

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WORKSHOP/BUSINESS MEETING

OF

SEPTEMBER 23, 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
WORKSHOP/BUSINESS MEETING
September 23, 2019

Workshop/Business Meeting 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 (P)
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (P)
Jana DiNatale (P)
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (P)
Jana Zanni Pesce (P)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Robert F. Vogler
Susan M. Nicholson
Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson
Jana DiNatale
Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary
Jana Zanni Pesce

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Brandi L. Kwong, Superintendent of Schools
Eric S. McGee, Assistant Superintendent
Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Edward Lussier, Technology Director
Richard Barden, Supervising Principal, MHS
Joe Harb, Science Department Chair
Danielle Collins, Food Service Director
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Vice Chairperson DiZoglio-called this Workshop/Meeting 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 amend the agenda to remove item #2 and item #13 from this agenda and add to the agenda for the meeting of October 15, 2019
Member Nicholson seconded the motion to approve as amended

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to accept the agenda as amended
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

Flag Salute

1. Public Participation-None

2. Maggie Duprey, Introduction to the Committee-Moved to October 15, 2019 agenda

3. School Resource

Superintendent Kwong introduced Lt. Joe Aiello, 2nd in command of the School Resource officers. Lt. Aiello introduced the 2019-2020 School Resource Officers.

4. AP Report

Superintendent Kwong asked Dr. McGee, Mr. Harb and Richard Barden to give their presentation on AP (Advanced Placement courses).

Member Vogler-The AP test taking has decreased since 2011

Mr. Harb-Students are encouraged to take the course. The students are referred to the AP courses by teacher recommendation. The Dual Enrollment program has given them some competition with students choosing that program as well as students taking honors instead of AP.
Superintendent-The AP is an open enrollment for students. The students still have to understand they have to be committed to the course.

Member Vogler-Do teachers go to the scoring sessions?

Mr. Harb-The teachers are offered that opportunity and some have taken that opportunity.

Member Vogler-He would like to see the student grades in the AP classes. He has a concern that students are not passing. He would like to see comparable school percentages.

Mr. Harb-Prior to 2008 the students were selected for the AP courses. It was not an open enrollment. The passing percentage was not as high as it is right now, 70%. He would also like

to commend the teachers for their hard work and would also like to celebrate the student's dedication. They also offer AP enhancement to students that need extra help.

Member DiNatale-She would like all students to get a qualifying grade. What are they doing to help the students that struggle?

Asst. Superintendent-They offer AP enhancement.

Member DiNatale-She feels students should be placed where they should be. She doesn't want to fit as many kids as they can into AP classes. She doesn't feel a student has to take an AP course to be successful. She would like to see the course titles/course numbers. She feels a student should get the same grade in their AP course as the grade on the AP test. How do we get the students to a better place?

Superintendent-Sending teacher to training and AP enhancement. They have made significant changes in the past two years. They will continue to have conversations and give the support to the teachers and students.

Member DiNatale-Do the AP teachers go to training every year?

Superintendent-Yes. They can do day training or board training. They can not teach an AP course if they do not do the training.

Member Deeb-There is a lot to celebrate and they are moving in the right direction but there is still work to do. He feels AP courses teach to a test. He would like to see a comparison to similar cities. He would like to see the number of students that look the AP courses back to 2015. He does not agree with open enrollment.

Member Zanni Pesce-She would like a further breakdown. Students that didn't take the test she would like to see their class grade. She is concerned with students passing the course and not passing the test. She likes the idea of prepping grammar school students for the course.

Member DiZoglio-He sees the numbers going up. He would like to see how students did that take multiple AP courses.

5. Motion to remove from the table Revised and Readopt Policy #EFC School Lunch Payment Policy-First Read

MOTION: Member DiNatale moved to remove from the table Revised and Readopt Policy #EFC School Lunch Payment Policy-First Read.
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

6. Revised and Readopt Policy #EFC School Lunch Payment Policy-First Read

Superintendent-She handed out a document with the most up to date negative meal balances.

Mr. Gosselin-He addressed the memo and stated that the Food Service department is not is a deficit. The previous policy said if a student did not have the money to pay for lunch they would have a cheese sandwich. Several years ago they let students go on credit for 2 meals before they

received a cheese sandwich. Infinite Campus can send parent information to the school lunch system, Mosaic, and send emails to parents about delinquent balances. They are doing a mass email at the end of each week in English and Spanish to parents of students that have no money in their accounts.

Member DiNatale-If they hired a bilingual parent liaison for Food Service would that come out of the Food Service budget? They are trying to help parents and students. No one on the Committee wanted to hurt families. The topic is not shaming the student, it is to make sure every student is fed. The student debt is \$3,300.00 already this year.

Mr. Gosselin-At the end of last year the debt was \$620.00

Superintendent-The cheese sandwiches are not charged to the student. They are not reimbursable. A regular school lunch has to be added to the student's debt which is not reimbursable by the food service budget and would come from the school dept. regular budget.

Member DiNatale-How do we absorb the cost of a cheese sandwich and not the cost of regular meal debt?

Mr. Gosselin-The School Department regular budget makes the Food Service department whole.

Member DiNatale-Can you clarify if in the past Food Service was absorbing the debt for the cheese sandwich.

Mr. Gosselin-No. Federal and state regulations do not allow food service to reimburse for regular lunches it would have to come from our regular budget.

Member DiNatale-Parents should always complete the Free/Reduced Lunch application.

Ms. Collins-Parents can apply all year long for free lunch. There is no cut off time.

Member Deeb-He feels the policy before them addresses the needs of the families and no child is shamed.

Member Zanni Pesce-She feels this policy gives the administration some teeth. She is concerned about the number of students that owe \$25.00 or more.

Mr. Gosselin-The Free and Reduced processing has not been completed yet.

Superintendent-If they hire a parent liaison, some of this language will change.

Member DiNatale-Under responsibilities (page 11) she agrees with the changes in paragraph 1. In paragraph 2 she would also like to have added backpacks, phone and emails. She agrees with the changes in paragraph 4.

Member DiNatale-Talked about her reasoning for putting DCF into the policy. She believes sometimes people might need help and don't know how to get that help. Her previous comment about contacting DCF is for families who send their students to school with no money and no food. That is why she wanted the language at the end of paragraph 3. On page 12 (middle of the page) She does not support this. She feels consequences should be against the parents and she does not support taking things away from the students. If parents have a positive balance at the end of they year she would like to see them be able to donate the money to students who can't afford their meal debt.

Member Vogler-He suggested that the Superintendent and Member DiNatale meet and come to a policy agreement and they can vote for it at the October 15th meeting.

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to approve the hiring of a Bilingual Parent Liaison to be paid out of the Food Service Budget.
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Member Deeb-He would like clarification of this position and the salary.
Superintendent-This position would mirror the current parent liaison positions that they have. The salary is around \$22,000.00 per year

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to table the Revised and Readopt Policy #EFC School Lunch Payment Policy
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

7. Motion to remove from the table Revised and Readopt Policy #JCDAB-Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug use by Students Prohibited-Second Read

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to remove from the table Revised and Readopt Policy #JCDAB Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug use by Students Prohibited-Second Read
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

8.Revised and Readopt Policy #JCDAB-Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs use by Students Prohibited-Second Reading

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to Revised and Readopt Policy #JCDAB Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug use by Students Prohibited-Second Read
Member DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

9. Motion to remove from the table Revise and Readopt Policy #JCDA-Extracurricular Code of Conduct-Second Reading

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to remove from the table Revised and Readopt Policy #JCDA Extracurricular Code of Conduct-Second Read
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None
VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

10. Revise and Readopt Policy #JCDA-Extracurricular Code of Conduct-Second Read

MOTION: Member Deeb moved to Revised and Readopt Policy #JCDA-Extracurricular Code of Conduct-Second Read
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Member DiNatale-I don't remember the change in students arriving to school late

AMENDMENT TO THE POLICY

MOTION: Member Deeb moved to amend Policy #JCDA to read Student must check into school by 10:00am to do extracurricular activities-Second Read
Member DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: Member DiNatale-Students arriving to school after 10:00am must have a note to do extracurricular activities.

MOTION: Member DiNatale motioned to put in the old language.
Mr. Vogler motioned to amend full day and put back in the old sentence

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

11. Revised and Readopt Policy #BBAA School Committee Member Authority-Second Read

MOTION: Member DiNatale moved to Revised and Readopt Policy #BBAA School Committee Member Authority-Second Read
Member Zanni Pesce seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

AMENDMENT TO THE POLICY

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to amend paragraph 5 to read "Any Methuen School Committee member may make a written or and or verbal request"
Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:

Member Vogler-He is making this amendment so everyone on the Committee gets equal treatment. It also protects the Superintendent.

Member DiNatale-She does not understand this amendment. The most transparent request is in writing.

Member DiNatale-She thinks this is nonsense. The Superintendent needs to document and send information to every member. She wants to strike the last paragraph.

Member Pesce-She would like to get the school attorney's opinion.

Superintendent-She will ask Attorney Maccaro for clarity on this.

WITHDRAWAL OF AMENDMENT

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to withdraw his amendment to paragraph 5 to read “Any Methuen School Committee member may make a written or vocal request”

Member DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to table Revised and Readopt Policy #BBAA School Committee Member Authority-Second Read

Member Deeb seconded the motion

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED TO TABLE

12. FY’20 Grammar School Handbook-Approval

MOTION: Member Deeb moved to approve the FY’20 Grammar School Student Handbook

Member Nicholson seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

13. FY’20 High School Handbook-Approval Moved to the end of October 15, 2019

14. Residency Update

Mr. Lussier gave his presentation and update on Residency. He discussed doing residency checks on all Grade 10 students. They will for the first time match residency information with the City database so this will eliminate all students having to bring in documentation for proof of residency. The students that do need to bring in paperwork will drop the paperwork off at the high school.

Member Zanni Pesce-Do they have the number of students attending Methuen Schools using a Guardian Affidavit?

Mr. Lussier-They do not have that data from the past but they have started to track it.

Member DiNatale-If they are using the information from the City then it should allow them to do more than 1 grade. She is disappointed they are not doing all grades. They voted 2 years ago that a full check of all students would be done.

Mr. Lussier-They need to try matching date with the City with 1 grade. If that is successful they will add another grade level or two. It is a huge undertaking and they are trying to find a way to simplify the process.

Member DiNatale-Can the School Safety officers help with this.

Mr. Lussier-They already have a roll in this.

MOTION: Member Deeb moved to extend this School Committee meeting past 9:30pm
Member DiNatale seconded the motion

DISCUSSION: None

ROLL CALL

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

VOTE: 4-2-0 APPROVED TO EXTEND MEETING PAST 9:30pm

CON'T DISCUSSION:

Member Nicholson-She thanked Mr. Lussier and his staff for all of their hard work. She acknowledges the work the staff does while being short staffed for a while now. I do understand what Member DiNatale is saying though. Doing a couple of grades would be wonderful but I don't see that happening. However listening to you Dr. Kwong this will be your first time you will be doing this. You do have some software that would certainly help. So on behalf of the Committee I want to thank you for your honesty and letting us know our expectations are realistic.

Member Deeb-He can attest to Mr. Lussier's work ethic. The residency check is a high priority of the School Committee. When they adopted the policy they were told it could be done. The Committee wants this done. They want a full residency check.

Mr. Lussier-He will meet with the Superintendent and come up with a plan.

Member DiNatale-Doing this saves us money and helps with class sizes.

Mr. Lussier-He would like to do this one grade level and then plan for the other grades.

Member DiZoglio-Since the parking passes have been issued have they pick up any out of district students while showing there driver's license and car registration?

Superintendent-No issues with residency while issuing parking passes.

15. Student Activity Accounts Renewals and Discontinue-Vote

MOTION: Member Vogler moved to accept the Student Activity Accounts Renewals and Discontinue
Member Deeb seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Gosselin-He brought this forward to the Committee so that the policy will reflect the changes that were made and voted on to change the balance maximums in the Student Activity accounts.

Member Vogler-He has concerns about the end of year balances and what happens to the money.

Mr. Gosselin-He will get that information and bring it back to the Committee.

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

Mr. Gosselin told the Committee Policy JJE/JJF last July that they voted on the change of the maximums. I would like to have a vote on the full policy at this time with the approved maximums in the policy.

MOTION: Member DiNatale moved to approve as presented

DISCUSSION: Member Deeb seconded the motion
None
VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop/Business Meeting, Vice Chairperson DiZoglio entertained a motion to adjourn the Business/Meeting session for the evening at 9:44pm.

MOTION: Member Deeb motioned to adjourn the Workshop/Business Meeting for the evening at 9:44pm.

Member Zanni Pesce seconded the motion

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

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