

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS SESSION

OF

January 12, 2015

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
BUSINESS SESSION
January 12, 2015

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

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Stephen N. Zanni, Chairperson
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett, Secretary
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb
Ms. Jana DiNatale
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet
Mr. Rober F. Vogler

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brandi, Kwong, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Ms. Sara Ospina, Student Representative
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

1. Call to Order

Mayor Zanni called this meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

a. Flag Salute

Conor Mottram, a 4th grade student at the Marsh Grammar School, led the Committee in Opening Exercises of this meeting.

b. Moment of Silence-Mr. Vogler requested a moment of silence for William Russell who passed away this week. Mr. Russell was a science teacher and science department head in Methuen for 35 years.

2. Participation by Others

a. SOAR Award

Jefferson Arevalo was the recipient of the S.O.A.R. Award at this meeting. The Career Vocational Technical Education Department chose Jefferson for this Award.

b. Student-None

c. Staff-None

d. Public-None

3. Approval of Minutes -

Transcript Business/Organizational Session of November 10, 2014 and November 24, 2014.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to adopt the Recorded Transcripts of November 10, 2014 and November 24, 2014 as presented and waived the reading; Ms. Fawcett seconded the motion to approve as presented.

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

4. Staff Reports

a. Superintendent's Monthly Report-Superintendents Scannell reviewed her Monthly Report with the School Committee.

b. Instructional Technology Monthly Report-No questions.

c. Facilities and Grounds Monthly Update-Superintendent Scannell would like to rebuild both ice rink compressors at the end of the year if the funds are available.

d. Physical Education, Health, Family Consumer Science & Wellness Monthly Update-No questions.

e. Student Services Out of District and McKinney-Vento Updates

Mr. Vogler-Is there a cost sharing with the other school departments in the cities and towns that these students are coming from?

Ms. Bozek-Yes, they pay 50% and we pay 50%.

Ms. Fawcett-When Special Education students come to Methuen during the school year do we bill the towns they come from?

Ms. Bozek-Yes

5. Old Business and Other Pending Matters

None

6. New Business

a. MHS Field Trip to Spain/Portugal 2016-Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to approve the MHS Field Trip to Spain/Portugal 2016. Mr. Sweet seconded the motion.

Discussion

Mr. Deeb-Is this paid for by the students?

Superintendent-Yes

Mayor-How long is the trip.

Ms. McNichols-We are going the week of April Vacation.

Mayor-How much does the trip cost?

Ms. McNichols-\$3,100.00. That includes the airfare, 2 meals per day and site admission to the museums.

Mr. Deeb-Commends the Foreign Language Department for planning this trip.

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

b. MHS Program of Studies 2015-2016-Approval

Mr. Giuca explained their reasons for the changes to the Program of Studies for 2015-2016.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She thought they would have given the Committee an overview as to the reasons why they would like to make these changes. She is concerned with the changes to the History Department Courses.

Mr. Vogler-He would like the rational for the changes in the History Courses.

Mr. Crocker-We want to peak the student's interest and fuel their desire for learning their topics of choice.

Mr. Vogler-These courses will be replacing US History?

Mr. Crocker-Yes

Mr. Vogler-He would like to see a syllabus for these new courses.

Mr. Deeb-He has a lot of the same concerns as the other Committee Members.

History should be taught based on the facts and we cannot lose sight of those facts.

His biggest concern is that you are replacing 1 credit courses with ½ credit courses.

Mayor-The department head should be at our next meeting and bring an overview of the courses.

Mr. Sweet-A pre-requisite for all of these is still U.S. History I. He likes that students can focus on what they are interested in.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She understands that the goal is to excite the students. She has concerns with the possible loss of some of our History. It is History that she feels is very important to the students.

Mayor-MHS is making great efforts with the educational process. He would like to table this for tonight.

Mr. Deeb-Some of the course descriptions look great and he commends them for that. Maybe some of these changes could be elective courses.

Mr. Vogler-He appreciates what they are trying to do. You have 5-6 offerings but there is a gap in the History. Maybe there are too many changes that are trying to be done at once.

Superintendent-Mr. Crocker works hand in hand with the department heads that is why he is here tonight.

Ms. Fawcett-Is the History II course being replaced with all of these History courses so it will be broken down to 5 courses that they can chose to take 2?

Mr. Crocker-Yes. We hope they chose to take all 5.

Ms. DiNatale-Why is the NECC Readiness Math course being removed?

Mr. Crocker-This course is being removed to accommodate the expansion of other dual enrollment offerings that have piqued more interest from the student population. We can service our students who would be interested in Readiness Math in our own Math courses. NECC allows us to choose courses from their entire brochure. We chose 2 dual enrollment courses from that list. These courses are usually filled within hours of being posted.

Mr. Deeb-He is glad to see the Building Financial Literacy Skills course.

Mr. Crocker-This required course would be afforded to all freshmen.

MOTION: Mr. Deeb moved to table the Methuen High School Program of Studies for 2015-2016-Approval to another meeting. Mr. Vogler seconded the motion

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

c. Unit D-MOA

MOTION: Mr. Deeb moved to approve the Unit D-MOA. Mr. Vogler seconded the motion

VOTE: 6-1-0 APPROVED. Mayor Zanni voted no.

d. MPS School Calendar Survey for 2016-2017-Discussion

Mayor-This survey is not what he wanted. When sending out a survey there should be a rational. There is no rational with this survey. What he would like is to eliminate the February and April vacations and just have 1 vacation in March. We would find out the MCAS testing schedule and have the week after testing off. Looking at the future do we need 2 vacations? February and April are good learning months. This survey does not reflect what he said. He only mentioned the March vacation week. He thinks 1 week vacation in March is all the students need.

Mr. Vogler-He disagrees with the March vacation. He knows that other states have the March vacation but they also start before Labor Day and have Thanksgiving week off. He does not want to rush into the survey. There would also be contractual issues. We would have to discuss this in negotiations. He has met with no parent or teacher that agrees with just a March vacation. He does not want to send out the survey.

Mr. Sweet-He agrees the survey needs a rational. He wants to find out why Andover put this same issue on hold after they voted to do it.

Ms. Fawcett-She does not want to change anything without parent input. It usually takes 3-4 weeks to complete the testing cycle. We would need to check the testing schedule.

Mr. Deeb-It is always a good idea to solicit input. At the high school it is now mid-term exam time and in March it is MCAS so he thinks the February vacation is a good time for a vacation week. He likes the calendar the way it is but he is not against input.

Mayor-He wants to attach a rational for wanting the vacation week in March. He is working on that now and will bring it forward at a Workshop.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Andover backed away from a March vacation week because of the telephone calls and emails they received against it. She is struggling with the Mayor's rational. If there are issues with the learning time you would think the Superintendent and the Staff would be requesting a change.

Superintendent-She has sat with her team to do research on this subject. There is not enough data out there on this but there is a lot of data about Summer time off and that the time off is too long. She created the survey based on information she received from other Superintendents around the country on a email list server.

Our testing as well as spring events is based around our current vacation times. If all districts did this then we would go alone. To stand alone and do this, it could not be done. Our sporting schedule would also be affected. We are looking at an August start this September and to get out of school earlier.

Mayor-Have you spoken to Dr. Hackett in Taunton?

Superintendent-My understanding is that moving their vacation time has not been successful.

Ms. DiNatale-She appreciates the survey. She thinks we need more information on the survey. She would like to move forward with the survey.

Superintendent-She has been attending the School Council Meetings at each school and discussing the vacation issue. They are waiting for me to bring them more information from the Committee.

Ms. Ospina-She is a senior and around now she is starting to hear from other seniors that they don't want to come to school but they know that they are getting a vacation in February. February vacation is also a popular time for seniors to visit colleges.

e. Net School Spending Deficit Re-payment plan-Approval

MOTION: Mr. Sweet moved to approve the Net School Spending Deficit Re-payment Plan. M. Fawcett seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She thanks the City and School Department for this agreement. Going forward the State Delegation Bill has verbiage to include Retiree Health Insurance to Net School Spending. When will that begin?

Mr. Gosselin-The next fiscal year it will be 25% and there will be a 25% increase every year for a total of 4 years. We will then be able to clear 100% on Net School Spending.

Mr. Vogler-Will it be a charge back?

Mr. Gosselin-That will reflect on our end of the year report.

Mr. Deeb-He commends the Superintendent and Mayor for putting this plan together. How many years do retirees need to work for the City to get retiree health insurance?

Mr. Gosselin-As long as you retire from the City of Methuen you are eligible for health insurance. There is not a minimum of years of employment.

Mayor-The employees pay a 68/32 split. Retirees have an 80/20 split.

Ms. DiNatale-4 years down the road how is this going to impact our budget and our students? We need to think about this.

Mr. Deeb-The conversation has to center around people coming to work in Methuen their last few years before retirement and then retiring from the City and receiving 80% of their health insurance to be paid by the City.

VOTE: 6-1-0 APPROVED. Mayor Zanni voted no.

f. Methuen Public Schools Auditorium Rate-Approval

MOTION: Mr. Sweet moved to approve the Methuen Public Schools Auditorium Rate. Mr. Vogler seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mayor-Is this a flat fee rate?

Mr. Gosselin-Yes it is. Our smaller auditoriums are priced lower than our large auditoriums.

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED.

7. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

a. Expenditure Report - Monthly

Business Administrator Ian Gosselin submitted the Monthly Expenditure Report to the Committee.

DISCUSSION:

No Action

b. Revolving Funds Report – Monthly

Business Administrator Ian Gosselin submitted the Monthly Revolving Report to the Committee.

DISCUSSION:

No Action

c. Grants Report – Monthly

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Brandi Kwong, submitted the Monthly Grants Report to the Committee.

DISCUSSION:

Mayor-How do our Grant numbers compare to last year. Are there more or less Grants?

Dr. Kwong-We are ahead of last year in the number of Grants we have. We received smaller Grants this year but the dollar amount should be the same. She is in the process of writing 2 more Grants.

Mr. Vogler-What is the time line between City Hall receiving money and posted to the School Department Account?

Dr. Kwong-Typically it is week but it has sometimes taken up to a month.

d. Student Activity Accounts - Monthly

Business Administrator Ian Gosselin submitted the Monthly Student Activity Report to the Committee.

DISCUSSION: None

e. Supervisor of Food Services – Monthly

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

DISCUSSION: None

f. Bid Awards

1. HVACR Services-Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to approve the HVACR Services 3 year contract with a 2 year option to Francis H. Maroney, Inc. Mr. Sweet seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. DiNatale-She asked what the amounts represent in parenthesis on the Memorandum.

Mr. Gosselin-The Memorandum was created by our Purchasing Agent. He will ask her and email Ms. DiNatale the information.

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED.

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. Transportation Monthly Update

b. Residency Monthly Update

Ms. Carmen Aguilar Cruz, Records/Residency Secretary provided the Committee with the Residency Monthly Update Report.

c. School Resource Officers Monthly Update

A monthly report was given on each of the schools.

10. Business from the Committee

a. Building Committee Update by S.C. and Bldg Committee Member Sweet.

Mr. Sweet-The punch list is going down. The final bills are being paid. He toured the high school with the Superintendent. There were some staff concerns: Security concerns with some of the exit doors, technology and heating.

b. Consolidation Committee Update by S.C. Member Sweet.

Mr. Sweet-We did not have a meeting last month. We will be having a meeting this coming Wednesday.

Mr. Vogler-Lynne Hajjar Kumm made a comment at the last School Committee Meeting that she may not be able to continue to serve on the on the Consolidation Committee. The Consolidation Committee has never accepted her resignation. We feel she is still a member of the Consolidation Committee.

Mayor-She did state at the meeting that she was resigning.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She did not speak as eloquently as she would have liked at the last meeting. She remembers Mr. Vogler not accepting her resignation and that it would be discussed at the January Consolidation Committee Meeting. She felt she did not give a formal resignation and she would pick up where she left off on the Consolidation Committee.

Mr. Vogler-He had a Point of Information: The City Council Chairman appointed himself to the Consolidation Committee. How asked how he can appoint himself when it is a School Committee Member position.

Mayor-Let me look into this and talk to the parties involved and get back to the School Committee.

Mr. Vogler-Ms Hajjar Kumm should continue with the Consolidation Committee. If a School Committee member leaves the Consolidation Committee that person should be replaced with a School Committee Member, not a City Council Member. He hopes this will be resolved by the next Consolidation Committee Meeting on Wednesday.

c. Ameresco Project Update by S.C. Chairperson Mayor Zanni

Mayor-This is being re-worked on the City side. He will come back to the School Committee at a later meeting to see if they are still interested.

d. Charge backs by S.C. Member Fawcett

Ms. Fawcett-We did get some feedback from the State. She will review the feedback and get back to the Committee.

e. S.C. Policy Review Sub-Committee Update by S.C. Member Deeb

Mr. Deeb-The Committee met on January 2nd to go through the Policy Book policy by policy. We will have the changes to bring before you at the February Meeting. We have another Policy Review Sub-Committee Meeting scheduled for February 18th @ 9:00AM. to finalize the changes.

f. S.C. Energy Sub-Committee-Update and Recommendation

We have had 2 meetings. We met with representatives from Berrigio. They spoke of substantial Savings. We should allow the Business Office to sign a letter L.O.I. (Letter of Intent).

Mr. Gosselin-The State has regulations on how many communities can have a solar system. Their presentation seems too good to be true. With the cost of energy going up we need to look at ways to save money. He has also spoken with Seaman Company about doing some updating. Seaman would cost \$3,000.00 per month over the next 3 years. The solar savings would be about \$300,000 per year.

Ms. Fawcett-Solar Farm credits would make our buildings more efficient.

Mayor-You have to move quickly on the solar farm.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to authorize the Business Administrator to initiate a Letter of Intent with Berrigio.

Mr. Sweet seconded the motion.

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

OTHER

Superintendent- The Workshop Meeting on January 26th will be held at Methuen High School for the Science Fair.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-We will not have enough time at the Workshop to have Mr. Crocker and the History Department Head to come and explain the course changes.

Mr. Deeb-These course discussions should be at a televised meeting.

Superintendent-The next Business Meeting is going to be long as well as a long Executive Session.

Mayor-We should look into a separate meeting just for the course changes.

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, and enter into Executive Session for negotiations and litigation, at 8:44 pm, thus concluding this Business Session for the evening.

MOTION: Mr. Sweet moved to adjourn this Business Session and enter into Executive Session at 7:20

Ms. Fawcett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Sirois Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools