

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

July 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 Chris Oliver at 5:30 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: Chris Oliver, Elizabeth Coughlin, Mary Beckwith, Kathleen Amaral and John Nunes.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

No comment was offered.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the Regular Session Minutes of June 3, 2024 as written. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the Executive Session Minutes of May 13, 2024 as written, with the stipulation that they be held until the matters under consideration are completed. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

PRESENTATION

DeMello Students Invention Convention Project (2024): Mr. Oliver invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to introduce the matter.

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Liz Voci, Instructional Technology Instructor for the DeMello and Cushman Schools, and the “rising” sixth graders participating tonight, adding she had the good fortune to see this presentation at the Bridgewater State University Invention Convention this past spring.

Ms. Voci noted she facilitated the DeMello School’s participation in the Bridgewater State Invention Convention where the DeMello fifth grade students not only being the youngest participants but it being their first time competing: the DeMello students one first place.

Ms. Voci explained the process of the project and how the students worked to come up with their invention.

The DeMello “Re-Inventors” participating in the presentation were Juniper, Jamison, Anthony and Mackenzie.

The students explained the re-invention process including how they came up with their idea – *Green Keys: Grow and Game* - and how they executed it.

The Committee commended the students, their teacher and the school for their important work.

NEW BUSINESS

Preliminary FY26 Budget Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire invited James Kiely, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, to address the matter.

Dr. Saba-Maguire commented that the District started the budget process early last year; recognizing we are still concerned about the budget moving forward, we believe it is good idea for school committee agenda to have a budget item noting this was discussed with Mr. Oliver.

Mr. Kiely provided information on the District’s ideas and purpose for opening the FY26 budget conversation at this time.

Mr. Kiely stated there is an urgency to know where the District will be in FY26 and FY27 and what support we will need to meet the needs of students and to advocate for it.

Mr. Kiely referred to the budget sub-committee held on June 24, 2024 noting the sub-committee felt it was important to broaden the discussion and to bring “it” to full Committee for more input as well as to the community on an on-going basis as Dr. Saba-Maguire indicated.

Mr. Kiely stated we will begin by maintaining the “level of service” which is a good place to start but that is not “key” for us we want to grow which is part of our strategic planning process noting a meeting of the strategic planning team will be held on Wednesday.

Mr. Kiely stated the strategic plan will help inform the budget process moving forward.

Mr. Kiely noted the challenge of starting a budget process this early is there are many unknown costs noting there will need to be an understanding that when preliminary budget information is presented it is an expression of our needs, as best we can at the time, and starting point for discussions moving forward and a tool to help us make strategic actions in terms of advocating for our needs.

Mr. Oliver provided comments on starting the budget process now.

Mr. Kiely provided a list of key factors that have significant impact on the budget and what the District is doing to address said factors including transportation, special education tuition, student enrollment and utilities.

Mr. Kiely addressed the impact of utilizing reserve funds including \$1.8 million of school choice money to fund recurring costs in FY25 which will be needed in FY26 and how we will fund that is part of the discussion we need to have.

Mr. Kiely addressed other factors and how that will impact the budget process including the Town, State and Federal funding.

Mr. Kiely stated another “big” issue is that the remaining ESSER funds – which will be entirely spent – are funding all of our current summer programs adding we do not have a “place” in the FY26 budget for the approximately \$200,000 that is needed to fund summer programs.

Mr. Kiely listed issues affecting the Town budget which plays a role in our budget process including health insurance, Town collective bargaining and capital improvement planning.

Mr. Oliver offered additional information relative to where the Town gets its revenue and projections.

Mr. Kiely stated a key decision point for FY26 is the use of our reserves noting it is possible we may have \$1.5 million remaining in the school choice revolving fund at the start of FY26 and if we were to take a similar approach in solving a permanent problem with one-time funding – utilizing school choice and PreK revolving funds - it may be possible to get through FY26.

Mr. Kiely stated he is not asking the Committee to make their decision on “this” tonight but stressed the importance to start the discussion because we are not going to have enough money and there are only so many options adding the use of reserves would likely be a one-year fix taking us through FY26.

Mr. Kiely continued stating why he feels the District would be better positioned when we move forward to express the need for an override in the community in FY27: employment contracts will be in place, the Town Administration will be “settled in” and their roll in an override is key, the District’s strategic plan will be operational, we will have more time to advocate what we need to the community.

Mr. Kiely stated the best way to proceed might be to use the reserve funds in FY26 and to prepare for an override in FY27; for discussion purposes, we need to have our options in place in order to move forward with strategic decision making.

Dr. Saba-Maguire added we will have to have discussion about the immediate impact of utilizing those funds to carry us through; we do not go through this year unscathed in FY25, we lost over 9 positions.

Ms. Coughlin commented that the term “level services” is misleading particularly as we have lost positions over the years that have been left unfilled.

Mr. Oliver referred the term “incremental losses” which may be more accurate.

Mr. Oliver asked for a timeline for requesting an override.

Mr. Kiely responded you need to take the ballot date and go backwards from there.

Mr. Nunes commented on the dangers of using reserve funds.

Mr. Kiely concurred noting the number of positions lost would have been far greater but for school choice funds.

Mr. Nunes asked about crossing guards.

Mr. Kiely responded how the District addressed the need noting it is money the District did not plan for in the budget adding the police department may support the district in funding the position.

Mrs. Amaral asked about special education out of district transportation is there any "appetite" for car-sharing with local school district.

Mr. Kiely responded that he had a meeting, pre-pandemic, with his local counterparts and explained the logistical difficulties and we haven't done it since then but we are always willing to collaborate and the bus company is very amenable.

Mr. Kiely concluded with "Next Steps:" budget sub-committee meetings, meetings with District Administrators and Town Administrators.

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Ms. Coughlin asked if the Committee needs to make its decision by the end of August as to what we are going to do.

Mr. Kiely agreed with that time frame.

Ms. Coughlin asked how much we feel we need in reserves noting some district's set aside 4% and some set aside 20%.

Mr. Kiely stated the Town's Finance Committee Reserve Fund voted at Town Meeting is approximately 1% of "our" budget adding he doesn't think it would be an unreasonable decision for the School Committee to consider reserving maybe 1% of our budget and to project carrying that balance in school choice moving forward.

Mr. Kiely stated, on the other hand, if we need it and we have to use it "so be it;" and if we continue to participate in the school choice process and continue to make ourselves a destination where students want to participate in Dartmouth education then we get approximately \$680,000 - \$700,000 a year in revenue which "comes in" during the year providing some "leeway" should something arise.

Mr. Kiely added it is important to consider this as the Committee moves through the decision of whether or not to use reserve funds.

Mrs. Amaral clarified any discussion relative to an override should be framed as a Town decision about its revenue to meet the Town's needs which includes the school department.

Mr. Kiely stated he will send out the next tentatively scheduled budget sub-committee meeting date to the group.

Summer Facilities Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Mr. Kiely to address the matter.

Mr. Kiely commended the Dartmouth maintenance team lead by John Bernat as well as the school custodians for their incredible work maintaining the school buildings and grounds.

Mr. Kiely referred to a memo provided in the Committee Member's meeting packet noting the list of projects in the memo and highlighted the progress of some renovation and maintenance projects including but not limited to an overhaul of the high school library media center; the high school auditorium sound system upgrade; tennis court refurbishment; roof repairs; HVAC improvements; door access upgrades/new swipe card system; asbestos removal/DeMello and Quinn flooring.

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

Dr. Saba-Maguire commented on the amazing year we have had and how much she is looking forward to the coming year.

Dr. Saba-Maguire commented on the investment of the thirty-seven members of the District Strategic Planning Team to produce a plan that not only the School Community can "embrace" but the Dartmouth community as well.

-Dr. Saba-Maguire mentioned she attended the M.A.S.S. Conference last week along with Catherine Pavao and Ross Thibault, Directors of Teaching and Learning/Elementary and Secondary Level respectively noting "we" were able to network with colleagues as well as allow you to connect with some of the issues trending across the State.

-Curriculum Summit: approximately 65 educators came together at the high school in June to discuss vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment which is well aligned with work being recommended through District Strategic Planning.

-Summer Programming Update:

- 169 PreK-12 students enrolled in Extended School Year (ESY) Programs
- 112 K-5 students enrolled in summer academic programs
- 75 DHS students participating in credit recovery programs
- Summer Robotics Camp

-Kindergarten registration Update: 177 completed registrations noting enrollment numbers reflect what "NESDEC" indicated last year.

-HR Update noting recent hires as well as ongoing interviews for open positions as well as a call for Education Support Professionals and substitutes.

-District Strategic Planning Team will meet on Wednesday and hope to share a preliminary outline at the August School Committee meeting.

-District Leadership Team Retreat will be held at UMASS/Dartmouth in early August.

Dr. Saba-Maguire noted her meeting today with Vice-Chancellor James Anderson of UMASS/Dartmouth adding she is excited to build on that relationship noting the opportunities that can come “our” way as we start to think creatively about the way UMASS/Dartmouth can be an integral part of what happens here in the Dartmouth Public Schools.

Report of the Chair: The Chair reported the following.

-Superintendent Evaluation Update: Mr. Oliver noted he met with Dr. Saba-Maguire.

Dr. Saba-Maguire explained the format of her evaluation noting it will include her goals which the Committee voted on last year as well as the four standards and “evidence.”

Dr. Saba-Maguire will schedule meetings with each member to go over her evaluation.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated she will provide Members with access to her Evaluation “folder” tomorrow.

-Mr. Oliver proposed changing the August 19th school committee meeting to August 26, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.; the Committee agreed.

-**School Committee Workshop Discussion:** Mr. Oliver asked that the focus be Committee goals, agenda setting and the superintendent evaluation process. Mr. Nunes proposed September 17th; the Committee agreed pending the availability of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (M.A.S.C.) who Mr. Oliver asked facilitate the workshop.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated she will contact M.A.S.C.

Mr. Oliver asked that the matter be on the next meeting agenda to confirm the date and time.

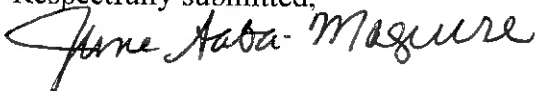
Other Matters that may not have been anticipated at the time of Agenda posting:

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The next regular session of the School Committee will take place in the Library Media Center at Dartmouth High School and via live stream at youtube.com/dhstvmedia on Monday, August 26, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to adjourn at 7:07 p.m. into Executive Session for the purpose of an update on Pending DEA Grievance and Legal Matters and not to return to open session. On a roll call the motion passed unanimously; 5-0: Mr. Oliver – Yes; Ms. Coughlin; Ms. Beckwith – Yes; Mrs. Amaral and Mr. Nunes – Yes.

Respectfully submitted,



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

Open Session - Documents/Exhibits

Agenda

Brief

Regular and Executive Session Minutes for July 22, 2024

Presentation – DeMello Students Invention Convention PPP and Video

Preliminary FY26 Budget Update - PPP

Memo – Summer Facilities Update