

School Committee Minutes
Virtual Meeting
January 25, 2021
6:15 p.m.

Members attending: Sharlene Cronin, SusanMary Redinger, Suzanne Allen, Abby Besse, Shannon Molloy, Maureen Babcock and Linda Dwight

Others in attendance Nick Thornton, Taylor Caroom, Brooke Caroom, Josh Myler, Dori Pulizzi, Robin Benoit, and Scott Hoffman

SusanMary Redinger called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Nick Thornton read the Vision Statement.

Public Commentary:

Rachel Kopay, 221 Littleton County Road, Harvard, MA - Anti Racism work

Student Report:

Brooke Caroom reported that COVID screening has been running much more efficiently. The senior rock was painted by the classmates of a student from the class of 2013 who passed away unexpectedly. Our condolences to the family. The switch next week in school with the afternoon classes is circulating around the school and students are starting to talk about it.

Nick Thornton reported that the basketball team is currently quarantining. One student tested positive so the whole team was considered close contacts and had to quarantine. The Student Advisory Council will be meeting with the School Committee on February 3, 2021.

Budget Review (VOTE)

SusanMary Redinger presented the FY22 budget for approval. Our plan is to send the budget to the Finance Committee tomorrow along with our 5% budget reduction list. SusanMary Redinger read through the cuts that would be required to meet the 5% budget reduction. Dr. Dwight will send a narrative to explain the impact to student learning across the district if these cuts were required. Sharlene Cronin reviewed a list of things that are not funded in the current budget that are prioritized as add ins if additional funding becomes available.

The lockers were taken off the capital list; they could be submitted next year. The Committee won't send the add on list until after people have had a chance to think about it. This budget does not include any dollars for a COLA which will impact the bottom line.

Sharlene Cronin made the motion and Suzanne Allen seconded to approve the budget as submitted.

VOTE Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

COVID Policy/School Closure review (VOTE)

The Committee reviewed a proposed adjustment to the COVID school closure policy. The following adjustments were presented:

- *Transmission is defined as a close school contact testing positive during the quarantine period or another member of the class testing positive within 14 days unless they contracted it from a non-school contact.
- *At HES, if more than one student in a class is COVID positive during the 14 day quarantine the class would switch to remote for 14 days.
- *At Bromfield in the middle school grades; if 3 students in a grade level are COVID positive during the 14 day quarantine the grade level will switch to remote for 14 days.
- *At Bromfield in the high school; if 3 students in grades 9-12 are COVID positive during the 14 day quarantine grades 9-12 will switch to remote for 14 days.
- *Faculty/Staff – a decision to switch to remote would be based on the ability to run school safely and on the number of absences.

The language will be clarified to read clearer regarding the 14-day quarantine period.

The Policy needs to be fluid and changed as COVID transmission rates change.

Suzanne Allen made the motion and Abby Besse seconded to approve the amendments to the school closure policy as presented.

VOTE Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

Screening Initiative Updates

Dr. Dwight gave an update on the COVID screening initiative. Things are going well. The state will be offering the screening program for six weeks for free. The group is working on using the state free testing but some things will look different. The fund raising is at approximately \$48K. We are now testing the EMTs and the DPW and they are funding these tests separately. We are testing approximately 780 tests this week. Thank you to Liz Ruark, Toby Bazarnick and Shannon Molloy for their work on this. A big shout out to Colleen Nigzus who has met with nurses across the state and invited them to come to observe how our program is working. They are really putting themselves out there to help others.

Classroom Capacity and Learning Model Changes (HES)

Dr. Dwight and Josh Myler reported that kindergarten enrollment is at the point where Dr. Dwight will need to hire an additional teacher. The next learning model change date is February 1st and it is expected additional students will be choosing the hybrid model. The Committee agreed that Dr. Dwight will need to hire an additional long-term substitute for kindergarten for the remainder of the year.

Student Learning Time Adjustments (TBS)

The new guidelines from DESE require us to include a synchronous check in between student and faculty/staff every day. Our plan is to inform students and families of the February 1st changes through discussions in class, email and a parent forum. Student attendance in all

afternoon classes on M, T, Th and Friday will be required as attendance will be tracked. At HES the majority of teachers and families supported a schedule change to in person days on Wednesdays as indicated in the December survey. The schedule for Wednesday in person time would be the same as the other 4 days of the week. The only change will be that Wednesday afternoons will not include a 2 p.m. remote learning time nor will afternoon specials occur. This ensures the afternoon collaboration and meeting time for teachers. Shannon Molloy asked the student representatives to bring feedback on the learning model changes to the SAC meeting on Wednesday.

Suzanne Allen made the motion and Shannon Molloy seconded to amend this policy as presented.

VOTE Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

Anti-Racism Work Update/Job Description DEI Coordinator (VOTE)

Dr. Dwight presented a list of DEI initiatives written by teachers of things that are happening in classrooms at HES and TBS. Dr. Dwight worked with the DEI Committee and the leaders in our district to capture parts of our vision that need to be shepherded to make improvements in our district. Dr. Dwight shared the job description for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Coordinator. The person who fills this position would serve as an educational leader. They would work on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and thereby improve the culture and safety of students, staff, and faculty. This position could be a stipend position or a part-time position. Dr. Dwight will work with the HTA to determine the financial details of the stipend. Suggested using the discretionary stipend funds for the remainder of this year and evaluate the position to see if it could be full time next year.

Abby Besse made the motion and Suzanne Allen seconded to move to accept the job description as written.

Members of the Committee wanted to follow the norms for the job description so it can be vetted by HTA, the Social Justice Club, the DEI group if there is an upcoming meeting before a vote is taken.

Abby Besse withdrew the motion with the understanding that Dr. Dwight will bring back with additional information for a future vote.

District Improvement Review

Tabled.

Policy Review (VOTE)

Refer to Agenda item V

ATM Report Review

Suzanne Allen shared changes she made to the Annual Town Meeting report. She will include additional information around not supporting the budget cuts as presented. Suzanne Allen will send off to Julie Doucet tomorrow.

Grant Approval

The following gifts were presented for approval by the Harvard Schools Trust:

Harvard Schools Trust - TBS History Bee and Bowl – Andrew Wright - \$200

Harvard Schools Trust - March: Book One – Andrew Wright/Kathleen Doherty - \$1,116.35

Sharlene Cronin made the motion and Abby Besse seconded to approve the gift as presented.

VOTE Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

The following gifts were presented for approval by the PTO:

PTO – Peter and the Starcatcher – Peter Murphy - \$125.

SusanMary Redinger and Suzanne Allen seconded to approve the gift as submitted

VOTE Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

Future Meeting Dates

February 3 - Student Advisory Meeting

February 8, 22 – Regular School Committee Meeting

February 10 - Budget Review with Finance Committee

May 15 – Annual Town Meeting

Agenda Items

District Improvement Plan

Add backs to budget

DEI Coordinator

Curriculum Review

HES School Improvement Plan

Student Learning Time

Minutes

With no objection, SusanMary Redinger approved the minutes of the January 11th meeting as amended.

VOTE Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

Liaison/Subcommittee Reports

Abby Besse reported that DEAC met last Thursday and talked about the survey for families. Students will be invited to the meeting to explain how their experience has been in the current year with the pandemic learning models. There are several building projects happening at Devens and they are reporting a lot of young families with kids are moving in which will be interesting to see how that impacts our school enrollment.

Suzanne Allen reported that HES School Council met and took a tour of the new building. Josh Myler reported that it was a great tour, overall the building is coming along nicely. Many of the classrooms are largely finished.

Suzanne Allen reported that the Policy Subcommittee and Continuous Improvement Subcommittee are meeting this week.

Shannon Molloy reported that DEI spent some time talking about the letter released by Dr. Dwight about the events at the capital and the reaction to the letter. Shannon learned from this

experience that if you feel supportive of something it is important to encourage people to have conversations with our peers and raise our voices about events in the world.

SusanMary Redinger reported that the HES building project is on time and on budget.

Everything is really coming together. The major concern that is still pending as a budget impact is the soil report. If it is clean soil on site it is cheaper to have it removed. One soil sample came back showing high levels of arsenic. A bigger area of soil needs to be tested to see how much of soil is affected to determine the cost. The furniture budget was a little over budget but the technology budget was under giving a combined savings of about \$100K.

SusanMary Redinger reported that the Bromfield House Committee has an upcoming meeting, they have already met twice. Bill Ferrence put together a proposed timeline and the survey has been sent out, so far there have been 188 responses on ideas for that property. Will be meeting again to go over the responses.

SusanMary Redinger reported that CPIC is writing up the individual projects that will be presented in the Annual Town Meeting book.

Shannon Molloy presented the following warrants for review:

Warrant 21-11 SCH - \$261,198.62 dated 11/20/2020

Warrant 21-12 SCH - \$2,101,894.54 dated 12/04/2020

Warrant 21-13 SCH - \$115,333.65 dated 12/18/2020

Warrant 21-14 SCH - \$1,689,469.92 dated 12/31/2020

Public Commentary

None

School Committee Commentary

Taylor Caroom – Will there be a student survey sent out that is similar to the parent survey that went out earlier?

Suzanne Allen would like to take an opportunity to thank so many people for the collaborative approach to the budget planning, testing and policy changes that have been ongoing throughout this pandemic year. Also, we have heard from families about mental health concerns but could we have a report on what the progress half way through the year. The number of kids failing and what supports we might be able to offer. This problem is not going to go away when this is over. It would be good to get a report from the guidance department and do a review of the SWAT team for targeting and watching kids as needed.

Executive Session

SusanMary Redinger with no objection moved to adjourn into executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A section 2 for the following purposes:

To discuss strategy with respect to and in preparation for collective bargaining with Harvard Teachers' Association because an open discussion may have detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee.

VOTE Allen (Aye), Besse (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye).

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Zadroga

