

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

May 5, 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 Elizabeth Coughlin at 6:00 p.m. in the Dartmouth High School Library Media Center.

On a roll call the following members were present: Mary Beckwith, Kathleen Amaral, Elizabeth Coughlin and Chris Oliver. John Nunes was not present.

Elizabeth O'Neill, DHS Student Representative to the School Committee was present.

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

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Robin Delafuente, a parent of Dartmouth Public School students, provided comments on the FY26 budget.

RECOGNITION

Superintendent's Certificate of Excellence Award: Ms. Coughlin invited the Superintendent to present the matter.

Dr. Saba-Maguire provided background information about the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Certificate of Academic Excellence noting this annual award honors seniors across the State who have demonstrated distinguished academic performance and personal contributions to their high school communities and invited Ryan Shea, Principal of Dartmouth High School (DHS), to make the presentations.

Mr. Shea announced that DHS seniors Audrey Kertscher, who will attend Johns Hopkins University in the fall to study public health/pre-med, and Tyler Ferreira, who will attend Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the fall to study chemical engineering, are the 2024-2025 recipients of the Superintendent's Certificate of Academic Excellence.

Mr. Shea highlighted Ms. Kertscher and Mr. Ferreira's many accomplishments while students at DHS.

The Committee offered congratulations to the recipients and wished them success in their future endeavors.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Beckwith moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the Regular Session Minutes of April 14, 2025 as written. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

Mrs. Amaral moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the Executive Session Minutes of April 14, 2025 as written, with the stipulation that they be held until the matters under consideration are resolved. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Elizabeth O'Neill, DHS Senior, reported on activities and events happening at Dartmouth High School (DHS).

- Day of Kindness update
- Junior Banquet update
- AP exam update and other student assessments happening in May
- PreK-12 Art Show being held on May 8th at DHS

CONSENT AGENDA

Dr. Saba-Maguire recommended the following requests to be approved by the Committee.

- 2025 Summer Elementary Enrichment Program

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Catherine Pavao, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning/Elementary Level, to address changes proposed to the Summer Elementary Enrichment Program.

Mrs. Pavao provided a brief history of summer elementary enrichment offerings over the last several years noting the loss of grant funding and the need to assess a fee to families to help offset the cost to continue to run the program explaining that this summer's offering is a hybrid of the 2 previous programs (summer enrichment and acceleration academy).

Ms. Coughlin confirmed the Committee will be voting on the cost of the camp which is \$200 for 4 weeks with a sliding scale.

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith, to approve the program for \$200. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

- Dig Green Volleyball Camp (August 2025)

Ms. Coughlin stated the program is a skill building program with a cost of \$180 per player for 5 days of instruction.

Mr. Kiely provided some background on the program.

Mrs. Amaral moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith, to approve the running of the Dig Green Volleyball camp, as presented. The motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

PRESENTATION

James M. Quinn Elementary School Improvement Plan: Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Audra Thomas and Stephanie Yermalovich, Quinn School Interim Principal and Assistant Principal respectively, to present their school improvement plan.

Dr. Thomas began by thanking Melissa McHenry and Elizabeth Correia, incoming Principal and Principal of the Potter and DeMello Elementary Schools respectively, for their support and collaboration.

Dr. Thomas stated the Quinn School Improvement Plan (SIP) stems from the District Improvement Plan.

Dr. Thomas and Mrs. Yermalovich presented the Quinn SIP addressing each of the four focus areas as well as providing action steps and measures of success for each area: 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. Oliver asked why the SWIS system (School Wide Information System) was abandoned.

Dr. Thomas responded noting the desire to create a system with better “balance” that might improve the collection of data noting the benefits of a shared google document and seeing data in “live time” but, in the end, found the SWIS system was better.

Dr. Saba-Maguire commented that the individual school improvement plans are driven by the District Strategic Plan and because of that the plans are making sense to the work being done in the schools adding we look forward to coming back to the Committee to have conversations about the impact of initiatives and strategies on student outcomes as well as how teachers feel about the resources being brought into the District.

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the Quinn School Improvement Plan. The motion carried unanimously: 4-0.

Dartmouth Middle School Improvement Plan: Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Peter Rossi, Principal of Dartmouth Middle School (DMS) and the middle school administration to present their school improvement plan (SIP).

Mr. Rossi introduced the DMS administrative staff: Sarah Decas, Associate Principal, Sam Madden and Marc Hayes, Assistant Principals.

Ms. Decas began noting the DMS SIP is aligned with the District Strategic Plan.

The DMS Administrative Team presented the DMS SIP addressing each of the four focus areas as well as providing action steps and measures of success for each area: 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. Rossi concluded the presentation stating the middle school facility needs to be replaced.

Mr. Oliver asked what R.A.R.E. means.

Mr. Madden responded R.A.R.E. means respect, accountability, responsibility and esteem.

Mrs. Amaral asked about “testing out” new curriculums and how the middle school is adjusting to the “growing pains”.

Mrs. Decas responded there have been “growing pains” and the school is addressing the challenges by introducing new curriculum slowly and focusing more on the learning process than the grades as well as planning additional professional development for teachers.

Ms. Beckwith asked for information about the Learning Partner Program and about making it into a class.

Mrs. Decas responded explaining the Program and the process of making it a class to better suit participants’ schedules.

Ms. Coughlin asked how students get involved in “check-in/check-out.”

Mr. Rossi responded students are often referred for a number of reasons noting it was originally for behavioral program and now it can be a mentoring program.

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the DMS School Improvement Plan. The motion carried unanimously: 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

Proposed FY26 Budget – Further Discussion and Vote: Dr. Saba-Maguire began by reaffirming both personally, professionally and on behalf of the Committee and the District itself how deeply we value our teachers and if there is a perception that the recent budget, particularly the reductions at the classroom level, reflect anything less than that then I acknowledge that is a serious shortcoming in the way we communicated that; there is nothing more important than our educators.

Dr. Saba-Maguire continued stating decisions to reduce staff are not taken lightly but with gravity and great care knowing there is a person at the end of the decision being made which effects not only them but their families.

Dr. Saba-Maguire noted recent comments that have implied certain segments of this community might not fully appreciate the importance of our schools and suggested that some residents may not see the need to invest in them adding it is appropriate and necessary for “us” to examine our budget with care and it is equally important to reaffirm a core truth that Dartmouth is a community, I believe, that deeply values its public schools.

Mr. Kiely reported that he and Dr. Saba-Maguire were invited to attend a joint meeting of the Select Board and Finance Committee last Monday.

Mr. Kiely reported “we” made it to the podium once regarding a grant writer being added for the Town; we responded explaining that that wasn’t something we would propose as we have staff who write grants for the District.

Mr. Kiely reiterated the next steps of the budget process adding we hope the Select Board and Finance Committee will support our budget at Town Meeting.

Mrs. Amaral asked if there is a reason this year why the School Committee was not part of a joint meeting with the Select Board and Finance Committee.

Mr. Kiely responded that “they” did not express interest in a joint meeting this year.

Mr. Oliver asked Dr. Saba-Maguire where her comments stem from.

Dr. Saba-Maguire explained the comments were made at the joint meeting and at a Finance Committee meeting.

Mr. Oliver suggested that we demand a joint meeting with the Select Board and the Finance Committee.

Ms. Coughlin stated there appears to be agreement from the Committee for a joint meeting and asked that we request a meeting so that questions can be addressed prior to Town Meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Last Day of School for 2024-2025: Ms. Coughlin reported the last day of school for the 2024-2025 school year will be June 13, 2025 noting this date accounts for the one school cancellation.

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to make June 13, 2025 the last day of school for 2024-2025 subject to change if necessary. The motion carried unanimously: 4-0.

Proposed Meeting Dates (July 2025 through June 2026): Dr. Saba-Maguire referred to proposed meeting dates provided in tonight's meeting packet for the Committee's approval: **2025** July 21st; August 25th; September 8th and September 22nd; October 6th and October 27th; November 17th; December 8th; **2026** January 12th and 26th; February 9th; March 2nd and 23rd; April 13th; May 4th and 18th; and June 8th and 22nd.

It was agreed that the start time for the summer meetings would be 5:30 p.m.

Ms. Coughlin suggested the Committee hold its summer retreat on August 18th we do not need to decide tonight.

The Committee agreed on the proposed dates from July 2025 through June 2026.

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: Laurie Dionisio, Executive Director of Student Services, updated the Committee on preschool enrollment noting screenings were conducted this past Thursday and Friday adding Stephanie Riccardi, the newly hired Early Childhood Director, has stepped up to the challenge with preparations for the changes being implemented next year.

-MCAS update

-DMS Literacy Night update

-DMS Jr Honor Society Induction

-Budget and Capital Improvement Update: Mr. Kiely spoke on capital improvement reporting the Town indicated it had spent its "free cash" at the October Town Meeting and had very little to move forward with at Spring Town Meeting and what that means for us is they moved a \$50,000 recommendation for our \$250,000 Technology request.

Mr. Kiely provided an update on the Fire Alarm System Project at DeMello and Potter regarding funding from the Town reporting there will be an article on the Town Meeting warrant to move money from the long-term capital stabilization fund to fund this project; it will be a separate item not included under capital improvements.

Mr. Kiely reported the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has not acted yet on its accelerated repair program reminding the Committee that the District filed a Statement of Interest (SOI) with MSBA for the high school roof and windows project noting MSBA has a meeting on May 28th.

Dr. Saba-Maguire provided an HR update: Justin Zexter has been appointed an Assistant Principal at DMS noting Mr. Zexter is a long time DMS educator as well as content positions begin to be posted.

-Family and Community Engagement Update: Dartmouth High Theater Company (DHTC) production of *High School Musical*.

-Safe and Supportive Schools Update: DHS Day of Kindness organized by Kristianna Fontes-Callahan, DHS School Adjustment Counselor.

Report of the Chair: The Chair addressed an email sent by the Athletic Department to all Committee members about updating its policy handbook reporting Mr. Nunes showed some interest in “doing that.”

The members supported Mr. Nunes’ interest in representing the Committee regarding the updating of the athletic department’s policy handbook.

Ms. Coughlin mentioned the dates of the next MASC/MASS joint conference are November 12th through November 14, 2025.

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, May 19, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Beckwith moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to adjourn at 8:03 p.m. into Executive Session 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 (DAA and DEA) and not to reconvene in open session. On a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously: 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



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

Open Session - Documents/Exhibits

Agenda

Brief

Regular and Executive Session Minutes for April 14, 2025

Consent Agenda – Dig Green Volleyball Camp; Summer Elementary Enrichment Program

Quinn School Improvement Plan Presentation

DMS School Improvement Plan Presentation