

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

NOVEMBER 16, 2023

A meeting of the School Committee was held at 6:30 P.M. on Thursday, November 16, 2023 at the Central Middle School Media Center with the following members present: Melanie Fiore, Chair, Betty Pryor, Vice Chair, Jaime Wallace and Megan Samborski. Also present was David Ljungberg, Superintendent, and Kathy Martin, Assistant Superintendent.

Chair M. Fiore called the meeting of the School Committee to order at 6:30 P.M. and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

A. Approval of Minutes

ACTION: A motion was made by M. Samborski and seconded by B. Pryor to approve the minutes of November 2, 2023. The motion was approved 4-0.

B. Financial

Leia Secor reported that the Town is part of a solar program – our Eversource bills have a credit on them and we receive a bill from another company for the solar panels. All bills from Eversource are being documented to make sure we are getting the 5% credit. A full report will be provided at the end of the fiscal year.

Superintendent Ljungberg reported on the FY25 Budget Timeline. Budget meetings will begin with all budget holders tomorrow. A Public Hearing on the budget is scheduled for January 11th and the School Committee will submit their budget to the Select Board and Town Administrator January 25th.

C. Public Comment - None

D. Student Representatives

Maddy DiLeo reported on Safety Night that took place last night following a tour of the high school, school spirit week started today with pajama day and will end next Wednesday with the lip dub and a pep rally.

Daniel Mirick reported that the powder puff game will take place on Monday, fall sports, freshmen and sophomore semi, the Drama Club and parent teacher conferences on November 29th.

E. YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) Report – Anthony Chui, Director of Health & Human Services for Melrose, Wakefield and Stoneham

This survey is administered every two years to middle and high school students. Superintendent Ljungberg introduced Anthony Chui who is the Director of Health & Human Services for Melrose, Wakefield and Stoneham.

Anthony Chui presented the 2023 survey results that included:

- The survey had 88% participation and was administered to students in grades 6-12 and was broken down by gender identity, sexual orientation, race and grade
- Risk factors included substance use, mental health, sexual behavior, bullying and violence
 - Alcohol use has relatively decreased since 2017 (High School)
 - Vape use has relatively decreased since 2017; tobacco use remains a priority area to address (High School)
 - Both high school and middle school students who experienced bully and mental health in the past 12 months were more likely than those who did not to experience depression, engage in self harm and seriously consider attempting suicide.
 - Transgender students were significantly more likely than the average high school student to experience sexual dating violence. LGBTQ+ students were significantly more likely than heterosexual students to experience sexual dating violence.
- Protective factors included trusted relationships, sleep, physical activity, perceptions of harm
 - Diversion Program helps create a sense of community and supporting our most vulnerable students
 - STOP Violence Grant supports direct work with students as well as capacity building in the form of professional development opportunities through 2025
 - We need to increase education about areas including dating violence, mental health and substance abuse
 - We also need more educational opportunities and parent question and answer sessions to increase access to information and involve parents

A discussion followed regarding the use of the STOP School Violence Grant for student education, the concern that although tobacco and vape use is decreasing, it is still higher than our counterpart districts; and plans for seniors with upcoming graduation and proms.

F. Student Supports

Bryan Lombardi, Sarah Auger, Tom Sallee and Nicole Clark were present at the meeting to discuss the support and programs that they have in place to address some of the concerns highlighted in the YRBS survey, such as:

- I Decide Program – funded through a grant with MGH is a voluntary program addressing such topics as tobacco, vape, peer pressure. We currently have two trained staff with clinical backgrounds and will be training two more.
- Stop School Violence Grant – Cartwheel Care Program: Nicole Robertson works closely with our counselors and social workers since they are the ones who interact with students in person and are best positioned to identify students' needs. Staff make referrals and parent consent for minors is required. Short term virtual therapy and individual counseling is available to our students.
- Responsive Classroom
- Cell phone policy (phones turned off during classroom time)

G. JLMC – MOU Stipend Ratification –

Tabled until the next meeting

H. District Offices – Update

Superintendent Ljungberg reported that the Arnold House Advisory Committee and they will recommend unfavorable action at the special Town Meeting on December 11th. Our best option is to pursue our need in a different manner, there are no specifics at this time.

I. MCAS Report

Superintendent Ljungberg gave an overview of the 2023 State Accountability and MCAS scores that included:

- Key takeaways from state data:
 - 2023 ELA and Math data indicate that the achievement slide from 2019 has halted and recovery is underway
 - Science results show slight decreases in achievement
 - Grade 3 results signal a need to remain cautious about incoming testing grades (PreK-K during pandemic)
 - Still have significant ground to make up to reach pre-pandemic achievement levels in some areas
- ELA Results – Administered to Grades 3-8 and Grade 10
 - Grades 3-7 results were lower than state average; Grades 4-10 improved compared to SPS 2019 results
 - Grades 3-8 Black, Asian, Hispanic and White were lower than state average; Grade 10 Asian was lower than state average
- Math Results – Administered to Grades 3-8 and Grade 10
 - Grades 3, 5 and 7 were lower than state average; Grades 4-10 improved compared to SPS 2019 results
 - Grades 3-8 Black and Asian were lower than state average; all grades improved compared to SPS 2019 results
- STE Results – Administered to Grades 5, 8 and 10
 - Grade 5 was below state average; Asian and Hispanic were below state average in Grades 5 and 8.
- Official accountability by school
 - Colonial Park – Substantial progress toward targets
 - Robin Hood – Moderate progress towards targets
 - South School – Substantial progress toward targets
 - Central Middle School – Moderate progress towards targets
 - High School – School of Recognition
- Chronic absenteeism has increased since last year and continues to be a concern

Superintendent Ljungberg outlined the action steps and strategic priorities:

- Focus on students and subgroups with high rates of chronic absenteeism
- Focus on PreK-2 early literacy and math skills
- Identification of individual students requiring additional supports, using general education, student support team process
- New and additional training and supports for PreK-12 educators (UDL, Science of Reading, Assessment Frameworks) – addition of 6 early release days

- Implementation of Responsive Classroom, SEL Supports – use of grant funds to support additional interventionists, social and emotional supports
- Ongoing data meetings
- Support/planning time for teachers

A. 8th Grade Waiver for Gymnastics

Superintendent Ljungberg, on behalf of Athletic Director David Pignone, requested an 8th grade waiver for gymnastics. This has already been approved by the Middlesex League based on the anticipation that numbers will still be very low again this year.

ACTION: A motion was made by J. Wallace and seconded by B. Pryor to approve the 8th grade waiver for gymnastics. The motion was approved 4-0.

A. MASS/MASC Joint Conference Update

The Superintendent and all members of the School Committee attended the Joint Conference in Hyannis last week. They were able to break up and attended many different sessions such as Artificial intelligence, Therapy Dog, the new IEP form, MIAA Standards, Chapter 70 and Collective Bargaining to name a few.

B. Committee Liaison/Subcommittee Reports

J. Wallace reported that the next SEPAC meeting is scheduled for November 20th. M. Samborski reported that the coalition has distributed pocket translators to some of our staff and front office secretaries and they are really working out well. They have more on order. M. Samborski also reported on S.A.A.V. (Stoneham Alliance Against Violence) – Step-Up Men Against Violence will meet on November 21 at the WCAT Studios in Wakefield. Legal services for domestic violence can also be found on the S.A.V.E. website.

C. School Building Committee

Superintendent Ljungberg reported that the next Building Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 20th. The School Committee will be in attendance for the branding presentation.

D. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Ljungberg reported on the following:

- A structural engineer firm has inspected the bridge at the Central Middle School and found it to be structurally sound. We will wait until the summer to do the repairs.
- Our service elevator vendor reported that they heard from TK Elevator that we should have the part in December.

E. Discussion/Correspondence/New Items –

None

F. EXECUTIVE SESSION

ACTION: A motion was made by M. Samborski and seconded by B. Pryor to enter into Executive Session for Collective Bargaining per MGL Chapter 30A § 21(a)(3): to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with SEA Bargaining Unit and litigation (Cynthia E. Shaw v. City of Stoneham Public Schools, Dave Ljungberg); and per MGL Chapter 30A § 21(a)(6): to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property and the chair so declares that an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining and legal position of the public body. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call at 9:08 P.M.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED
DAVID LJUNGBERG, SUPERINTENDENT**

Documents Reviewed:

Minutes November 2, 2023

YRBS 2023 Report

MCAS 2023 State Accountability Report