

**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD**

**OF**

**THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**WORKSHOP SESSION/BUSINESS MEETING/EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**OF**

**March 24, 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**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD**  
**METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**WORKSHOP SESSION/BUSINESS MEETING/EXECUTIVE SESSION**  
**March 24, 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:**

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

**MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:**

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

**Agenda-** Lynn Hajjar Kumm said there was a request by Mayor Zanni to table 6 b. and 7 a. for this meeting.

**Motion-** Robert Vogler made a motion to table 7 a.  
Richard Beshara seconded.

**Discussion-**Mr. Deeb-He believes this is a collective bargaining issue.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-We are only discussing the vote. We are not discussing the item.

**Motion-**Brian Sweet entertained a motion to table 6 a. for this meeting.

Mary Jean Fawcett seconded.

**Discussion-**Mr. Beshara-Point of clarification: If we approve 6 a. tonight can we make changes in the future.

Superintendent-This is a time sensitive piece but yes you can.

Mr. Deeb-We should not table this item. It is a time sensitive issue that has to be negotiated with bargaining units. We should move forward with the calendar and not delay the issue.

Mr. Sweet-What are the reasons we could not wait 2 weeks to approve 6 a.?

Superintendent-The calendar effects staff Professional Development. We need to plan vendors one year in advance. It affects our MCAS and PARCC Testing. She has to look at the needs of the parents that are planning vacations. Also planning report cards and parent conferences is a huge piece.

Roll Call Vote to table 6 a.

Ms. Lynne Hajjar-Kumm, Vice Chairperson Yes  
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett, Secretary No  
Mr. Richard P. Beshara No  
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb No  
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet Yes  
Mr. Robert F. Vogler No

**Vote-2-4-0**

**6 a. will remain on the agenda.**

**2. Participation by Others**

**a. Superintendents Academic Excellence Awards**

Michaela Cullum Doyle ranked #1 out of 430 students and Lauren McAndrew ranked #2 out of 430 students were honored for their academic achievements.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

Approval of School Committee meeting transcripts of 2/24/14 and 3/10/14.

**MOTION:** Mr. Sweet moved to adopt all the Recorded Transcripts of 2/24/14 and 3/10/14 as presented and waived the reading. Mr. Beshara seconded the motion to approve as presented.

**DISCUSSION:** None

**VOTE: 6-0-0**

**4. Staff Reports as Requested by School Committee Members**

**a. Gateway Cities ELL Enrichment Academies Grant Update as requested by Ms. Hajjar Kumm and Mr. Vogler.**

Superintendent-Introduced Heidi Perez. She is the LAD Supervisor and the co writer of the Grant. We will receive \$100,000.00 from the grant.

Ms. Perez-With the Grant we will be having an ELL Summer Enrichment Program for grades 7-12. We will focus on Marine Biology Skills.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-How many students will participate?

Ms. Perez-We currently have 140 students in these grade levels. We have enough resources for all of them to attend.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-How long is the grant?

Superintendent-1 year

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Can we reapply next year?

Ms. Perez-Yes

**b. Career Academies Planning Grant Update as requested by Mr. Vogler**

Superintendent introduced Maria McLaughlin, Associate Principal at Methuen High School. We will receive \$45,000.00 for this grant.

Ms. McLaughlin-We will be having a Bio tech and Engineering program this September for freshman. The grant was given to plan an internship for students after school.

Mr. Vogler - Congratulations to both of you for your hard work on these grants. Job well done.

**c. Special Education FY'14 Tuition Update as requested by Mr. Vogler**

Superintendent-Mr. Vogler asked for an update on students that are out placed for their education.

Mr. Vogler-Up to this point we are at \$314,000.00 and you are projecting to go over \$400,000.00. Are these students that came into the district after the first day of school?

Ms. Bozek-The majority of students are move-ins this year to the district.

Mr. Vogler-He appreciates Ms. Bozek coming and providing this information. He would like to have periodic updates. Maybe the first week of May.

**School Spring Cost Comparison as requested by Mr. Deeb**

Superintendent-The prices speak in a positive way. We average 8-10 job postings per month.

Mr. Deeb-Thank you for the report. This clarifies why we are using School Spring. We are seeing a significant cost savings.

Mr. Sweet-Do you get better candidates using School Spring?

Superintendent-Yes I believe we get better candidates.

**5. Old Business**

**a. District Buildings Summer Moves Timeline**

**i. Grade 9 Campus to Main Campus (July and August)**

Superintendent-This is our last piece of the high school move. Classes currently at the high school will move at the beginning of July. During the months of July and August we will move grade 9 back to the high school.

ii. Administration Located in K-8 buildings will move to the Grade 9 Campus (July-August) (this will open up badly needed classroom space in the K-8 buildings).

iii. The offices at the Quinn Building will be moved between October and December back to the Grade 9 Campus. When we started the renovation we needed a place to put the administrative offices. We put out bids for office space. The bids we received were millions of dollars. The City asked her to look at the Quinn Building and it had possibilities. What we have done at the Quinn Building is new windows and a new roof. The City can move back into the Quinn Building when we have moved back to the Central Building (Grade 9 Campus).

Mr. Sweet-Who will do the moving?

Superintendent-Our own personnel will do the moving. It is a big savings for us to do it that way.

Mr. Sweet-Do you have an idea as to how many classrooms will become available?

Superintendent-There will be a total of 13 classrooms that will become available.

Mr. Sweet-In September 2014 is there a change with the City if you continue to stay at the Quinn Building?

Superintendent-Starting in September 2014 the School Department would have to start paying rent to the City.

Ms. Fawcett-She is very concerned about the Pre-School and Kindergarten student numbers. It is critical that we take care of those numbers in those classrooms. This will make space for those classrooms.

Mr. Vogler-He would have liked to see the Central Building be made into a school for just Kindergarten but it would cost too much money to renovate the building for Kindergarten students. He is concerned about the preliminary enrollment numbers for next year.

**b. Pleasant Valley School.**

Mr. Vogler does not want to rush to sell Pleasant Valley School. He would like to wait at least a year before the decision is made to sell or not.

Superintendent-The PODS will be removed from the Pleasant Valley and the vehicles that we are currently parking there will go back to being parked at the schools and Central Building.

**6. New Business**

**a. Special Education Program Projections for FY'15**

Gina Bozek, Director of Special Education gave her presentation on Special Education staff positions that are needed for FY'15 Budget.

Mr. Beshara-These positions are in addition to what we have now in the buildings.

Ms. Bozek-Yes she met last week with the principals and the Superintendent to decide where these classrooms will be.

Ms. Fawcett-You said the upper Special Education ration is 1-11. The State recommendation is 1-4. With these changes we will be at 1-8. We will still be above the State recommendations.

Ms. Bozek-We support the teachers with the higher ratios with additional staff support.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She supports these positions because there will be a cost savings.

Ms. Bozek-It is hard to project tuitions because of move-ins.

Mr. Sweet-How can we get that ratio down to the State recommendation?

Ms. Bozek-This would provide some relief. We have provided Professional Development, staff support, and substitutes to help with the high ratios. It is very staff and time intensive.

Superintendent-This is a sub group that we talk about every year when we receive MCAS results and try to figure out what we can do to make our numbers better. Ms. Bozek has done a fabulous job.

Dr. Kwong-Special Education and English Language Learns are 2 sub groups that D.E.S.E wants us to focus on and give support to these sub groups.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Thank you Ms. Bozek and to your team. She is happy to hear that the State would like us to focus on these sub groups and is hopeful that the State will provide us with some funds.

**b. FY'15 School Calendar-Discussion and Tentative Approval**

The Superintendent presented the tentative calendar for FY'15.

Mr. Sweet-If we revisit with the Mayor present and he has some idea or comment to change the calendar can we re-visit the calendar?

Superintendent-It is never too late but we would have to go back to the drawing board. We would have to redo the entire calendar. We did do research and most communities follow the same calendar. We would need to reschedule testing dates, parent conferences, and early release days. Most of the vendors for the early release day Professional Development need to be hired up to a year in advance.

Mr. Deeb-He thanked the Superintendent for the calendar. He stated that most communities use this calendar. This calendar addresses snow days and all the concerns of the community. We should move forward tonight with this calendar.

Mr. Beshara-I like the calendar. He likes and supports the calendar and hopes the teachers do too.

Mr. Vogler-Great calendar. 98% of the school districts follow this calendar.

Ms. Fawcett-She looked at the D.E.S.E regulations. It is not the School Committee's job to micro manage the calendar, just to approve it. It is up to us to approve the calendar not create it.

Superintendent-She received a lot of complaints at the end of June that the students are in school when it is too hot.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-It is great to have the half day schedule ahead of time. It helps parents plan.

**c. Development of Committee for Unit C (Program Assistants) Negotiations**

Superintendent-She is looking for a School Committee Member to sit on the Unit C Negotiations.

Mr. Sweet-He volunteered to do it.

**7 a. Proper Dress for Teachers and Administrators as requested by Mayor Zanni**  
**Tabled**

**b. Superintendents Evaluation Under the New D.E.S.E. Guidelines as requested by Mary Jean Fawcett**

Ms. Fawcett-Last year at this time we did the Superintendent Evaluation. This year there is a new process for the Superintendent Evaluation.

Superintendent-She should be evaluated under the new D.E.S.E. guidelines. She will hand out packets at the next meeting. The School Committee votes on a committee member to Chair the Evaluation Committee. School Committee members do the evaluations.

**Other Business**

Mr. Beshara-When the new members of the School Committee had their training they were told by the association of School Committees that the School Committee Workshops should not be televised. He thinks they should have the Workshops in a different school each month.

Ms. Fawcett-It is a School Committee Policy that the meetings be televised. We would have to review the policy.

Superintendent-She will have her secretary review the policy.

Mr. Volger-We had workshops in the school a long time ago. It is good for Workshops to be in the schools.

Mr. Deeb-It is a great idea to go to the schools but he does not think they should get away from televised meetings. Is it contractual for the School Committee to evaluate the Superintendent? Are the evaluations given to the public cumulatively?

Superintendent-All of my evaluations are on file in her office. You can come by anytime and look at them. The evaluations done by the School Committee are numbered, not by name.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-We can modify the policy on televised meetings. She thinks that business meetings should be televised but not workshops. She would like to see the policy for the next meeting.

Mr. Vogler-He would like the Committee to send a letter to Mimi Hyde and Karen McLaughlin congratulating them on their retirement.

Mr. Beshara-We have given a Citation to Mimi Hyde at her retirement party.

Superintendent-Karen McLaughlin has not received hers yet.

Mr. Vogler-Net School spending should be on the agenda to get continuous updates. He would like a report on a regular basis. He would like this resolved sooner not later. Ms. Fawcett has been involved in chargeback issues. He would like a report on that as well. The charge back agreement should be made between the School Committee and the City Council. Not the Mayor and the Superintendent. He is disappointed about the article in the Eagle Tribune about the Consolidation. The School Committee acts as a body not as individual members. He feels the Superintendent should go to the Consolidation Meetings.

Mr. Deeb-Do they need to make a motion on Mr. Vogler's requests?

Superintendent-They do not need to vote. The requests for updates will be on every Business Meeting Agenda. The last time it was on the agenda it was asked to be on at that meeting.

Mr. Deeb-He is concerned about comments made in the Eagle Tribune that have not yet been discussed with the Board as a whole. He spoke with Representative DiZoglio about the Net School Spending. She made it clear to me we could be facing penalties next year because of it Net School Spending. There have been comments made about why we need to hire a Business Manager. These are some of the reasons why so we can be made aware of these situations.

Every school department has a Business Manager.

Ms. Fawcett-She echoes what Mr. Deeb is saying. There should not be things put in the newspaper about School/City Consolidation without it being discussed with the School Committee first. Anything that has an impact on our schools is not decided in the newspaper or by any one of us.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She expected at the last Business Meeting to have a detailed conversation about Net School Spending but was told by the Mayor and the Superintendent a solution was pending and she has not seen anything as of yet. As for the comments in the Eagle Tribune about IT on the school side, we all know what the Mayor wants to do on the City side. She is on the consolidation committee. It is an opportunity to look at what we are doing and if there are any cost savings. The committee has no power to make any decisions and changes. Those decisions are done by this School Committee.

Mr. Sweet-This is a review committee. We are at the fact finding stage. These meetings are open to the public. He does not want to mandate that the Superintendent attend the meetings.

Vogler-The Superintendent needs to know what we are talking about. In the past either the Superintendent or the Business Manager came to the Consolidation meeting. If the Superintendent is there she can explain to us how things are run and what school employee's job descriptions are and what they do. I am not mandating it.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-The consolidation committee needs to vote on that and 2 of our members are not here tonight.

Mr. Vogler-I think the Superintendent should come to the meetings. You cannot hypothesize on something you need to know the facts.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION – NEGOTIATIONS/LITIGATIONS: Yes**

#### **\*ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop/Business/Executive Session, Ms. Hajjar Kumm entertained a motion to conclude the Workshop Session for the evening at 8:34PM.

**MOTION:** Mr. Vogler moved to adjourn the Workshop at 8:16 PM.

Mr. Beshara Seconded.

**VOTE:** 6-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

**ROLL CALL TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Ms. Lynne Hajjar-Kumm, Vice Chairperson-YES

Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett, Secretary-YES

Mr. Richard P. Beshara-YES

Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb-YES

Mr. Bryan P. Sweet-YES

Mr. Robert F. Vogler-YES

**MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson

6-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,  
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder  
Methuen Public Schools