

**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD**

**OF**

**THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**WORKSHOP SESSION**

**OF**

**March 28, 2016**

**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 SESSION**  
**March 28, 2016**

This Workshop of the Methuen School Committee was held at the Central Administration Building, Conference Room and was posted for 6:30 PM.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson  
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson  
Mr. Robert F. Vogler, Secretary  
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb entered meeting at 6:53 P.M.  
Ms. Jana DiNatale  
Ms. Joyce C. Campagnone  
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio entered meeting at 7:12 P.M.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Brandi Kwong, Assistant Superintendent  
Ms. Gina Bozek, Director Student Services  
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator  
Mr. Edward Lussier, Director Instructional Technology  
Mr. Bruce Stella, Director of Facilities  
Ms. Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

**CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:**

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson called this Workshop to order at 6:30 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

**a. Flag Salute**

Mayor Zanni gave to each School Committee Member a City Brochure that he had printed. There were 2,500 brochures printed and they will be distributed to local businesses as well as schools to be handed out to the public. He also wanted to thank Methuen High School Supervising Principal Richard Barden for the Assessment Report. It was a very nice report.

**• Capital Improvement Plan**

Superintendent-Bruce Stella has worked diligently on this Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The handout is to give you a snapshot of what needs to be done in the buildings. We always receive complements on how wonderful our buildings are maintained and we would like to keep them that way.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Do you have a summary of priorities?

Mr. Gosselin-Mr. Stella has done that on the spreadsheet in your packet.

Mayor-There are things that have to be done including the Ice Rink and Gymnasium roofs. He is glad to see this process started. He thanked Mr. Stella for the report. He also stated that there is a lot of talk about graduation. There will be no school or city budget money used to purchase the chairs needed for the graduation at the stadium.

Ms. Campagnone-Have you thought about a secure place to store the chairs.

Mayor- Superintendent Scannell and Mr. Stella will find a place to store them. He also stated that there will be no one allowed on the field with high heeled shoes.

Ms. DiNatale-Are we committed to have graduation at the stadium next several years?

Mayor-Yes, we are spending a lot of money so now we are committed to having it at the stadium.

Mr. Vogler-We need to make sure the parents are aware they cannot go onto the field.

Superintendent-We will be having a student assembly as well as sending out notices to the parents to make them aware of this.

- **FYI Parent Survey and Debbie's Treasure chest.**

Dr. Kwong-She passed out a copy of the slides that were unable to be shown by the representative from Debbie's Treasure Chest at the last School Committee Meeting. Per Ms. DiNatale's request Dr. Kwong also handed out a copy of the parent survey with all the parent answers from the 5 schools

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Question #12, were the parents positive towards administration?

Dr. Kwong- Yes the comments are attached. She also mentioned that she redacted school names and administration titles/teacher names. She wanted the School Committee to see the comments but did not want the schools/staff identified. They received very positive comments in regards to communication with the school even though we are in need of a better student management system.

- **Infinite Campus Technology Replacement in Regards to FY'17**

Mr. Lussier passed out a brochure on the Infinite Campus Student Management System. He stated that this system will bring together all of our individual department systems. He worked to choose this system with the Assistant Superintendent, Student Services Director, Business Administrator, Guidance Department Chair, and the Human Resources Director. If this is approved at the next Business Meeting they will be up and running in September and phase in different parts of the system throughout the year.

Superintendent-The vendors also met with the building secretaries and bookkeepers so that they could also review the different systems. Salem N.H. and Brockton M.A. have the Infinite Campus System and some of our staff visited these towns to see the system running.

Ms. DiNatale-She thanked Mr. Lussier for all of the Committee's hard work. She asked if the beginning of the year forms that parents complete will be on the portal or will they still be paper handouts.

Mr. Lussier-That is one of the components of this system but it will not be ready this September. It should be ready for next September '17.

Ms. DiNatale-She is concerned about PBIS and the communication with parents about rewards.

Dr. Kwong-The way things are currently tracked is for Personnel use not parents. We could look into that for our push system.

Ms. DiNatale-It is important for staff to have that information but parents should also get that information. If this is not a piece of this system then we are missing an opportunity to let parent have conversations at home.

Dr. Kwong-You are talking about the social/emotional piece. We are at the beginning of that and we need to be thoughtful when making decisions about that type of information.

Mr. Lussier-Teachers would also have to have updated email information from the parents.

Ms. DiNatale-She hopes they look at using ClassDoJo more. It is free and gets the information to the parents. Are there any concerns about what the system cannot do?

Mr. Lussier-It is an all in one system. We will need to make some adjustments but the positives far outweigh the negatives. We will keep Connect Ed. The voice call system that Infinite Campus has is \$15,000.00 more than what we pay for Connect Ed. We will also not absorb food service. The big push will be getting parents information correct in the portal.

Ms. DiNatale-She feels a big piece for parents is not being able to receive text messages from the schools through the Connect Ed system.

Mr. Deeb-What is the cost for Infinite Campus?

Mr. Lussier-It will be a \$40,000.00-\$60,000.00 budget increase plus implementation costs.

Mr. Deeb-This looks good on paper is it PC friendly?

Mr. Lussier-This will work on any device.

Mr. Deeb-In reference to different ways to contact parents and students, he encourages teachers not to email students.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She has seen very positive experiences with her children emailing teachers. It seems to be helpful with class work and home work.

Superintendent-We have policies on correct internet usage.

Mr. Deeb-Learning a new system will require a lot of training. Will it be worked into Professional Development?

Superintendent-Yes

Mr. Vogler-It would be good to have a timeline as to when parts of the system will be phased in. He would like to see parent training sessions. Is this company going to include training in their price?

Mr. Lussier-Yes it includes 24 days of training.

Mr. Vogler-Are there other school systems that use this?

Mr. Lussier-Yes. Salem NH, Brockton MA, Weston Ma, and several private schools.

Mr. Vogler-Will this system interfere with our iPads?

Mr. Lussier-No. A new system is a huge deal/undertaking. There will be an Infinite Campus team working with us.

Mr. Vogler-What information will be rolled into this system?

Mr. Lussier-Our student data.

Mr. Vogler-What will the system do in September?

Mr. Lussier-Everything the parents see now on the current system will be available in September.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Will the student schedules be ready for September?

Mr. Lussier-Yes.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Will the teacher evaluation tool be seamless in this system?

Dr. Kwong-Yes. The evaluation tool is only forms.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She would like the Superintendent's Monthly Report to have an update on the progress of the system. Why is their phone system so expensive?

Mr. Lussier-It is a messenger with voice system. It is out sourced by Infinite Campus that is why it is so expensive.

Superintendent-Many districts including Methuen have been having Connect Ed call problems. We are working with Connect Ed to fix these problems.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-The text messaging of the Connect Ed voice call information may be too long of a message to text.

Ms. DiNatale-Hopefully it will have the ability to do it when it is the right circumstance.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-We should also think about using Twitter.

Mr. DiZoglio-How far back will the student information go?

Mr. Lussier-Infinite Campus is going to help us bring over 5 years of information.

Everything else will be stored on a hard drive.

Ms. DiNatale-She hopes this system will allow the parents to have choices on how to communicate with the teachers and school.

Mr. Lussier-It will be the same as Connect Ed. The parent portal is specific to each student.

Superintendent-We will be looking into all of the parent communication items.

Mayor-He would like Infinite Campus to come before the School Committee and do a presentation. Did the Committee look at other companies?

Mr. Lussier-Yes we looked at 8-10 on paper. 6-8 vendors gave presentations or webinars. They also had secretaries and bookkeepers sit in on the presentation to get their input as well.

Mayor-Can this company keep-up with the State and Federal Policies? He would like time to think this over. He feels there should be a plan in place before the School Committee makes a decision.

Mr. Deeb-He feels the School Committee does not need a presentation. He agrees this needs to be done all at once.

Mr. Lussier-He has a plan in place. They are not taking this lightly. The bid was for a 3 year contract with a 2 year option.

Mayor-How would you train staff?

Mr. Lussier-We would have split workshops for secretaries. We would run the old and new systems through May and June and then the entire new system for July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Vogler-Are we touching any financial systems?

Mr. Gosselin-No

Mr. Vogler-He thinks this system looks good. He knows parents who have children that attend Salem NH schools and they like this system.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She does not need a presentation. She does not want to micromanage Mr. Lussier's Department. He has answered all of her questions and he said he will keep us informed. She is very excited for the new system and it is long overdue.

Ms. Campagnone-She would like to see a comparison with other companies.  
Superintendent-Mr. Lussier met with many other vendors and spent hours of time working on this.

Mr. Lussier-We had different vendors come in and they spent an entire day with secretaries, nurses and guidance councilors. We have done all the research.

Mr. DiZoglio-He thanked Mr. Lussier for his presentation tonight. You have done your homework.

Ms. DiNatale-She also does not want to micromanage Mr. Lussier's Department but when we talked about this in the past we were looking for something to help support the parents, but this seems to support administration. She owes it to the taxpayers to look at the cost. She promised the parents better communication and she is not seeing that with this system.

Mr. Lussier-There is not a vendor out there that would have their entire system up and running for this September. We need to make sure everyone is comfortable with using the system. This system has the best parent portal that we could find.

Mr. DiZoglio-He would like a timeline and cost for the next meeting.

Dr. Kwong-She wants to let Ms. DiNatale and the entire School Committee know that this system can do all that you are asking of it. It is not fair to ask the teachers to implement all the functions by September. We need to be fair with every person involved with this change. This system has a lot of potential. It just cannot all be up and running in 3 months.

Ms. DiNatale-She would like to see a timeline. She feels that the parent piece is being pushed away. Text messaging is not going to be available and homework will not be online by September. That is not what the parents want.

Dr. Kwong-Parent communication is the reason why we went with this company. She wants it to be clear that parent information will get out there we just need time to get the information in the system and the staff trained.

Mayor-He would like Mr. Lussier to get the School Committee the information on what systems we currently have and which of those systems will be rolled into Infinite Campus. He would also like information on the cost of the new system and a timeline.

- FY'17 Foundation Budget-Initial Discussion

Mr. Gosselin gave his power point presentation of a snapshot of the FY'17 Foundation Budget. He spoke about the increase for the retiree health insurance for the next year.

Mr. Deeb-He asked if the retiree split was the same as the employees 62/38.

Mayor-The retiree split is 80/20. That has been the retiree split for many years. He asked when the bus contract ends for the Special Education Transportation.

Mr. Gosselin-We have 1 year left of the contract.

Ms. Bozek-She wanted to mention that the Screening Brief Intervention Referral for Treatment (SBIRT) Program will be awarding us a \$10,000.00 Grant. We are in the process of training staff for September.

- Potential Staffing Update for FY'17 School Year  
Ms. Bozek-The Special Education Department will be requesting the following positions for the 2016-2017 School Year Budget;  
There will be 45 pre-school students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) transitioning into kindergarten. She is requesting 2 new kindergarten classrooms for kindergarten students with intensive needs, 1 lower school classroom for medical fragile students and 1 high school inclusion teacher. She took away a lower school PASS teacher last year. That position needs to be added back. She is also requesting 2 support staff positions. They started the year with 102 out of district students. That is currently at 118. There were 18 new special education students that moved in this year. 14 were collaborative students we took right away. The remaining 4 we will be fiscally responsible for as of July 1, 2016.  
Mr. Vogler-Do you have a projection for the out of district costs for next year? Will these new classrooms be able to support these students?  
Ms. Bozek-She did not have the projection information with her at this Workshop.  
Mr. Deeb-Are we providing any services differently than the surrounding communities and New Hampshire?  
Ms. Bozek-Many States follow the Federal Guidelines for Special Education. The State of Massachusetts has their own specific guidelines that we need to follow as well as the Federal ones.  
Ms. DiNatale-She wants to be fair to all our students with what they need and give them the correct level of service.

Superintendent-We will be requesting the following Regular Education Staff positions for the 2016-2017 School Year Budget.

K-8 is in very good shape. We are requesting no additional staffing in those grades.

Dr. Kwong is reviewing the Title I Department. The high school is moving in a positive direction. We are recommending 1 foreign language teacher to help reduce class size and 1 social studies teacher to also reduce class size. She would also like to restore the theater program. Hundreds of students are interested in having this program back. She has had many requests from parents as well as students.

Ms. DiNatale-Why would you like to have this program during the day and not after school?

Superintendent-It would be an elective option. She is also requesting 1 guidance councilor at the high school and 1 Special Education liaison. She strongly supports these requests. She is currently reviewing upcoming retirements. She is also meeting with Ms. Bozek and John Crocker, Guidance Department Chair, to look at adding 1 additional guidance councilor at each building.

Mr. Deeb-Are you proposing additional money? He is concerned about all these additions.

Superintendent-These positions are currently in discussion.

Mayor-This is a fluid process right now. We are expecting the enrollment at the high school to go up for the next school year.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-You are asking for an additional councilor at the K-8 schools? We have 1 Dean at each building. What is the reasoning for the addition?

Superintendent-We have more at risk students outside of Special Education. Social emotional learning/well being. This is not just Methuen these issues are Nation Wide. She will get them the case load numbers.

Mr. DiZoglio-What is the roll of a Dean of Students?

Superintendent-They oversee all the discipline and work hand in hand with the principals. They do not have the capabilities to handle the social/emotional piece. In the last 4-5 years the student behaviors have changed drastically.

Mr. Vogler-He would like to see psychologist trained in drug and alcohol abuse.

Mayor-We have 2 part time drug staff that will be made full time positions.

Superintendent-We are at the forefront with drug and alcohol issues. She is very happy with what we do and have a handle on substance abuse. We do not have a drug problem in our schools.

Ms. DiNatale-She would like to know the reasons for the extra guidance staff. Is it for discipline issues or student mental well being.

Superintendent-If you knew what these young students are dealing with outside of school with family issues you would be shocked. These are not behavior issues they are social/emotional issues that these students are trying to deal with outside of school but bringing them into the classroom.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION – NEGOTIATIONS/LITIGATIONS:** Yes

**\*ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop Session, Mayor Zanni requested a roll call to end the Workshop and go into Executive Session 9:01 PM.

**ROLL CALL TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson Yes  
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson Yes  
Mr. Robert F. Vogler, Secretary Yes  
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb Yes  
Ms. Jana DiNatale Yes  
Ms. Joyce C. Campagnone Yes  
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio Yes

Respectfully submitted,  
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder  
Methuen Public Schools