in June so we have time however there is much uncertainty which makes it difficult to make decisions.

NEW BUSINESS

Student Opportunity Act: Dr. Gifford asked that this matter be held for a future meeting as the State extended the deadline date and the Administration has not had an opportunity to fully develop its plan due to the current situation.

School Choice Funds: Mr. Oliver asked the Committee to have a discussion around the allocation of school choice funds. Mr. Oliver stressed that he does not have any complaints about how these funds have been spent by the Administration but rather it is a question of the Committee’s fiscal duty.

Mr. Oliver added he would like to see a process put in place requiring the School Administration to submit requests to the Committee to use school choice funds. Mr. Oliver asked members for their opinion regarding the matter.

Mr. Nunes stated the Committee does receive information regarding where funds are spent and that they are spent well and sparingly.

Dr. Karafotis asked if there are guidelines in place.

Dr. Gifford responded not to her knowledge.

Dr. Jenkins stated she contacted MASC to see if they have a policy and they do not but they suggested that this is within “our realm” of fiscal responsibility.

Dr. Jenkins agreed with Mr. Oliver that the Administration has spent the money appropriately; it is a matter of the Committee’s fiscal responsibility. The Committee has say over all other budget items before money is spent and that that process should apply to school choice funds.

Mr. Nunes expressed concern of starting to “micro-manage” Central Office.

Mr. Oliver responded to Mr. Nunes’ concerns and that he doesn’t want to micro-manage Central Administration; perhaps we could set a threshold where anything over \$1,000 dollars requires School Committee approval.

Dr. Gifford stated she and Mr. Kiely spoke about the difficulty of needing permission to make expenditures when trying to make quick decisions.

Dr. Jenkins stated time would not be an issue and agreed with Mr. Oliver’s suggestion of a threshold but perhaps higher than what he stated.

Dr. Karafotis agreed some type of procedure should be put in place that would satisfy all parties.

Mrs. Amaral stated she like the idea of implementing a process but with a higher threshold.

Mr. Kiely stated the District could put together a proposal for the policy sub-committee and recited a list of past and intended expenditures.

Mr. Oliver stated he would be comfortable with a threshold of \$10,000 and reiterated the reason for a policy is the Committee's fiscal responsibility.

Discussion of District Plans concerning COVID-19: Dr. Gifford reported on the District's plans during School Closures including the following:

- District Leadership Team (DLT) held a meeting this morning to discuss Phase II of the Learning Plan: building and grounds access; technology department working to "round up" Chromebooks; surveys sent to parents regarding Chromebooks.
- Extended Learning Page was posted immediately after announcement of school closure: 9000 sessions of activities have been posted and 4500 users have accessed the site.
- “We” met with the DEA Leadership this afternoon to apprise them of Phase II which includes collaboration across the District by grade level and content area: by next week teachers will be required to prepare 3 lessons per week around new content to enrich student learning.
- Teachers are holding morning and afternoon meetings to communicate with and support students.
- DHS and DMS Guidance Counselors will be holding office hours daily via email or telephone.
- Related Service and Special Education Teams are holding meetings.
- We have been communicating with Cat Lyons, our Special Education Legal Counsel, who continues to update us as to how to best service our students.
- Central Office Team is planning on holding a virtual Public Forum to air possibly Thursday; we have posted an email address on our latest information document where folks can send questions.
- Tomorrow all staff will be having meetings to clarify instruction and to have an opportunity to ask any questions.
- Parents are asked to tune in to the district's YouTube channel which is a way of receiving Alerts.
- We will be reducing our emails to one a week to inform parents of additions to the site.

Mr. Oliver asked about what is being done or planning to be done for high school seniors regarding activities.

Dr. Gifford responded it is early to make decisions regarding specific activities until more information is received from the State and DESE; the high school administration has started the “conversation” not only around senior activities but grading as well.

Mr. Nunes asked how students can request and receive letters of reference for scholarships.

Dr. Gifford responded that the guidance department is holding office hours at which time requests for letters can be made.

Dr. Jenkins commented the District needs longer range plans and communication to parents is not very clear; we need to be able to tell parents when students will receive communication from their teacher(s) and how they will receive this communication.

Dr. Gifford stated google classroom(s) especially in grades 6-12 will be set up by the end of the week.

Dr. Jenkins confirmed students should hear from their teacher(s) by the end of this week and that parents should verify their email address in ASPEN as they will be contacted through that email address.

Ross Thibault, Dartmouth High School Principal, joined the meeting at 7:37 p.m. and responded to Mr. Oliver stating DHS seniors should not worry the high school will not “forget” to honor them and clarified the plans for “grading.”

Dr. Jenkins asked Mr. Thibault to speak about the high school’s plan to support students who need time to improve their grades.

Mr. Thibault responded that the message to faculty is to “extend yourself” to assist students who require additional help to be successful.

Dr. Karafotis asked about advanced placement exams.

Mr. Thibault stated College Board will post its schedule by April 3rd and there will be 2 testing options and students will be allowed to test in their home on any type of device; College Board is providing free resources for students to review and for this year the exam will be 45 minutes in length and will focus on content that would have been covered by most AP teachers by the first week of March.

Report of the Chair: Mrs. Amaral reported the following:

- Mr. Nunes congratulated DHS Senior Lindsey Oliveira for being named to the *Standard Times* girls’ basketball super team as well as player of the year and receiving the Dave Cowens award.
- Parents please keep your children at home; memorial stadium, school fields and courts are closed.

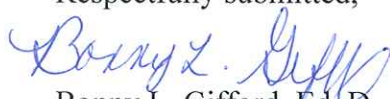
Other Matter that May Not have been anticipated at the time of the Agenda posting.

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The next regular session of the School Committee will take place on Monday, April 6, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. and will be held remotely. A vote on the FY21 Budget is scheduled to be held at this meeting.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver to adjourn to Executive Session at 7:56 p.m. in order to provide an update with respect to collective bargaining with union personnel and not to return in to Open Session. On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,


Bonny L. Gifford, Ed. D.
Superintendent