

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

March 11, 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. The Chair announced the meeting is being recorded for future broadcast over DCTV.

On a roll call the following members were present: Kathleen Amaral, Christopher Oliver, Elizabeth Coughlin and John Nunes. Shannon Jenkins was not in attendance.

Also present: Dr. Saba-Maguire, James Kiely and Ms. Genthner.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No comment as offered.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to approve the Regular Session Minutes of February 12, 2024 as written. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Dr. Saba-Maguire recommended the following request for the Committee's review and consent noting that four students from the Youth and Government Club will be attending the event with their club advisor (Ms. O'Neil.)

- DHS – Participate in the Youth and Government Annual Model Government Conference in Boston MA (March 2024)

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to approve the consent agenda item as presented. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

PRESENTATION

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

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Peter Rossi, Principal of Dartmouth Middle School, to present tonight's *Spotlight* segment.

Mr. Rossi thanked the Committee for the opportunity to spotlight the middle school's Garden Club and its vision for the outside courtyard space.

Mr. Rossi introduced tonight's presentation participants: Oliver Goncalves a DMS 8th grader and a member of the Garden Club, Temple Mitchell and Laura Hellstrom, DMS faculty members, who advise the club which is part of the after-school program.

A brief video was aired depicting the transformation of the outside courtyard space into the DMS Outdoor Classroom and Educational Gardens which includes raised beds, a storage shed, composting bin, pollinator houses and landscaping all constructed through the collaborative efforts of students and staff.

Mr. Nunes asked what is grown in the garden

Mr. Goncalves responded the club grows vegetables and herbs and explained growing plants through hydroponics during the winter.

Ms. Coughlin asked if left over plant-based food from the cafeteria is composted.

Mr. Goncalves explained that leftover food from the cafeteria is placed in worm bins to be decomposed into soil to be used later adding leaves and dead plants are put into the compost bin.

Mr. Oliver asked about hydroponics.

Mr. Goncalves explained the program.

Ms. Hellstrom added future projects including future "beds", a pollinator garden to attract native pollinators, and a perennial vegetable garden and an herb cutting garden.

Ms. Hellstrom stated the focus on the educational purpose of the space including signage to explain sustainable practices is the goal of the outdoor educational space.

Ms. Mitchell commented that the students built the structures (shed, beds, and tables) shown in the video.

Mr. Rossi put in a "plug" for the middle school unified basketball team which kicks off its season this Friday at 2:30 p.m. against Plymouth South.

Revised Proposed FY25 Budget: Mrs. Amaral invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to present the revised proposed FY25 Budget.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stressed the efforts of all the school and district-based staff for their thoughtful revisions and considerations noting we have navigated some challenges; we have had many discussions and have had to make some difficult decisions regarding our shared commitment to our Dartmouth students.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated the process to get us to what we hope is the final iteration of this budget has been marked by the collaboration of many different groups.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated she wants to assure people that we have scrutinized every line item and explored what we believe to be are innovative solutions to the challenges that we have faced throughout the budget process.

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Mr. Kiely to explain the budget timeline and where we are presently.

Mr. Kiely stated the budget process has been addressed several times noting his presentation is 29 slides long adding we will jump ahead since the first 20 slides have not changed from previous presentations.

Mr. Kiely reminded the Committee of the budget starting point and the Town's allocation for the district which was going to be a problem from the start as well as the expiration of ESSER funds along with an expected increase in transportation costs which exceeded what was anticipated, increased labor costs as well as legal services and special education services; all things that we knew would push us over the 3% offered by the Town.

Mr. Kiely explained the proposed budget presented on December 11th which was a needs-based proposal attempted to maintain services but there were "cuts" included in our original proposal.

Mr. Kiely commented on the override proposal as discussed at the Joint meeting with the Select Board and Finance Committee on January 8th noting, at its meeting on January 8th, the School Committee voted to utilize school choice funds to "buffer the gap" adding we have factored in these funds in excess of \$1.8 million.

Mr. Kiely explained how "we" have utilized multiple solutions to "bridge the gap": school choice funds, other funds and reductions.

Mr. Kiely explained why additional needs are being funded through the school choice account: ESSER positions; a new behavior specialist position, as well as technology and curriculum materials which was previously voted by the Committee to be funded through this source.

Mr. Kiely explained the school choice spending plan noting that this account will support these positions for a year and can, at least, partially support things for another year then the savings will be gone noting school choice funds grew due to the utilization of ESSER funds over the last few years.

Mr. Kiely explained some items will be funded through other accounts: summer school programs with waning ESSER funds and a part-time maintenance position through the school lunch revolving account.

Mr. Oliver asked if the school department realizes anything from Medicaid billing.

Mr. Kiely responded we indirectly receive some money which funds a secretarial position adding there is no requirement by law that we receive those funds.

Mr. Kiely stated the reductions that some reductions that are being proposed are through attrition and explained the proposed elimination of three elementary classrooms noting DeMello school will change to a K-5 school and Cushman will only house preschool adding the average class size in every "one" of those schools would be 21.

Mr. Kiely summarized the budget recommendations noting the biggest difference are the reductions: new positions built into the budget in relation to meeting students' needs in an appropriate manner and other positions removed from the budget and moved to other sources which were mentioned earlier in the presentation.

Mr. Kiely reviewed the budget proportions which have not changed from previous presentations for a total proposal of \$53,159,839 which is \$13,000 more than what the Town is proposing and an additional \$1.3 million allocated to school choice; we are pushing the problem off a year, maybe two.

Mr. Oliver commented on school choice and explained his support for the District's participation adding we violate Town financial policies by using one-time revenues to fund recurring charges but we are left with no alternative.

Ms. Coughlin stated she hopes the greater community understands that "we" will be asking for money in the future and we do that after looking at every line item and thinking about the students' best interest.

Mr. Nunes agreed with Mr. Oliver's commits about Town policy.

Mrs. Amaral asked about next steps.

Mr. Kiely responded the public hearing will be held on March 25th with the hope the School Committee will vote on the budget at its first meeting in April.

Mr. Kiely stated the Finance Committee would like to meet with us; scheduled tentatively for April 4th at 4:00 p.m.

Mrs. Amaral asked if the proposed budget gets posted.

Mr. Kiely stated it will be posted tomorrow morning.

Mr. Oliver made comments about the need for an override in the near future when the people of Dartmouth will need to decide what kind of school district they want.

OLD BUSINESS

Revised Proposed FY25 Budget - Discussion: Mrs. Amaral stated the discussion was had during the presentation.

NEW BUSINESS

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

- Budget letter was sent to faculty and staff as well as to the School Committee
- March preparations for MCAS.
- Preschool lottery registration is happening through Friday.
- A presentation on early childhood education will be made in April by Laurie Dionisio and Kim Redlon.
- Kindergarten registration is open and parents are asked to register their children as soon as possible.
- Entry Planning Update - looking forward to the reporting phase.
- HR Update: will be advertising for the Early Childhood Director, need for substitutes.
- Climate and Culture Update: Girls' Basketball season; Hunter Matteson broke the all-time scoring record for basketball; Ashton Machado, goalie for DHS hockey team, will be recognized on March 19th at the Bruins game at TD Garden; DHS chess team is doing very well; TEDx talks happening at DHS covering relevant, current topics; 4 students attended the recent M.A.S.C. conference and suggest we invite them to a future committee meeting to talk about their experience.
- Mr. Nunes will receive the *Joao Rodrigues Distinguished Service Award*
- Family and Caregiver Forum was held last Wednesday – thank you to all participants.

Report of the Chair: The Chair provided comments about the Family and Caregiver Forum and mentioned feedback from a volunteer was “alarming” as it came close to violating students’ privacy and wanted to be sure that the District “circles” back with the individual about student privacy.

Dr. Saba-Maguire followed up on Mrs. Amaral's comments and assured the Committee the matter will be addressed.

- Music Competition Updates
- Sports Update: Mr. Nunes asked if we could have the team captains in to recognize them for tremendous seasons.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated we are planning a date in April which would allow most of the captains to attend.

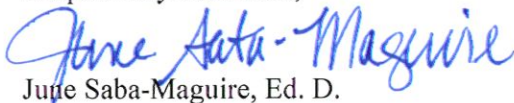
Other Matters that may not have been anticipated at the time of Agenda posting:

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, March 25, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at which time the public hearing on the budget will be held.

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to adjourn at 7:15 p.m. from Open Session. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,


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

Open Session - Documents/Exhibits

Agenda

Brief

Regular Session Minutes for February 12, 2024

Spotlight on Kids - Video

Consent Agenda – DHS Youth & Government Annual Model Government Conference

Revised Proposed FY25 Budget