



## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

### **BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES September 17, 2019**

<b>Meeting:</b>	School Committee
<b>Date:</b>	September 17, 2019
<b>Location:</b>	MERMHS Library
<b>Attendees:</b>	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Rachel Fitzgibbon, Vice Chairperson Ken Warnock Ann Cameron Caroline Weld Eric Bourke
<b>Absent:</b>	
<b>Guests:</b>	Chris Bevilacqua, Executive Director, Ipswich YMCA
<b>Recorded by:</b>	Gail Hunter

**A. Call to Order** – Ms. Erdmann called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

#### **1) Public Comment –**

Miriam Bradford, Old Essex Road, Manchester –

Ms. Bradford brought a book to share with the Committee that her son had made over the summer because he has a lot of anxiety about school. She specifically asked the Committee to look at the page about the responsibilities he son anticipated in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He knew he would have homework and tests but there were additional things he would get to do like the school musical and go to Merrowvista. She knows her son will be disappointed if there is no

Merrowvista trip this year and there are many other children, like him, who will also be disappointed. The Committee thanked Ms. Bradford.

## **2) Chairman's Report –**

Ms. Erdmann received an invitation from Lisa Smith, Programming Director, 1623 Studios (Cape Ann TV) to attend a Cape Ann Climate Crisis Conference on Wednesday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at Rose Baker Senior Center, Gloucester, MA from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. Ms. Smith would like a member of the School Committee to participate in the conference along with several Cape Ann Selectmen and Manchester, Town Administrator, Mr. Federspiel.

## **3) Consent Agenda –**

- Acceptance of Warrants
- Minutes 9/3
- Approval of Out of State Travel

*Ms. Cameron moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Ms. Wolf seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

## **4) Sub-Committee Reports**

### **Elementary Facilities/MSBC Sub-Committee (Ms. Weld and Ms. Cameron)**

Ms. Weld reported the building is moving along on schedule. WT Rich has drone images of the site which will be uploaded to the Building Committee web site for those interested viewing construction progress. Ms. Cournoyer, Memorial School teacher, is working to develop the construction project into the curriculum for students to better understand what is happening around them.

First Steel delivery is scheduled for October 28, 2019. Masonry and Roofing bids will be awarded on October 8, 2019. Ms. Cameron stated the project is on time and on budget.

### **Finance Sub-Committee (Ms. Cameron and Ms. Erdmann) –**

Ms. Erdmann stated the first meeting with the budget collaboration group is scheduled for September 27, 2019, at 8:30 a.m.

### **Policy/Communication Sub-Committee (Ms. Fitzgibbon and Mr. Bourke) – No Report**

### **Negotiation Team (Ms. Wolf and Mr. Warnock) – No Report**

Superintendent Beaudoin met with the Co-Presidents of META who are preparing a final draft for the Teaching Assistants contract. Ms. Wolf asked to review the final draft. Superintendent

Beaudoin stated once the final draft is ready it will be reviewed by the Negotiation Team prior to submission to DESE.

## **5) Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Beaudoin reported meHub launched last week. It is a resource site with the goal of aligning with Towns, Schools and Communities. meHub working with Spaulding Education Fund will present Minding Your Mind speaker programs for adolescents, teens, their parents, teachers and school administration. The Minding Your Mind programming goal is to reduce the stigma and destructive behaviors often associated with mental health issues. Minding Your Mind Programs move away from crisis-based response to prevention through education.

On October 24, 2019 the District will hold the Annual Round Table Safety and Crisis Preparedness meeting.

Last Friday there was a rumor of a threat that a weapon was to be brought into the High School. The information was posted in an email. In the future, prior to posting a rumored threat it is hoped an adult will be informed. Both Police Departments worked quickly to identify and resolve the issue. Thanks to the hard work of the Police Departments, staff and students the rumor was resolved last Friday evening.

Ms. Weld recognized Ms. Lynn Warnock and Ms. Michelle Kempinski for their work in developing meHub.

## **6) New Business**

## **7) Continued Business**

- Community Partner – Ipswich YMCA – Chris Bevilacqua

Superintendent Beaudoin introduced Mr. Bevilacqua and stated he and the Ipswich YMCA have been tremendous partners. The District's relationship started with Essex Elementary School's After School Program which has expanded to early release days, childcare, swimming programs and more. Ms. Cameron mentioned the summer program which is a great resource for families.

Summer Literacy Program: This program was funded with a grant the first year and was a two-week program which has expanded to four weeks. In the mornings the focus of the program is academic, taught by teachers; in the afternoon the kids are bused to Camp Dory where they experience the full day camp program. Students who participate make notable gains in their grade equivalency.

After School Essex Elementary: The YMCA provides an on site fully licensed after school program for the students of Essex Elementary. Financial assistance is available for families needing support, 12% of students receive some form of assistance. The After-School program is

flexible providing services 2 to 5 days a week. There are currently 31 students participating in the program.

Middle School Theater Program: This is the fourth year of the middle school theater program for students in grades 6-8. Productions take place in the fall and spring and bringing performing arts to the middle school has been fun and successful.

Mr. Bevilacqua outlined next steps:

- Expand summer literacy program to 6 weeks.
- Essex Elementary After School program continue to provide and expand services to working families.
- Essex Youth Commission programs: provide space and staffing as needed.
- meHub support the network.
- Partner with MERSD with programs and support.

Ms. Cameron stated the two Towns have been engaged in regional conversations around shared services and indicated Mr. Bevilacqua was already doing that and wondered if he had been looped into conversations around shared services. He has not but will speak to Town Administrators about the Ipswich YMCA's engagement with both Towns.

Ms. Weld asked if Manchester residents could participate in the programs. Mr. Bevilacqua indicated Manchester families were participating in the Summer Literacy Program and Middle School Theater Program, but all programs are open to Manchester residents. All YMCA's on the North Shore are part of the same association.

- Grade 5 Field Trip Task Force – Next Steps

Superintendent Beaudoin initiated the discussion by stating in May 2019 the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Task Force identified next steps for evaluating the sustainability of the Merrowvista Trip in light of costs, staffing and liability. The decision of the Task Force ended in a stalemate with the Task Force recommending further study specifically around the overnight component of the trip.

At the beginning of school year 2019-2020 Principal and staff reviewed the trip and concluded there was not enough staff to fully support the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Trip. Two teachers are on leave, two teachers have different grade assignments and there is only one male teacher assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade. Superintendent Beaudoin has concluded it is unsustainable in the current format to support out-of-state overnight trips this year.

Additionally, Superintendent Beaudoin has decided to discontinue overnight out-of-state trips for the District due to staffing and liability concerns of staff. Ms. Erdmann stated it was difficult to continue planning for trips when the District cannot guarantee staffing during the planning process. She went on to state the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade team is composed of staff with young families concerned about their personal liability.

Superintendent Beaudoin surveyed 52 other Districts and 70% of the Districts surveyed no longer participate in overnight out-of-state trips for the same concerns.

Ms. Erdmann stated it is important to preserve the positives of the experience provided by the Merrowvista Trip.

Mr. Warnock expressed concern for staff and their liability. He asked how does the trip tie into the School Committee and is the final decision brought to the Committee because it is part of the program. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated the trips were part program, part policy and part operational.

Superintendent Beaudoin went on to state the challenge of the out-of-state overnight trips has been developing for a while. There is strong support for maintaining a much-loved tradition. However, she would not be doing her job if she did not finally make the difficult decision. The decision was made after reviewing the pros and cons and in light of maintaining tradition. She recommends keeping the multi-day event but regionally based.

Ms. Weld expressed concern for the kids who have been looking forward to going to Merrowvista; and asked if it was possible to do the trip one more year? She agrees it is a heavy lift for the staff.

Ms. Cameron stated she has 4 children who have gone on both trips and some years she had children going on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade overnight trips. It was difficult fundraising for the trips. It is difficult for kids with challenges and a huge lift for staff. She asked what are we trying to achieve? She would like to see curriculum focus as the goal for the time invested in school trips.

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked for clarification regarding staffing. Superintendent Beaudoin stated two teachers are now teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 2 teachers are on leave of absence and there is only 1 eligible male teacher to go from Memorial. Ms. Fitzgibbon understands staffing but requested additional information regarding costs: Merrowvista \$30K, transportation \$5K, stipends \$12K. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated there were indirect costs of time over the course of the year preparing kids for the trip.

Superintendent Beaudoin is proposing 2 Task Forces one for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade and one for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade to review and recommend alternatives. Ms. Wolf stated it is hard to let go of a tradition, but she believes in the end there will be amazing adventures for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. She proposed 5<sup>th</sup> Grade students get together before moving to Middle School at formal and informal gatherings.

Ms. Erdmann asked that everybody present be respectful in asking questions, making statements and they limited their time to two minutes.

Allison Dandrea, 386 Summer Street – Ms. Dandrea's question had to do with reformatting the trips and where the money would come from? She was 5<sup>th</sup> grade chair one year and spent the year raising money for the Merrowvista trip. She wondered if parents would be charged with paying for the proposed new trip. Ms. Erdmann indicated it would depend on what the Task Force recommends and there will likely be elements of fundraising for the trips. Superintendent

Beaudoin stated she anticipates the new costs will be less than \$40K with the elimination of overnight accommodations and extended travel.

Ally St. Marie – Asked how the news would be shared with the students? Superintendent Beaudoin stated school-based communication would move through the Principals and that would likely happen by the end of the week.

Sarah Sack, Manchester – Wanted to know if parents were willing to take on additional expenses to hire staff to cover where teachers were unavailable would that help support the trip? Superintendent Beaudoin said the issue for the District is inclusion and accessibility for all students and that cannot be addressed with out-sourcing. Superintendent Beaudoin stated eliminating the overnight component will reduce the liability issue and will allow for proper staffing during the day.

Donna Smith, School Nurse Essex Elementary – has gone on the trips to D.C. and Merrowvista. The needs of our students grows every year and the medication list grows exponentially. This past year the District went through three nurses prior to identifying a nurse for the Merrowvista trip. The work teachers put-in is getting more difficult every year. There are issues, concerns and extreme accommodations that make it almost impossible for teachers and the District to fully accommodate all students.

Debra Wood, 5 Alpine Road, Manchester – Has three children, one in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade who is looking forward to going on the trip to Merrowvista. She would like her children to have had the same experience. She asked if parents were willing to spend more and Merrowvista willing to staff the trip would that be possible or was the decision final? She pointed out kids have anxiety and they will experience that anxiety on a one-day trip and on a four-day trip. She stated Merrowvista was genuine, organic and worth keeping. The bonds made Merrowvista were self-empowering.

Julie Crocker, 13 Norwood Avenue – Has a daughter in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade who encouraged her to come to the meeting because she wants her brother to have the same experience she had. Ms. Crocker is a proponent of the overnight experience having been a camp counselor. Her daughter made friends at Merrowvista from Essex who she remains friends with today. Ms. Cocker would like to see the District continue the trip and consider problem solving with interested parents to allow for Merrowvista to staff the trip.

Amanda Lucas, 20 Magnolia Ave – Supports the trip and asks if the District could do the trip this year? She is the coordinator for this year's fundraising effort and indicated that starting over and finding new experiences to support with short notice is not optimal.

Ms. Erdmann indicated this is not a School Committee decision we are being asked to support the Superintendent's recommendation. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that having Merrowvista staff the trip changes the trip and makes it no longer a component of the curriculum. The trip is viewed as a component of the curriculum and the law requires every student to be entitled to the same experience.

Kevin Delaney, 2 Ocean Street, Manchester – Mr. Delaney is 42 and when he was a student he went on the trip. He believes people under value how much is learned outside the classroom when students learn to paddle a canoe and conquer a rope swing. He wondered if the District has reached out to the community.

Mr. Warnock indicated as a member of the Task Force the Task Force had received several testimonials and there were people who supported the trip and people who did not support the trip. Ms. Fitzgibbon also a member of the Task Force had supported surveying the public. Mr. Warnock stated he did not agree with the survey because it was a request and not part of the charge of the Task Force.

Mr. Delaney stated he would like to see more community involvement and believes there are resources in the community that would help.

Ms. Erdmann reiterated the lift for teachers is too demanding and the pool of teachers the District can draw from is limited. Ms. Weld stated the needs of children have changed and it is important for the District to protect teachers. Ms. Wolf stated teachers are stretched all year long. It is important to listen to staff when they state it is too much.

John Garth, 39 Walker Road, Manchester – Stated the process did not appear to be inclusive. He heard about the issue from his son.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated staffing changes this year resulted in the decision. In respect to everyone as Superintendent at some point I needed to make the recommendation. We would love to continue the trips to Merrowvista and D.C. but I do not believe we can.

Ms. Erdmann stated the recommendation had come as a surprise to the School Committee too and reminded those present that the conversation about school trips had been anticipated to go through 2020. However, written communication from the staff, staffing changes and the demands of the overnights resulted in Superintendent making her recommendation. Mr. Warnock stated the concerns of the exhausted staff have brought us to this point. We are now challenged with how we can do this better.

Theresa Whitman, Task Force member from Essex – Stated she was also a member of the School Council and there are currently open positions on the Council. She encouraged parents to become involved at the Council level where Administration and parents discuss issues like the late bus and health curriculum. As a member of the Task Force it was clear early on that long term the out-of-state travel and Merrowvista trip were not sustainable. She believes it is important to keep the best parts of the program. And that outreach and communication to the parents could have been better addressed. She looks forward to continuing on the Task Force.

Monica Taylor, Has 3 children enrolled in the District and found out about this evening's meeting on Face Book and feels blind sided by the decision. She asked why the difference in staffing was not known during the summer and wondered if there was enough transparency in the process.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated teachers participate voluntarily in over night trips and with faculty changes the impact on the trips was not fully accessed until the beginning of the school year.

Ms. Erdmann reiterated the intent of the District, the Task Force and the School Committee was to have this conversation over the course of the School Year 2019-2020. She understands that parents are disappointed, and the timing is not perfect. Ms. Fitzgibbon stated the recommendation is a huge disappointment and the School Committee was also blind sided but staffing changes make it impossible to continue.

Sarah Valeo, 47 Forster Road, Manchester – Summarized the issue as staffing and personal liability and asked if the District was open to problem solving? There are lots of smart people here and is there any possibility of making the trip possible this year?

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District cannot deliver on the overnight component of the trip. The problem solving is how can we develop a new experience for the students. Superintendent Beaudoin restated the District cannot staff the program appropriately this year. Ms. Erdmann stated the District cannot staff Merrowvista it is important to keep pieces of the program that have merit and the community involvement most needed is what can we do next?

Christina Egan, Essex has two children at Memorial School, she is the PTO President and had not heard anything about this until this evening. She asked at what point was it decided that chaperoning needed to be teachers? And when is the deposit due. Can we keep the discussion open until the first week in October?

Ms. Erdmann responded teachers staff the overnight trips to accommodate the needs of the students and to maintain the trip as part of the school curriculum. The deposit for Merrowvista is due the first week in October.

Kim Field, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher in Essex – Stated she has chaperoned the trip for ten years. If the trip takes place this year parents will say the same thing next year. Someone is going to be disappointed and she apologizes for that. There is a lot that goes into planning the trips and the trips are challenging. There have been community people who participate but it is the teachers who are responsible for the children and know the children and their needs.

Miriam Bradford, Old Essex Road, Manchester – Asked when the trip became curriculum?

Superintendent Beaudoin stated what makes it part of the curriculum is the entire 5<sup>th</sup> Grade is expected to participate because the District does not provide instruction during that week. It is an expectation that all students participate. Therefore, it makes the District responsible for providing access for all students.

Superintend Beaudoin concluded we're in a different time for working professionals with real life families and responsibilities. If anyone is looking for someone to blame it is me. Clearly, we wanted the overnight trips to continue unfortunately we do not have the capacity to do the for the school.



*Mr. Warnock moved to discontinue overnight travel; Ms. Cameron seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Fitzgibbon abstaining.*

*Ms. Cameron moved to continue the Task Forces to develop culminating experiences for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades by December 2019; Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

- School Committee 2019-2020 Goals
  - Develop and deliver a fiscally responsible budget that restores educational quality, supports District goals, recognizes the confines of Proposition 2 ½, and advocate for increased funding for the District.
  - Rebuild Manchester Memorial School on time and on budget and communicate the capital plan to maintain all three District schools and assets.
  - Successfully negotiate a contract with META Unit B (Teacher Assistants) using IBB.
  - Support implementation of programming that enhances our organization's cultural proficiency and promotes respect and appreciation for individual and cultural differences.
  - Target resources to support social/emotional needs of students across the District.

*Ms. Cameron moved to approve the School Committee 2019-2020 goals as edited; Ms. Fitzgibbon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

## **8) School Committee Comment**

Ms. Weld requested a change in School Committee meeting time to 6:30 p.m. Ms. Wolf agreed stipulating the School Committee business will be conducted between 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. with Public Comment scheduled at 7:00 p.m. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated the 6:00 p.m. time would be reserved for Executive Session.

*Mr. Warnock moved to approve the change in School Committee meeting time to 6:30 p.m.; Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

Ms. Cameron asked about KnowAtom curriculum in the Elementary Schools, indicating she thought the District had changed to Stem Scopes. Superintendent Beaudoin stated Dr. Riley was reviewing the Elementary School science curriculum and would make a recommendation later this year.

School Committee and School Building Committee meetings will be added to the *Cricket Gavel* 2 Gavel to inform the public of upcoming meetings.

## **9) Adjourn**

*Mr. Warnock moved to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Wolf seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **School Committee Future Meetings**

- October 1, 2019
- October 15, 2019