

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District held Wednesday, May 27, 2020 at 7 p.m., via **Video Conferencing**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84394191167?pwd=MkdUcTVKaTUzZi9ISFILNFQ0djhHdz09>

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair
Mary N. Antocci, Vice Chair
Cathleen Carmignani
Catherine M. Kabala
Kenneth J. Laferriere
Stephanie A. Reed
Jamie L. Terry

Also in attendance were Steven M. Lamarche, Superintendent of Schools, Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations, Karen A. Ares, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; district administrators Lorinda C. Allen, William F. Chaplin, Jennifer A. Desto, Lori A. Pacheco, Dean W. Packard, Kathleen E. Pastore, Diane D. Seibold, Christopher E. Starczewski; five members of the staff and community; Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

The chair called to order the Public Hearing on the FY 2021 budget.

Mr. Lamarche offered an opening statement about the changes the district has experienced since the committee voted its preliminary budget of \$51,214,389, in February and the subsequent, unprecedented school closure. Mr. Lamarche said the district must now marry new norms with unknowns, while remaining flexible, ranging from the worst case scenarios to hope. The preliminary budget reflects a 2.42% increase

Mr. Lamarche said the few large unknowns to plan for include reductions in revenue, but additional costs and expenses; extended school year programs happening online or brick and mortar; transportation, there are current savings, but a return to school following CDC guidelines means, at most 11 students per school bus or four buses per run.

There are questions about what this will look like in the fall. Will there be a delay, accelerated opening to brick and mortar, or a hybrid of online/in school. In school, student reentry looks like 8-10 students per classroom to accommodate the 6 ft requirement.

There are other issues surrounding hygiene, protocols for sick employees or sick students, as well as cleaning.

What is known are the risks and assumptions of the governor's 9C cuts to transportation, or to whatever else the governor has authority to reduce.

Mr. Lamarche recommended scheduling the next school committee meeting on Wednesday, June 3 as an opportunity to plan for the town meetings. Mr. Lamarche reviewed the concessions to the FY 21 budget, including four special education co-teachers, a full-time athletic director, and human resource director.

Committee members agreed it is difficult to vote the budget at this point, as many proposals are not feasible at this time.

The Public Hearing closed at 7:31 pm

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, May 13, 2020

A motion by C. Kabala, second by M. Antocci to approve the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of Wednesday, May 13, 2020, as corrected, was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

C. Carmignani-yes

C. Kabala-yes

K. Laferriere-yes

S. Reed-yes

J. Terry-yes

M. Antocci-yes

P. Aucoin-yes

A motion by K. Laferriere, second by M. Antocci to approve the minutes of the executive session of Wednesday, May 13, 2020, was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

C. Carmignani-yes

C. Kabala-yes

K. Laferriere-yes

S. Reed-yes

J. Terry-yes

M. Antocci-yes

P. Aucoin-yes

III. Citizens' Forum

Mason Road School Principal Jennifer A. Desto thanked the Dudley-Charlton Education Foundation for its annual grants award program in support of the district's educators.

IV. Communications

Mrs. Carmignani shared concern expressed by parents regarding the last day that assignments will be given to students. Mr. Lamarche said this will be determined in consultation with principals.

Mrs. Antocci reported on numerous problems students from throughout the country encountered while taking the College Board Advanced Placement tests. Parents have filed class action law suits as the testing time was reduced to 45 minutes, and students were unable to submit answers. The suit claims the interruptions violated the Americans with Disabilities Act, and seeks compensatory damages.

Mrs. Antocci said the Massachusetts Association of School Committees is working with State Representative Kim Ferguson and the governor's office seeking reimbursements of monies for canceled international travel. Mrs. Antocci said companies are not reimbursing the full amount because of administrative costs they have incurred. A virtual hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3.

Mr. Laferriere expressed concerns from parents that the remote learning opportunities will continue into the summer. Mr. Lamarche said outside of special education summer programs, there are no plans for this as a whole.

V. Superintendent's Report - Fiscal Year 2021 (vote required)

Mr. Lamarche reported there have been no significant changes to the state's remote learning protocol, and recognized parents and caregivers for becoming part of their child's educational team. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Mr. Lamarche has formed a Reopening Working Group of educators, administrators, nurses and community representatives. The group will hold its first meeting on Tuesday, June 2 via video conferencing.

The superintendent asked the school committee to support a final FY 2021 budget of \$51,214,389, with assessments as follows:

Charlton:	\$13,897,944
Dudley:	\$9,109,427

A motion to approve a final FY 2021 Budget of \$51,214,389, with assessments of \$13,897,944 to Charlton, and \$9,109,427 to Dudley, was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

C. Carmignani-yes

C. Kabala-yes

K. Laferriere-yes

S. Reed-yes

J. Terry-yes

M. Antocci-yes

P. Aucoin-yes

The committee expressed concern that the towns would not be able to sustain this increase. Mr. Lamarche reminded the committee that this is a starting point. The budget can only be reduced at this point, not increased.

VI. New Business

A. Report of the Director of Finance and Operations (Vote Required)

Dental Benefits

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Dental has offered a partial rebate to all members based on the circumstances created by Covid-19. The district's plan will be credited 20% of the cost for three months, based on the March premium. Active members will receive their share directly in a June paycheck. Retirees will be issued a reimbursement check. Mr. Mathieu said this represents some budget savings as well.

FY20 Closeout

Mr. Mathieu said FY20 has been a challenging year in every respect, and fiscal operations are no different. While there is some time left in the year, initial projections put the closeout somewhere between \$1 - \$1.5 million.

FY21 Budget Update

Mr. Mathieu shared the good news that the district's FY20 Regional Transportation revenue will exceed the budgeted amount by approximately \$540,000. This represents the variation between the Governor's FY20 budget announcement and the final reimbursement amount based on actual expenditures and ridership. Mr. Mathieu said typically, these funds flow into the Regional Transportation Revolving account and are used in subsequent budget years. Anticipating cuts to the FY21 budget revenue estimates, these funds can be used to help offset any loss of revenue in this category as information becomes clearer with the release of the House Budget, expected after July 1.

Green Communities (Town of Dudley)

Mr. Mathieu reported the town of Dudley has filed its competitive grant through the Green Communities program. As part of this application, projects for energy management systems at Mason Road, Dudley Elementary and Dudley Middle Schools were included. This will assist in energy conservation and ultimately cost savings for the district. The town of Dudley is also currently looking into a solar project at the landfill and have invited the district to join to offset net metering credits. We can explore this opportunity and provide updates in the future.

B. Report of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee Meeting – 3/10/20

Ms. Reed reported on the subcommittee's March 10, 2020 meeting during which members discussed the FY 21 budget and uncertainties, as well as the costs and other requirements of installing permanent bleachers at the athletic field.

C. Proposed Alternative Learning Center at DMS – Director Allen

Mrs. Allen discussed the proposal to create an Alternative Learning Center at Dudley Middle School for Fall 2020. The program would specifically allow a cohort of special education students in grades 5, 6, and 8 from Dudley and Charlton who are presently attending out-of-district schools to return to the district. The students fit the protocol of behavioral needs and are placed in the learning center according to their IEP. The classroom is self-contained, and staffed with a special education teacher, and an instructional assistant trained in Applied Behavioral Analysis. The district's Board Certified Behavior Analyst will be available to the cohort, as will the school psychologist. The goal is to transition the students back to general education classroom at each middle school.

The program will save the district \$172,000 if all students were to return. Mrs. Allen said this will cover the cost of a teacher and instructional assistant. There are more savings to the district in the long run.

The committee expressed its support of this program.

D. Update Class of 2020 events – Principal Chaplin

The Class of 2020 will be saluted Sunday, May 31 in a car procession from Shepherd Hill Regional High School to Charlton Middle School. According to Mr. Chaplin, students picked up their caps and gowns at the school in a drive-by procession. Sunday is the scheduled graduation date. The Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley has issued a statement clearing the way for outdoor graduation ceremonies after July 17. Mr. Chaplin said a Shepherd Hill ceremony is tentatively scheduled for depending we could do an outdoor ceremony, tentatively scheduled for Aug. 2.

E. Update on NEASC Progress Report – Principal Chaplin

Mr. Chaplin reported on the five-year review by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, which was completed virtually view in March under the leadership of Assistant Principal Michael Resener and English Department Coordinator Jamie Congdon. The review focused on feedback gained during the last accreditation. The NEASC indicated its support of Shepherd Hill's Pathways. Mr. Chaplin said this is the final review conducted under the traditional methods. NEASC has introduced a new model of accreditation, focusing on five standards, the schools' learning culture, and best practices,

Mr. Mathieu received late today the information that the district's snow removal contractor indicated his business is closing, and asked to cancel the two-year contract. Mr. Mathieu said he will explore alternatives.

Mrs. Aucoin appointed Cathleen Carmignani to serve on the screening committee to hire a new principal at Dudley Elementary School.

VII. Next Meeting Dates

School Committee Meeting: Wednesday, June 03, 2020, 7:00 PM via video conferencing

A motion by K. Laferriere, second by C. Kabala to suspend policy BE, Time and Place, to schedule the next meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee for Wednesday, June 3, 2020, at 7p.m., via video conferencing, was approved by unanimous vote.

C. Carmignani- yes
C. Kabala-yes
K. Laferriere-yes
S. Reed-yes
J. Terry-yes
M. Antocci-yes
P. Aucoin-yes

Budget and Finance Subcommittee: TBD
Policy Review Subcommittee: TBD
Curriculum Subcommittee for Teaching and Learning: TBD
School Safety Subcommittee: TBD

VIII. Future Agenda Items –

IX. Executive Session: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining [**Massachusetts Nurses Association**] or litigation [**First Student and Vanpool**] if in open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares, and to return for a vote or votes if necessary, and to adjourn.

The chair entertained a motion to enter executive session, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining [Massachusetts Nurses Association] or litigation [First Student and Vanpool] if in open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares, and to return for votes if necessary, and to adjourn, and this was approved by unanimous roll call vote at 8:39 p.m.

C. Carmignani - yes
C. Kabala- yes
K. Laferriere-yes
S. Reed-yes
J. Terry-yes
M. Antocci-yes
P. Aucoin-yes

The committee returned to open session at 9:46 p.m.

A motion by K. Laferriere, second by M. Antocci to settle the remainder of the 2019-2020 contract with transportation vendor Van Pool in the amount of \$205,000, was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

C. Carmignani-yes
C. Kabala-yes
K. Laferriere-yes
S. Reed-yes
J. Terry- yes
M. Antocci-yes
P. Aucoin- yes

Van Pool transports special education students attending schools in and out of district, as well as homeless students and those in the foster care system. Mr. Mathieu said this settlement represents 68% of the contract.

A motion by C. Kabala, second by K. Laferriere to amend the settlement with First Student from paying 55% of the remainder of the contract to 29%, and eliminating the requirement that First Student hire back the drivers, was approved by unanimous vote.

- C. Carmignani-yes*
- C. Kabala-yes*
- K. Laferriere-yes*
- S. Reed-yes*
- J. Terry- yes*
- M. Antocci-yes*
- P. Aucoin- yes*

Mr. Laferriere thanked Mr. Mathieu for his work on the district’s behalf.

X. Adjourn

A motion by C. Kabala, second by M. Antocci to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous roll call vote at 9:48 p.m.

- C. Carmignani-yes*
- C. Kabala-yes*
- K. Laferriere-yes*
- S. Reed-yes*
- J. Terry- yes*
- M. Antocci-yes*
- P. Aucoin- yes*

Items used for this meeting include:

<i>Agenda for May 27, 2020</i>	<i>Minutes of the School Committee Meeting 5/13/20</i>	<i>Minutes of the Executive Session of 5/13/20</i>
<i>Report of the Director of Finance and Operations 5/22/20</i>	<i>Report of the Director of Pupil Personnel Services 5/22/20</i>	<i>NEASC communication – Shepherd Hill Regional High School update</i>
<i>Superintendent’s Report 5/22/20</i>	<i>FY 2021 Budget Presentation</i>	

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary