

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS SESSION

OF

APRIL 14, 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:
DEIDRE RUNGE, PUBLIC RECORDER**

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD
METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
BUSINESS SESSION
April 14, 2014

This business part of the meeting of the Methuen School Committee was held in the Great Hall of Searles Building, City Hall, and was posted for immediately following 6:30pm Organizational Meeting.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Stephen N. 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 Vogler

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brandi, Kwong, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Frank Antonelli, Interim Business Manager
Ms. Devon Heffernon, Student Representative
Deidre Runge, Public Recorder

Roll Call

Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm	Yes
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett	Yes
Mr. Richard P. Beshara	Yes
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb	Yes
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet	Yes
Mr. Robert Vogler	Yes
Mayor Stephen N. Zanni	Yes

1. Call to Order

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

The Mayor asked for a vote to amend the Agenda to add Administration Offices move to Central Building

MOTION:	Mr. Beshara moved to amend the agenda and add 5a Ms. Kumm seconded the motion to amend the agenda
DISCUSSION:	None
VOTE:	7-0-0 APPROVED

1a. Flag Salute

Emma Duong, student a 4th grade student at the Comprehensive Grammar School, led the Committee in Opening Exercises of this meeting.

2. Participation by Others

a. SOAR Award

Chelsea Buell was the recipient of the S.O.A.R. Award at this meeting. The Family Consumer Science Department chose Chelsea for this Award.

b. Student Advisory Committee

- Rosemary Mahoney a sophomore at MHS told the Committee about the district-wide Band Jamboree at the field house. Great event and a must see.
- Alyssa Farnkoff a sophomore at MHS told the Committee about the school spirit events being held at the high school with students and staff. Many events one of the favorites is the faculty students Mat-ball game
- Devon Heffernon told the Committee she went to the Jr. Prom and it was great and can not wait to go to the upcoming Sr. Prom.
- The Mayor brought up the wonderful article in the Boston Globe about one of our own athletes “Christian Monserrat and his wrestling career”.

c. Staff

No Action

3. Approval of Minutes

Transcript of March 24, 2014 Workshop

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to adopt the Recorded Transcript of March 24, 2014 as presented and waived the reading;

Mr. Beshara seconded the motion to approve as presented.

DISCUSSION: The Mayor wanted to reiterate that the school department does not have to pay rent. Also he wanted to note the calendar was presented as a first draft and the vote taken was not recorded. But since the MEA did not approve that draft the vote was null and void anyways.

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

4. Staff Reports

a. Superintendent’s Monthly Report

Ms. Kumm asked about the new auditorium at the high school and if it is expected to be finished by September 1st. The Superintendent told the Committee that as of this week the floor was not painted. Mr. Beshara asked if the Seniors were going to be able to use the new auditorium before they graduate. The Superintendent says her hopes are we do. But we do need to go through a punch list. Once that punch list is done then we can open. The Mayor said the cat walk will be complete with lights. The sheet rock had a crack so they want to repair. Maybe next meeting we will know more.

b. Technology Monthly Report

None

c. Instructional Technology Monthly Report

Ms. Kumm said thank you to the Superintendent for including the email sent to Mr. Lussier, the Director of Instructional Technology regarding donations to the schools and their use.

d. Facilities and Grounds Monthly Update

Ms. Kumm said she asked the Superintendent for an update on the bridge at the CGS. The Superintendent gave a breakdown about the repairs needed. The Inspector is coming tomorrow and we will do the necessary work in house this summer. Ms. Kumm asked about the future. The Superintendent said if we need to do it now we would be looking at overtime on weekends and we can not fund that now. Mr. Sweet asked to see another barrier around the bridge so no students can get on the bridge.

5. Old Business and Other Pending Matters

Administration Offices Moving to the Central Building

The Mayor said he wanted a brief discussion

Superintendent, I took a lot of time today putting together this information

Ms. Kumm was pleased with the packet. I think this information is important to have Superintendent - I am addressing all the questions that have come across my desk

- Please read the cover memo
- Then see all the enclosures - These cover everything that came across my desk questioning my decision to why we can not move the Special Education Students to the Central building:
- Restricted Environment is against everything we have worked for and Ms. Bozek, the Director of Student Services is here to answer any questions you may have
 - Ms. Kumm asked if she could please give an overview of the memorandum they got tonight
 - Ms. Bozek said students move in and out of classrooms with their peer models The last paragraph has the regulations and codes with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that we must follow
 - Mr. Vogler, we cannot segregate special education students is that correct
 - Ms. Bozek – correct
 - Ms. Bozek told the Committee they need to access peer model classrooms for many reasons

The Superintendent moved onto her memo regarding the facts

- First thank you Mayor for clarifying we would not have to pay rent
- She read the budget busters list she submitted:
 - Noted all the salaries that would be needed to house any sort of school at the Central
 - The impact on the schedule of the K-8 buildings with specialists.....
 - Transportation we would need a brand new tier of busses to transport all over the City.
 - I cannot imagine the equipment we would need to mirror the other buildings
- We would have to sit with the union and agree to a contractual letter
- To place 8th grade their- we have 596 students in the 7th grade 392 students this year in 9th and 420 last year were overcrowded both years
- A K-4 building means redistricting

The Superintendent said she wanted everyone to hold on to the fact – when we started this MHS renovation our big concern was “where are we going to put the children”. We saved the District a good amount of money moving the Administration Offices throughout the District. Again the monies saved went back into the renovations. The decision was not wasted. We have two great new Buildings the Central and Quinn that wouldn’t have happened without the disruption in the district. This was a win win situation.

The Superintendent then went over class size and enrollments which was a concern of the Committee.

Ms. Kumm – a quick question on enrollments, what is the schools maximum capacity?

Superintendent – I can get that for you

Superintendent – Also I did not add the P.V. is filled with confidential files that we need to keep forever and our staff is constantly driving from building to building to get files they need.

Mr. Vogler – your right, original goal was my suggestion to move Administration which worked out. When we opened K-8 we told parents this is their school. We would be breaking a commitment to them moving them to a non state of the art school. It would not have a quality gym, media... The list of Space memo shows me the classrooms that would be freed up. The only thing I ask is if possible 2 or 3 classrooms at the Central be considered for the Historical Commission.

Also I would hate to loose the P.V. building if we might need it down the road.

Ms. Fawcett – I think I misunderstood. I thought this was a done deal. You are the Superintendent, you brought us the plan and I thought it was done. The kindergarten going to Central - I don’t see that working out at all. Get your staff back in one building. That is your job.

Superintendent – I did roll it out to move forward but I received a lot of questions so I am just clarifying my decision. I also want to note the new parent room for 2nd language learners that we can now have. This will be a district-wide location. Ms. Sigillo and Ms. Piccolomini the Tile I Supervisor are so excited about this new addition to the system. This will be a great spot to do the testing for reading and second language learners.

Mr. Sweet – I have a question about a comment made regarding ADA codes and \$2 million in your memo.

Superintendent – Our variances that we received from DESE to house the 9th grade at the Central Building will expire in June. We got a pass for 3 years with the thresholds, radiators, paint, bathrooms... that we have to do if the Central is to house any children. We will need to bring it up to code and that is approximately what it would cost.

MOTION: Mr. Deeb asked at this time for a motion to move Administration Offices to the Central Building

Mr. Vogler seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Mr. Deeb said to the Superintendent – this is an excellent job to present this information to us.

Ms. Kumm was glad to see it also.

Ms. Fawcett thanked her for including the information and bringing to their attention having kids moved to different schools. I appreciate the information and glad that you are going to move forward.

Mayor – I have some concerns.

- What is best for our community overall
- The long range-what I don't want to do here is have you come back down the road
- Where we are going to be in five years
- Are we going to be all set next year
- I assure you, you might need another school down the road
- The P.V. will be a great place as a historical value down the road
- Overall I am looking at money and I am looking at other programs. My thought is we received great information tonight I would like to review and talk again at the next meeting.

Mr. Deeb – you made valid points we all agree. The Superintendent did put the statistics on enrollment in the packet and I understand your points and at some point we might have to look at addressing down the road. Meantime I believe the administration wants to move forward.

Mayor – are these classrooms going to fix our over-crowding?

Ms. Fawcett – we are not giving the building up it will be available if needed at a later date.

Superintendent – the building is ours if we need it down the road we would move out. Also Mayor the administrators and I spent 4 months at leadership meetings discussing and we are absolutely sure we will have enough room in the schools.

Mayor – if five years down the road we have overcrowded classrooms what will you do? Think about the future. My feeling is I need the opportunity to digest the information you gave us.

Mr. Vogler – Give them the classrooms they need

Ms. Kumm – we are not selling the building we will still have it

Mr. Deeb – is this time sensitive

Superintendent – I have 9th grade classrooms moving out and back to high school first. I need to have administrative offices move out of schools back into Central next. We have walls to put up and take down. This is a time sensitive piece. Again, I have confidence in my leadership team and this is what is best for the schools. I need the space.

Mr. Sweet – I agree with Mr. Vogler. Also does the Central building need work to move back into?

Superintendent – no we as Administration can move right in. No renovation needed for us.

Mayor – are we all set then to move?

Superintendent – no expense – must paint and some rugs replaced that we already have and we have our own workers doing it. There will be no movement in September with the start of school. Also I spoke to Mr. Vespa and he bought (funded all new items and he knows where they are going.)

Mr. Beshara – Could principals tell you what is going in to the classrooms
Administrative staff are leaving.

Superintendent – I will get you that. Mayor I want you to know we are all
set for next year.

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm	No
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett	Yes
Mr. Richard P. Beshara	Yes
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb	Yes
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet	Yes
Mr. Robert Vogler	Yes
Mayor Stephen N. Zanni	No

Ms. Kumm noted that she was not voting no to move but would
have liked time to review the information presented to the
Committee tonight.

VOTE: 5-2-0 APPROVED

6. New Business

a. Authority to Transfer Funds – Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to allow the transfer of funds
Ms. Kumm seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Mr. Beshara asked what exactly this meant but also stated he had
good faith we will do properly.

Mr. Antonelli – right now the administration has permission to
move supply monies to other supply monies this mainly lets us
transfer for example supply monies to let's say salaries.

Mr. Vogler – can we get a report on transferred funds?

Mr. Antonelli said yes.

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

b. 2013-2014 Last Day of School – Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to approve the last day of school
Ms. Kumm seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Mr. Deeb asked the Superintendent why we bring this forward for
approval it was approved when we approved the calendar last year.
The Superintendent told the Committee pretty much because of
past practice.

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

c. Unrepresented Employee Salary Schedule - Approval

MOTION: Mr. Beshara moved to approve the salary schedule
Ms. Kumm seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

d. Technology (Laborers International Local 175) - Ratification

- MOTION:** Mr. Vogler moved to approve Local 175 contract
Mr. Beshara seconded the motion
- DISCUSSION:** The Mayor asked if he can get a copy of the contract he did not receive it.
- VOTE:** 6-1-0 APPROVED (Mayor did not get to review so he voted no)

e. 2014-2015 School Calendar - Approval

- MOTION:** Mr. Vogler moved to approve the FY'15 Calendar
Mr. Beshara seconded the motion
- DISCUSSION:** Mr. Beshara said this is different then the one we saw. The Committee recognized the president of the Methuen Education Association, Ann DiBenedetto – I put a draft out to Unit A members and with the responses I was receiving we decided to pull the vote. This current draft reflects our contract.
Mr. Beshara – I thought we were helping the teachers out. Disappointed it didn't go to a vote
Mr. Deeb –It came out late this year but as Vice President of my union we did do a side letter to change contractual verbiage. Maybe for next year start early.
Mayor – there was a question about how I wanted to change the calendar/vacations this year. I just want to suggest we put it out there to see about in the future going to one week vacation in the winter instead of two. In the fall we can send a letter maybe to see what the thoughts are for the next year
- VOTE:** 7-0-0 APPROVED

f. 8th Grade Final Assembly – June 20, 2014 - Attendance

- DISCUSSION:** The Committee suggested where they would attend and the Superintendent will put a list together and send it to them for confirmation.

g. Surplus Items - Approval

- MOTION:** Mr. Beshara moved to approve
Mr. Vogler seconded the motion
- DISCUSSION:** None
- VOTE:** 7-0-0 APPROVED

7. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

a. Expenditure Report - Monthly

Business Administrator Frank Antonelli submitted the Monthly Expenditure Report to the Committee.

- DISCUSSION:** The Mayor asked Mr. Antonelli “I see lots of negatives how we doing?”
Mr. Antonelli said we are doing great moved some things to grants also know that we are waiting for \$1,000,000 in circuit breaker money.
No Action

b. Revolving Funds Report – Monthly

Business Administrator Frank Antonelli submitted the Monthly Revolving Report to the Committee.

DISCUSSION:

No Action

c. Grants Report – Monthly

The Grants Department submitted the Monthly Grants Report to the Committee.

DISCUSSION: Mayor was happy to see all grants were awarded.

No Action

d. Student Activity Accounts - Monthly

Business Administrator Frank Antonelli submitted the Monthly Student Activity Report to the Committee.

DISCUSSION:

No Action

e. Supervisor of Food Services – Monthly

Director of School Nutrition Services, Wayne Vespa submitted the Monthly Food Service Report to the Committee

DISCUSSION:

No Action

f. Bid Awards

No Action

g. Contract Approval

No Action

h. Budget Transfers

No Action

8. Notification of Appointments and Other Personnel Matters

a. Personnel Transactions

No Action

b. Professional Staff

No Action

c. Support Staff

No Action

d. Personnel Matters Requiring Committee Action

No Action

e. Notification of Vacancy Postings

No Action

9. Superintendent's Reports, including Communications & Recommendations on Financial Matters, Old & New Business

a. Residency Monthly Update

No Action

b. School Resource Officers Monthly Update

A monthly report was given on each of the schools.

10. Business from the Committee

a. Building Committee Update – S.C. and Bldg Committee Member - Bryan Sweet

Bryan Sweet updated the Committee – The auditorium was already mentioned earlier. As we get closer to the end we are looking at items we took out to make sure we would have money and now we can start adding them back in.

b. Consolidation Committee Update – S.C. Member –Bryan Sweet

Mr. Sweet told the Committee they were moving forward with recommendations to merge insurances with school and city departments at their next meeting on April 24th.

c. Ameresco Project Update – S.C. Member Lynne Hajjar Kumm

Mayor – I had a meeting with Brian Dempsey and Linda Dean Campbell to try to get rid of the penalty with net school spending. Ameresco can not start until NSS is settled. The Superintendent and I have to still wrestle with this. We are trying to resolve.

Mr. Antonelli – I spoke to Representative Campbell and she had filed to amend the penalty and if it is approved they will send the amendment to the Senate. Roger Hatch promising he will wait until the penalty issue is resolved before they move on.

Mr. Vogler – This has been ongoing and snowballed the last few years. Moving forward with the budget we will make sure kids get what they need.

**d. Net School Spending Update by Mr. Antonelli requested by S.C. Member Vogler
See 10c**

e. Chargebacks by S.C. Member Fawcett

Ms. Fawcett said I sent our agreement to our lawyer and it appears it needs to be between the School Committee and the Mayor. There was no vote taken to approve the agreement.

Mr. Vogler – May I suggest we wait until May 15 and if we feel inappropriate charges are on it we can have a meeting and look at regulations. This is a big issue.

Ms. Fawcett – I have always been contentious about this matter. I would like it if we can all come to some agreement together.

Mayor – This agreement was transparent with Superintendent, the former Business Administrator the City Auditor and me.

Ms. Fawcett – the question wasn't about the transparency but that we didn't see the agreement until it was done and we didn't vote on it as a Committee.

**f. Review of S.C. Policy #GBR – Dress Code – as requested by S.C. Chairperson
Mayor Zanni (tabled on 3/24/14)**

The Mayor brought this to the Committee's attention because we have not had a new policy since 1987. I just want the Committee to take a look at the dress code.

The Committee recognized Ms. DiBenedetto to speak – This policy was put together by a prior Superintendent and Business Administrator. Given what our professional staff does we are in more areas than standing in a classroom.

Mr. Deeb – I have heard nothing but good about Methuen. I want the message to go out we think they do a great job.

Ms. Kumm – I have never heard parents speak about the dress code and I know many.

g. Appointment of Sub-Committee for Superintendent Evaluation

Mayor – the Superintendent does not have to have an evaluation this year

Ms. Fawcett – I misunderstood I thought you need to

Superintendent – Yes and I had small group meetings with each of you to go over the process. I feel it is the right thing to do after all, our teachers and administrators are all doing them.

The Mayor told the Committee he saw an article in the Globe that School Committees in the state are upset with PARCC (Read Peabody) and Mitchell Chester, Commissioner of Education and the ethics.

Mr. Deeb – I believe common core is a step back and I am in agreement with the article. Teachers and Administrators were not part of common core and testing. I support your effort to check if there is a conflict.

Mayor – this is a computer based testing. I think we should just check if there is a conflict of interest. If we would like I would send a letter in behalf of the Committee:

MOTION: Mr. Deeb asked the Committee to support and agree to send a letter regarding the conflict of interest.

Ms. Kumm seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Mr. Vogler – I have concerns with over testing. I read the article with all due respect and would not want to bring anything up to aggravate the Commissioner while trying to settle NSS. I do however agree to question and challenge the burden of unfunded mandates. I don't want to touch the ethics.

Mr. Deeb – our responsibility is to set policy. Mandates being passed down are hitting our finances since Ed Reform.

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm	No
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett	No
Mr. Richard P. Beshara	No
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb	Yes
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet	No
Mr. Robert Vogler	Yes
Mayor Stephen N. Zanni	Yes

VOTE: 3-4-0 REJECTED

Mr. Beshara thanked Dr. Kwong for taking the time to explain teacher evaluations to the Committee. Also since workshops can be held in other places I would like to see next year that we schedule workshops in every building, maybe take quick tours before the workshop.
Mayor – Good Idea

11. Executive Session

- a. Negotiations
- b. Litigation

12. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss at this Business Session, Mayor Zanni entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:40 p.m., thus concluding this Business Session for the evening.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to adjourn this Business Session at 8:44.

Mr. Kumm seconded the motion.

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,
Deidre Runge, Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools