

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS SESSION

OCTOBER 9, 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:
DEIDRE RUNGE, PUBLIC RECORDER

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES
METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
BUSINESS SESSION
OCTOBER 9, 2018

This Business Session of the Methuen School Committee was held at Methuen High School, Media Center, and was posted for 6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Jajuga called the Business Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed below.

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (NP) (arrived at 7:13pm)
Susan M. Nicholson (P)
Nicholas DiZoglio (P)
Jana DiNatale (P)
Dennis D.J. Deeb (P)
Jana Zanni Pesce (P)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (P)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Robert F. Vogler
Susan M. Nicholson
Nicholas DiZoglio
Dennis D.J. Deeb
Jana DiNatale
Jana Zanni Pesce
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Brandi Kwong, Acting Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Jennicha Pierre, Student Representative
Ms. Deidre Runge, Public Recorder

MOTION: Ms. Nicholson motioned approve the agenda as presented
Mr. DiZoglio seconded the motion to amended
VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

There was a moment of silence for Dr. Marilyn Harris, retired Assistant Superintendent for Methuen Public Schools.

1a Flag Salute

Edrian Vargas, a fourth grade student at the Comprehensive Grammar School, led the Committee in Opening Exercises of this meeting.

2. PARTICIPATION BY OTHERS

a. SOAR Award (2 Science & English)

Kevin Griskevich was the recipient of the S.O.A.R. Award at this meeting. The Science Department chose Kevin for this Award.

Angelo Pocoli was the recipient of the S.O.A.R. Award at this meeting. The English Department chose Angelo for this Award.

b. Student

1. Introduction of Jennicha Pierre the MHS Student Representative

2. Student Advisory Council

Caitlin Jalbert spoke about the new “Connections” format

Abygaelle Silien Spoke updated the Committee on MHS sports teams

Sarah Carter updated the Committee on the “Best Buddies” program

3. Letter of Commendation for outstanding performance on the Preliminary

SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in 2017 - Recognition

- Thomas L. Barry

- Jonathan D. Kumm

4. The National Academy of Future Scientists & Technologists/Award of Excellence – Recognition

- Brian Quero

c. Public Participation

Melissa Quinlan – 65 Birchwood Rd. – Timony Parent spoke of an incident that was not reported to her by the school

MOTION: Ms. DiNatale motioned to adopt a policy that if a student is injured it should be reported by the end of the school day

Mr. Deeb seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Ms. Nicholson said this should not be the sole responsibility of the nurse. This rises to the level of an administrator. She asked for a friendly amendment that injuries to anyone should be reported to the principal and that the principal and the nurse should investigate then inform the parents then an incident report should be sent to the Superintendent’s office.

Ms. DiNatale accepted the friendly amendment

Mr. DiZoglio seconded the friendly amendment

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

Acting Superintendent Kwong – Please clarify

Ms. DiNatale – My intention is to have a parent notified whenever a student is injured.

Ms. Pesce – When we are drafting this it should not just be a visible injury. A parent knows about their child’s history.

Robert Vogler arrived at the meeting at 7:13p.m.

Anthony Puopolo – 20 Adelaide Ave. got up and started speaking as an attorney on behalf of a client.

Mrs. Nicholson – Are you an Atty.

Mr. Puopolo – yes

Mrs. Nicholson – you keep mentioning client. It is not appropriate for you to talk about a client to school committee without an attorney present. I am not sure you should continue.

Mr. Puopolo – I understand, I will come back with my client when she is available.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. **MOTION:** Ms. DiNatale motioned to approve the minutes of June 25, 2018
Mr. DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-1 APPROVED (Mayor voted present)

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio motioned to approve the minutes of June 28, 2018
Ms. DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio motioned to approve the minutes of July 9, 2018
Mrs. Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

MOTION: Mr. Deeb motioned to approve the minutes of July 23, 2018
Ms. DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-1 APPROVED (Mr. DiZoglio voted present)

MOTION: Mr. Deeb motioned to approve the minutes of August 14, 2018
Mr. DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

b. **Declassification of Executive Session Minutes August 30, 2018**

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio motioned to approve the Executive Session minutes of August 30, 2018
Mrs. Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio motioned to withdraw his motion to approve.
Ms. Pesce motioned to table
Ms. DiNatale seconded the motion to table

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (Y)

Susan M. Nicholson (Y)

Nicholas DiZoglio (Y)

Jana DiNatale (Y)

Dennis D.J. Deeb (N)

Jana Zanni Pesce (Y)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (Y)

VOTE: 6-1-0 APPROVED (Mr. Deeb voted no)

MOTION: Ms. DiNatale motioned to add audio recordings at Executive Sessions.

Ms. Pesce seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Mr. DiZoglio said when we had the attorney here last time he said we do a little too much writing. It should be bullets and votes. So I would request the attorney to look and see if we would be legally correct audio taping executive session minutes.

Mayor – Clarified the vote was to table until we consult with the attorney to make sure we are on legal ground.

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio motioned to table

Mr. Deeb seconded the motion to table

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (Y)

Susan M. Nicholson (Y)

Nicholas DiZoglio (Y)

Jana DiNatale (N)

Dennis D.J. Deeb (Y)

Jana Zanni Pesce (Y)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (Y)

VOTE: 6-1-0 APPROVED (Ms. DiNatale voted no)

4. STAFF REPORTS

a. Superintendent's Monthly Report

Ms. DiNatale – We opened the school year with preschool classes at capacity. Now we have more students, can you tell me how we are handling this?

Acting Superintendent – We will be looking to opening new classrooms. We knew this was coming. We are making sure the staff to student ratio is appropriate until we come up with a plan to open more classrooms.

Mrs. Nicholson. You say that during the budget process we closed an intensive and integrated preschool classroom.

Acting Superintendent – Yes

Mrs. Nicholson – Where did the teachers and Program assistants go?

Acting Superintendent – They went to different positions in other schools and classrooms.

Mrs. Nicholson – So where will the funding come from?

Acting Superintendent – We will be talking to this later, but we did have money in our unemployment and budget money we put into grant salaries and the hiring practice was bringing in lower on the salary schedule.

Mrs. Nicholson – what classes are you looking at adding?

Acting Superintendent – One Intensive and one integrated classroom.

Mrs. Nicholson – We need to be transparent of any positions we are hiring so the public does not think we are deficit spending. I will be looking for a lot of detail how we are funding and whom we are hiring.

Acting Superintendent – We were notified that the circuit breaker fund was funded at 72%, which is another 500,000 we have. We are definitely not deficit spending.

Ms. DiNatale – Can we have specifics regarding Circuit Breaker funding we were expecting and what money actually is coming in. I also sent an email because I heard there is additional

Chapter 70 money. We were one of 11 towns that received more funding but don't know the specifics. And what monies are currently sitting in general funds that we may have to go to City Council and ask for.

Mr. Gosselin – I had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Lahey at the Mayor's office and Senator Ives office and we cannot find what you are referring to. So if you can give us what you have we can look into it.

Mr. Vogler – I agree we need the money amount. What if there is extra money that came in and is with the City.

b. School Resource Officers Monthly Update

Mrs. Nicholson – I have heard from former colleagues DESE is looking into joint evaluations of school resource officers by the Superintendents of Schools and the Chief of Police. Have you seen this joint initiative yet?

Acting Superintendent Kwong – Yes, right now DESE has put together a 15 page MOU. This is a new regulation and Superintendents are talking about it. We are looking for a compact version of it. Problem being many Districts don't even have SRO's and are trying to get that in place. The Chief is out of the state right now but I have been having the conversation with Sgt. Fleming a Lt. Aiello.

5. OLD BUSINESS AND OTHER PENDING MATTERS

a. Newly Adopted S.C. Policy # GCFA – Verification of Staff Licensure – Second Reading

MOTION: Mr. DiZoglio motioned to approve the second read
Mr. Vogler seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Methuen School Nutrition Offer vs. Serve Policy – Approval

MOTION: Ms. DiNatale motioned to approve the OVS Policy
Mr. DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

b. Green Communities Designation and Grant Program (C&D) Presentation

Mr. Bill Buckley, Economic Director for Methuen and Neil Duffy, Regional Coordinator did a brief presentation to bring the schools onboard.

Mr. Duffy – If Methuen is in you will receive a \$266,000 grant. You will then be eligible for yearly grants. Mostly energy projects for municipal communities fuel efficient purchase policy. Anytime you replace a vehicle you will purchase with criteria specs approved by the Green Policy. You would need to sign off on the Fuel Efficiency / Green Policy by the October 26 deadline.

Acting Superintendent Kwong – Mr. Gosselin, Mr. Stella and I have met with Mr. Buckley and Mr. Duffy and agree we are always open to grant monies. What we need from you tonight is approval and then I would like to write the letter of support. We are in a good place to do this.

Mr. Deeb – I am skeptical. I always hesitate when it comes to grant money. In the long term, we might be tying ourselves down. Sounds nice we are going green but I want to be guaranteed

cost savings.

Ms. Pesce– If the City goes Green would we get 266K grant and there after every year be eligible for 250K or is it a competitive grant, a grant all communities compete for or if we meet the requirements is it a guarantee.

Mr. Duffy – You are right if you spend down the 266K you are eligible to apply for projects. They are being funded but maybe not get all you apply for.

Mr. Vogler – Who gets the 266K.

Mr. Duffy – Completely up to the city.

Mr. Vogler – I am a big fan of solar.

Mr. DiZoglio – Did the City pass this.

Mr. Duffy – Yes.

Acting Superintendent Kwong – We cannot lose anything we can just gain.

c. Fuel Efficiency/Green Policy – Approval

MOTION: Ms. DiNatale motioned to put forward the Fuel Efficiency/Green Policy

Ms. Pesce seconded the motion

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (Y)

Susan M. Nicholson (Y)

Nicholas DiZoglio (Y)

Jana DiNatale (Y)

Dennis D.J. Deeb (N)

Jana Zanni Pesce (Y)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (Y)

VOTE: 6-1-0 APPROVED (Mr. Deeb voted no)

d. Technology Evaluation Schools/City – Update

Acting Superintendent Kwong – There was a lot of talk about the schools taking over the City. We agreed that Mr. Lussier taking over was not good at that time. He will continue to consult.

Mr. Lussier – This is not a good time. We have identified some ways that could help, like adding staff. For both side it is just not the right time.

Acting Superintendent Kwong – He has a skillset that is invaluable but this is not the right time but a great way to start talks.

Mr. DiZoglio – I like how we announced not moving forward tonight. We learned more about our IT department through a City Council meeting. The City thinks we are taking over on November 1st. I do want to know going forward we will be involved in the talks. I hope in the long run you are compensated and recognized.

Mr. Lussier –This was a true conversation. It was more like figuring things out and what would it look like. I would not jeopardize the school side. The Mayor understood the time was not right. This was more of an investigation and found some benefits on infrastructure and like jumping on the City fiber.

Acting Superintendent Kwong – We agreed that Mr. Lussier would continue to consult and have conversations for possible projects we might be able to share next year.

Mayor Jajuga – He is a talented man and we appreciated all the discussions we had with him. He talked to all department heads and they were all impressed. We all talk about more collaborative

effort we talk about but don't see. As was mentioned earlier tonight, the DPW and Mr. Stella's collaboration. I am trying to blend departments in a collaborative effort.

7. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

a. Expenditure Report – Monthly

None

b. Revolving Funds Report – Monthly

None

c. Grants Report – Monthly

None

d. Student Activity Accounts – Monthly

None

e. Food Services – Monthly

None

f. Contracts

1. Snowplowing/Removal Services for FY 18-19

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to approve the snowplowing bid as presented and allowed by the City of Methuen and the Methuen Public Schools. Rates were established by the City of Methuen.

Mr. DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Mr. Deeb – I have a concern even though I know it is exempt from formal bidding.

Mr. Gosselin – going out to bid will not benefit us.

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (Y)

Susan M. Nicholson (Y)

Nicholas DiZoglio (Y)

Jana DiNatale (Y)

Dennis D.J. Deeb (N)

Jana Zanni Pesce (Y)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (Y)

VOTE: 6-1-0 APPROVED (Mr. Deeb voted no)

2. Merrimack College Fellowship Agreement - Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to approve the Agreement for \$92,500.00
Ms. DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

g. Pearson Lease - Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to accept the 6 year lease from Ontario Investments for \$61,715.86 annually for a total cost of \$370,295.16
Ms. DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

8. NOTIFICATION OF APPOINTMENTS AND OTHER PERSONNEL MATTERS

a. Personnel Transactions

None

b. Appointments

None

c. Notification of Vacancy Postings

None

d. Personnel Matters requiring Committee Action

1. Family Resource Center Enrollment Specialist (2) – Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to approve the two Enrollment Specialist Positions for the FRC

Mrs. Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Acting Superintendent Kwong – We had to hire temporary positions, as it was clearly needed for all enrolling, all withdrawals and all residency checking districtwide. Without a doubt, we need these positions.

Mr. Lussier – The idea for centralized registration for a district our size was right. It just has not been staffed correctly. We had 12 secretaries doing this job but they all had their own touch. We have a good workflow right now with just two positions. Since May 14th we have had 1,063 applicants. Please know these applicants come in for multiple visits to complete the registration process (come back with medical documentation, registration...) There is no sign of this slowing down. Methuen has a revolving door.

Acting Superintendent Kwong – As we try to staff this Family Resource Center, we also have three people housed down there, other department secretaries that are bilingual staff to assist the parents. This is working.

Ms. DiNatale – Are these two staff members going to be hourly?
Acting Superintendent Kwong – They are unaffiliated 40 hours a week 12 month positions that typically follow the secretaries contract. They will have a more flexible schedule like starting early morning or later early evening to accommodate parents working schedules.

Ms. DiNatale – Are these new positions going to be able to carry sick and vacation time, to the same degree we allow now. This is a concern to me. I know these are people being brought back but I want to make sure we make changes for new employees.

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

2. Student Services Support Specialist (1) – Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to approve the Student Services Support Specialist

Mrs. Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None
VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

Mr. Gosselin – Since you approved these positions I would like your approval to move funds up to \$150,000 from unnecessary unemployment funds in contractual services to a payroll line. We had \$200,000 set aside; I put \$20,000 aside for a Superintendent Search so very comfortable with the \$150,000.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to move funds up to \$150,000
Mr. DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Ms. DiNatale – I thought you said \$130,000
Mr. Gosselin – Just don't want to keep coming back for approval.
I will come back with the actual figure moved

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

9. BUSINESS FROM THE COMMITTEE

a. Side Letter of Employment, Assistant Superintendent Contract – Approval

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to approve the side letter
Mr. Deeb seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

b. Motion: To contract with MASC to begin the process of a full search for a permanent Superintendent of Schools for Methuen Public School or act in any other way relative Thereto as requested by Committee Member Deeb

MOTION: Mr. Deeb motioned to approve the MASC Contract
Mr. Vogler seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Mrs. Nicholson – I read through the MASC information. I just want to make sure they identify two people to work with us.
Mr. Deeb – Mr. Gilbert who works this area is retiring and they gave us two names one is Glen Koocher but the other name escapes me right now.
Mrs. Nicholson – I believe that is Dorothy Presser and I am very happy with both of them have a wealth of experience.

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

c. Motion: To begin the process of searching for an Interim Superintendent for the remainder of the 2018-2019 School Year for Methuen Public Schools by posting the vacancy immediately and soliciting applications for the same or act in any other way relative thereto. As requested by Committee Member Deeb

Mr. Deeb – Giving the direction of School Committee, I provided a list of names to fellow Committee members. Given the timeline, I don't think we need to continue so I withdraw my motion.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler since there is a withdrawal I motioned to appoint Brandi Kwong as the Interim Superintendent Superintendent
Mrs. Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:

Ms. DiNatale – I want to clarify you are saying we will have a Superintendent working here by December.

Mr. Deeb - Not working, we can have a permanent superintendent in place by December, January to negotiate when they can come in.

Ms. DiNatale – Likely we would hire someone who works and has a commitment to another district. Don't get me wrong, Dr. Kwong has been doing an amazing job. I cannot imagine anyone can come in and do a better job. It is just a matter of what the Community asked and that was to go out for a search and us doing our due diligence. For that reason, I would vote no on this.

Mr. DiZoglio – MASC did say that putting an Interim in place would be about the same search timeline. This point in time I want to put all our time in searching for a full time superintendent. I have had teachers say not knowing is what is keeping them on edge.

Mrs. Nicholson - The timeframe is not going to work to conduct an interim search. We continue to get correspondence in support of Dr. Kwong from staff and parents. Personally and professionally, I need to support Brandi Kwong for the rest of the school year.

Ms. Pesce –I want to thank Dr. Kwong, but I agree with Ms. DiNatale, I think going out for an interim search would be much quicker search. For this reason, I will be voting no.

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (Y)

Susan M. Nicholson (Y)

Nicholas DiZoglio (Y)

Jana DiNatale (N)

Dennis D.J. Deeb (N)

Jana Zanni Pesce (N)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (Y)

VOTE:

4-3-0 APPROVED (Deeb, DiNatale & Pesce voted no)

Mr. Deeb voted no because he did not want to put a timetable on it.

And the last motion was committing until the end of the year.

MOTION TO EXTEND THE MEETING PAST 9:30

MOTION:

Mr. Vogler motioned to extend the meeting

Ms. DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:

Mayor Jajuga – One of my items below is regarding this. We need to be sensitive to students going beyond 9:30. There was a concern from parents. Can we try to keep the rest of the conversations brief please?

ROLL CALL

Robert F. Vogler (Y)

Susan M. Nicholson (Y)

Nicholas DiZoglio (Y)

Jana DiNatale (N)
Dennis D.J. Deeb (Y)
Jana Zanni Pesce (Y)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (N)

VOTE: 5-2-0 APPROVED (Mayor Jajuga and Ms. DiNatale voted no)

d. Finance Committee request of Financial Documents – Discussion as requested by Committee Member DiZoglio

Mr. DiZoglio – Again I found out by watching a City Council meeting that 9 school related documents out of the 13 documents requested by the Finance Committee where for the School department. He read the full request. This was not a “records request”. Our Administration does not report to the City Council or one City Council Member. It is my understanding this would need a City Council vote. There oversight of our budget is the bottom line total that the Mayor gives to them. We are 1 of 27 communities that went over budget. 25 of these communities received help from their City. They do not even know. We wait for the Council as a whole requests the information or if it is a “public records request”, they should compensate us for the work.

Mr. Vogler – Read a report from Murphy, Hesse, Toomey and Lehane dated June 18, 2018, re: M.G.L. 71:34. He asked that a copy of the letter from MHTL be sent to City Council. This is not a request of the whole Council. This is from two councilors from the finance company. \$300K was taken from our after school revolving fund and I am worrying they are looking for our money.

Interim Superintendent Kwong had been asked to go the attorney’s opinion on the public request of a City Council member. She had not heard back yet.

Ms. DiNatale – Mr. Gosselin do we have all this information pulled already?

Mr. Gosselin – A majority of it.

Ms. DiNatale – I just suggest we hand over what we have.

Mr. DiZoglio – I think we should have the Council Chair contact us for this in writing.

Mr. Vogler – Let the Council decide.

e. Setting up a Sub-Committee on Redistricting

The Committee decided to wait until a permanent Superintendent is appointed.

f. Setting up a Sub – Committee to Work with Mr. Lussier, SRO’s and Mayor’s Office on residency

Ms. DiNatale, Ms. Pesce and Mr. DiZoglio volunteered.

g. School Committee Meeting Time/Student Concerns as requested by Mayor Jajuga –

The Mayor spoke to this at 9:30 during the vote to extend the meeting.

#9 – ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business to discuss at this Business Session, The Mayor entertained a motion to adjourn the Business Session for the evening at 9:47 pm.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to adjourn the meeting
Mr. DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 7-0-0 APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,
Deidre Runge, Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools