

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WORKSHOP/BUSINESS MEETING

OF

MARCH 21, 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

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METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WORKSHOP/BUSINESS MEETING
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This Workshop/Business Meeting 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 (P)
Ms. Jana DiNatale (P)
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (P)
Ms. Jana Zanni Pesce (P)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator
Ms. Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio called this Workshop Session to order at 6:30PM with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

Flag Salute-Mr. DiZoglio

6:31PM

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to leave the Workshop/Business Meeting and go into Executive Session to discuss Contract Negotiations and School Safety.

Ms. Zanni Pesce seconded the motion

VOTE: 6-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

MARCH 21, 2018

ROLL CALL TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

7:31PM Re-entered Workshop/Business Meeting

Superintendent-She handed out an update to the New Position Request that she brought to the Committee at the last meeting. Mr. Vogler asked her to rework the list and choose the essential positions. She feels they are all essential positions.

Marsh-Deleted 2 Reading Teacher positions. She cannot just do 1 position. They need an upper and lower reading teacher. She would rather do a good job than not. 1 reading teacher could not service the entire building. She has also taken the off the list the Bilingual Parent Liaison.

CGS-Same positions deleted from list.

Timony-Same positions deleted from list.

Tenney-Same positions deleted from list.

MHS-Deleted 4 part time teachers Academic Support Lab and 1 Guidance Counselor.

District Wide-Maintenance Craftsman, Mental Health Coordinator (District), Network Operator, Part Time Maint. Secretary, Student Services Bookkeeper.

Ms. Nicholson-She followed the last meeting on television. She appreciated the Superintendent's work. She would like to see the data behind keeping these positions or deleting these positions.

Superintendent-She will get the numbers for the next meeting. They have a constant cycle of new students. These students have a lot of breaks in their education. The impact on the classroom when they come in sets the teacher back to bring these students up to speed. The students' records are not always up to date. Many of these students are 2/3/4 years behind. The impact is across the board.

Ms. DiNatale-She is disappointed that the Reading Teachers are deleted from the list. She would like to see this position expanded. As a District we are leaps and bounds ahead of other Districts. All the students would be impacted. The Academic Support Lab is what the MHS students asked for. There should be an opportunity for these students. She feels the Guidance position is also very important. She would like more information on the ESL, BCBA and the psychologist positions.

Mr. Deeb-He agrees that the reading teachers should be a priority. Some students are remedial and need extra help. The Intensive Pre-K is not mandated by the State.

Superintendent-This is a mandated program. Students are already being serviced by the Special Education Department.

Mr. Deeb-If Pre-K is not mandated, how are they mandating this program?

Superintendent-Any child 3 years of age or older with Special Education Services must be serviced. We also test at the private and parochial schools.

Mr. Deeb-What if we didn't offer Pre-K?

Mr. Gosselin-We would need to send someone to the home or hire a 3rd party. There will be 8 Special Education students and 8 Roll Model students. The Roll Model students are charged tuition.

Mr. Deeb-The Maintenance Craftsman is already in the budget.

Mr. Gosselin-It is in the budget as One Dollar. He wants to fund the position.

Mr. Deeb-Do we save money with this position?

Mr. Gosselin-Craftsman positions save us a lot of money.

Superintendent-MHS is busy all weekend. Mr. Gosselin receives calls and he needs to call in our Maintenance Team.

Ms. DiNatale-Do we pay them overtime?

Mr. Gosselin Yes.

Ms. DiNatale-Can we give them time off for working overtime instead of pay?

Mr. Gosselin-No

Superintendent-We did give comp time years ago. The auditors were not happy with that.

Mr. Vogler-He would like to see the class size for Foreign Language and Social Studies classes. He would like the Superintendent to add back in the Academic Support Lab.

Mr. Gosselin-They made some cuts to the original 84 Million Dollar Budget amount. The positions cut totaled \$717,000.00. The new Circuit Breaker had not been received yet so he used last years figure. They have calculated this year's figure which is higher than last years, the total is about 3.2 Million Dollars. He cut the Extraordinary Expenses down to \$100,000.00. They reduced the Chromebook amount by half, about \$100,000.00.

Mr. DiZoglio-Was the whole amount cut from Extraordinary Expenses?

Mr. Gosselin-Yes

Mr. DiZoglio-He is disappointed some repairs have been put off for 3 years. He requests to go back to the Budget and freeze the number. He wants Bruce Stella and Ameresco at the April meeting. He wants the School Committee to get a copy of the Capital Improvement Plan and have checked off what has been done and what is left to do. The students will not have any schools to go to if we don't keep up the maintenance in the schools. The playgrounds will not pass inspection. The City needs to realize that as well.

Mr. Vogler-He sat with Bruce Stella and went over some of the things that need to be repaired. \$250,000.00 will come from the Ameresco Project to go towards the CGS roof. The additional \$100,000.00 needs to come from a bond. He supports the Security Issues. It is important to maintain our facilities. Cooling Towers need to be replaced. We can't use half of the Tenney Auditorium because of railing issues. The MHS Bus Loop road needs repairs. The bridge at the CGS School needs to be redone. Our budget is low compared to other districts.

Mr. Deeb-He agrees with Ms. Nicholson. He would also like to see data and justifications for the new positions. They also need to come in with a fiscally responsible budget. He asked the Superintendent for information on the Out-Of-District tuition.

Superintendent-The Out-Of-District information is not complete. She will have it for Monday Night's meeting.

Mr. DiZoglio-We have been fiscally responsible for too many years.

Mr. Deeb-He understands and feels this Committee has been fiscally responsible for the past 5 years. Last year every department in the City was increased to maintain the high level of services. He feels there is a balancing act. He would never support a 2 1/2 Override.

Ms. Zanni Pesce-She understands that cuts have to be made. She does not want to see the Chromebooks cut. How will we disburse Chromebooks if they are cut?

Superintendent-They are in carts and will be shared.

Ms. Zanni Pesce-She feels that would be a waste of time. She does not approve of this cut.

Ms. Nicholson-She was happy to hear the new Mayor is recognizing a Capital Improvement Plan. Extraordinary Expenses should never take away from the children and teachers. The need for playground repairs and the bridge at the CGS strongly urges a Capital Improvement Plan. She would like to know what the roll of the Psychologist at the Marsh and CGS will be. The ESL positions, could they help new students or should we eliminate ESL positions for Newcomer Reading Teachers? We are going to support the needs of our students and staff and let the Citizens know this is why we need these positions. She asked the Superintendent for any information she can get the Committee that will help them advocate for the Budget.

Superintendent-She was at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) this morning. Things are changing drastically with MCAS Testing. ESL teachers will be our most important positions in our school system. The assessment high stakes attached to our Second Language Learners and accountability is over the top for all the right reasons. The mindsets have to change about the MCAS levels. We cannot talk about levels, they are disappearing. It is going to be a radical change. The ESL instructor is going to be very important in school districts with the demographics like they have.

Mr. Gosselin-MCAS will be completely different. You will be comparing percentiles with different schools. They are putting more weight on different areas. There will no longer be the term "Levels". It is going to be a different way to look at how schools are performing.

Superintendent-She also asked DESE if they would come out to the districts and give a presentation to School Committees throughout the State. The mindset is different as well as the terminology. The accountability is hitting areas that it never hit before.

Ms. Nicholson-You are talking about levels disappearing with MCAS testing. The ACCESS test that the ESL students participate in has levels that indicate the amount of support the student needs. Are those levels going away as well?

Mr. Gosselin-They did not speak specifically about the terminology with the ACCESS testing. They did talk about the results of the ACCESS testing and student's improvement being weighed more than it has in the past. They are also going to put weight on students that take Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Superintendent-We are in a good place. They are looking at honors differently, depending on the classroom.

Mr. Gosselin-In the past they compared schools to similar schools. They are no longer doing that. It will now be non high school, any schools 3-8, they don't have to have all those grades just any 3-8 grades.

Ms. DiNatale-She agrees with what they are doing. To her it makes sense. Every student in every classroom should be learning the same thing. It is the whole idea behind the testing. We have updated our Curriculum and it should be teaching our students all of those things. What this means for our taxpayers is that our students will be compared to students in cities and

towns where they spend a ton of money over foundation budget and our students are going to be competing with those students to get into college. We need to invest in our schools so our students can be learning what they need to learn in their classrooms here in Methuen and we can't do that if we keep trying to work with a foundation budget. A foundation budget is 15 years out of date and does not make any sense. Foundation means a floor and is the very minimum the City should contribute. We have cut 90 positions between 2007 and 2017. She wants the deleted positions coming off of this year's budget to be added back into the budget. She wants staff paid fairly and for students to have what they need in the classroom. Disruption impacts everyone in the classroom. Improvement to the buildings should be pared down to important things. We need to ask the Mayor what items can be included in a Capital Improvement Plan. Our Education Budget should be for education our students, not repairing the buildings. She doesn't feel our Community wants to go backwards. She doesn't think the taxpayers want to impose user fees, bus fees or increase class size. She is in support of a fair budget.

Mr. Deeb- Based on the cuts over the past 10 years, is this proposed budgets or actual cuts?
Superintendent- These are all funded positions that were cut from budgets.

Mr. Deeb- He feels that is important for people to know. Obviously this District has taken a significant hit over the past 10 years. We are all in this together and it is balancing everyone's needs. You will need to go back to the drawing board and try to incorporate what everyone on the Committee has said. He thanked the Superintendent for advocating on behalf of our students.

Mr. Fahey- They will be meeting with all department heads including the schools next week to discussing a Capital Improvement Plan. At the last meeting there was some discussion about the Chargeback/Medicaid issue. There was a meeting with the Mayor, Superintendent and staff. They have reached an interim agreement on the Chargeback issue. They are going back and forth between the City and the School Department to finalize things. There will be a significant cut to the discretionary pieces of the items that are in the Chargeback agreement. Once the Mayor and the Superintendent have signed the agreement, it will go to the School Committee Chargeback Committee for review. The Medicaid piece is still in the works they have not finalized that yet. However, we have had some good solid discussions on this.

Mr. Vogler- The Superintendent cannot sign the Chargeback Agreement. The Mayor signs the agreement and the School Committee would vote on the agreement. It is an agreement between the School Committee and the Mayor.

Mr. Deeb- He agrees with Mr. Vogler. There should be a Sub Committee meeting prior to the next meeting to review a tentative agreement.

Mr. DiZoglio- Is there an agreement prepared for the Sub Committee to review?

Mr. Gosselin- We have the framework. It is not ready to bring to the School Committee.

Superintendent- It is still a work in progress.

Mr. Gosselin- The vast majority of the Chargeback Agreement is insurance which is non discretionary. There are other items that are discretionary. It is a true negotiation with good faith on both sides.

***ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop Session, Mr. DiZoglio entertained a motion to conclude the Workshop Session for the evening at 8:34 pm.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to adjourn the Workshop Session at 8:34 pm.

Ms. Nicholson seconded the motion

VOTE: 6-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

Methuen Public Schools