

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

**February 10, 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.

On a roll call the following members were present: Kathleen Amaral, John Nunes, Mary Beckwith, Elizabeth Coughlin and Chris Oliver.

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

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

**RECOGNITION**

Dr. Saba-Maguire and Mr. Oliver presented Green Apple Award certificates, issued by the School Committee in conjunction with the Superintendent's Office, to those staff members nominated by their colleagues who exemplify one or more of Dartmouth's core values. The following individuals were honored: Michael Capello, Daniel Lefebvre, Hilaria Sousa, and Cheryle Kamm.

The District hosted its first Green Apple Awards ceremony and reception in the Dartmouth High School cafeteria just prior to tonight's meeting were recipients were presented with their *Green Apple* award.

The Committee recognized Kathleen Thornton, the District's Athletic Trainer, for her honor of being awarded Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletics Association's (MIAA) Trainer of the Year.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Nathan Silva made comments regarding the proposed FY26 budget.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mrs. Amaral moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the Regular Session Minutes of January 27, 2025 as written. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

DHS Senior Elizabeth O'Neil provided updates on activities and events happening at Dartmouth High School (DHS).

- To honor and celebrate Black History Month, DHS Black Student Union members have been working on art and visuals to display throughout the building as well as coordinating a movie series for students to come together
- DHS Senior Katherine Cheesbro has set a new school high scorer record for Girls' Basketball which has not been broken since 1995
- DHS Indoor Track Update
- After Prom Committee is holding a fundraiser on March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Vault in New Bedford MA
- Student Council attended its first SEMASC (Southeastern MA Association of Student Councils) where they learned about leadership and networking
- DHS and DMS are teaming up for *Music in Our Schools* month: three show will be held: for the Band on March 4<sup>th</sup> for the Chorus on March 10<sup>th</sup> and for the Orchestra on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

**SPOTLIGHT ON KIDS – James M. Quinn Elementary School:** The Chair invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to introduce tonight's presenters.

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Dr. Audra Thomas announcing that Dr. Thomas was recently appointed the Principal of Quinn School along with Stephanie Yermalovich, Quinn School Assistant Principal, to the podium to deliver tonight's *Spotlight* presentation.

Dr. Thomas and Mrs. Yermalovich presented tonight's *Spotlight* segment highlighting Quinn School Community Partnerships indicating they align with Focus Area 3 - *Family and Community Engagement* of the District Strategic Plan.

Dr. Thomas and Mrs. Yermalovich highlighted the four parts of Quinn Community Partnerships: Local Community Programs, University of Massachusetts/Dartmouth; Dartmouth High School and Quinn 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Peer Leaders.

Dr. Thomas stated Quinn has 42 fifth grade peer leaders noting the program was started approximately ten years ago and has been run by Tiffany Martin, a Quinn School outreach worker, "the entire time."

The following fifth grade peer leaders participated in the *Spotlight* presentation telling "us" why they wanted to be a peer leader, what being a peer leader means as well as things they are proud of: Olivia Francis, Juliana Tomaz, Alanna Machado, Bennett Crook, Isabella Silva, Sam Vargo, Stella Callahan, Peyton Morris, Logan Nunes, Ira Patel, Abigail Bussiere, and Victoria Arroja.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

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

- DHS – WGI World Championships – Indoor Color Guard (April 1-6, Dayton OH)
- DHS – WGI World Championships – Indoor Percussion (April 8-13, Dayton OH)

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Amaral to approve both items. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

## PRESENTATION

**Proposed FY26 Budget:** Dr. Saba-Maguire stated what she hopes is heard as we present the proposed FY26 Budget is our commitment to student success, responsible resource management and alignment with our District Strategic Plan.

Dr. Saba-Maguire noted “this \$55 million plus” budget was developed with a focus on meeting the evolving needs of students while maintaining fiscal responsibility; we have carefully prioritized investments in instruction, student support services and curriculum materials while working diligently to ensure “every dollar spent” directly benefits teaching and learning.

Dr. Saba-Maguire added steps have been taken to realign staffing and resources to reflect the changes and challenges in student enrollment and educational demands.

Mr. Kiely commented from a budgetary perspective the District Strategic Plan was designed to be an “actionable” plan in which we could set our priorities and find a way to align our budget goals to those priorities.

Mr. Kiely continued noting efforts were made to align the proposed FY26 budget to the strategic goals noting “we are not there yet” but we are “starting the journey” with this proposal.

Mr. Kiely reported the slow decline of the District’s student enrollment and provided anticipated class size averages.

Mr. Kiely provided data indicating the additional needs of Dartmouth students: in the last ten years, Dartmouth’s high needs student population rose from 29% to more than 43%; its low-income population rose from 17.5% to 30%; students with disabilities rose from 12.5% to over 21%.

Mr. Kiely provided information pertaining to per-pupil spending in comparison with the State average noting Dartmouth is below the State average in all categories.

Mr. Kiely commented we invest our money wisely but there just simply isn’t enough of it.

Mr. Kiely reviewed the allocation of funds as provided in the proposed FY26 Proposed Budget: Instruction (75% or \$41,382,337); Administration (2% or \$1,071,458); Maintenance & Utilities (6% or \$3,677,873); Other Services - including transportation- (13% or \$6,961,825); Tuitions (4% or \$2,213,605) for a Total Budget of \$55,306,558; Medicaid (\$46,953) for a Total Budget with Medicaid \$55,353,511.

Mr. Kiely explained the challenges and proposals within the budget categories.

Mr. Kiely reported school choice is funding \$1,673, 220 in the proposed FY26 budget noting he never thought we would be “there” explaining how the District is proposing to use a \$1 million worth of “savings.”

Mr. Kiely reviewed the budget staffing recommendations including additional Special Education Teaching positions and a Human Resource Director.

Mr. Kiely reviewed resources to be reallocated noting of the nine positions affected seven would be covered through attrition.

Mr. Kiely listed items to be funded by school choice: instructional positions, curriculum materials and technology replacement and provided a projection of school choice funds maintaining the current spending pattern.

Mr. Kiely reported he received an invitation from Gary Carreiro, the Town's Finance Director and Co-Interim Town Administrator, to attend a Finance Committee meeting on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Kiely stated more discussion on the proposed budget can be had at the next school committee meeting scheduled for March 3<sup>rd</sup> adding the public hearing on the budget will be held at the Committee's second March meeting with the Committee's vote taken at the following meeting.

Mrs. Amaral asked if the District has had conversations with the Town recently.

Mr. Kiely stated he has been encouraged by the dialogue he has had particularly with Gary Carreiro noting he cannot commit to anything on his behalf but feels he is willing to consider our requests and is hopeful this year's conversation with the Town will be different than last year's but not sure that the District's request for a 4.1% budget increase will be fully supported.

Mr. Nunes asked how the staff reductions will affect the class sizes specifically middle and elementary levels.

Mr. Kiely responded the approximate, average class sizes noted earlier reflect the proposed staff reductions.

Mr. Oliver asked for "actuals" for this year's K-8 classroom sizes.

Mrs. Amaral asked about requests that did not "make the final cut" which was provided in past budget proposals.

Mr. Kiely stated it is part of the budget proposal but that it did not make the presentation and that he will provide that information to the Committee.

Mrs. Amaral asked about projecting tuitions for students who need outside placement or outside services that "we" are bound by law to provide.

Mr. Kiely stated it is the most volatile area of the budget in terms of potential impact noting an out of district tuition can cost from \$50,000 to \$250,000 with the addition of transportation costs and explained how the District built into the proposed budget to prepare for changes in this area noting grant funding and state funding.

Mr. Oliver asked for a "slide" showing all of our offsets (grants) including Circuit Breaker.

Mr. Kiely stated he will have that information for the Committee at its next meeting.

Ms. Beckwith asked how the Finance Committee and Select Board look at our need to use school choice funds.

Mr. Kiely responded he doesn't know how they will look at it this year; I haven't met with those boards yet adding in the last couple of budget processes the feeling was we have the money there why aren't we using it.

Ms. Beckwith followed asking if there are other town departments that have a source of funding similar to school choice and are they expected to spend those funds.

Mr. Kiely stated he won't speak for other town departments but there are some different mechanisms; enterprise funds in which "they" charges fees, in terms of "them" using those reserves, I don't know.

Ms. Coughlin commented departments, such as DPW, charge more fees when they need to and those increases do not go through the approval process that the school department has to go through noting school choice funds should not be the source of funding for 11 full time positions.

Mr. Oliver referred to the per-pupil spending summary and stated we need to increase our per pupil spending to keep up with the needs of our students and to catch up to the State average.

Mr. Oliver asked if the student/teacher ratio includes coaches, specialists and special education teachers.

Mr. Kiely responded it does include those positions adding we have more students per staff member than the State average and more students in need of more support.

Mr. Oliver asked how does what we propose compare to comparable districts regarding staffing recommendations specifically the Special Education Team Facilitators, what model do comparable districts use as we do not have this position right now, and a Human Resource Director, do comparable districts have a Human Resource Director or is it a shared position with the town or municipality.

Mr. Oliver proposed that we hold "informational nights" at the schools with Dr. Saba-Maguire and others to get the word out, to advocate and educate the greater community what the needs of the school district are.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Statement of Interest (SOI) Application for Dartmouth High School Roof Replacement Project:** Dr. Saba-Maguire noted the work Mr. Kiely had done to prepare and meet with representatives of the MSBA when they visited the District to assess school facilities.

Mr. Kiely thanked Dr. Saba-Maguire and noted John Bernat, Facilities Manager, and Building Principals were very helpful answering MSBA's questions.

Mr. Kiely presented the SOI for the Dartmouth High School Roof (and Window) Replacement Project for the Committee's approval.

Mr. Kiely explained the MSBA's strict application process noting, if the Committee supports the SOI, the language in the memo must be read into the meeting record in its entirety.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral and Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 10, 2025, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of the Town of Dartmouth, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated February, 2025 for the Dartmouth High School located at 555 Bakerville Road, Dartmouth which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future:

Priority 5. Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilations systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in the facility;

The following are the identified deficiencies as required to be described for Priority 5: the fully adhered EPDM roof has reached the end of its serviceable life, through-wall flashings have been determined to be compromised leaving paths for water infiltration, stone caps and bands on the above roofline walls are exhibiting signs of failure allowing water infiltration, thermal expansion and building settlement has led to cracking and damage to surrounding masonry at the control joints, perimeter sealant at the windows is failing, most windows are foggy and filled with condensation, roof top units curbs are severely rusted, ductwork and pan flashings within the roof top units are sources of water infiltration;

and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Dartmouth to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

On a roll call vote the motion passed 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:** Elementary ELA literacy curriculum professional development for teachers has started; DHS students recently traveled to Bridgewater State University cybersecurity range with DHS Computer Science Teacher Bridget Weinert; SOMOS Spanish curriculum pilot continues at Dartmouth middle and high schools; the District will again host the Two-day Regional (World Language) Workshop on March 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>; first *Playbook Initiative* Workshop will be hosted at DHS on Wednesday.

**-Budget and Capital Improvement Update:** HR Update – Special Education teacher at DMS was hired; Dr. Audra Thomas and Melissa McHenry were recently appointed to the Principalship at the Quinn and Potter Elementary Schools respectively; Stephanie Riccardi has received a warm welcome by students, staff and families as the new Early Childhood Director at Cushman School.

**-Family and Community Engagement Update:** Preschool Family Information Night will be held on Wednesday February 26<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Cushman School; First edition of the *Dartmouth Compass*, the central office's quarterly newsletter was released recently noting this is an internal newsletter for to increase communication among staff and faculty about what is going on within the District; the first Green Apple Award ceremony was held today; DHS

Orchestra will be traveling to Spain and Portugal over the winter break

**-Safe and Supportive Schools Update:** Dr. Saba-Maguire addressed the recent school cancellation and the process of making that decision when inclement weather is forecasted.

**Report of the Chair:** The Chair made brief comments about the proposed budget and its connection to the District Strategic Plan.

-Band Competition Update.

**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](http://www.youtube.com/dhstvmedia) on Monday, March 3, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to adjourn at 8:24 p.m. into Executive Session for an update pertaining to pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3), to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining where an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's bargaining position (Dartmouth Educators Association) and not to return to open session. On a roll call the motion passed unanimously; 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



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

### **Open Session - Documents/Exhibits**

Agenda

Brief

Green Apple Award Certificates

Regular Session Minutes for January 27, 2025

Quinn Spotlight on Kids Presentation

Consent Agenda Items

Proposed FY26 Budget

MSBA Statement of Interest