

**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD**

**OF**

**THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**WORKSHOP SESSION**

**OF**

**April 7, 2015**

**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**  
**April 7, 2015**

This workshop of the Methuen School Committee was held in the Media Center of the Donald P. Timony Grammar School, and was posted for 6:00 PM.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson  
Ms. Lynne Hajjar-Kumm, Vice Chairperson  
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett, Secretary  
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb Arrived at 6:11PM  
Ms. Jana DiNatale  
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet  
Mr. Robert F. Vogler

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ms. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Brandi Kwong, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator  
Mr. Edward Lussier, Instructional Technology Director  
Ms. Gina Bozek, Student Services Director  
Mr. John Crocker, Guidance Department Chairperson  
Mr. Joseph Harb, Science Coordinator Grades 8-12  
Ms. Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:**

Mayor Stephen Zanni called this meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

**Advanced Placement Analysis of Student Learning, Growth and Achievement**

Superintendent-Mr. Harb is here tonight to give a presentation about the Advanced Placement Test and the changes that have happened over the years and the rational for the changes.

Mr. Harb gave his presentation.

Mr. Crocker-He explained how Advanced Placement Scholars are chosen to take the courses. Methuen High School has an open enrollment unlike other districts that hand pick their Scholars.

Ms. DiNatale-Other school districts have much high scores than our students. She hopes that the students in these AP classes are able to achieve at least a score of 3 on the exam.

Mr. Harb-We do not water down the test. Our students are taking the same test as all the students in the Nation. Most schools that we are compared to do not have open enrollment.

Ms. DiNatale-If the classes were smaller would a larger number of students succeed? Are the larger class sizes having an effect on students test scores?

Mr. Harb-Many students are not prepared for college. These courses prepare our students for college.

Mr. Deeb-He would like to see other district AP course criteria. He thinks the high school may need to look at selective criteria and not open enrollment.

Dr. Kwong-She was told by the Assistant Superintendent of North Andover schools that they are going to change to open enrollment. The College Board wants schools to have open enrollment. If we went back to selective criteria it would be a step backwards.

Mr. Harb-In the eyes of the College Board Methuen Public Schools has a very successful Advanced Placement Program. In 2010 the College Board flew him to California to speak on how to create a successful Advanced Placement Program. The Commissioner of Education came to visit Methuen High School and said that he wished more schools had an AP Program similar to Methuen.

Mr. Deeb-He feels taking an Advanced Placement Course is a privilege and not a right. When you look at criteria, no one who receives less than a B in an honors class should be allowed in the Advanced Placement Courses.

Mr. Crocker-When we are looking at the student's grades we are not letting anyone take a course that previously received a D or an F. We have found that the previous criteria keep many students out of the Advanced Placement Courses.

Mr. Vogler-He is concerned with the perception that is out there. Your explanations are good but there are 47,000 residents in this City that thinks we do not do well in Advanced Placement Courses and want to know why. He thinks there should be some restrictions to get into the courses. He would like to see a breakdown of what the student's letter grades are and what they are getting for a score on the exam in each course.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-She is struggling with the open enrollment. She would like to know how many students are in each class and if there is collaboration work. Who decides if the student can't handle the course work and is the student then removed from the course?

Mr. Harb-The students are recommended for the courses by their teachers. If a student is struggling we ask them to seek out their teacher for extra help. If they come to us with their parents and ask to be removed from the course we will honor that request.

Mr. Crocker-Along with the teacher recommendations we sit down with each student and speak to them about the course and what is expected of them.

Ms. DiNatale-She does not feel that a student in an Advanced Placement Course should be receiving a grade of C or D.

Mayor-This is a healthy discussion. We have concerns about these courses and are trying to understand the process. If the Committee has further questions they can get them to the Superintendent and she will get the answers for you.

Superintendent-These courses use a syllabus set by the College Board. The students at Methuen High School are taking the same Advanced Placement Courses and exams as all the other school in the Nation, private and public.

7:12PM Mayor requested a break from the meeting

7:16PM Meeting returned to session

Dr. Kwong-Mr. Deeb requested the certifications of the middle school social studies teachers. Please see the handout with that information.

Mr. Deeb-Thanked Dr. Kwong for the information. Concerns were brought to his attention about the certification of these teachers. Are we doing 20% outside of certification with other subjects or just social studies?

Dr. Kwong-Just social studies.

Mr. Deeb-He is concerned that the middle school students are only receiving ½ hour of social studies each day.

Dr. Kwong-She will get the answer to that for him.

Mr. Deeb-He is concerned that if a teacher is teaching outside of their content area they may not be as passionate about that subject.

### BUDGET DISCUSSION:

Superintendent-Mr. Gosselin will give his revised preliminary budget presentation.

Mr. Gosselin gave his presentation.

Mayor-How many Special Education Students will be out of district next year?

Ms. Bozek-There will be 83 students placed out of the district next year. We will be bringing 5 students back to our schools at the end of this school year. C.R.E.S.T has increased their programs and they will fit the needs of some of our students.

Mayor-What are the homeless student numbers?

Ms. Bozek-As of March 1<sup>st</sup> there was 68 students. As of today there are 6 more students.

Mr. Vogler-Do we get reimbursed from the state for these students?

Ms. Bozek-We did last year but may not receive any money this year.

Mr. Vogler-Do we receive a credit for the Medicare we give the City?

Mr. Gosselin-No

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-How many classrooms are in each building?

Superintendent-There are approximately 55-60 classrooms per building.

Mayor-Why do all the schools have the same supply amounts?

Mr. Gosselin-We will be breaking that down by student.

Mayor-Do students get a list on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of school requesting supplies?

Superintendent-They may but the supplies the teachers are asking for may be a 3 ring binder or folders.

Mayor-Why is the equipment line for the high school so high?

Mr. Gosselin-It is for the science equipment for the new science classrooms at the high school.

Superintendent-All of our out of district school tuitions have gone up.

Mr. Gosselin-He is waiting to meet with Siemens. Once we get that set up we will see an energy cost savings.

Mr. Vogler-He would like to see a Capital Improvement Plan (C.I.P). He would like to see this presented to the City Council along with our budget.

Mayor-We can go through the budget and do a C.I.P. We can have a workshop with the City Council and let them know what you need.

Mr. Gosselin-Ms. DiNatale asked to see this year's revised budget along with last year's budget. He will get that to the Committee tomorrow.

Ms. DiNatale-We fund a Net School Spending Budget. The difference for this year's budget is 1.6 Million Dollars. How do surrounding towns handle their student transportation? Do they charge for bussing?

Superintendent-Transportation is a budget buster for many towns.

Mr. Gosselin-He is meeting with Trombly to try and consolidate routes and buses.

Ms. DiNatale-How efficient are the buses? Are they full?

Superintendent-It depends on the weather. We also have high schools students getting their driver's license during the school year. We do not have sufficient sidewalks so we have some students that have a door to door service.

Ms. Bozek-We have had to add buses this year so that the students can arrive to school on time.

Mr. Gosselin-The bus company has been very good to us.

Superintendent-60% of our busing issue is because of the lack of sidewalks.

Ms. DiNatale-Can the City put in more sidewalks.

Mayor-There is no money in the City budget for sidewalks.

Ms. DiNatale-If there will be no para- professionals in the kindergarten classrooms do we have other options?

Superintendent-She is looking at next year's kindergarten registrations and if the numbers stay low we may be able to do something. She believes they may be able to find money to retrieve some of the paraprofessionals.

Ms. DiNatale-Instead of a full time craftsman position could we make that a part time position? She is concerned about the cost of classroom supplies. She does not want supplies being purchased by the teachers.

Mr. Sweet-Not long ago we had a Net School Spending conversation that the City owes us 3 Million Dollars. He does not think they should go to the City with an exact Net School Spending amount. He also commented that on Tab 7 of the revised budget some of the figures do not make any sense.

Superintendent-Her administration team has worked very hard at cutting 2.5 Million Dollars. We have looked at every department. We are trying to be creative. She will keep asking the Mayor for more money. We understand that we are a level 3 school and we are struggling with cuts to the initiatives.

Mr. Sweet-We still have to cut 3 Million Dollars. How many more positions can you cut?

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-We need the 14 Kindergarten Paraprofessionals that are being cut from the grant. We need to really look at positions that we can eliminate. The Kindergarten classrooms are at their capacity. It will be very difficult for the teachers without the Kindergarten Paraprofessionals.

Mayor-If you see something in the budget you think can be cut put it into a motion to have the position eliminated.

Dr. Kwong-The department heads are very important to the district. They know the staff and the students. They are a great asset to her and she could not do what she does without the department heads. Other districts have several staff members working side by side with the Assistant Superintendent. She does not have that she has the department heads.

Ms. Hajjar Kumm-Why do we need a craftsman in each school?

Mr. Gosselin-There is one assigned to each building but they work district wide. They have different crafts and skills.

Jane Sigillo-The Language Acquisition Supervisor in the LAD Department is also the department head for the ESL Department at the high school. The LA Supervisor along with the

LAD Director supervises the ESL K-8 ESL staff. The Supervisor supports the entire district developing professional development sessions. The LAD department has 5 ELL Coaches (one in each building) and 26 ESL Teachers to service 560 students. The department is governed by many laws. They had a program review in January and they did very well.

Mr. Deeb-He believes in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Mr. Gosselin-He has reached out to Frank Antonelli about the process.

Mr. Deeb-He would cut the Kindergarten Paraprofessionals before he would cut any high school teachers.

Mr. Vogler-He does not agree with cutting the grade 9 math teacher. He will never support user fees. Do we have "subject to funding" in the teacher's contract?

Superintendent-No

Mr. Vogler-He would like a joint meeting with the School Committee and the City Council.

Mayor-We should have more workshops in the schools. This has been a great discussion.

**\*ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop Session, Mayor Zanni entertained a motion to conclude the Workshop Session for the evening at 8:50PM.

**MOTION:** Robert Vogler moved to adjourn the Workshop at 8:50PM.  
Brian Sweet seconded.

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,  
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder  
Methuen Public Schools