

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

END OF YEAR MEETING/WORKSHOP SESSION

OF

JUNE 24, 2019

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**  
**END OF YEAR MEETING/WORKSHOP SESSION**  
**June 24, 2019**

End of Year Meeting/Workshop Session of the Methuen School Committee was held at Methuen High School, Media Center, and was posted for 6:30PM

**CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:**

**ROLL CALL**

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

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

**MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:**

Susan M. Nicholson (NP)

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Brandi L. Kwong, Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Lisa Golobski Twomey, Interim Assistant Superintendent  
Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator  
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

**CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:**

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

**Acceptance of the Agenda**

**MOTION:** Member Vogler moved to accept the agenda as presented  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion to approve as presented

**DISCUSSION:** None

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

**Flag Salute**

**1. Public Participation-None**

## **2. Sean Cronin, Introduction to the Committee**

Mr. Cronin is the Fiscal Stability Officer for the City of Methuen. He introduced himself to the Committee and explained his position.

Member Zanni Pesce-If the Committee tried to set up a Special Education Reserve fund do they need to get an Opine from him first before setting up the account?

Mr. Cronin-No. He puts in writing his opinions and thoughts on items that are on an agenda.

Member Zanni Pesce-They would have been okay setting up a reserve fund with no money in it to impact future finances?

Mr. Cronin-That approach isn't really necessary. There are other mechanisms to accomplish what he thinks they are looking to accomplish.

Member DiZoglio-The Committee can vote on contracts but not lease agreements. Those have to go before City Council. Can you explain the difference?

Mr. Cronin-If you are talking about the TELPs that is the statute. By law they need  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the vote from the legislative body of the Community.

## **3. Methuen Financial Report (School Dept.)-Presentation by Seth Racine**

Mr. Racine gave his presentation

Member DiNatale-The salary deficit is identify as 68 positions. 48 positions were filled and 20 were vacant and scheduled to be eliminate in order to implement the budget reduction. Did he determine why those positions were filled and what happened? She recalled the Superintendent at the time said there was money available and people were being called back and that the positions being filed were Special Education positions and that they were necessary to the District.

Mr. Racine-They did not look into the decision making as to who was employed and who were not. One of the issues they found was that there was not a position control process. It would be helpful to have numbers assigned to positions and then activate those positions as they are funded or deactivate if there is not funding. It would help to analyze as they go and see who is in what position, what positions were funded and the ones that were not funded. They could not tell what positions were activate and which were not. They had to rely on payroll data.

Member DiNatale-Is it possible for him to do a further investigation to find out if those positions that were filled were required for Special Education needs? She could not find this information in his report.

Mr. Racine-They looked into that but they were unable to associate data with specific people to specific positions so they were unable to determine that.

Member DiNatale-Isn't there a list of who was hired during that time and what their position was?

Member DiZoglio-If these positions were dedicated to Special Education then he puts the cost overruns to the Special Education total. They should be able to pull the names of who was recalled back for Special Education positions.

Superintendent-They are talking about the '17-'18 school year. Not '18-'19 school year when they recalled staff to come back. They can find staff that were hired from the payroll and identify what their position was.

Member Vogler-Did you factor in the retirees? There seems to be systematic problems that people were not aware of. Did they do an Educational review?

Mr. Racine-They only looked at cost, not at individual positions. This is a financial review so it wasn't about getting into decision making during that year or programmatic recommendations about what is best for students.

Member Zanni Pesce-She feels this is all mismanagement and not underfunding.

Member DiNatale-She wants people to understand the total on the spread sheet for Special Education costs for FY'18 is not the total Special Education cost for the year.

Mr. Racite-That is correct. This is select FY'18 Special Education non salary accounts.

Member DiNatale-Alot of the conversation at that time was about the need to spend the funds because of the Special Education needs in the District and properly educating those students. She feels it is important to concentrate on what portion of the overspend was for Special Education students and the education they deserve, and what portion of the overspend was spent on things that could have been avoided. She felt that was the purpose of this report but that was not accomplished in the report they have. She would like an outline of what the real Special Education cost were for FY'18. The question still on the table is how much of that funding was necessary to properly fund the education of the students. If it was necessary then there was no avoiding it and that is a different scenario then spending money that should not have been spent.

Mr. Racine-This report was not meant to find a cause but more to look at the financial information and the budget and they found that the salary budget exceeded that budget. It appeared the number of positions from June the prior year into August and September of the FY'18 school year had not changed and did not change throughout the year. They did find that there is a rising cost in students that need additional needs from ELL student to students with disabilities. These cost are real and they are expensive and they far exceeded the budget. This report was not to cast blame in anyone's direction, but to say these are real cost and acknowledging they need to be paid for. Once they identified these cost they shifted to how do you get ahead of it. Cost such as Special Education are so serious and they need to be proactively managed going forward. The more information and data that you have will allow the leadership teams to make longer term and better decisions with the limited resources they have.

Member DiNatale-She appreciates the suggestions he is making. One of the concerns is that the budget continues to be so tight every year and if there is a change in the necessary services for students that have special needs and those needs have to be addressed according to the law, they have to spend the money. Not have it identified whether the overspending was Special Education or not it makes it more difficult for them to do their jobs. If there is not a Special Education reserve fund, that is setting this District and administration up for failure.

Member Vogler-He would like a total picture of the ELL and Special Education positions. From November they saw the deficit and were told that when the Circuit Breaker money came in that would be used to fund the deficit. The report states that the money did not come in time to help with the deficit.

Member DiNatale-He said they need a comprehensive financial system. How much does that cost?

Mr. Racine-They cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. He recommends a comprehensive one that will include finances, payroll and HR. There are some that go above and beyond that. The savings and benefits of it far exceed the investment. He encourages them to buy one that does city and school.

Member DiNatale-She asked the Mayor if it is something they are doing.

Mayor-The CAFO who comes on July 1st has been discussing this with the auditor and the fiscal stability officer for a greater integration of the systems. They do not have a dollar figure yet.

Member Deeb-You say lack of systems led to the return of local and grant funds. Did they look into this further and how much was returned? Is this the same monies specified on page 22?

Mr. Racine-This highlight was meant to say it is important that the Superintendent and her team look at the budget in an all funds manner.

Member DiNatale-Is it possible to get an explanation on those grants? Why the funds were not used.

Mr. Racine-Often times they were around specific programs or they were carried over for specific reasons over the course of the summer.

Superintendent-There were 2 things happening. There were funds that were returned to the State and they no longer have access to those. The chart on the bottom is typically their entitlement grants that get carried forward to start up programs. There is a reason and a purpose for the carried over funds. The returned money was grants that did not get carry over.

Member DiNatale-This overview is not helpful to her.

Superintendent-She wants to keep perspective on what he was told and what the purpose of this report was. It was not something the School Committee requested, it was something that was required because of the legislation. There was a very specific purpose to this. She cautions them not to go backwards. They have done a lot to move forwards this year. There are questions that are unanswered and she will do everything she can to help answer those questions. Some of those questions are not in her purview right now because she just does not know the answers. They have already started to have forward moving conversations to move this District forward. Their biggest concern is that there was a deficit and it can never happen again. Their goal is to put in the checks and balances that they have typically not had.

Member Vogler-He would like to look at a timeline and cost plan. He would like details on a reserve account.

Member Vogler-The recommendations are very good. He would like to see this as an ongoing discussion.

Member DiNatale-What does recommendation #4 mean, create budget flexibility within Circuit Breaker?

Mr. Racine-Circuit Breaker is a reimbursement of the prior year. It is funding for students with disabilities and usually goes towards out of district tuition costs. Circuit Breaker is very flexible for them and can be carried over to the next year. If you do not have to use all of your Circuit Breaker in a year, you can carry some of that to the following year. That would be a reserve for students with disabilities.

Member DiNatale-What is the difference between Circuit Breaker and Stabilization fund.

Mr. Racine-Circuit Breaker is a reimbursement fund that is provided directly from the State to the School Dept. A stabilization fund is created with money from the City and there are certain voting requirements to access the funds.

Member DiNatale-If they have Circuit Breaker money left at the end of the year would they have to place that money in a Special Education Stabilization fund or do they carry it over in the Circuit Breaker line?

Mr. Racine-You would leave it in Circuit Breaker.

Member DiNatale-How many years can they carry it forward?

Mr. Racine-1 year.

Ms. DiNatale-She would like to implement the Position Review Committee right away. She would also like to have a review as to why the grant funds were returned.

Member DiZoglio-Is there a process to posting a job?

Superintendent-As of this school year there is a paper trail with written documentation and Superintendent Approval.

Superintendent-There will be funds in Circuit Breaker for next year. If something was to happen with the out of placement tuitions they will have the money available. This past year they have had a system of controls and her goal is to make them more formal. They have also had meetings with the new CAFO that have been enlightening and hopeful.

Member Deeb-He feels it is important to note that the Committee did vote for a hiring freeze for non-essential positions and the administration has come to the Committee with various positions.

Mr. Cronin-It's not the schools, it's not the city, it is one entity. In a well-run municipality where the city and school work well together you have formal policies that dictate how much money is going into reserves, where the money is coming from and what is the use of the reserve. If it was Special Education overspending it doesn't matter. A budget was set. If it was Special Education then they should have cut somewhere else. You have to live within your budget or have reserves set aside. The city and school need to have some dialog and good policies set up for when something like this happens.

Member DiNatale-When you say live within the budget if the Special Education cost start trending higher are you suggesting instead of going to the City for funds they should start cutting teachers? There is nowhere to cut in this budget. What is his expectation in this scenario?

Mr. Cronin-The expectation is Mass General Law. You live within your budget. He suggests conversations with the City but back when this happened free cash was low and what they had was used for the snow and ice overage and then they had nothing. You would have to do the thing you don't want to do, which is cut a budget.

#### **4. Union Contracts**

##### **a. Methuen Custodians Association-Ratification**

**MOTION:** Member Vogler moved to approve the Ratification of Methuen Custodians Association Contract  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

**DISCUSSION:** None

##### **ROLL CALL**

Robert F. Vogler (YES)

Susan M. Nicholson (NP)

Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)

Jana DiNatale (YES)

Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)

Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (YES)

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

##### **b. Massachusetts Nurses Association-Ratification**

**MOTION:** Member Vogler moved to Approve the Ratification of Massachusetts Nurses Association Contract

**DISCUSSION:** Member DiZoglio seconded the motion  
Member Deeb-He will be voting against this contract. Of all the contracts they have settled this is the only one where they have been unable to negotiate the longevity benefit out for future hires.

**ROLL CALL**

Robert F. Vogler (YES)  
Susan M. Nicholson (NP)  
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)  
Jana DiNatale (NO)  
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (NO)  
Jana Zanni Pesce (NO)  
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (YES)

**VOTE: 3-3-0 VOTE FAILS**

Member DiZoglio-Can this be brought forward again?  
Member Deeb-According to Robert's Rules someone from the prevailing side needs to make the motion to reconsider. It would have to be one of the no votes to ask to reconsider.

**5. School Resource Officers Report**

Member DiNatale-Have any of the medical incidents been for Narcan?  
Superintendent-She will get that information.

**6. Union Contracts**

**a. FY'20-Grocery Bid Winner-Contract-Approval**

**MOTION:** Member Vogler moved to accept the FY'20 Grocery Contract  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

**DISCUSSION:** None

**ROLL CALL**

Robert F. Vogler (YES)  
Susan M. Nicholson (NP)  
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)  
Jana DiNatale (YES)  
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)  
Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)  
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (YES)

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

**b. FY'20-Paper/Cleaning Supplies Bid Winner-Contract-Approval**

**MOTION:** Member Vogler moved to accept the FY'20 Paper/Cleaning Supplies Contract  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

**DISCUSSION:** Member DiNatale-She would like it noted that the previous vote and the following votes were all awarded to the lowest qualified prices, yet meeting all of the bid specifications.

**ROLL CALL**

Robert F. Vogler (YES)

Susan M. Nicholson (NP)  
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)  
Jana DiNatale (YES)  
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)  
Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)  
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (YES)  
**VOTE:** 6-0-0 APPROVED

**c) FY'20-Milk Bid Winner-Contract-Approval**

**MOTION:** Member Vogler moved to accept the FY'20 Milk Contract  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

**DISCUSSION:** None

**ROLL CALL**

Robert F. Vogler (YES)  
Susan M. Nicholson (NP)  
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)  
Jana DiNatale (YES)  
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)  
Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)  
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (YES)  
**VOTE:** 6-0-0 APPROVED

**d) FY'20-Bread Bid Winner-Contract-Approval**

**MOTION:** Member Vogler moved to accept the FY'20 Bread Contract  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

**DISCUSSION:** None

**ROLL CALL**

Robert F. Vogler (YES)  
Susan M. Nicholson (NP)  
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)  
Jana DiNatale (YES)  
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)  
Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)  
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (YES)  
**VOTE:** 6-0-0 APPROVED

**e) FY'20-Ice Cream Winner-Contract-Approval**

**MOTION:** Member Deeb moved to accept the Ice Cream Contract  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

**DISCUSSION:** None

**ROLL CALL**

Robert F. Vogler (YES)  
Susan M. Nicholson (NP)  
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)  
Jana DiNatale (YES)  
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)



Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)  
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (YES)  
**VOTE:** 6-0-0 APPROVED

**f) FY'20-Produce Winner-Contract Extension-Approval**

**MOTION:** Member DiZoglio moved to accept the Produce Contract Extension  
Member Deeb seconded the motion

**DISCUSSION:** None

**ROLL CALL**

Robert F. Vogler (YES)  
Susan M. Nicholson (NP)  
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (YES)  
Jana DiNatale (YES)  
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (YES)  
Jana Zanni Pesce (YES)  
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (YES)

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

**7. Update from Superintendent Goals**

Superintendent Kwong presented her 3 Goals with evidence (handout)

**8. Any other End of Year Business need to End the School Year as it becomes available**

Superintendent-She acknowledged Dr. Lisa Golobski Twomey and thanked her for her loyalty, attention and dedication. She has been with her this year through thick and thin. She appreciates her for that and all they work she has done to help keep this District moving forward this year.

Member Vogler-He would like handicap access at the field house on the next agenda.

Mayor-Mr. Stella is working together with the DPW on getting that done.

Member DiNatale-The Disabilities office for the City should also be involved in that as well to make sure they are compliant.

Mayor-He has been here for 2 budgets. The first budget he had to unload the stabilization fund so that the schools would get adequate money. That is not the case this year. They are working towards building up the Stabilization account.

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss at this End of Year Meeting/Workshop session, The Mayor entertained a motion to adjourn the End of Year Meeting/Workshop session for the evening at 8:28PM

**MOTION:** Member Vogler motioned to adjourn the End of Year Meeting/Workshop session at 8:28PM  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

**DISCUSSION:** None

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

**Respectfully submitted,  
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder  
Methuen Public Schools**