



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES February 4, 2020

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	February 4, 2020
Location:	MERMHS Learning Commons
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Rachel Fitzgibbon, Vice Chairperson Eric Bourke Sarah Wolf Ken Warnock Caroline Weld Ann Cameron
Absent:	
Guests:	John Willis, Memorial School Principal, Mike Cronin, <i>Gloucester Times</i>
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

AGENDA

- A. **Call to Order** – Ms. Erdmann called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- B. **Business Meeting Open Session**
 - 1) **Public Comment** – There was no public comment this evening.
 - 2) **Chairman's Report** – Ms. Erdmann had no report this evening.
 - 3) **Consent Agenda**

- Acceptance of Warrants
- Minutes – 1/28/2020 and 1/7/2020 Will be reviewed at the meeting on March 3, 2020
- Approval of Out of State Travel -- None

Ms. Wolf moved to approve the Warrants; Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4) Sub-Committee Reports

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Caroline Weld/Ann Cameron) – Report

Ms. Weld reminded the Committee there is a scheduled walk through of the Memorial School construction site on Monday, February 24, 2020 at 3:30 p.m.

- Finance Committee (Anne Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – Report

Ms. Erdmann reported the Collaborative Group had met last Friday. The focus of their discussion was the budget and the good news surrounding the budget. Ms. Erdmann will leave that for Mr. Urbas to share with the Committee later in the meeting.

The Collaborative Group also discussed the status of Eagle's Nest and turf fields. A question was raised about the lease which may expire in 2024, Essex is interested in discussing the status and terms of the lease. Ms. Erdmann stated the discussion will follow further consideration by the lawyers and be fully discussed in a future meeting.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Rachel Fitzgibbon) – NR

The Policy sub-committee has not met this year. Superintendent Beaudoin suggested the sub-committee meet on March 3, 2020 prior to the scheduled School Committee meeting and review the list of MASC policy review recommendations.

- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – NR

5) Superintendent's Report/Goals

The current student reporter is a basketball player. During basketball season he has a scheduled game on Tuesday evenings. The High School is working to identify a junior with a schedule that better aligns with School Committee meetings. The new student reporter will tag team with the current reporter for the remainder of the year and be available next year.

Negotiation Team – Utilize interest based bargaining methodology to successfully negotiate a multi-year META Teacher Assistant contract and follow-up work from META Teacher agreement.

- Reestablished monthly meeting with META co-presidents for communication and joint problem solving.

- In collaboration with META Co-Presidents we are set to discuss establishing a schedule for this process in February.

Creative Education Foundation – Establish partnership with Creative Education Foundation to assist with community engagement.

- Survey incorporating Vision of Graduate in development (Planned Release week 2/24)
- Tentative dates identified for World Café/Focus Group (week 3/30) Projected 2-3 sessions
- Report to School (late April/May)
- Facilitation Planning Session (SC/AC/META) – Summer 2020

Wellness Committee – Reestablish the District Health & Wellness Committee (Carry forward as priority goal FY20) An umbrella for all social emotional pieces including health, PE and nutrition.

- Committee and Meeting Schedule Established
- Committee Make-up
- Initial goals include Mission/Vision and Self-assessment using the CDC Healthy School Index

Essex County Learning Collaborative: As members of the ECLC, MERSD will engage in an intensive two-year professional development experience aimed at helping educators better meet the diverse learning assets and needs of students with learning disabilities, learning and attention issues, exposure to trauma – as well as those who experience systemic bias related to race, ethnicity, income and gender. Five public school districts in Essex County have been selected to participate in the second cohort of the ECLC. These districts include Andover, Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School, Hamilton-Wenham, Manchester-Essex and Saugus Public schools.

MERSD group is made up of an administration team who will work in parallel with strategic planning initiatives including communication, social-emotional learning, new models of learning and access to diversity.

Budget and District Improvement: Continue to Manage the Memorial School Project

- Weekly Team Meetings monitoring schedule and budget
- Active subcommittee work – furniture, playground and technology acquisition and budget oversight
- Liaison with OPM

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked under student learning which Superintendent Beaudoin had previously stated would explore opportunities to build a better understanding among participants. Ms. Fitzgibbon asked has this been rolled into something else? Superintendent Beaudoin stated she hoped ECLC will be able to help with the effort. Administrators have participated in many

workshops and learning sessions to find an inroad. The District is ahead of many schools and work being done by ECLC is looking at the root causes and developing long-term approaches. The concept of understanding yourself and others appears to be an approach along with the conversation around equity which may provide a broader understanding of what can be achieved.

Ms. Fitzgibbon also asked about Cleargov.Gov. Understanding it was stalled during the building project. She wondered what the status was. Superintendent Beaudoin stated it was launched in November is part of the budget documents and is up, running and active.

Ms. Fitzgibbon also asked about the annual budget document has it been reformatted? Superintendent Beaudoin stated it is a goal to have the budget reformatted in a more graphic market friendly manner, but it may not be ready for March 2020.

Ms. Cameron asked about the ECLC and would it be possible for the Committee to hear in depth about goals, deadlines, outcomes and new models for learning. What does this look like? Superintendent Beaudoin said Dr. Riley is the lead on ECLC and she will be happy to come in have a discussion on ECLC and also provide Literacy and RULER updates.

Ms. Cameron would also like to include a discussion on the work done by the District with the two Towns around shared services. Shared services comes up at almost every Finance Subcommittee meeting, Ms. Cameron believes the District should take credit for having initiated the discussions and continuing the dialogue.

Ms. Erdmann would like to see the Wellness Committee working with meHub. Superintendent Beaudoin agreed and stated Ms. Wolf was the School Committee representative on the Wellness Committee.

6) Continued Business

o Memorial School Spotlight Presentation – Principal Willis

Meet the Team MMES Leadership Council Members

- Joanne Seaman – MMES Nurse, META Co-President
- Laura Carlson – MMES School Adjustment Counselor
- Maggie Tomaiolo – Grade 5 Teacher, School Building Committee Member
- Coleen Kelleher – Special Education Teacher, ELA Leadership Team Member

30,000 Foot View Changes, Changes, Changes

- MMES Student Population
 - o Enrollment and Diverse Student Needs
- State Curriculum Expectations/Accountability
 - o Common Core Adoption and New Accountability System
 - o MCAS Administered via Technology
- Staffing Reconfigurations

- Physical Plant Aging building initiating new construction project

Curriculum: Changes in Massachusetts DESE Expectation and New Accountability System

- Common Core Adoption
- New Accountability System Implementation
 - Attendance, Lowest Performing Subgroup
- ELA Leadership Review Process
 - Why? – Need for consistent, articulated K-5 ELA Curriculum across the District to ensure that all grade 6 MERSD students have a similar experience entering MERMS
 - Although MANY great things happening at all levels, horizontal and vertical alignment will benefit the District as a whole
 - How? – Partnership with “Hill for Literacy” to analyze and evaluate our current ELA practices and compare to current programs on the market
 - Assessment Review Process
 - Program Review Process, My View (Pearson), Wonders (McGraw-Hill), MERSD Balanced Literacy (Current)
 - Next Steps
 - Comprehensive review of current practices, Pearson and McGraw-Hill to determine the best direction for MERSD K-5

Student Services: Changes in student needs profiles, program development and Staffing

- Although overall population numbers have decreased, diversity of student needs has increased
 - Meeting Diverse Academic Needs
 - Development of Intensive Reading and Written Language (IRWL) Program
 - Expansion of Intensive Reading and Written Language (IRWL) Program
 - Development of Social and Academic Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program
 - Expansion of Social and Academic Integrated Learning (SAIL) Program
 - Meeting Diverse Medical Needs
 - More Children Needing Specialized Nursing Care
 - Meeting Diverse Social-Emotional Needs
 - MMES provides many opportunities for students to develop their Social-Emotional Skills
 - RULER, Second Step, MARC Staff Training, PBIS/Character Education (Core Values), Community Service (Charity Drives, Volunteerism), Student Leadership (Student Ambassadors)
 - Counseling Services Provided by staff LICSW and Psychologist

Appreciating Diversity/Differences

- School-wide Meetings
 - Local Community Member – “Living with Multiple Sclerosis”
 - Berkshire Hills Music Academy Performance – Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities
 - Leukemia and Lymphoma Society – Science-based Service-learning Program
- MERSD’s Understanding Our Differences Program
 - MMES Alumni – MERMHS Students – “Overcoming Learning Disabilities”
 - Local Community Member – “Living with Autism Spectrum Disorder”
 - MMES Alumni – “Navigating the World with Physical Disabilities”

Student Services: Supporting Students through Strong Community Partnerships

- MSTSFD
 - Fire Safety Week
- MBTSPD
 - Andre Locke, School Resource Officer (SRO) – Role Model and Mentor
- Mobile Crisis Team
- MBTS Parks and Recreation and MERSD Programming Partnership
 - Expanded After-school enrichment programming
 - Sports, art, music, drama, academic

Physical Plant Changes: Critical Challenges Leading to New Building Project

- Challenges with a 70-year-old Building:
 - Systems – Heat, electrical, plumbing failing
 - Security – Challenges with retrofit
 - Parking/Queuing – Safety and Efficiency Challenges
- Strength: Very adaptable staff, students, parents and Community!
 - MMPTO Support
 - Aesthetic Improvements – Murals, Motivated Quotes, Aquarium
 - Recess Equipment
 - Play areas – challenges this year mitigated by PTO support
 - Flexible and Creative Staff
 - Locker room/showers used as teaching space and staff workspace
 - Music Classes in Auditorium
 - Mobile Art Classes
 - Community Support
 - Safe Routes to School/MBTS Bike and Pedestrian Committee
 - MBTS FD and PD
 - Manchester and Essex Taxpayer Support
 - MERSD School Building Committee

It Takes a Village Ours is Very Strong and Supportive!

Mr. Bourke thanked the presenters. He stated he has a 3rd grader who was informed by her teacher the students may expect a surprise chair massage during construction.

He asked about the SRO and if there were differences in current or future leverage for the students. Principal Willis indicated there is a higher percentage of need at the MERMHS, however, the Memorial School had an incident during the first week of school. He called Officer Locke who made additional calls within minutes the Police were at the school, Officer Locke arrived, and the situation was quickly resolved. Principal Willis was impressed with the speed and efficiency of how the situation was handled.

Mr. Bourke also asked about preparing 3rd graders for MCAS testing and was there a way to prepare kids and address stress. Principal Willis stated he has spoken to the 3rd graders about the test and assures the students it is one test on one day. The students at Memorial perform at a high level and sometimes need reassurance that there is no chance they will not pass to grade 4.

Mr. Warnock stated it was a great presentation and believes the themes of adaptability were impressive.

Ms. Cameron stated she had a couple of questions. She asked how the ELA team would choose a program that addresses the needs of children with challenges. Is there one program that is going to meet the needs of a range of students? Ms. Kelleher stated programs in 2020 are significantly different from previous boxed programs and there are interventions built in into programs. She anticipates some supplementing especially in specialized programs.

Ms. Cameron asked about technology in the classroom. Mr. Willis answered there are aspects of technology that are integral to the classroom. He believes active boards are one of those things. However, he believes it is important to read and write to fully imprint learning on the brain.

Ms. Weld asked about social emotional support of kids with anxiety especially interested in how services are provided for students who are not underperforming. Ms. Carlson replied there are systems in place to identify kids with anxiety. All students have access to support services not only the students who are academically struggling.

Ms. Erdmann thanked the presenters and stated she especially like the diversity side of the program and wished it was part of the program when her children were at Memorial. Ms. Erdmann asked Ms. Kelleher about the ELA task force and how teachers were feeling about where they are in the process. Ms. Kelleher stated everyone is excited and dedicated to giving the program a complete review. The process is still in the early stage, much of the hard preparation work has been completed and we're looking forward to moving forward.

- FY21 Budget

- Update & Discussion

Mr. Urbas stated the budget assumptions have been updated for health insurance and Circuit Breaker reimbursement for Out-of-District (OOD) tuitions.

As a result, the final Operating Budget figures are:

- Total Spending: \$27,061,314 = 3.82% (\$996K) increase vs. FY20
 - This is reduced by approximately \$225K from the 4.7% increase in the previous, 1/14 draft budget
- Total Assessment: \$23,464,801 = 3.18% increase vs. FY20 (down from 3.64% previously)
 - MBTS Assessment = 2.94% increase (was 3.38% previously)
 - Town of Essex Assessment = 3.61% (was 4.10% previously)
- Reserve Funding = \$250K (down from \$375 previously)

Total spending reductions of \$225K breakdown as \$100K from health insurance and \$125K in OOD. In the revenue portion of our Operating Budget, we have used this \$225K spending reduction to lower our planned use of reserves by \$125K and reduce assessments by \$100K. This is based on School Committee's even preference at the 1/28/2020 Public Hearing regarding how we should apportion any potential savings between reserves and assessments.

- Health insurance renewal estimate has been lowered to 6.0% from 8.5% based on one more month (October 2019) of claim utilization data, which we received from our broker last week. Previously, we had data only through September 2019, and it was simply premature to lower our FY21 forecast based on such little data. We are continuing to run very well with the new HRA plan, which is great news.
- Additionally, we have assumed Circuit Breaker funding will increase to \$279K up from \$154K. This is based on a student-by-student forecast of potential Circuit Breaker reimbursement in FY20 and FY21.
It might help to look at the footnote on p.12 (Student Services/Special Education), which shows that total estimated OOD costs in FY21 is still assumed to be \$1.27 million, but we are reducing the portion funded by the General Fund budget from \$946K (in the 1/14 budget draft) to \$821K, with an equal offsetting increase in the portion funded by grants (mostly Circuit Breaker but also \$20K from IDEA. The IDEA amount is unchanged).
- The common factor in both updates is that we are forecasting unknowns. As time has passed, our comfort has increased, but these updated forecasts still have uncertainty and make our FY21 budget less conservative for certain.

The Capital (debt service) Budget for FY21 is unchanged

- Vote to Approve

Ms. Cameron moved to approve the FY21 MERSD Operating Budget in the amount of \$27,061,314.00 and the Capital Budget in the amount of \$4,415,238.00, Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Essex Elementary Playground Replacement

- Vote to approve committee structure and budget

Ms. Wolf moved to approve the charge to the MERSD Playground Replacement Committee with managing community input and overseeing the process for identification and construction of a new playground for the Manchester Essex – Essex Elementary School.

The approved budget for the project is targeted at \$300K and not to exceed \$350K (surface and structure).

The playground Committee will be comprised of the following: Citizen Representatives, Jake Foster and Jess Yurwitz, Essex PRO Representative (TBA), Director of Finance & Operations Avi Urbas, Essex Elementary Principal, Jennifer Roberts and Facilities Manager Jason Waldron.

The timeline established targets a fall 2020 opening of the playground: vendor selection, mid-February (state contract required), design 6-8 weeks, design approval, 4/6/2020 School Committee, order equipment, mid-April (12-week lead time), installation, late July and August (4-6 weeks).

Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

7) School Committee Comment – There were no additional comments this evening.

C. Adjourn

Ms. Cameron moved to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.