

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

January 27, 2025

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 6:00 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: Chris Oliver, Elizabeth Coughlin, Mary Beckwith, Kathleen Amaral and John Nunes.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mrs. Amaral moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the Regular Session Minutes of January 6, 2025 as written. The motion passed: 4-0. Mr. Nunes abstained.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to approve the Executive Session Minutes of January 6, 2025 as written, with the stipulation that they be held until the matters under consideration are resolved. The motion passed: 4-0. Mr. Nunes abstained.

PUBLIC HEARING

School Choice – 2025-2026

Mr. Oliver opened the Public Hearing on School Choice for the 2025-2026 School Year at 6:05 p.m. inviting those who wish to speak on the matter to come forward.

No public comment was offered on the matter.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Amaral to close the School Choice Hearing at 6:07 p.m. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nathan Silva offered comments on the FY26 budget.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

DHS Senior Jordan Rosenberg provided updates on activities and events happening at Dartmouth High School (DHS).

- Debate Team Update noting DHS seniors Audrey Kertscher and Will Jordan's achievements at a recent competition.
- Winter Sports Update
- Robotics Team Update
- NHS Fundraising Events
- DHS Theater Company Spring Production *High School Musical* Update
- Student Council Fundraiser Updates

SPOTLIGHT ON KIDS – George H. Potter Elementary School: The Chair invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to introduce tonight's presenters.

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Rick Porter and Melissa McHenry, Potter School Principal and Assistant Principal respectively, to the podium to deliver tonight's *Spotlight* presentation.

Mr. Porter explained tonight's *Spotlight* presentation is about how fifth grade students created a newscast under the direction of Sandra Chicca, the Potter School Instructional Technology Coach, and with the assistance of Robert Perrotti, the Dartmouth High School TV Media instructor and DHS junior Brady Jackson and DHS senior Michael Burke.

Ms. Chicca described the project process noting 25 students participated in the project.

The following fifth grade students participated in the *Spotlight* presentation: Francesca Yanni, Sylvia Vadeboncoeur, Madison Gardner, Abigail Mandeville, Edward Casey and Rachel Hall.

Mrs. McHenry thanked the students and Ms. Chicca for their hard work as well as staff and families for their support by attending tonight's presentation.

Mr. Porter thank DHS Principal Ryan Shea for his support of the project and Mr. Kiely for obtaining transportation for Potter students go to Dartmouth High School to film their newscast.

The Committee thanked the Potter Administration, staff and students for their presentation.

CONSENT AGENDA

Dr. Saba-Maguire recommended the following request for the Committee's review and consent.

- DHS – MASC Annual Student Council Conference – Hyannis MA (March 2025)

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Amaral to approve the request as presented. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

PRESENTATION

School Improvement Plan – Dartmouth High School: Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Ryan Shea, Principal of Dartmouth High School (DHS) to present the DHS School Improvement Plan.

Mr. Shea presented the high school's School Improvement Plan (SIP) stating the plan is aligned with the District's Strategic plan and thanked the School Council for its review of the plan, the

DHS administrative team for its input and Dr. Ross Thibault, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning/Secondary Level for his assistance with tonight's presentation.

Mr. Shea presented the SIP by addressing each of the four focus areas: Teaching and Learning; Safe and Supportive Schools; Family and Community Engagement; and Budget and Capital Improvements, through four categories: School Based Action Steps, Timeline, Led By, and Measures of Success.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the DHS School Improvement Plan for school year 2025-2026. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Competency Determination Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Ross Thibault, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning/Secondary Level to provide the update noting the District is in a good position relative to competency determination.

Dr. Thibault welcomed the opportunity to update the community on how "we" go about earning a high school diploma in MA due to the ballot initiative that passed in November.

Dr. Thibault explained the competency determination (CD) which is the minimum requirements a high school student must meet to earn a high school diploma noting the CD is aligned directly to the MA Curriculum Frameworks more commonly known as the state standards.

Dr. Thibault clarified that what the ballot initiative changed was MCAS is no longer allowed to be used as a competency determination for receiving a high school diploma and what the ballot initiative did not change is that it did not eliminate MCAS noting Dartmouth students will still take MCAS.

Dr. Thibault stated MCAS scores will remain important for school accountability ratings and so it is important that students continue to do their best.

Dr. Thibault explained the requirements of the competency determination and presented the proposed Dartmouth Public Schools' Competency Determination.

Dr. Thibault stated the Dartmouth High School graduation requirements are aligned to the Mass Core curriculum - a recommended curriculum by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - which supports Dr. Saba-Maguire's comment that the District is in a good position relative to competency determination.

At approximately 7:11 p.m., Mr. Oliver left the meeting.

Dr. Thibault noted the Governor created a K-12 Graduation Council to examine the variations in local CD requirements adding he anticipates future presentations on the matter before this Committee with revisions and updates.

At approximately 7:14 p.m. Mr. Oliver returned to the meeting.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the Competency Determination for Dartmouth High School graduates. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Preschool Reconfiguration Proposal: Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Laurie Dionisio, Executive Director of Student Services, to present the District's proposal.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated modifications to the preschool program have been "in the works" since I have been here adding Mrs. Dionisio and Ms. Redlon as well as the Cushman and Potter school preschool staff have been part of the conversations and that a considerable amount of time has been dedicated to developing the proposed changes.

Laurie Dionisio, Executive Director of Student Services, presented the District's proposed restructuring of the District's preschool programs including reducing preschool for age 3 students to ½ days (preschool for age 4 students will remain full day) and to increase the cost for preschool for age 4 students to \$600 per month and to establish a cost of \$250 per month for ½ day preschool for age 3 students.

Mrs. Dionisio added it is proposed to not hold preschool when the District has a scheduled early release day or ½ day.

Ms. Dionisio explained the rationale for the proposed reconfiguration noting the proposed increase will help to offset any increases in transportation due to the ½ day proposal.

Ms. Coughlin asked if creating ½ preschool for age 3 students would affect any state requirement for days in school.

Ms. Dionisio responded there are no "real" parameters around "that" it has more to do with services.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated most area districts have ½ day programs for both age levels adding having a ½ day preschool for age 3 students is appropriate and recognized by the state as a best practice.

Dr. Saba-Maguire confirmed that the ½ day preschool is proposed for age 3 "peer partners" as well.

Mrs. Amaral commented that she has reservations about the proposal and ask for an explanation as to how this is going to work maintaining or developing inclusion.

Mrs. Dionisio responded noting the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirement to provide a continuum of services and noted that inclusion is always the goal but it is not always the reality and how do we balance that.

Mr. Oliver asked if Potter will remain a preschool classroom for age 4 students.

Mrs. Dionisio stated that is correct.

Mr. Oliver asked if the rate change is a set monthly rate or if there will be a daily rate.

Mr. Kiely stated it is a monthly rate.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the Re-Imaging of the Cushman Preschool for 2025-2026 including the adjustments to the cost. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Mrs. Dionisio introduced Stephanie Riccardi who will start as the District's Early Childhood Director on February 3, 2025.

OLD BUSINESS

April 2025 DHS World Language Department's Cultural Excursion to Spain/Portugal

Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire reminded the Committee of the success of last year's cultural excursion and that we want to continue to provide students with the benefits of these events.

Mr. Shea introduced Mary Ellen Costa, a retired educator from the New Bedford Public Schools and Dartmouth High School graduate, who has led more than 25 international trips with students and who will lead DHS students and chaperones on its cultural excursion.

Mr. Shea gave an update on what is expected on the student excursion and noted EF tours is our travel partner.

Ms. Costa provided her experience working with EF tours noting their presence in the world and customer service.

Ms. Costa stated "we" are leaving on Good Friday (April 18th) and returning on Sunday, April 27th and provided transportation information.

Ms. Costa stated there are 19 DHS students participating with 6 chaperones including herself explaining the chaperones' responsibilities.

Ms. Costa stated she will encourage families to download "What's App" where photos will be added daily for families to follow their child's experience.

SC Policies Section B – School Committee and Government Operations and SC Policies Section A - ADF Wellness Policy – Second Reading and Vote:

Mr. Kiely reported the District checked with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (M.A.S.C.) and legal counsel regarding a suggestion to add a CORI requirement under Policy BBBA/BBBB – *School Committee Member Qualifications/Oath of Office*, noting both advised against adding the requirement to the policy.

Mr. Kiely stated everything remains the same as presented at the First Reading.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the SC Policy Section B – *School Committee and Government Operations* and SC Policies Section A - *ADF Wellness Policy*. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

FY26-FY35 Capital Improvement Plan (Draft): Mr. Kiely reminded the Committee that the FY26-FY35 Capital Improvement Plan (draft) (hereinafter referred to as CIP) was presented at the last meeting noting nothing was changed based on that discussion.

Mr. Kiely stated he plans to present a Mass School Building Authority (MSBA) Statement of Interest (SOI) for the high school roof adding the SOI will need approval from the Select Board before it is submitted to MSBA for consideration.

Mr. Kiely stated it is hoped the SOI is submitted to MSBA in March.

Mr. Oliver asked about the project timeline.

Mr. Kiely stated the project will likely get started in 2027 indicating the approval process from MSBA and funding from Town Meeting.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the FY26-35 Capital Improvement Plan. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Proposed 2025-2026 School Calendar: Dr. Saba-Maguire noted a revised option for Option One is being presented for consideration along with the initial Option One and Option Two as presented at the Committee's last meeting.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated the revised Option One option provides for a ½ day on Tuesday, December 23, 2025.

Mr. Nunes stated his reasons for recommending a ½ day on Tuesday, December 23, 2025.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve revised Option One as the calendar for the 2025-2026 academic school year. The motion carried: 3-2 with Mr. Oliver and Mrs. Amaral opposing.

Preliminary FY26 Budget – Update on Budget Discussions: Dr. Saba-Maguire commented that the presentations made this evening reflect the learning opportunities provided to students and how they directly connect to the educators adding it is our responsibility to the school community and to the Town to be clear in making these connections when we present our FY26 budget.

Mr. Kiely reported there is a budget sub-committee scheduled for February 3rd to prepare us for the budget presentation on February 10th noting the Governor's budget was released this week which provides for a \$75 per pupil increase which translates into a \$242,000 increase for Dartmouth and which, unfortunately, will not "save" us from facing challenges in this process.

Mr. Kiely commented he is very concerned that the Governor failed to fully fund universal free lunch and breakfast but has hopes the legislature will adjust this.

Mr. Kiely noted the unrestricted town aid was about the same as the District's.

NEW BUSINESS

School Choice Discussion and Vote: Mr. Oliver opened discussion on the matter.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated currently there are 122 school choice students at Dartmouth High School

Mr. Kiely stated school choice students make up approximately 13% of the high school population and referred to financial information provided to Committee members in their meeting packets noting we have in excess of \$1.3 million planned in expenditures and reminded the Committee of the significant amount of discussion it had on how the District was going to bridge the budget gap for the current year.

Mr. Kiely stated we plan to continue to use these funds over the next several years; unfortunately, expenses continue to be greater than revenue so we will slowly use our reserves, in the short term, and continue to look for support from the Town before we exhaust those reserves.

Ms. Coughlin explained her position on school choice in the long term but stated she is in favor of going forward with school choice this year.

Mr. Nunes asked about Mr. Oliver's suggestion of adding middle school.

Mr. Oliver stated he met with Dr. Saba-Maguire recently and after that discussion the timing is not right.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated that a "study team" would need to look at the impact of adding more students particularly to class size before a recommendation could be brought to the Committee for its consideration.

Mr. Nunes stated his stance on school choice has not changed but is aware of the financial needs.

Mr. Oliver provided his reasons for supporting school choice.

Ms. Beckwith asked how many Dartmouth residents participate in school choice.

Mr. Kiely responded 53.

Ms. Beckwith stated her reasons for being in favor of school choice.

Mrs. Amaral stated her reasons for being in favor of school choice.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin, to adopt school choice for the 2025-2026 school year. The motion carried 4-1 with Mr. Nunes opposing.

2024 Annual Report - Vote: Dr. Saba-Maguire thanked the schools for their work on the 2024 Annual Report which was provided to members in the meeting packet and asked the Committee for its vote of approval noting suggested revisions received from Ms. Coughlin.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith, to approve the 2024 Annual Report as adjusted. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Superintendent's Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire provided information of work being done in the District that is aligned to the District Strategic Plan as well as current activities and events that are happening.

-Teacher and Learning Update:

- High Quality Resources
- Professional Development
- DHS has earned the college board's AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award

-Budget and Capital Improvement Update:

- HR Update

-Safe and Supportive Schools Update:

- Addressed recent "events" that occurred in the District and the importance to remain focused on safety, respect and responsibility and acknowledged the efforts of staff to address the events so successfully.

-Family and Community Engagement Update:

- District Leadership Team Newsletter will be going out soon.
- Green Apple Awards will be presented at the next meeting including a reception before the meeting.

Report of the Chair: Mr. Oliver made comments about sporting events and asked spectators to enjoy the games.

- DHS Band April Competition Update
- Kathy Thornton, the District's Athletic Trainer, was named MIAA's Trainer of the Year.

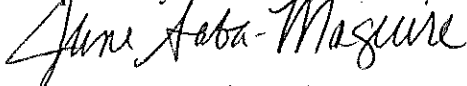
Other Matters that may not have been anticipated at the time of Agenda posting:

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 www.youtube.com/dhstvmedia on Monday, February 10, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to adjourn from Open Session at 9:04 p.m. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



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

Open Session - Documents/Exhibits

Agenda

Brief

Regular and Executive Session Minutes for January 6, 2024

Spotlight on Kids (Potter School) Presentation

DHS School Improvement Plan Presentation

Competency Determination Update

Preschool Reconfiguration Update

SY2025-2026 Calendar Proposal (Option 1 – Revised)

School Choice Budget Information