

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

January 22, 2024

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 6:00 p.m. in the Dartmouth High School Library Media Center.

On a roll call the following members were present: Kathleen Amaral, Christopher Oliver, Elizabeth Coughlin, Shannon Jenkins and John Nunes.

Also present: Dr. Saba-Maguire and Ms. Genthner.

PUBLIC HEARING

School Choice – 2024-2025

Mr. Nunes opened the Public Hearing on School Choice for the 2024-2025 School Year at 6:05 p.m. inviting those who wish to speak on the matter to come forward.

Bob Gauvin, resident of Dartmouth, offered comments relative to school choice stating he recommends the Committee “phase out” school choice and provided his reasons.

Arlene Johnson, a senior attending Dartmouth High School (DHS) under the school choice program, stated opportunities and successes presented and realized by herself as well as others due to their ability to attend DHS.

Aubrey Wise, a student at Voke Tech, stated her wish to return to Dartmouth under school choice.

Danielle, Aubrey Wise’s mother, stated she offered to pay to send her daughter to Dartmouth High School but was told that was not allowed.

Dawn Pomfret, parent of a student attending DHS under the school choice, offered comments in support of the school choice program adding she would be more than willing to pay to send her daughter to Dartmouth if that was possible.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver to close the Public Hearing for School Choice for School Year 2023-2024 at 6:15 p.m. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments were offered on other matters on tonight’s agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to approve the Regular Session Minutes of January 8, 2024 as written. The motion passed: 4-0. Dr. Jenkins abstained.

It was noted executive session was not held on January 8, 2024.

CONSENT AGENDA

Dr. Saba-Maguire recommended the following requests to compete for the Committee's review and consent.

- DHS – WGI East Power Regional – DHS Varsity Color Guard to Bethlehem PA
- DHS – WGI East Power Regional – DHS Indoor Percussion to Tom's River NJ

Dr. Jenkins moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver to approve the Indoor Percussion Team trip to Tom's River New Jersey and the Winter Guard trip to Bethlehem PA. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

PRESENTATION

SPOTLIGHT ON KIDS – Dartmouth High School: The Chair invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to introduce tonight's presenters.

Ryan Shea, Principal of Dartmouth High School (DHS), briefly shared personal experiences pertaining to the high school internship program noting the importance of maintaining and growing the internship program which is the subject of tonight's *Spotlight* segment.

With the use of a PowerPoint presentation provided to committee members in the meeting packet, Mr. Robert Perrotti, lead teacher of the Business, Innovation and Technology Department at DHS, presented a brief overview of the high school internship program noting the increase in participants from 49 last year to 92 for the current year.

Mark Russell, internship and business teacher at DHS, provided an explanation of *Imblaze*, the software program being utilized since the fall of 2023, in order to help facilitate the program noting how the district, with the help of MassHire, obtained funding for the software for the next 3 years.

Richard White, internship and business teacher at DHS, spoke briefly about how students are placed in an internship adding interns are placed from Fairhaven to Fall River including Westport and New Bedford noting currently there are more opportunities in cities.

DHS senior class members, Mason Bouchard, Alivia Araujo and Grace Haskell, spoke briefly of their individual experiences interning at Farland Corporation Civil Engineering; Bright Dents of Dartmouth and Fusion Physical Therapy respectively.

Mr. Perrotti, Mr. White and Mr. Russell concluded the presentation with "Next Steps" noting the intent to grow and evolve the program, to recruit and to work with the junior class to secure placements.

Mr. Oliver stated his support for the program.

Ms. Coughlin asked for specifics of the program: after school, number of hours students work at their internship.

The students and staff responded.

Dr. Jenkins encouraged placement in state and local government departments if it isn't being looked at currently.

Mr. Perrotti responded students are interning at Dartmouth Police Department and Fairhaven Fire Department but we would like to do more.

Mr. Nunes suggested accounting programs.

Mr. White stated we are looking to provide more business options to students.

Mr. Russell added a student worked at Citizens Bank last year.

Dr. Saba-Maguire provided comments regarding the program noting the commitment of the students and facilitators.

Resolution 24-01 – Regular and Late Transportation Contract: Dr. Saba-Maguire briefly reviewed the memorandum prepared by James Kiely, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, which was provided in the meeting packet noting there was only one bid which was submitted by Tremblay's.

Dr. Saba-Maguire noted the actual increase in transportation costs was greater than the 15% built into the FY25 budget proposal which Mr. Kiely did give indications that the percentage would likely be greater: the increase in transportation per the one bid submitted is 26%.

Dr. Saba-Maguire noted the research and analysis done by Mr. Kiely who continues to work on efficiency improvements hoping to eliminate at least one bus which would offset some of the budget deficit.

Dr. Saba-Maguire noted, upon the Committee's approval, the contract to be awarded would be a one-year contract with a two-year option.

Dr. Saba-Maguire read resolution 24-01.

WHEREAS: Bid invitations for Regular/Late Transportation Services (K-12) were duly advertised and the bid proposals received were opened at 10:00 A.M. on January 10, 2024 and;

WHEREAS: The bid from the only responding bidder, Tremblay's Bus Company, LLC, was reviewed and deemed to have met the published specifications; Therefore, be it,

RESOLVED: That a contract for the Regular/Late Transportation Services (K-12) be awarded to Tremblay's Bus Co., LLC, 284 Myrtle St., New Bedford, Massachusetts, based on Dartmouth Public Schools specifications dated December 27, 2023 for the period of July 1, 2024 and ending

June 30, 2025. The contract offered is for an initial period of one year beginning July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025, with two additional one-year options, to be exercised at the sole discretion of the School Committee of the Town Dartmouth, for a maximum end date of June 30, 2027. The rate for July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 is \$477.00 per route per day.

Ms. Coughlin noted the date of the bid specifications should read 2023 and not 2024.

Mr. Oliver and Dr. Jenkins noted the challenges regarding school transportation is being felt across the state.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins to approve Resolution 24-01. The motion carried: 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

FY25-FY29 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) - Vote: Mrs. Amaral invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to speak on the matter.

Dr. Saba-Maguire indicated the District is looking for the Committee's vote on the FY25-FY29 CIP presented by Mr. Kiely at the January 8, 2024 school committee meeting.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver to approve the FY25-FY29 Capital Improvement Plan as presented at the January 8, 2024 meeting of the Committee. The motion passed unanimously; 5-0.

Mr. Nunes asked to be informed when the plan will be presented to the Town Capital Improvement Planning Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

School Choice 2024-2025 – Discussion and Vote: Mrs. Amaral opened discussion on the matter.

Dr. Jenkins stated she would like to “clear up” some “misconceptions” made during the Public Hearing on School Choice, held earlier this evening, specifically the assertion that Dartmouth schools lose money on school choice which is simply “not true” describing what the average amount spent per student covers noting the costs continue to exist whether school choice continues in Dartmouth.

Dr. Jenkins further commented that School Choice is not having a negative effect on student success adding students attending under school choice add value to the school community.

Mr. Nunes stated he has always voted no regarding school choice and will do so tonight and provided his reasons for doing so adding that it is fortunate to have the funds from the program particularly in light of budget constraints.

Mr. Oliver commented on the many discussions between this committee and other town boards and noted his support for school choice reiterating school choice is allowed only at the high

school level adding, should conditions change specifically as it regards enrollment of Dartmouth residents at the high school, then school choice will be looked at and changes made.

Dr. Jenkins asked for confirmation that the State school choice program does not allow for “additional” payment noting it came up during the School Choice Public Hearing this evening.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated that is correct.

Mrs. Amaral stated she agreed with Dr. Jenkins adding she believes that “we” are incredibly enriched by the students who come here from other communities.

Dr. Jenkins moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver, to authorize school choice for the 2024-2025 school year at levels similar to previous years and at the discretion of the administrative team. The motion carried 4-1 with Mr. Nunes opposing.

2023 – Annual Report - Vote: Dr. Saba-Maguire thanked the schools for their work on the 2023 Annual Report which was provided to members in the meeting packet and asked the Committee for its vote of approval.

Ms. Coughlin recommended the document be reviewed for punctuation and clarity before submitting it to Town Hall noting it is a very informative document that took much work to produce.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated she is looking forward to working with the Committee and Staff to bring the annual report “to life” so the public can hear about “it” beyond a written document.

Mr. Nunes asked that after the document is reviewed as recommended that it be posted on the District website.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins, to approve the 2023 Annual Report. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Authorization to Release Executive Session Minutes: Mrs. Amaral opened discussion for authorization to release executive sessions minutes for 2021, 2022 and 2023 which were provided to the members in the meeting packet.

2021 – 1/25/2021; 2/8/2021; 4/26/2021; 5/17/2021; 6/7/2021; 10/18/2021 and 11/1/2021; **2022** – 1/24/2022; 4/11/2022; 5/9/2022; 5/23/2022; 6/6/2022; 6/27/2022; 10/17/2022; 11/7/2022; 11/21/2022; 12/12/2022; 12/19/2022; **2023** – 1/9/2023; 1/23/2023; 2/13/2023; 3/6/2023; 3/27/2023; 4/10/2023; 4/24/2023; 5/2/2023; 5/15/2023; 6/5/2023; 9/25/2023; 10/16/2023; 11/6/2023 and 12/11/2023.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins, to release all of the executive session minutes listed for 2022 and 2023. The motion passed unanimously; 5-0.

Dr. Saba-Maguire recommended that the June, October and November executive session minutes of 2021 continue to be held.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins, to release executive session minutes 1/25/2021; 2/8/2021; 4/26/2021 and 5/17/2021. The motion passed unanimously; 5-0.

Superintendent's Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire provided information and updates of events and activities happening throughout the District.

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Ross Thibault, Director of Teaching and Learning/Secondary Level, to speak about new information coming from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) regarding proposed "weighting of years for 2024 calculations" as well as absenteeism and the challenges associated with it.

With slides provided to Committee members in the meeting packet, Mr. Thibault presented data regarding proposals from DESE pertaining to its school accountability results.

Mr. Thibault noted a proposal regarding "weighting indicators" specifically chronic absenteeism.

Mr. Thibault stated DESE is voting on proposals tomorrow morning.

Mr. Nunes asked about students who might have had surgery or other illness.

Mr. Thibault responded DESE defines an absence as "an absence" regardless of the reason adding the Commissioner is proposing some ideas to "earn back" absences through Saturday sessions and/or accelerated academies.

Mr. Oliver stated he had heard that students who are at home for medical purposes and who receive tutoring that those days would "count."

Dr. Saba-Maguire and Mr. Thibault responded that is correct; if the district provides tutoring for at least 50% of the academic day "we" should be counting "them" as present for instruction.

Mr. Oliver commented there is only so much a district can do to address absenteeism and yet the district will be penalized for its chronic absenteeism.

Dr. Saba-Maguire shared school leaders and teachers are aware of this challenge and are doing everything they can within their sphere of influence to ensure that kids are coming to school noting the high school made modifications to its schedule adding we are still feeling the impact of COVID but we are "getting" there with students and families stressing the importance of students being in school.

Mr. Thibault stated we are tracking towards improving this school year but the questions remains if we will "hit" our targets.

Dr. Saba-Maguire offered brief comments on the following:

- Curriculum Update noting the Governor's commitment to literacy resources

Catherine Pavao, Director of Teaching and Learning/Elementary Level, spoke briefly about the District's curriculum team efforts specifically elementary literacy curriculum.

- Entry Planning Update noting we will be presenting our “Findings” soon
- Early Childhood Director Posting Update
- Student Achievement Update

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

- Mr. Nunes asked for an update on school committee minutes from New Bedford Voke.
- Music Program Update

Other Matters that may not have been anticipated at the time of Agenda posting:

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The next regular session of the School Committee will take place in the Library Media Center at Dartmouth High School on Monday, February 12, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins to adjourn at 7:48 p.m. into Executive Session for the purpose of non-union contract and a DEA Grievance matters and not to return to open session. On a roll call the motion passed unanimously; 5-0: Mrs. Amaral – Yes; Dr. Jenkins – Yes; Ms. Coughlin; Mr. Oliver – Yes and Mr. Nunes – Yes.

Respectfully submitted,



June Saba-Maguire, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Open Session - Documents/Exhibits

Agenda

Brief

Regular/Joint Session Minutes for January 8, 2024

Consent Agenda – DHS WGI East Power Regional – DHS Varsity Winter Color Guard

Consent Agenda – DHS WGI East Power Regional – DHS Indoor Percussion Team

Spotlight on Kids (DHS) – PPP Dartmouth High School Internship Program

Resolution 24-01 – Awarding a Contract for Regular/Late Transportation Services (K-12)

2023 Annual Report

2021, 2022 and 2023 Executive Session Minutes

Superintendent Report –DESE Information- Proposed Weighting of Years for 2024 Calculations