

School Committee Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting
February 27, 2023
6:15 PM

Members attending: Suzanne Allen, Abigail Besse, Sharlene Cronin, Shannon Molloy, and SusanMary Redinger.

Others in attendance: Linda Dwight, Caitlin Lelievre, and Ingrid Nilsson.

Ms. Besse called the meeting to order at 6:16 PM.

Executive Session:

At 6:16 PM, a motion was made and seconded to enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the HEA because an open meeting may have detrimental effects on the bargaining position of the School Committee. Members agreed unanimously by a roll call vote and will return to open session.

Move: Ms. Redinger

Second: Ms. Allen

Status: Passed

Members returned to open session at 6:51 PM.

Vision Statement:

Asha Khurana read the vision statement.

Remembering Barbara Scesny:

Ms. Eleni Burns, Director of Food Services, paid tribute to Barbara Scesny, a cafeteria staff member, who recently passed away. Committee members expressed their condolences.

Student Update:

Asha Khurana provided the student update and shared that there were a lot of fun Valentine's Day activities prior to the February break. The students who went on the NOLA trip have returned and accomplished several service projects while they were away. Additionally, Asha shared several accomplishments from the District's athletic teams and that there will be a science fair at the high school on Friday, March 3rd. There will be a semi-formal dance next week and the TBS Quiz Team will be competing at AMSA the weekend of March 4th.

Ms. Cronin excused herself at 6:55 PM to attend the Finance Committee meeting.

Public Commentary:

None.

Superintendent Update:

Dr. Dwight shared her submitted report as follows:

- FY24 Local Aid Estimates: The Healey-Driscoll administration provided preliminary local aid estimates for FY24 in advance of the March 1st release of the administration's budget. Harvard's Chapter 70 state aid for public schools went up \$135,536. Dr. Dwight is hopeful that such funding may help defray the extraordinary increase in tuition at private out-of-district special education schools.
- FY24 Harvard Public Schools Budget: The District presented its FY24 budget and proposed adjustments to meet the FY24 Omnibus allocation to the Harvard Finance Committee on February 14th. The Finance Committee will consider the school budget and all other town budgets at its meeting on February 27th and will make a recommendation to the Select Board who will begin to consider the FY24 budget on February 28th.
- Winter Sports - Final Weeks: Dr. Dwight shared some highlights from the winter athletic season and thanked the athletes and their coaches for their hard work and dedication.
- Middle School Winterfest and Dance: Mr. Greene, TBS Middle School Principal, and Mr. W, PE Teacher, helped organize Winterfest which included lots of school spirit with grade level competition. Additionally, the high school's Class of 2023 sponsored the first middle school dance. Both events were a big success.
- Furniture Request: The substantially separate classroom at the Hildreth Elementary School has experienced a change in enrollment with different students assigned to the classroom based on their learning needs. Furniture needs have been identified and Dr. Dwight asked members to review the requests for a formal vote at the next Committee meeting on March 6, 2023.

School Choice Recommendation:

Dr. Dwight shared her prepared memo regarding her recommendation for School Choice for the 2023-2024 school year. She has recommended adding 20 Choice students to next year's middle school and high school which will replace the 11 students who are graduating this year and add nine additional students.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the recommendation to add 20 Choice students as proposed. The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 4-0.

Move: Ms. Allen Second: Ms. Redinger Status: Passed

Changes Being Considered for Next Year:

Dr. Dwight shared how the leadership team is beginning to look at ways of unleveling certain subjects in an effort to help students view themselves as capable while ensuring that students who have an aptitude for certain subjects are being continually challenged. Teachers will be supported in the differentiation required to make this happen. Additionally, more technology courses are going to be added to the middle and high schools while also continuing to create some separation between the two schools. Dr. Dwight also shared that they would like to try implementing different schedules for the middle and high schools in order to have a smoother transition for students moving from 5th to 6th grade. A more formalized plan will be brought forward to School Committee, but this information is meant as a preview of what is to come.

ADA Compliance Update:

Dr. Dwight shared that as a result of an accessibility assessment, a number of issues have been identified that need to be addressed at HES and TBS in order to be ADA compliant. The District is committed to making those changes and Dr. Dwight shared that Ms. Redinger has been able to assist with sending this information to the architect for HES. There are some instances where the construction company did not perform the work according to the architect specifications and the District is hoping to have Shawmut come back onsite to make some of the necessary adjustments. The work at TBS is mostly related to the exterior of the building and will involve getting quotes next fall so the building can become ADA compliant. Ms. Redinger pointed out that although they are hoping to have Shawmut come back to HES, they have not yet agreed to this.

Dr. Dwight also shared that Ms. Beth Graham wrote a grant to have some pieces added to the playground that are more accessible for all students and some of those items have started to arrive.

Policy Review:

Ms. Allen presented the proposed changes to policies: IJ, IJJ, IJM, and ADF. Committee members decided to vote on the policies individually.

A motion was made and seconded to approve policy IJ as presented. The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 4-0.

Move: Ms. Redinger Second: Ms. Allen Status: Passed

A motion was made and seconded to rescind policy IJJ as recommended. The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 4-0.

Move: Ms. Redinger Second: Ms. Allen Status: Passed

A motion was made and seconded to rescind policy IJM as recommended. The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 4-0.

Move: Ms. Redinger Second: Ms. Allen Status: Passed

A motion was made and seconded to approve policy ADF as amended. The motion was passed by a roll call vote of 4-0.

Move: Ms. Redinger Second: Ms. Allen Status: Passed

2023-2024 Calendar Update:

Dr. Dwight shared a revised school calendar which was done on the recommendation of the civil rights review that recently occurred. The revised calendar denotes the last day of school without the five snow days factored in which will help ensure the correct date for graduation. This will be done for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. Additional edits will be made to the colors on the calendar to help members of the community who may be colorblind.

Ms. Cronin re-joined the School Committee meeting at 8:05 PM.

Grants/Club/Field Trip Approval:

Ms. Jennifer Toth shared that Harvard Public Schools was one of 16 public school districts in the state to qualify for the Afghan Refugee Support to Schools grant. The goal of this grant is to enhance school district capacity to promote the academic performance and successful integration of Afghan newcomer students.

Dr. Dwight shared the grant pending School Committee approval and answered questions from members regarding the details of the grant.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the grants from the Harvard Schools Trust as presented. The motion was passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Move: Ms. Molloy

Second: Ms. Cronin

Status: Passed

Future Meeting Dates:

The next School Committee meeting is on March 6, 2023.

Agenda Items:

Ms. Besse asked members to contact her with items they would like to include on the next agenda.

Minutes:

Ms Besse approved the February 6th meeting minutes with no objections.

Members will re-review the minutes from February 14th at the next meeting once edits have been made.

SC Liaison and Subcommittee Reports:

Ms. Cronin shared an update from the Finance Committee meeting tonight and said that the town was able to find about \$230K in proposed cuts which brings them to a surplus of about \$83K. They voted unanimously to push that budget forward to the Select Board. Ms. Redinger asked if this eliminates the need for an override and Ms. Cronin said yes. She also shared that CPIC met last week and that almost all of the proposed projects were funded which is great news. Best Practices will be meeting again this week to continue their work on the self-evaluation.

Ms. Allen shared the lineup of presentations the Wellness Committee has organized for the remainder of the school year. An email has been sent out district-wide and these presentations are meant to cover all grade levels.

Ms. Redinger reported that HEAC has a meeting scheduled for March 2nd to understand the draft of the electrification assessment for TBS. The HES Building Committee had its last meeting and approved the final expenses to begin the project closeout with MASC. The TBS School Council had a meeting before February break to discuss what support looks like for 11th graders and how they can be encouraged to utilize that support, transitioning and curriculum

coordination, and how to provide time and space for students to have more personal time and connection with teachers.

Ms. Molloy shared that there is a warrant in the folder for Committee members to review. Unfortunately, the last DEI meeting was canceled due to weather. SEPAC was not able to have their last meeting, but offered a workshop on understanding IEPs which was very well attended.

Ms. Besse reported that a shed has been ordered for Ann Lees and should be ready to go when the spring athletics season starts. Additionally, the town is going to hire a consultant to review the District's needs for an athletic fields complex. Ms. Besse said she sent out notes to the other Committee members from the recent Student Advisory Council meeting. She asked members to send her questions to use at the next meeting. The Budget Subcommittee is meeting on Friday, March 3rd and will share updates at the next Committee meeting on March 6th.

Public Commentary:

Marisa Khurana, Harvard resident and Special Education Teacher at HES, said that she has seen Lynn Lyons present when she came to TBS a number of years ago and that she is excellent. She recommended that Committee members attend and help get the word out to parents of younger students. Lynn Lyons is scheduled to come present in May as part of the series Ms. Allen outlined in her report.

School Committee Commentary:

Ms. Molloy asked about the furniture that has been ordered for the seniors. Dr. Dwight said some of it is backordered, but some is being prepared for delivery. There is other furniture that has been put in their designated space in the meantime so they are able to use it, but it will be exciting to have the furniture meant for that space available.

Ms. Molloy was excited to share that all of the Committee members will be participating in the Civics Cup on March 5th which sends a strong message of support to the HPS students.

Dr. Dwight shared that the HC2 Conference is on March 4th at Volunteers Hall in the Library. It has been organized by one of the District's students and will cover the theme of hope.

Adjournment:

At 8:39 PM, Ms. Besse adjourned the meeting without objection.