

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SPECIAL MEETING

NOVEMBER 18, 2020

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

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METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
SPECIAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 18, 2020

The special 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

Ryan DiZoglio (P)
Karen Hallbauer (NP)
Jessica MacLeod (NP)
Susan Nicholson (P)
Louann Santos (P)
Jana Zanni Pesce, Vice Chairperson (P)
Mayor Neil Perry, Chairperson (P)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ryan DiZoglio
Susan Nicholson
Louann Santos
Jana Zanni Pesce, Vice Chairperson
Mayor Neil Perry, Chairperson

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Karen Hallbauer
Jessica MacLeod

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Brandi L. Kwong, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools
Ronald Noble, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessments and Grants
Edward Lussier, Director of Technology
Mary Beth Donovan, Supervising Principal
Deidre Runge, Public Recorder

The Mayor asked for a motion to accept the agenda as presented

MOTION:	Member Pesce motioned to approve the agenda Seconded by Member Santos
DISCUSSION:	NONE
VOTE:	5-0-0

Flag Salute by the Committee

Mayor read out loud: This special meeting was posted as: Individuals that would like to participate at this meeting may do so in writing (see Policy #BEDH #7 referring to remote meetings) before 3:00 p.m. Wednesday, November 18, 2020 via email to derunge@methuen.k12.ma.us which will be printed and given to the Chairperson of the meeting to read to the public.

or;

The Mayor also read: those that would like to attend, we will allow 12 (twelve) additional people into the meeting. You must follow health and safety guidelines including wearing a mask throughout the meeting and follow the 6' of social distancing. See if anyone signed up for participation

- Via email: Spencer O'Dowd, 327 Howe St.
- Via email: Melissa Lacroix, 8 Randolph Ave.
- Jonathan Becker, 473 Lake St., Haverhill, MA – President of the Methuen Educators Association spoke on behalf of the teachers and remote learning.

Mayor: Remember if you would like us to read a comment at the next meeting please send to derunge@methuen.k12.ma.us by November 23, 2020 before 3:00 p.m.

Mayor: At this time we will close the Public Participation part of this meeting.

#1 The Mayor asked Member Santos to start the discussion on COVID 19 Update that she requested the Special Meeting

Member Santos – read a statement she had put together regarding her concerns with the communication regarding the decision to have the whole lower school at the Tenney Grammar School switch to remote learning. Her major concern was she was not aware of it before the notification went home to parents. Parents almost immediately called her and she didn't know how to respond. She also asked if maybe they could look at the COVID dashboard and tweak it a little bit that parents have said it is confusing to them.

The Superintendent apologized for not getting the information to them first. She went over the events that led to the last minute decision. The timing of the Thursday meetings with the Mayor, DPH and our lead nurse do not always work. We send our phase determination letter out on Thursday afternoon after we meet. In this case, on Thursday evening we had three additional people then more on Saturday. Once we got these numbers on Sunday as confirmed cases, and reviewed their location in the school, we had a ZOOM meeting. In classroom transmission was being seen here so the decision was made to go remote. I alone had to type, translate the determination letter; set it up to send to all the parents. I usually send an email to you first and say this letter will be going out today, but with the given time restraint, it would have been irresponsible of me not to get the information out to parents. I will make sure to send it to you first in the future.

A discussion ensued between the Superintendent and the Committee regarding what they would like to see the COVID Dashboard look like. The Superintendent said she would take their suggestions and come back to them at the next meeting with a new look.

Member DiZoglio on my meetings I hear parent and staff concerns. I was approached by someone that said that DESE's website had nobody listed for COVID cases in Methuen. They are saying you are not reporting cases to DESE, so I called DESE. I want everyone to hear that

the Superintendent was doing it right. Because of the holiday, they held on to the numbers. They also said that they receive calls from the Superintendent if not every day they get one every other day.

Mayor Perry told the Committee that when cases are reported we are following the law to the letter on both the city and school side.

Superintendent – Part of the concern I am hearing is “how do I know if I am a close contact”. You will know because our contact tracer callers will call you. Our Callers call everyone in the classrooms, on busses... that have to quarantine also.

Mayor Perry – Our contact tracer callers that go through the list and call everyone directly have a 30% no answer rate. If you get a call, please make sure to answer or return the call.

Member Nicholson asked about the meeting mention in the email read earlier in public participation and that Member DiZoglio also referred too. My questions are “what are the purpose of the meetings” because unless we are all together we are not School Committee members. And “who was invited and how did they find out about this meeting”. I would just like some information to better understand.

Member DiZoglio said he does a broadcast on Facebook where he walks them through things like the reopening plan and School Committee meetings. Last night I did a ZOOMPod and everyone is invited to join by registering on Facebook. They do need to be a Methuen resident or a staff member. At the meeting I just listen. I write down their questions and bring them to the meeting. We don’t negotiate we just talk.

Member Nicholson said, “I would worry how easy it is to cross the line in a meeting like that. When things like parents are afraid of speaking their mind and staff if afraid of retribution are being mentioned staff is not there to hear this. Those are very negative and hurtful comments. I don’t want to short change them when these negative comments are made. I do applaud your outreach. It is a very fine line you walk in a meeting like that.

Mayor Perry – I agree that outreach is good but you can not be talking about topics subject to collective bargaining at all. And you do not talk as a member of the body.

Member DiZoglio – I start off the meeting with “I don’t speak on behalf of the School Committee, and I only speak on behalf of me. I just listen.

Superintendent – The message I am getting from parents, staff and students is that they are very understanding. We have not stopped giving to the schools since the pandemic and when I say we I mean us, staff, parents, students... I do not believe what you brought forward tonight is the sentiment of everyone.

Member Nicholson – Everything is spelled out here for us. The news was distressing but you prepared us for pivoting whether it be to go remote or back into the classroom. There is a protocol in place that is being followed.

The Mayor asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting

MOTION: Member Pesce motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m.
Seconded by Member Santos
VOTE: 5-0-0

Respectfully submitted,
Deidre Runge, Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools