

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC RECORD

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUDGET WORKSHOP SESSION

OF

AUGUST 24, 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:

DEIDRE RUNGE, PUBLIC RECORDER

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METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
BUDGET WORKSHOP SESSION
AUGUST 24, 2015

This Workshop of the Methuen School Committee was held in the Central School, in the Superintendent's Office, 10 Ditson Place, Methuen, and was posted for 6:00 pm.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson	NOT Present
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson	YES
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb	YES
Ms. Jana DiNatale	YES
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett, Secretary	YES
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet	YES
Mr. Robert F. Vogler	YES

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb
Ms. Jana DiNatale
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett, Secretary
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet
Mr. Robert F. Vogler

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Brandi Kwong, Assistant Superintendent C.I.A.
Ms. Gina Bozek, Director of Student Services
Mr. Edward Lussier, Director of Instructional Technology
Mr. Richard Barden, Principal, MHS
Mr. John Crocker, Director of Guidance
Ms. Deidre Runge, Public Recorder

CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm called this Workshop to order at 6:00 p.m. with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

The Superintendent introduces Sgt. Joe Aiello the new SRO Leader and asked him to update the Committee about the SRO's and their reporting this year.

- Sgt. Aiello – thanked the committee and said he was happy to be back in the school system. (he was the SRO for the 9th grade campus). He told the Committee all the officers this year will be more visible. “I just came from a safety seminar and all they stressed on was to make

sure you are visible.” He explained that visibility is a divertive. Also by parking our cars in different places so people don’t know when you are around or can see your schedule.

He also told the Committee that new staff needs to be updated on the ALICE Program. Kids do a great job with this program. They listen to their teachers.

He told the Committee that bullying laws aren’t new but we are working with the D.A.’s Office to stay current with internet safety and cyber bullying. We also want to work with students in the near future to stop some texting issues.

- Mr. Vogler – I like to see you upfront. Visibility is good. My only concern is the traffic issues. The Marsh congestion is bad and the Tenney still needs some work. It does seem when officers are visible it is better at the Tenney.
- Sgt. Aiello – The Marsh came out with a new traffic flow. This configuration will get people in and out smoother.
- Mr. Vogler – I would like to see a lock down done with dogs.
- Sgt. Aiello – We have done that before.
- Ms. DiNatale – Are the safety presentations you will be offering to the high school students going to be done at the upper schools too?
- Superintendent – Yes
- Mr. Lussier – All K-8’s meet with an IT staff member and are taught cyber safety.
- Ms. DiNatale – Sgt. Aiello I would like to see a more detailed report on the new form you are presenting.
- Superintendent – Your concerns that there were higher numbers in some schools was due to how they were reported out. One Officer was actually counting friendly discussions with parents not only discipline student’s parents. I have to reiterate that it is a fine line reporting things in print. We are working on that but I am going to be very honest with School Committee we have to be really cautious the way we speak about students.
- Ms. DiNatale – I also think parents should be informed so they can speak to their child. Transparency. This was parents can have those conversations with their kids.
- Mr. Sweet – Do parents get notified about the Active Shooter practices.
- Superintendent – We do not notify mock lock down, fire...before hand. Defeats the purpose. We notify all parents after mock lock downs. We have had no negative calls from parents.
- Ms. Fawcett – As a principal we didn’t typically know when they were happening either. Glad to hear more work is being done in the middle school with student safety.
- Mr. Crocker – Yes we partner with the D.A.’s Office and meet monthly.
- Mr. Deeb – any change on residency follow ups.
- Superintendent – yes we report that to you at the business meeting on 9a.
- Mr. Barden – We also send follow ups on any returned letters.
- Superintendent – the SRO’s will even sit outside and follow thru on checks. They visit homes 3,4 or 5 times a day if need be. I agree with Ms. DiNatale a detailed report every other month mentioning classes held like cyber bullying, bus evacuation practices... would be good.
- Mr. Sweet – When you are doing a residency check does he have another SRO officer to back him up at the school.
- Sgt. Aiello – yes and I will be over there as well.

- Superintendent – I just want the committee to know it is very hard to stay one step in front of social media especially when something can be made up so easily. I will not speak to an incident ever until I get all the facts.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT – MHS - UPDATE

- Superintendent – In April there was a lot of questions regarding AP so Mr. Crocker has prepared a presentation for you that is in your packet.
- Mr. Deeb – We do have a different philosophy. I believe we should have restrictions on who can take the classes.
- Mr. Crocker. There are some classes like psychology that we do have prerequisite classes that a student has to take to get into the AP class. It's about looking at each student.
- Mr. Barden – We want students to be able to access AP classes. If a student comes to us senior year and says I want to try harder we give them that opportunity.
- Mr. Deeb – To the Superintendent – We are a Level III school is AP or SAT scores a reason for this.
- Superintendent – No. We are very proud of the graduation and drop out numbers. There is many items that come in to play for Levels.
- Dr. Kwong – We will put our report card on the website so parents can review and they can call us so we can answer all their questions and concerns.
- Mr. Sweet – Just because Greater Lawrence is a Level I, do they have a lot of work ahead of them.
- Dr. Kwong – Yes
- Mr. Vogler – We are in a State that glorifies tests. I am happy with the graduation rate. I would like to see the % of students that take AP classes and go to college.
- Mr. Crocker – 91.6% of the students went to college.
- Ms. Fawcett – I feel anyone that has the opportunity should get in to AP classes. I am concerned that the low income student parents don't give them the support to take them. I am glad to hear the teacher can recommend these children to enter AP classes. I am impressed with the numbers.
- Mr. Sweet – I am also happy students are empowered to take AP classes.
- Ms. DiNatale – I am appreciative of all the time and effort you put into this presentation. I would like to see a comparison of passing grades in classroom to the grades in the test.
- Mr. Crocker – you cannot simply enroll in AP courses you need to pass the course. They are also getting the skills. The skills they gain are long standing and will help them succeed in college and the working field.
- Ms. DiNatale – I do agree I just want to ensure other children get college readiness. I take issue that it is said if a child takes an AP class they are most likely going to college.
- Mr. Crocker – AP is only something but not everything you need to go to college. It is just another college readiness program.
- Dr. Kwong – The College Board decides on how to arrive with the 1-5 scores. One of the factors is because it is a worldwide test. This sheds some light on grading of AP testing and why some students may get an A or B in class but a 1 or 2 on the test.
- Ms. DiNatale – I just think if a child is struggling in an AP class they should be removed so they don't distract the other students or hold them back. it takes away from the kids ready to move on.

- Ms. Kumm – Is there a class size for these courses? And how do you deal with parents/students that want an AP Class.
- Mr. Crocker – 18-22 class size.
- Mr. Barden – If a student is struggling in an AP class early on we review that student's placement. We usually see in our AP classes serious students who are putting in a good effort. We have an overwhelming amount of staff that want to see students succeed at Methuen High school and come help students during the summer, weekends, before and after school. The last thing you want is a student leaving the school saying no one believes in me.

iPad's Update

- Mr. Lussier spoke about the way they decided to roll out the iPads this year. He mentioned how they collected all the iPads last year and will be delivering them during the first two weeks of school.
We are able to block sights while in school. Students are not allowed to iMessage this year. We also can lock certain apps like social media. All administrators voted to stay with the layer model. The benefits students have and the choices to prepare for the world outside of school. This also promotes making good decisions.
- Mr. Barden – Discipline will be, warned, signed appropriate forms, call home... Most behavioral issues is with cell phones not the iPads. We have a no cell phone in class rule. Students are to keep in their pocket. If it is not a technology moment in class they are to put the iPads away. We also have teachers circulating the classroom more to keep an eye on this. We are so lucky to have an iPad in every student's hand. Other school districts are jealous of us.
- Mr. Lussier – Also teachers have the tool to notify Administration without distracting the class. I have the confidence dealing this and other concerns teachers had. We want to keep the expectations high and maybe revisit institutional models later for some groups.
- Mr. Vogler – What about iPad repairs being done locally.
- Mr. Lussier – It is going out to bid. The bid will include that they are picked up and dropped off every Monday. We are hoping a local vendor wins the bid.
- Ms. DiNatale – I am so excited with the iPad initiative. I am also glad to see discipline of use of the iPads is a priority. I am concerned with the amount of control we have with the layered models where our kids have access to social media and games. Those 2 things do not have an educational value. Tax payers do not want to be paying kids to be using social media and games on their iPads.
- Mr. Lussier – In an ideal world I would lock all of them too but I can't. So we block things we know are troublesome until they find something else than we lock that out too. We have a good control of things at the schools but unfortunately we cannot control their use of iPads at home. That is the parent's job. We do not have the ability to lock them out of apps at their homes.
- Ms. DiNatale – Do you have a policy on this educational device about not being able to install non educational programs? Than if they do are they breaking the rules? This would show we are not allowing it.
- Superintendent – We will put our thoughts together and check over the policy.
- Ms. DiNatale – Maybe you could just put in the policy "Educational Use Only"

- Ms. Kumm – Are teachers getting professional development on expectations of iPads like walking around the classroom, strategies....
- Dr. Kwong – Yes.

MOTION – Mr. Vogler motioned to pass 3 hours seconded by Ms. DiNatale

VOTE – 6-0-0 Unanimously approved

Technology Department Staffing Discussion

- Mr. Lussier passed out a proposal about some staffing changes. He told the Committee he worked with the union on the changes and there benefits to the technology department. With the new technology initiatives this will give me the staff I need.
- Superintendent – If you like this we will put it on the next agenda for you to vote on.
- Mr. Sweet – My question is what is happening to the staff in the other positions.
- Mr. Lussier – One staff member is way in over his head he is accepting a lower job. The second one is my assistant which I do not use. She is only grants and works directly with Dr. Kwong on grants. The support staff technology position staff member is retiring in December. We will not be replacing this position. I have a bigger need for increasing the time for the network operators.
- Mr. Vogler - I think network operators shouldn't go from 10 to 12 months maybe they should be an 11 month position.
- Ms. DiNatale – Did you think of offering stipends instead of increasing their hours.
- Mr. Lussier – we looked at all of that and the Union and I agreed with my proposal.
- Superintendent – we will put it on the next business meeting agenda for your vote.

***ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop, Ms. Kumm entertained a motion to conclude the Workshop Session for the evening and enter into Executive Session for the purpose to discuss negotiations at 9:33PM.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to adjourn the Workshop at 9:33PM.
Ms. DiNatale seconded.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Stephen Zanni, Chairperson	NOT Present
Ms. Lynne Hajjar Kumm, Vice Chairperson	YES
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb	YES
Ms. Jana DiNatale	YES
Ms. Mary Jean Fawcett, Secretary	YES
Mr. Bryan P. Sweet	YES
Mr. Robert F. Vogler	YES

VOTE: 6-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,
Deidre Runge, Public Recorder
Methuen Public Schools