

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

March 8, 2021

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 6:30 p.m. and was held in the Dartmouth High School Library Media Center; the public was not allowed to physically access the meeting. The Chair stated the meeting is streaming live on the DHS Media YouTube channel and noted the meeting is being videotaped for future broadcast over DCTV. The Chair informed viewers that public comments can be emailed to the recording secretary at kathleengenthner@dartmouthschools.org to be read during Public Comment.

On a roll call the following members were present: Mr. Oliver, Dr. Jenkins, Mrs. Amaral and Mr. Nunes. Mrs. Waite was not in attendance.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Oliver stated public comments can be emailed to the recording secretary at kathleengenthner@dartmouthschools.org.

No public comments were received.

The Committee clarified that public comment emails are received, considered and made part of the record.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the Regular Session Minutes of March 1, 2021. On a roll call vote, the motion carried: 3-0. Mr. Oliver – Yes; Mrs. Amaral – Yes and Mr. Nunes - Yes. Dr. Jenkins abstained.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Mr. Oliver welcomed Student Representative Evan Garcia, an 11th grade student at Dartmouth High School, who provided an update of recent activities and events happening at the high school.

Mr. Garcia noted the following activities taking place at Dartmouth High Schools:

- Senior Superlative Awards Night was held virtually which can be viewed on the DHS tv media and DCTV.
- Fall II Sports started with 207 student athletes competing in four sports: football, track, cheer and unified basketball.

- Clubs and activities are happening including unified bowling; DHS now has retractable bowling alleys thanks to the assistance of the engineering department.
- DHS now has an e-Sports team which had its first competition last week and can be viewed on [twitch.tv/dartmouthhs](https://www.twitch.tv/dartmouthhs).
- Indoor Percussion made it to the semi-finals at the Winter Guard International Competition.
- Sophomore Hannah Lima made it to MA State Finals for *Poetry Out Loud*.
- DHS Debate Club competed a few weeks ago (Mr. Garcia noted he placed first overall in group discussions; Sophia Waite and Ali Hijazi placed second and third in the novice extemporaneous speaking category.)
- TEDx presentations started last week and can be viewed on DHS tv media YouTube channel and DCTV.
- Students have begun meeting with their guidance counselors to begin picking out courses for next year; class requests are “in” by March 12th.
- AP assemblies are taking place during P.A.C.E. period this week.
- This week is foreign language week at DHS.
- DHS has a new therapy dog: Augie.

RESOLUTION

Resolution 20-03 – Request for Unpaid Leave: Dr. Gifford presented the unpaid leave request submitted by Bronwyn Leone, a Teacher Assistant at DeMello School, explaining that the leave request corresponds to her child’s “at home learning” days making the leave unnecessary once the elementary grades are back to full in person learning.

Dr. Gifford added the District would be in favor of approving the requested leave.

Mr. Oliver invited discussion on the request for unpaid leave by said Teacher Assistant sent to the Committee in their meeting packets.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins to approve Resolution 21-03 as explained by the Superintendent. On a roll call vote, the motion carried: 4-0. Mr. Oliver – Yes; Dr. Jenkins – Yes; Mrs. Amaral – Yes and Mr. Nunes - Yes.

PRESENTATIONS

Spotlight on the James M. Quinn Elementary School: Dr. Gifford invited Kyle Grandfield, Principal of the Quinn School Administrators to make his school’s presentation.

Mr. Grandfield acknowledged co-presenters Assistant Principals Audra Thomas and Stephanie Yermalovich.

Mr. Grandfield provided a “lead in” to a video that was shown to illustrate a day in the life of a Quinn student; Mr. Grandfield noted programs – such as Peer Leaders and PBIS rallies - are still running at Quinn they just look different.

Mrs. Yermalovich commented on how proud “we” are of Quinn students who have shown how flexible, resilient and dedicated they are with what has been asked of them over the course of this year.

Mrs. Thomas expressed the Quinn Administration's appreciation for its staff who also have been flexible and resilient in the face of what has been asked of them this year.

The Committee thanked the Quinn Administration for their presentation.

Update on District Pupil Support Services: Dr. Gifford invited Elizabeth Townson, the District's Pupil Support Services Administrator, to present an update on pupil support services.

Mrs. Townson provided a PowerPoint presentation on pupil support services.

Mrs. Townson detailed the challenges the district faced this year including staffing specifically around related services.

Mrs. Townson continued explaining how services are being delivered to students noting accommodations and modifications.

Mrs. Townson reported virtual team meetings have been positive experiences for families and staff; the department continues to collaborate with families to ensure students' progression and success.

Mrs. Townson took the opportunity to thank the 120 staff members of the special education department for their hard work and dedication over the past year as well as to parents/families for their collaboration and patience.

Mrs. Townson reported on the district's preschool program evaluation which was required by the state who evaluated the program in December of 2019; the district was required to conduct an evaluation this year which focused on the preschool program.

Mrs. Townson stated the evaluation was conducted by Dr. Carolyn McKearney and Linda Cullen from SouthCoast Educational Collaborative.

Mrs. Townson identified the program's strength: support for the inclusion model which is now embedded into staff practices: conducting our own evaluations during the in-take process; professional development; strong related services team and welcoming environment.

Mrs. Townson highlighted some of the evaluation recommendations: creation of a preschool professional learning community (PLC); create a plan for students new to preschool who have more intensive needs; written referral or flowchart process for transitioning special education students out of preschool to kindergarten.

Dr. Jenkins stated she would like to see virtual team meetings continue to accommodate working parents.

Mrs. Townson agreed.

Mr. Oliver asked if the state needs to "weigh in" on allowing virtual meetings.

Mrs. Townson responded "no" adding state and federal law indicates parental participation can happen in any "way, shape or form."

Mrs. Amaral asked what has been the biggest struggle.

Mrs. Townson responded staffing particularly as it concerns related services.

Mrs. Amaral asked about COVID compensatory services.

Mrs. Townson explained why it has not been much of a concern for the district.

Mrs. Amaral asked if discussions have taken place about offering more comprehensive services during the summer.

Mrs. Townson responded at this time the extended school year program (ESY) is set to run this summer and will be in-person at the Quinn School.

Mrs. Amaral noted the Special Education Parents Advisory Council will be hosting parents' rights training.

Mrs. Townson confirmed that the parents' rights training will be held on April 12th from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Mr. Oliver asked if additional staffing may be necessary next year for students who might have regressed over the past year.

Mrs. Townson responded on going team meetings help to ascertain student progression/regression but it is difficult to know, at this time, what additional staffing needs might be necessary for next year.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Kiely asked that the matter be tabled.

OLD BUSINESS

FY22 Budget: Mr. Kiely stated the matter of the proposed budget is on tonight's agenda in order to address any questions the Committee may have and reiterated the budget process timeline - March 22nd public hearing and Committee vote in April - adding the timeline is flexible.

Mr. Oliver commented on staffing matters and vacancies and asked if the district should be looking for more teaching assistants particularly at Quinn School.

Dr. Gifford responded there are staff on year long leave and their positions are built into the budget.

Mr. Oliver asked if it's the district intention to fill positions that are built into the budget.

Dr. Gifford stated it is adding that central administration meets frequently with district administrators to discuss the needs of the individual schools.

Mr. Oliver referenced page 9 of the proposed FY22 budget document asking for an explanation of the 4.3% savings under the Administration and why it does not reflect the full salary of the position being eliminated which is the Director of Teaching and Learning.

Mr. Kiely responded the restructuring involves two positions which the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education classifies and places in different budget accounts: the position of assistant superintendent into an administrative account and the position of director of teaching and learning into an instructional account.

Mr. Kiely explained further that the savings in the proposed FY22 budget is on the instruction side because the proposal is to eliminate the director position and to fill the assistant superintendent position.

Mr. Kiely stated that monies held in contractual holding lines last year are now at \$0.00 because contract negotiations were settled and allocated to the appropriate instruction budget lines adding that the bulk of the budget falls under instruction and changes are sometimes not apparent.

Mr. Oliver asked if there will be a change to the assistant superintendent job description.

Dr. Gifford referenced the list of assistant superintendent duties provided to the Committee at a previous meeting.

Mr. Oliver asked that the district share the assistant superintendent job description with the Committee.

Mr. Oliver asked that the position name be amended to reflect its duties; something like Mr. Kiely's job title.

Dr. Gifford agreed.

Mr. Oliver clarified the Committee appoints the Assistant Superintendent based on the Superintendent's recommendation.

Dr. Gifford agreed.

Mr. Nunes interjected that he "thought" the appointment of an Assistant Superintendent was the Superintendent's "hire."

Mr. Oliver responded that MA general laws states otherwise.

Mr. Oliver stated the appointment of an assistant superintendent should be done in conjunction with the budget approval.

Dr. Gifford agreed.

Dr. Jenkins commented social workers are "of the utmost" priority and would go against her normal opposition to use one time revenues to fund on going expenses to fund these positions.

Dr. Jenkins stated she is not clear on what the difference is in the cost of eliminating one administrative position and filling the other.

Mr. Kiely stated approximately \$12,000 which is not directly the difference between the two salaries; there is a plan in place that would explain the full proposal for restructuring the two administrative positions.

Mr. Nunes asked how public comments will be handled during the Public Hearing on the budget.

The Committee stated how the public should submit comments relative to the budget hearing.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent's Update: Dr. Gifford provided the following:

- MCAS is still going forward and an updated calendar was sent out; the middle school is to be determined.
- Kindergarten registration is open and parents can find information on the district website.
- Preschool registration for new students will close on March 11th.
- Music department looking to make changes in light of the new guidelines including allowing some spectators along the lines of the athletic department's protocols.
- DHS year end activities are being planned; Mr. Thibault will send out information soon.
- At this time plans are being made to hold an in person high school graduation ceremony so long as restrictions and guidelines allow for it.
- Seal of Bi-literacy will be offered again this year to students who have earned the recognition: the exam registration deadline is March 31st which is administered at the high school and paid for by the district. It is expected that 150 students will be taking the exam.
- Plans to expand full in person learning continue: desks have been purchased and discussions on how best to conduct lunch period are on-going but will be worked out in time for students' return; transportation is in "good shape" but it will look different, there will be no physical distancing per the new guidelines.
- Plans for expanding in person learning at the middle and high school continue to be discussed; the middle school has been asked to include synchronous learning.

Mr. Nunes asked if middle and high school students will be in person soon.

Dr. Gifford responded the middle school has worked hard assessing the logistics using 3 feet but it is a "big challenge."

Mr. Oliver asked that a report on the senior activities be added to a meeting agenda.

Mr. Nunes asked if the four senior class officers could be invited to the post April vacation meeting to report on senior activities.

Dr. Jenkins stressed the need to communicate senior events and activities directly to parents.

Report of the Chair: The Chair had nothing further to add.

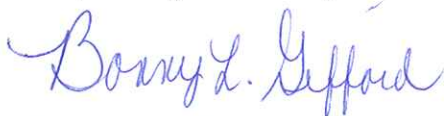
NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The next regular session of the School Committee will take place at the Dartmouth High School Library Media Center on Monday, April 5, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.; the public

will not be granted physical access to this meeting but will continue to have access to meetings via live stream at the DHS Media YouTube channel <https://youtube.com/dhstvmedia>.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to adjourn from Open Session at 8:35 p.m. The motion carried unanimously: 4-0. On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously: 4-0. Mr. Oliver – Yes; Dr. Jenkins – Yes; Mrs. Amaral – Yes and Mr. Nunes - Yes.

Respectfully submitted,



Bonny L. Gifford, Ed. D.
Superintendent