

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WORKSHOP SESSION/BUSINESS MEETING

OF

January 27, 2014

SUBMITTED FOR THE APPROVAL OF:

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

AND

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

“AN OPEN MEETING ADVANTAGE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF METHUEN”

RECORDED BY:

MARTHA SIROIS, PUBLIC RECORDER

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METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WORKSHOP SESSION/BUSINESS MEETING/EXECUTIVE SESSION
January 27, 2014

This meeting of the Methuen School Committee was held in the Searles Building, Great Hall, and was posted for 6:30 PM.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson
Ms. Lynne Hajjar-Kumm, Vice Chairperson
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett, Secretary
Mr. Richard P. Beshara
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet
Mr. Robert F. Vogler

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brandi Kwong, Assistant Superintendent
Ms. Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Zanni called this meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

Moment of Silence-To recognize the passing of Ms JoAnn Allen a longtime Methuen Kindergarten Teacher. Ms Allen taught at the Howe School and the CGS School.

Agenda-Mayor Zanni entertained a motion to accept the agenda for this meeting.

Motion-Mr. Vogler made a motion to accept the agenda. Mr. Bryan Sweet seconded.

Vote-7-0-0

Other Business:

1. Presentation by Methuen High School Administration on the 2014-2015 Program of Studies.

Superintendent-The Superintendent was excited to roll-out the Program of Studies for 2014-2015. There are some additions as well as deletions. She introduced the Administration from Methuen High School that presented the 2014-2015 Program of Studies:

James Giuca-Supervising Principal, John Crocker Guidance Department Chair, Jeffrey Osgood P.E/Health/FCS/Welln. Supervisor, Ann Marie Krusell English 7-12 Coordinator, Heidi Perez, L.A.D. Supervisor. They have worked very hard and they are excited to speak to you about the Program of Studies for 2014-2015.

Mr. Giuca-We are here tonight to request your approval of the Program of Studies for 2014-2015 which addresses current student and school needs. The Program of Studies is a menu of courses for students. No new staff will be considered or hired. Included along with the changes are the rationales. We are moving away from Level 2 courses. Mr. Crocker will address that later. Roger Lenfest, Social Studies Chair could not attend the meeting so Mr. Giuca spoke about the History Courses. New entry for Grade 9 is American Government. He and Mr. Lenfest both believe that you should start close to home with freshman Social Studies.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Is that a required course for freshman?

Mr. Giuca-Yes

Mr. Crocker- Many of these changes to the Program of Studies target our at risk students in a way that is different from the past. We are removing most of our level 2 courses. The reason behind this is that we find that clustering a group of high need students makes it difficult to give the students individual attention. Our leveling system is still in place which is level 3, college level courses, level 4, honors level courses, and level 5, Advanced Placement courses. Intermediate Algebra will help our high needs students. It is to help students that are not ready for Algebra II. It is a bridging course between Geometry and Algebra II. We are offering Reading Enhancement to help students that have difficulty with reading. We have had great success this year piloting this program in grade 9. The largest changes will be to P.E. and Health. There is a new ½ year required advanced health course. The big change in the P.E. courses is that there will be 8 electives. The students can chose the course they would like to take instead of taking 1 generic PE course.

Ms. Krusell-When the department was creating these courses we wanted to address the needs of our students. We looked at Common Core and Literacy Mandates for students and we wanted to gear these courses towards the student needs.

The Contemporary Issues Course we hope aligns with the current Social Studies Contemporary Issues Course. For example the students will look at Shakespeare Plays and then try to write their own play using current issues. We have multi level courses to meet all the needs of our students at the high school.

Mr. Osgood-PE: We have such a great opportunity to bring these courses to the high school. The PEP Grant has given Methuen great resources. Giving the students choices for their PE class is a great opportunity for these students.

Health: Based on the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and student feedback, a need to provide students with additional health information and skills beyond the freshman requirement is evident. Health is ever changing and we need to service our students beyond 14 years old. We talk about some heavy issues in freshman class but I have a lot of students come to me in their junior or senior year to talk about issues that we talked about in freshman health class but that they are now dealing with.

Ms. Perez-Our biggest changes for next year will be adding SEI Math courses and a SEI Biology course. There is a new program called SIFE (Students with Interruptions in their Formal Education. This is to help students with large gaps in their education. This program helps the students fill in the gaps. We also will have a New-Comer Seminar Course to help our new students adjust.

Mr. Deeb-Commended the administrative staff for an outstanding presentation. Very impressed and this will be very beneficial to Methuen students. The fact that we are

offering these types of course is phenomenal. He would like to explore an economics or personal finance course.

Mr. Vogler-Nice job. He would also like to see an economics course. How many ESL students do we have?

Ms. Perez-60 students at the main campus and 15 at grade 9.

Mr. Vogler-Commended the English and Algebra courses.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Outstanding presentation. There are a lot of negative comments out there about Common Core and watering education down but this shows that this is not true. We are not going away from the classic but they will be applied to modern day. The health and wellness is terrific. Is there any interaction with the parents?

Mr. Osgood-Parent involvement is huge and this type of course will open up communication with students to me as well as guidance and hopefully parents. We will be working on ways to involve the parents. Grade 9 class we welcome the parents and go over the syllabus with them.

Ms. Fawcett-She is very excited to look at PE and Health offerings. Fine Arts were not mentioned but she knows there is also a lot of work going on as well. Happy to hear about SEI classes. She likes that the decisions are being based on data. She is happy that no new staff will need to be added.

Mr. Sweet-He thanked the administration for coming tonight he enjoyed the presentation and it was very helpful to him. All of my questions have been answered.

Mr. Beshara-Nice presentation. Will Contemporary Issues take the place of American Lit course or would the students take both courses?

Ms. Krusell-They will take either or.

Mr. Beshara-Is the Reading Enhancement course teacher recommendation for every grade level?

Ms. Krusell-We are just doing the course at grade 9 right now. We will be expanding to grade 10 next year. We have given a baseline test to identify the students for next semester. We also meet with the teachers. Teacher recommendation is essential.

Mayor-Asked where the title of the new courses were listed?

Mr. Crocker-They are listed under the additions.

Mayor-appreciates all the work that everyone has done. Would like to see the numbers of students taking language courses.

Mr. Vogler-He would like to see Arabic.

Mayor-He is looking for what the future holds for Foreign Languages.

Mr. Giuca-We have a survey ready to go out to the community for upper grade students and high school students. Once we get that data back we can set up a solid language program.

Mayor-We have put the foreign language this year into grade 8. We hope to bring it to the lower level grades in the future. You have all done a great job. At the Science Fair today the students have a lot of pride for their school. We are developing here in Methuen students dedicated to learning.

Superintendent-Mr. Crocker would like to comment on the economic question.

Mr. Crocker-We do have an economic course called Personal Finance. It helps students get ready for the real world.

Superintendent-Mr. Crocker would you please talk about our Connections Group.

Mr. Crocker-We started Connections Group which is an Advisory Block with small groups of students getting together 17 times this year to talk about various subject. No more that 12 students are in each group and we have touched upon economics and personal finance. This past session touched upon college finance. Connections involve the entire student body and staff.

Mr. Deeb-Could we get the numbers of what the student involvement is in the Personal Finance course?

Mr. Crocker-Yes

Mr. Giuca-I would like to let you know that the Program of Studies is a work in progress. Each year we review the Program of Studies. I want to praise the staff for the Connections Program. Mr. Barden and Mr. Crocker took the NEASC advisory piece and coordinated the Connections Program. What they did was brought us ideas and started a volunteer committee with the teachers. It satisfied the NEASC piece and has brought the school together. I praise them and all the staff for what we have done so far. The building is fabulous and it is the people in it that make it wonderful. It is a marvelous place to work.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Ms. Hajjar-Kumm-You have a packet about CREST. I hope you have all reviewed it.

Mayor-Mr. Fratto was appointed by either the current Superintendent or the previous Superintendent. Now that Mr. Fratto is no longer with us who will replace you if you are not available for a meeting.

Superintendent-If I am not available to attend a meeting a School Committee member will attend the meeting.

Mayor-So we should appoint someone from the School Committee as a backup if the Superintendent cannot attend. Robert Vogler volunteered to be the School Committee back-up.

Mayor Zanni entertained a motion to appoint Robert Vogler as the Superintendent's substitute if she is unable to attend the CREST meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Beshara moved to appoint Mr. Vogler.
Mr. Deeb seconded.

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

***ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop Session, Mayor Zanni entertained a motion to conclude the Workshop Session for the evening at 7:28PM and enter into executive session To discuss deployment of security personnel or devices or strategies with respect thereto

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to adjourn the Workshop at 7:28PM.
Ms. Hajjar-Kumm seconded.

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools