

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WORKSHOP/BUSINESS/EXECUTIVE SESSION

OF

OCTOBER 22, 2018

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 RECORDED MINUTES
METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WORKSHOP/BUSINESS/EXECUTIVE SESSION
OCTOBER 22, 2018

This Workshop/Business/Executive Session of the Methuen School Committee was held at Methuen High School, Media Center, and was posted for 6:30PM

ROLL CALL

Mr. Robert F. Vogler (P)
Ms. Susan M. Nicholson (P)
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (NP) Entered meeting @ 6:37PM
Ms. Jana DiNatale (P)
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (NP)
Ms. Jana Zanni Pesce (P)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (P)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Robert F. Vogler (P)
Ms. Susan M. Nicholson (P)
Ms. Jana DiNatale (P)
Ms. Jana Zanni Pesce (P)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (P)

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (NP) Entered meeting @ 6:37PM
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (NP)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Brandi L. Kwong, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Christopher Reeve, Supervising Principal, Comprehensive Grammar School
Rebecca Gordon, Supervising Principal, Marsh Grammar School
Mary Beth Donovan Grassi, Supervising Principal, Tenney Grammar School
Timothy Miller, Supervising Principal, Timony Grammar School
Richard Barden, Supervising Principal, Methuen High School
Ms. Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Jajuga called this Workshop/Business/Executive Session to order at 6:30PM with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

Flag Salute-Mayor Jajuga

Public Participation-None

1. Interim Assistant Superintendent Plan-Approval

Superintendent-She emailed the Interim Assistant Superintendent plan to the School Committee. This plan will be for the remainder of the school year. Anne Marie Krussell will assist with the English Department at the high school while Dr. Lisa Golobski Twomey acts as Interim Assistant Superintendent.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to approve the Interim Assistant Superintendent Plan
Ms. Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:

Ms. DiNatale-What will the impact be on the Budget for these positions?

Superintendent- It will be a savings of \$47,000.00.

Mr. Vogler-He feels this is a good plan.

Ms. Nicholson-This is an excellent plan with two outstanding candidates. She is excited about moving forward.

Ms. Zanni Pesce-She is excited she has heard great things about Lisa and Anne Marie. She is also excited there is a savings.

VOTE: 5-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

2. District Accountability/MCAS/School and District Improvement Plans

Superintendent Kwong gave her presentation.

Ms. DiNatale-The 43% that are partially meeting targets, would you explain what that means.

Superintendent-You can find that information in the district and school tabs. You will see the 2017 achievement and the 2018 achievement, what the change is and what the target was.

Ms. DiNatale-What percentage of our students are meeting the target?

Superintendent-She can tell them how many students are meeting or exceeding the MCAS target. That information will be coming next.

Ms. DiNatale-She sees the value in all of this but upset that they are getting lists of sub group students and they are supposed to focus on these students. She is interested in all of the students learning what they need to learn to be successful. This is why that meeting target number is so important to her. If that percentage is high then the students are not learning what they need to move onto the next level. That concerns her and she wants to know what they can do better to address it.

Mr. Vogler-In math it shows all students declined. He doesn't understand why this is happening. He is concerned about this.

Superintendent-She is concerned as well and she will address that tonight.

Mr. DiZoglio-Does everything add up to 100%?

Superintendent-No. Our report card is based on 100% weight. The way they score this is they take those percentages and put them into a point scale. Then the point scale becomes a percentage. That is what percentage they are meeting their target. All 5 schools are partially meeting target.

Ms. DiNatale-She was reading the MCAS bulletin to prepare for this meeting and there are 4 categories listed. Exceeding expectation, meeting expectations, partially meets expectations and not meeting expectations. Is that different from partially meeting targets?

Superintendent-Yes, it is different. The MCAS scoring is one part of this score.

Ms. DiNatale-Where it states not requiring intervention, her impression is that none of the schools will be listed to receive any intervention?

Superintendent-If they felt they needed intervention; there was a defined measure for that.

Mr. DiZoglio-This states we are in the 28th percentile. Isn't that low?

Superintendent-There are high schools in the State that are in the 21st percentile that were a level 1. This is because they have met their targets. It has nothing to do with the fact that they are out-performing our students. With the previous 1-4 system, if a school received a level 1, that

does not mean all these students are getting advanced on the MCAS. This new system is about us meeting our targets as a school district and keep moving forward.

Mr. DiZoglio-Did the scores meet expectations?

Superintendent-Not in math and they are not sure why. Grade 3 outperformed themselves in math. They are the first Grade 3 to have Eureka Math from the beginning of their elementary schooling. In grades 4,5,6,7, the scores declined. The center of the conversations has been to figure out why this happened. They all took the test on the computer so they may have not spent as much time writing out the problem since they could answer it on the computer. This was a concern for the teachers who watch students every day show their work and now the test was on the computer. She asked the State for data to show how the students did this year taking the test on the computer compared to the past when they took the test by hand. They do not have that data. Our Grade 4 students outperformed the State last year so to see their scores decline in Grade 5 the way they did does not make any sense to them. Grade 8 performed well.

Mr. DiZoglio-He is concerned about science. Why are the scores low? What is being done to bring up the scores? Math scores are also low across the grade levels. What will be done for this? He would like to see more details in the School Improvement Plans.

Mr. Vogler-He is concerned about science and math scores. He would like to see more details in the School Improvement Plans about these scores and how they are planning to increase the scores.

Mr. DiZoglio-He agrees, especially in the science area. They have made a big investment in the high school STEM program.

Superintendent-They are not happy with some of these scores but there are also areas where they see improvement, and they are happy about that. They are trying to figure out what happened in math. Grades 3 and 8 did better than last year, grade 4, 5, 6 and 7 did not and they are trying to understand why. She has professionally invested a lot of time into these two programs and it is super important to see what is happening day to day in the classrooms. They did have some staffing issues last year. It is very difficult to find math and science teachers at the middle school level.

Ms. DiNatale-She knows how hard the administration and teachers are working. She also knows how hard Dr. Kwong and her team have worked on curriculum. She is just so confused as to why the numbers are so low. These numbers are unacceptable. They as a School Committee can't sit back and accept these numbers. These students need to go out and compete in the World with students who are learning one hundred percent of the curriculum. They need to address this right now. She does not feel it is a curriculum problem, she is happy with the curriculum. If it isn't the curriculum is it an instructional problem. Are they breaking it down by classroom to see if strategies that one teacher has are working better than the strategies another teacher may be using. How can they help them with the resources they need. She has been there for many years and these students are not learning what they need to know year after year. They need to accept responsibility for this and make some really big changes this year. It is not fair to these students to continue not learning the material.

Superintendent-She does not have a one-statement answer. She has had some very specific conversations with the principals about math and science. Science is always a subject they keep chasing. It is not tested every year. She agrees that they have the materials that they need to teach these subjects. They did a lot of schedule changes this year that she thinks will support more academic time. She doesn't agree with the statement that they are not learning what they need. This is just one test, two days. It does not mean they have not learned what they were supposed to that year. It all depends on what questions they decide to ask this year on the test. One test in Grade 8 covering 3 years of science, 30 questions, it isn't fair to say they haven't learned.

Ms. DiNatale-They are really far from the meeting expectations category. They could get there if our curriculum was completely on point, our teaching was completely on point and the support

was completely on point. There is potential for getting there. What do we do to help with what is prohibiting our students from getting there. She would like more that just the plans they have had in the past; those are not getting the job done. She would like drastic measures right now. Ms. Nicholson-This is one test. There are so many other indicators in student achievement. It is unfortunate that schools have been ranked according to MCAS data. It is only one indicator of student success. She is also not happy with these scores, but do they put all their focus on one indicator? It is a moving target. They can't compare scores from year to year because of the changes in the MCAS. They may need more resources but she does not feel they should put them all into MCAS. The standards keep changing, assessments keep changing and expectations keep changing. They have a lot of work to do in the District, but she is not going to live and die over MCAS scores. There are many more things that are important for their students. Their emotional and social well-being is important as well as music and art. This data is overwhelming and they need to help parents understand it better. She does not want any of their students to be judged on one indicator. They do so much more for their students and she does not want them teaching to a test. They need to celebrate their successes. Yes, they can be disappointed with MCAS. She feels the goals and objectives lack specificity. How the data is collected to decide interventions is important. She would like to have the School Improvement Goals as an agenda item for the next School Committee meeting and not this evening. She has so many questions. She feels there are too many School Improvement Goals. It is difficult to try and put your time and energy into so many and expect to do well. If they are holding the students accountable, they need to hold the staff and School Committee accountable as well. They will soon be looking at next year's budget. They need to educate the public on how they are spending their money and if they are not meeting their goal then why. It is not always about money. Throwing money at a problem does not always solve the problem. She would like to postpone the School and District Improvement Plans until the next meeting. One of the goals is engaging the Community and parents. Only two schools mentioned their PTO. All the building administrators and teachers should be working with their PTO. No one mentioned their school councils in their goals. Do they need to spend more time with their school councils and educate the members? These two groups are very important in getting the word out to families and getting them more involved.

Mr. Vogler-He agrees with Ms. Nicholson. MCAS is not a cure all. Many students that did not do well on the MCAS have been successful. He would like to table the School and District Improvement Plans until the next meeting. He feels a lot more training will help the problem.

Superintendent-She has been meeting with the principals and their teams about school and professional goals. She does not want anyone to think they are not having those conversations because they are. This is how they should be spending their time, looking at and trying to figure out what are the things that are going to make a difference. One of the biggest challenges is biting off too much and to figure out what areas they should focus on.

MOTION: Ms. Nicholson moved to table the School Improvement Goals until the next regularly scheduled School Committee Meeting.

Mr. Vogler seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:

Ms. DiNatale-She would like to have some discussion tonight about changes that are going to be put in place now. She would like a meeting before the next School Committee meeting. She feels this is urgent. She feels they need to do things drastically different this year. She understands this is just one test. She is not concerned about the test she is concerned about the students not learning the curriculum. She feels the test is a pretty good indicator as to whether the students in this District are learning the curriculum.

Mr. Vogler-He agrees with the urgency of this but he feels the principals tonight have heard from School Committee the details they are looking for in the School Improvement Plans and give them time to work on them.

Ms. DiNatale-She asked Dr. Kwong if they need more time.

Superintendent-It is the end of October and they did not wait to do things until tonight. They are sharing the School Improvement plans as they have been developing them. They have had the data for six weeks. The principals have very specific tasks with evaluations and different benchmark assessments being done throughout the year. School Improvement Plans do not typically get approval by the School Committee. They bring them before the Committee to let them know their plans. They are already doing the job they set out to do. She understands they need to have a larger discussion and she is not in disagreement with that. There have been a lot of changes over the past few months. They have already started the process of doing some of the things in the plans. Is the Committee looking for revised Improvement Plans for the next meeting?

Ms. Nicholson-She is not expecting them to reinvent the wheel. There has been some excellent work done. When she looks at what has been identified as percent of teachers planning and executing lessons aligned to standard, how are you going to collect evidence of that? This is what she means when she says lack of evidence.

Superintendent-On page 11 they worked with the State and this is one of the things they recommended, so they are the same for each school. Next is targeted interventions. Is this where you would like them to add those benchmarks?

Ms. Nicholson-Yes.

Ms. DiNatale-If a student does not perform well on a test in the classroom what is the intervention that is happening right away? Do they have those interventions? If they make sure the students are mastering the material every day, then they will do well on these tests. That is the specific and measurable goal that she is looking for on these improvement plans.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Robert F. Vogler (Yes)

Ms. Susan M. Nicholson (Yes)

Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (No)

Ms. Jana DiNatale (No)

Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (NP)

Ms. Jana Zanni Pesce (No)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (Yes)

VOTE: 3-3-0 MOTION FAILS

Ms. DiNatale-Her no vote is because of the delay. If the Superintendent can give them a date that is a quicker turnaround, she would make another motion to table this until that date.

Mr. DiZoglio-The team has their goals and are going to go forward with them regardless of when they come before them. He feels they should continue with the MCAS presentation and then have two principals give their presentation. They have their plans and their goals. It is a formality for them to come before the Committee. They are not there to micromanage them.

Ms. Nicholson-If they are talking about major changes, are they now saying hurry up and get them done in the next week because they can't wait until November 13th? The Superintendent has already said she is meeting with the principals to go over the goals and objectives. She also said the past several months have been overwhelming with changes and she is respectful of that. She is confident that every employee in Methuen Public Schools is working effectively with the

students. She feels this can be discussed at the next School Committee meeting and she is distressed that the motion failed.

Ms. Zanni Pesce-The reason for her vote is she agrees with some of the Committee Members in meeting the specificity in the details of the planning. She does not want to delay this until November 13th if they are going to go school by school. She agrees they need specific ideas and timelines. She wants to hear their plans. How much time do you feel you need?

Superintendent-They are not going to wait until November 13th to do what they need to do. They have already started this process. Teachers already have their professional practice goals. Things are already happening in the buildings. She hears everyone loud and clear about the specificity. She would like to bring Dr. Golobski Twomey into these conversations and to do that she does need that time. Looking at the calendar for the next two weeks there is a lot happening and it may be difficult to get everyone together.

Mr. DiZoglio-He would like to change his vote so he is going to make the motion again.

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio moved to table the School Improvement Goals until the next regularly scheduled School Committee Meeting.

Ms. DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: NONE

VOTE: 6-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

3. School Committee Calendar-Discussion as requested by Committee Member Vogler

Mr. Vogler-They are scheduled to meet November 26th, the Monday after Thanksgiving. Since schools will be closed Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and they will meet on November 13th, he would like to void the meeting on November 26th.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to Void and publicly note on the calendar that they will not meet on November 26, 2018.

Mr. DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: NONE

ROLL CALL

Mr. Robert F. Vogler (Yes)

Ms. Susan M. Nicholson (Yes)

Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (Yes)

Ms. Jana DiNatale (No)

Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (NP)

Ms. Jana Zanni Pesce (Yes)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (Yes)

VOTE: 5-1-0 APPROVED Ms. DiNatale voted NO

Mr. Vogler-He spoke with City Councilor Kannan and they came up with a date for a joint meeting with School Committee and City Council for December 3, 2018 @ 6:00PM.

Mayor-What is the reason for this meeting?

Mr. Vogler-School Budget discussion.

Mayor-In his role as the Chair of the School Committee he has been updating the City Council on the School Budget.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to have a joint meeting on December 3, 2018 with School Committee and City Council
Ms. DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: NONE

VOTE: 5-1-0 APPROVED Mayor Jajuga voted NO

Mr. DiZoglio-Please send any agenda items for this meeting to him.

Ms. DiNatale-She would like to ask that the Superintendent and Business Administrator to attend this meeting.

Superintendent-She and Mr. Gosselin will be at the meeting on December 3rd.

***ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop/Business/Executive Session, Mayor Jajuga entertained a motion to conclude the Workshop/Business Executive Session for the evening at 8:39PM and go into Executive Session.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to adjourn the Workshop/Business Session at 8:39 PM and go into Executive Session for the purpose of: #1 Executive Session Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21 (a) (2) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. #2 Executive Session Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21 (a) (1) to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than the professional competence, of an individual. The School Committee will adjourn from Executive Session.

Ms. Nicholson seconded the motion

ROLL CALL

Mr. Robert F. Vogler (Yes)

Ms. Susan M. Nicholson (Yes)

Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (Yes)

Ms. Jana DiNatale (Yes)

Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (NP)

Ms. Jana Zanni Pesce (Yes)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (Yes)

VOTE: 6-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

Methuen Public Schools