

School Committee Minutes
Upper Town Hall
Monday, April 13, 2020

Members attending: John Ruark, Sharlene Cronin, SusanMary Redinger, Suzanne Allen, Shannon Molloy, Maureen Babcock, Linda Dwight and Aziz Aghayev.

John Ruark called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

John Ruark read a statement indicating that the meeting was being held remotely and the meeting was being held via video conferencing. Members in attendance were identified through a role call process.

April Vacation

Dr. Dwight explained to the Committee that the Commissioner of Education has given school districts the option of holding school during the April break. If school was held during the four days of April break the school year would end four days earlier in June on June 16th. Dr. Dwight shared the survey results and feedback from teachers and students regarding the options. The data showed that a large majority wished to continue learning during the April break period.

SusanMary Redinger made the motion and Suzanne Allen seconded to move that we change the school calendar to eliminate the April break and to continue the education and class work during that time. The last day of school will now be June 16th.

VOTE

Allen (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye), Ruark (Aye)

Coronavirus Readiness and Learning Plan Update

Dr. Dwight informed the committee that the schools have shifted into Phase 2 of the remote learning plan with teachers beginning to introduce new curriculum material to their classes. The district is listening to feedback and working to improve it as we go. Dr. Dwight also informed the committee that DESE announced that MCAS testing will be cancelled for this school year.

School Choice

The Committee discussed School Choice allotments for the 2020-2021 school year. Dr. Dwight and the administrative team is recommending next year's grades 6, 7 and 9 as possible grades for choice students to be enrolled. After discussion the Committee agreed to add Choice students in grades 6 and 9.

SusanMary Redinger made the motion and Suzanne Allen seconded to move that we open up 6 school choice slots in next year's 6th grade and 3 school choice slots in next year's 9th grade.

VOTE

Allen (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye), Ruark (Aye)

FY20-21 Budget Approval

The School Committee reviewed the final FY21 budget for approval. Aziz Aghayev talked through the proposed cuts to the budget as it was originally presented. This budget reduces services by \$108,000 and increases the Devens offset by \$166,000 for a total reduction to the FY21 school's omnibus budget request by \$274,000.

SusanMary Redinger made the motion and Sharlene Cronin seconded to approve the revised budget as presented.

VOTE

Allen (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye), Ruark (Aye)

Continuous Improvement Subcommittee Report

As part of the School Committee goals for the year, the Continuous Improvement Subcommittee met to review feedback from the full committee and select a few options for action by the full committee. The items selected were; 1. updating the superintendent evaluation rubric, 2. schedule "school committee office hours", 3. create a school committee document library, 4. look for professional development opportunities for school committee members. A new member guide was also discussed but that may go hand in hand with the document library. No decision needs to be made, but the hope is to find ways to roll out and work on these topics as time goes on.

Superintendent Update

See Attached

Continuing Pay of Bus Contract

Aziz Aghayev explained that Harvard as well as other districts that use Dee Bus Service are trying to negotiate to reduce remaining payments in light of a reduction in service. Districts are working together and would like to negotiate with Dee a possible 50% reduction that would allow payments to cover the cost of leases and overhead items only. So far Dee Bus Company has not agreed to negotiate a reduction in payment. A meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.

Budget Override Strategy

Dr. Dwight explained that the Select Board had asked the Finance Committee to bring back a recommendation for how to balance the FY21 operating budget should the \$317,239 override fail at Town Meeting in June. The Finance Committee recommended that the entire amount be taken from the school budget. The Select Board is expected to decide at their next meeting if they will accept the Finance Committee's recommendation. Committee members suggested writing a letter to the Select Board to argue that the school should not be expected to assume the full amount of the cut, should the override fail. Dr. Dwight, SusanMary Redinger and John Ruark

will craft a letter from the School Committee explaining how the cuts would affect the schools and identifying ways the town and schools could work together in the process moving forward.

Grant Approval

The Harvard Schools Trust presented the following grants for approval from the School Committee:

1. Remote filming stands – Josh Myler \$878.80
2. Student Books for Distance Learning – Peggy Bragg \$4,500
3. Remote learning headphones – Josh Myler \$625

John Ruark made the motion and Sharlene Cronin seconded to approve the grants from the Harvard Schools Trust as presented.

VOTE

Allen (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye), Ruark (Aye)

School Building Update

SusanMary Redinger explained that the building project has been going smoothly and the COVID-19 outbreak had not had an impact until last week when the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Glaziers told their members not to report to work. A letter was prepared, reviewed by legal counsel and sent Shawmut Construction indicating that COVID safety guidelines could be followed at the sight and workers should report to work. Harvard expects Shawmut to follow through on its contract with the town. Shawmut is saying they have no control over the conditions. It may become very legal. In good news, the National Grid project is finished, the concrete pouring is done and work continues on the roof, partition and ducts. Additionally, David Fay was able to delay the solar installation until after the building is complete without losing credits. At this time there is no change in completion date but that is likely to change.

Contract ratification; Vote

Dr. Dwight informed the School Committee that she had heard from Tim Bragan that the economic slowdown due to COVID-19 will impact local aid funding for the next fiscal year. If the state numbers come in bad the town may not be able to fund the salary increases presented in the proposed HTA contract. The state is holding a meeting in the week ahead which will hopefully shed light on the numbers. Options available are to vote the contract tonight or table the decision to ratify the contract tonight and wait for two weeks when new numbers from the state may be available. The Committee reluctantly agreed that it would be better to make the decision in two weeks after state numbers are clearer. The contract ratification will be tabled for 2 weeks.

Agenda Items

Title IX Plan Work

Start time update

Continuous Improvement

Transportation Cost for Athletics

Dashboard Subcommittee report

Approval of Meeting Minutes

With no objection the Chair, John Ruark approved the minutes of the March 23th meeting as presented and amended.

Liaison/Sub-committee Reports

Shannon Molloy reported that SEPAC is scheduled to meet on April 21st via zoom.

Shannon Molloy reported that the School Start Time Committee has not met.

Shannon Molloy reported that there has been no word on a virtual HES Council meeting yet.

The results of the parent survey were getting attention when they last met and she hopes that the Council is able to process that work when they are back together.

Shannon Molloy reported that the town will be moving to electronic signatures on warrants.

Suzanne Allen reported that SEPAC is working on their foundational and guiding by-laws.

They continue to work on a survey to send out. They are meeting again April 21st.

Suzanne Allen reported that the Wellness Subcommittee and Data Dashboard Subcommittee have not met.

Suzanne Allen reported that the Policy Subcommittee is working on the Booster policy.

SusanMary Redinger reported that Capital is not meeting until after town meeting.

SusanMary Redinger reported that TBS School Council is planning for a potential May meeting.

Sharlene Cronin reported that fields have been shut down; irrigation and fertilization have continued. The Subcommittee is still trying to decide when to meet again.

Maureen Babcock reported that DEAC will be meeting via their first zoom meeting on Wednesday. Maureen will provide an update after that.

John Ruark had no updates at this time.

School Committee Commentary

John Ruark thanked everyone for their patience. He thanked the school for all their hard work during these unprecedented times. He looks forward to finding a way to work with the town that will lead to success now and in the future.

Suzanne Allen made the motion and SusanMary Redinger seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m.

VOTE

Allen (Aye), Cronin (Aye), Molloy (Aye), Redinger (Aye), Ruark (Aye)

Respectfully submitted

Mary Zadroga

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