

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee of Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 7:00 PM Via Live Stream - Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/dcrsd>, <https://vimeo.com/513440704>, Video Conferencing - Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/98839394392>

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Kenneth J. Laferriere, Chair
Pauline J. Aucoin, Vice Chair
Cathleen Carmignani
Jordan W. Evans
Catherine M. Kabala
Stephanie A. Reed arrived at 7:48 PM
Jamie L. Terry
Michaela Cluett, Student Representative

Also in attendance were Steven M. Lamarche, Superintendent of Schools, Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations, Brian J. Ackerman, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Lorinda C. Allen, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; district administrators William F. Chaplin Daniel D’Arcangelo, Jennifer A. Desto, Lori A. Pacheco, Dean W. Packard, Kathleen E. Pastore, Christopher E. Starczewski, Andrew Leach, Michael Tucker, Peter Olson, Michael Resener, Kelly True, Rich Earle, Sandra Sullivan, secretary.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Claire, grade 4 at Heritage School, and Wesley Albuquerque, grade 1 of Charlton, led the group in the pledge.

III. Moment of Silence

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, February 10, 2021

A motion by P. Aucoin, second by C. Kabala to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of Wednesday, February 10, 2021, was approved by a vote of 6 in favor.

P. Aucoin- Yes
C. Carmignan-Yes
J. Evans- Yes
C. Kabala- Yes
K. Laferriere- Yes
S. Reed- Not present
J. Terry- Yes

V. Approval of the Warrant

The following warrants were signed remotely.

Accounts Payable	
Warrant #	Amount
46	\$95,019.33
47	\$2,468,853.42
48	\$13,152.99
49	\$825,371.83
Total	\$3,402,397.57

VI. Citizens' Forum

JoEllen Burlingame, Charlton, encouraged the committee to maintain access to its meetings via Zoom / Vimeo even after the pandemic is over as this has greatly increased her ability to participate, she said. Ms. Burlingame also implored the board to consider keeping remote learning an option for the remainder of the school year.

VII. Communications

Mr. Laferriere received several communications from residents who asked that their letters be read into the record.

1. Jamie Dell'Ovo, Charlton. Her two children attend Shepherd Hill. She is more than happy with all schools, and the staff and teachers the family has encountered throughout the years. She urged the committee to keep the date of March 15 to return students to schools.
2. Pamela L. Walsh Houghton, a 21-year veteran teacher in the district, said she has served with pride and great joy. She is looking forward to returning to school safely and is concerned about the March 15 return. She asked that teachers be allowed to get vaccinated before students return fully to school as she said it is not OK to stand less than 6' from a student or students sit less than 3' together in a bus seat. This letter was also signed by district staff Nicole Brown, Ellen Roach, Kathleen Nugent, Christine Chupka, Linda Giles, Elizabeth Hurley, Nancy Eisnor, and Maureen Goding.
3. Parent David Durgin, Dudley. He has three children, two of whom were able to test out of their IEPs. This process was hindered for their third child due to distance learning.
4. Cyndi Piehl, a teacher at Shepherd Hill Regional High School, informed Mr. Laferriere that she initiated the petition at Shepherd Hill Regional High School advocating for a delay in the move to a new learning model until mitigation strategies are strictly regulated at the high school. The petition addresses safety concerns which faculty members say are drastically different at the high school than at elementary schools. The petition contained 49 signatures.
5. Kristin Kustigian, Charlton, has three children in school, and urged the committee to get the students back in school for consistent, daily live instruction by March 15 following nearly a year since live instruction. She said the transmission rates are low now because of the protocols that are in place.
6. Lisa Lancette, Charlton, said she is eager for district students to receive more in person instruction and urged the committee to not delay the planned March 15 shift.
7. Jill Moody, Dudley, said it is time to move forward with the plan. She said if extra-curricular activities can be held, students can be back at school.

8. Matthew Kustigian, a junior at Shepherd Hill, would like to return to school full time now. He said remote is no replacement for live learning.
9. Joseph Kustigian, grade 7, said he would like to return to school now.
10. David Botelho of Charlton supports the proposal to send students back on March 15, and is looking forward to opening to daily in-person learning.
11. David Smolski, of Charlton, said our children need to return to full in-person learning, and noted three sources that say this is safe. He expressed concern for children's mental health, and said schools that use of masks and social distancing students are not at high risk of transmitting the virus. Mr. Slaminski was especially concerned for the time lost in learning math and science.
12. Christopher Kustigian, a senior at Shepherd Hill, said he is teaching himself calculus and physics this year and that remote learning is not effective.
13. Mr. Laferriere said he has received a communication, signed as Anonymous. Mr. Laferriere cited Policy KE which prohibits any anonymous letters and said he is unable to entertain or read it into the record.

Mrs. Terry said policy KE talks about complaints and said the letter is not written as a complaint.

Mr. Laferriere left it to the committee to decide.

Ms. Evans said not everyone got the letter, so not everyone is able to determine if it is a complaint.

Mr. Laferriere entertained a motion to read the letter, none was made.

Mr. Laferriere read policy KE.

Mrs. Kabala said the letter is no different than those which were just read. It is from a district employee. Mrs. Kabala said the policy can be suspended.

Mr. Laferriere said the issue is that it is anonymous.

Mr. Laferriere entertained a motion to read the letter.

A majority of the committee agreed to allow the chair to read the letter that was also sent to some school committee members.

The writer is a mother of a child who attends school in the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District, and requested that the letter be shared. The writer is also an employee, and fears retaliation from the administration if they knew the author of the letter. The writer expressed concerns about the model shift, and cited CDC essential elements of safe K-12 instruction. The writer said DESE is not a scientific body, and leaders have ignored science over the last year.

The board did not act on the boards of health recommendations and teachers paid the price.

Mrs. Carmignani requested the letter be halted and said the letter is clearly a complaint.

The chair asked for a motion to accept the letter.

Mrs. Kabala asked to move on.

Mrs. Reed said you can't define it as a complaint if not everyone has seen it.

A motion by C. Carmignani, second by S. Reed to deem this letter as a complaint and discontinue the reading was amended.

A motion to amend the initial motion was made by C. Kabala, second by S. Reed to stop reading this complaint and not discuss and move on, and this was approved by a vote of 6 in favor, one opposed on roll call vote:

C. Carmignani -Yes

J. Evans -Yes

C. Kabala-Yes

S. Reed -Yes

J. Terry -No

P. Aucoin -Yes

K. Laferriere -Yes

The amended motion passed by a vote of 6-1.

A motion was made by C. Carmignani, second by S. Reed to stop reading the letter without discussion and move on was approved by a vote of 5-2 on roll call vote:

C. Carmignani- Yes

J. Evans- No

C. Kabala- Yes

S. Reed -Yes

J. Terry -No

P. Aucoin- Yes

K. Laferriere- Yes

14. Mrs. Kabala and Mrs. Aucoin received a communication about use of sick day with COVID cases.

Mr. Lamarche said individuals use their own sick time especially those cases generated at home, not in school.

VIII. Student Representative Report – Ms. Michaela M. Cluett

Ms. Cluett reported on the activities of the Show Choir and Pit Band, as well as the NHS sock drive and Student Council diaper drive. The math team will hold its final meet next week. The turf field has been plowed for football practice as the Fall II season will start up soon.

Ms. Cluett thanked the student athletes, coaches and staff for their support of the winter season.

IX. Superintendent's Report

X. New Business

A. Fiscal Year 2022 Presentation – Central Office Administrators

Supt. Lamarche said central office administrators are prepared to present the budget this evening.

The central office team is working closely and with principals to develop a budget that is based on what we know today. We live in a world where things change rapidly.

Mr. Lamarche explained the critical components and the risks and assumption of fiscal planning in a COVID world that has seemed to flip the script in terms of the needs of all learners. Mr. Lamarche said district enrollment is decreasing, and this is consistent with the state. The district must also address student needs, aging facilities and regulatory requirements.

Mr. Lamarche said the theme for the year adopts a phrase used by the John Paire Foundation – Be Better. We have to be better than we were before COVID.

System and systemic goals include fostering equity, investing in cultural awareness, and supporting our educators.

The FY 22 Budget:

- Supports programmatic expectations
- Seeks resources to provide summer learning
- Identifies transitional positions to establish the right supports
- Promotes critical instructional parity

Lorinda Allen, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, reported on the ways the special education department has met students' needs. Mrs. Allen said there are 528 students on IEPs, and of those, 14% are educated in an intensive learning or alternative learning centers. These are students who might otherwise be educated in out of district placements. The district's cost for additional staff needed for these intensive programs decreases the cost to educate these students in out-of-district placements.

There are currently 38 students in out-of-district placements. Two are in residential placements, 15 in private day and 21 in collaborative programs.

Mrs. Allen outlined student services staffing and funding sources and said any cost savings are redirected to the budget to fund other programs. With the reality of COVID and the mission to be better, the district has looked at providing additional supports such as ongoing nursing care, increased educational evaluations to identify learning gaps, and support for the transitional population due to limited placement opportunities that were closed due to the pandemic. The district also looks forward to providing extended opportunities for summer services and compensatory services.

The recommended student support and service positions are as follows:

.6 FTE occupational therapist
1.0 FTE nurse
2.4 FTE adjustment counselor
8.0 FTE instructional assistants
1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher for transitional program at high school
.5 FTE Speech
Extended School Year Services – specific services.

Brian J. Ackerman, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Dr. Ackerman said among the top priorities has been a finding a brain and research-based set of instructional materials that will be funded in part by a state grant. Dr. Ackerman has identified CKLA, from Amplify at a total cost for year 1 of \$223,000. The state grant will offset this cost by \$163,000.

Dr. Ackerman said this program is highly rated by two state-endorsed services, Ed Reports and CURATE.

Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. Mathieu said the FY 22 budget includes a near 3% increase to the operational budget and a structural deficit from FY 21.

FY 22 revenue overview:

Mr. Mathieu said the overall impact to the towns is substantial. While the use of one-time resources was discussed last year in real time, and budget increases in the range of 3% should not be surprising that does not alleviate the actual amount. The overall assessment increase of \$2.15 million is more than 67% of the 2018 override.

Mr. Mathieu said the district is in a similar position to the recent past: declining enrollment means a lack of Chapter 70 increases. The district, therefore, must continue to rely on the communities to fund the majority of the budget.

The district has constructed a five-year plan to reduce its reliance on reserves.

ESSER II grants are available for use in FY 22, and FY 23 in the amount of \$1,089,272. Mr. Mathieu said the towns can request that these funds be used to offset their minimum local contributions.

Mr. Mathieu presented the FY 22 budget in the amount of \$52,571,801, or a 2.86 % increase. FY 22 Assessments are:

Charlton: \$14,789,261, an increase of \$1,143,460

Dudley: \$9,890,252, and increase of \$1,009,412

The assessments have increased to \$2,152,872

Next steps:

This evening's presentation is informational only and no vote is required tonight. Meetings will continue with town officials on March 3 and 8, with the public hearing on the FY 22 budget set for Wednesday, March 24, 2021, at 7 PM.

B. Report of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee – Catherine Kabala

The topics were covered by the budget presentation.

C. Teaching and Learning Request for Purchase – Dr. Brian Ackerman

Dr. Ackerman requested the committee's approval to purchase a set of reading instruction materials, CKLA from Amplify. Dr. Ackerman explained why this has been selected as the elementary reading program. The materials are aligned to standards, and it is highly rated by two state-endorsed sites, Ed Reports and CURATE. CKLA provides comprehensive, brain and research-based instruction. Teachers no

longer need to look in other places for supplemental resources.

A motion by C. Kabala, second by J. Evans to support the request to purchase CKLA, was approved by unanimous roll call vote:

C. Carmignani - Yes
J. Evans -Yes
C. Kabala- Yes
S. Reed- Yes
J. Terry- Yes
P. Aucoin- Yes
K. Laferriere- Yes

Dr. Ackerman explained that the total cost is \$223,000 for year #1. He said the state Legislature has authorized \$160,000 to support prevention efforts, and increase educational quality. This money expires June 30, 2021. The remaining \$63,000 will come from the district budget.

Dr. Ackerman said once we make this initial investment there is no financial commitment until FY 2023. As part of the grant, one unit of study per grade on each side of the district that has been vetted by Ed Reports and CURATE as being brain and research based. That unit is shipping and will be implemented this year. The full implementation process will depend on the school calendar.

D. Report of the Policy Subcommittee – Steven Lamarche

This item was tabled.

1. JFABD – Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services – 2nd Read
2. JFABE – Educational Opportunities for Military Children – 2nd Read
3. JFABF – Educational Opportunities of Foster Children – 2nd Read

E. Update, planned transitions

Gov. Charlie Baker and Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley have proposed regulatory changes calling for all elementary students to return to school full time by the first full week of April, with the other grade levels phased in shortly after that. DESE will review this plan March 2. The state has said that remote learning will no longer count toward student learning time; however, those families who have selected remote learning for the year may continue for the remainder of the school year.

Mr. Lamarche said the state is experiencing a precipitous drop in cases, which have dropped by 70% across the Commonwealth. Mr. Lamarche shared some important pieces regarding a return to in-person learning.

1. CDC Guidance

The guidance issued by the CDC on February 12 continues to state that layered mitigation strategies are the gold standard. The guidance does not address the impact of extensive remote learning on students and families.

2. DESE/DPH Transportation Guidance

The latest guidance says busing can return to pre-covid regulations with three students to a seat at the elementary levels and 2 at the high school.

3. March 15, 2021 – five full in person half days

Mr. Lamarche holds to this recommendation, saying adjustments will be made if needed.

4. May 3, 2021

Mrs. Carmignani said as students are returning to school, the school committee needs to start meeting in person again.

A motion by C. Carmignani, second by S. Reed to return to in-person school committee meetings beginning Wednesday, March 10, but retaining the video conferencing capabilities for the public and members who choose to remain remote, was approved by a vote of 6 in favor, one opposed:

C. Carmignani -yes
J. Evans -yes
C. Kabala -yes
S. Reed -yes
J. Terry -yes
P. Aucoin -no
K. Laferriere -yes

Mrs. Terry asked if the health departments in both towns are supportive of in-person meetings.

Mr. Laferriere said he reached out to the chairs Jennifer Cournoyer in Dudley, and Kathleen Walker in Charlton. Mrs. Walker said the school committee can make its own decision. Ms. Cournoyer said they are not in the position to meet in person and will continue to evaluate the situation.

Mr. Lamarche said we have been approved for pool testing, which is planned to be in place around the March 15 transition date.

The district will monitor the cases following school vacation week and any effect of staff and students who have traveled out of state during that time.

All recommendations are for teachers to remain 6', with students in some classrooms by necessity, be no less than 3'.

As the hour approached 11 PM, a motion was made by S. Reed, second by J. Terry to waive Policy BE and allow the meeting to continue, and this was approved by unanimous roll call vote:

C. Carmignani - Yes
J. Evans -Yes
C. Kabala- Yes
S. Reed- Yes
J. Terry- Yes
P. Aucoin- Yes
K. Laferriere- Yes

F. School Committee Resolution MCAS

Mr. Laferriere responded to a request to add this item to the agenda. The Citizens for Public Schools is requesting support of their initiative for a moratorium to MCAS testing for the next two years: 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. The Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee did support similar language at

the Joint Conference of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents held in November.

Mrs. Kabala said we are so stressed out already, that to take time away from teaching to administer a test is not needed, and we strongly urge the state to stop this test for the next two years.

Ms. Evans served as the voting delegate to the Joint Conference and said the Resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority with 112 in favor.

A motion to support express support of a moratorium on high stakes testing for the next two years, was approved by unanimous roll call vote:

C. Carmignani - Yes
J. Evans -Yes
C. Kabala- Yes
S. Reed- Yes
J. Terry- Yes
P. Aucoin- Yes
K. Laferriere- Yes

The committee asked the chair to send a letter to Governor Charlie Baker and Commissioner Jeffrey Riley of the committee's support.

G. Superintendent's Evaluation

This item was tabled.

1. Timeline - Steven Lamarche
2. Indicators – Kenny Laferriere

XI. Next Meeting Dates

School Committee Meeting: Wednesday, March 10, 2021, Shepherd Hill Regional High School 7:00 PM

Budget and Finance Subcommittee: Tuesday, March 9, 2021, 4:00 PM

Policy Review Subcommittee: Friday, March 5, 2021, 9:00 AM

Curriculum Subcommittee for Teaching and Learning: TBD

Capital Outlay/Safety Subcommittee: Friday, March 5, 2021, 11:00 AM

XII. Future Agenda Items: Update HVAC (ongoing), Update Fiscal Year 2021 (ongoing), Update Equity Committee (ongoing), Update Plan Transitions (March), MASC/MASS Conference Report, School Year 2021-2022 Calendar (March) Fiscal Year 2022 Public Hearing (March), Shepherd Hill Athletic Fields Update (March), School Choice (April) Update on Principal Search Committees

XIII. Executive Session: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining [**Dudley-Charlton Paraprofessionals Association**] if in open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares.

A motion by S. Reed, second by C. Kabala to enter executive session to discuss collective bargaining regarding the Dudley-Charlton Paraprofessionals Association and to reenter open session to take a vote if necessary and to adjourn, was approved by unanimous roll call vote at 11:10 PM.

**Minutes of the School Committee
Meeting of Wednesday, February 24, 2021**

- C. Carmignani - Yes
- J. Evans - Yes
- C. Kabala - Yes
- S. Reed - Yes
- J. Terry - Yes
- P. Aucoin - Yes
- K. Laferriere - Yes

The committee returned to open session at 11:32 PM.

Mr. Lamarche apologized for leaving the microphone on as he moved from one device to another to moderate the open meeting Zoom session and the Executive Session in another Zoom. He takes full responsibility for what was said during those moments.

XVI. Adjourn

A motion by S. Reed, second by J. Terry to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous roll call vote at 11:34 PM:

- C. Carmignani - Yes
- J. Evans - Yes
- C. Kabala - Yes
- S. Reed - Yes
- J. Terry - Yes
- P. Aucoin - Yes
- K. Laferriere - Yes

Items used for this meeting include:

Agenda for Meeting of 2/24/2021	Meeting Minutes of 2/10/2021	Superintendent's Report	Report of the Director of Finance and Operations
FY 22 Budget Documents	Policies: JFABD, JFABE, JFABF	Educational Intent Model	Request for Instructional Materials
MASC Resolutions	Shepherd Hill Regional High School Petition		

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, Secretary