

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee held Wednesday, October 25, 2017, Charlton Middle School, 2 Oxford Road, Charlton, MA 01507, 6 p.m.

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Mary N. Antocci
Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair
Raymond J. Chalk, Vice Chair
Catherine M. Kabala
Joseph M. Pietrzak
Elaine M. Rabbitt
Stephanie A. Reed

Also in attendance were Gregg J. Desto, Superintendent of Schools, Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations; district administrators: Lorinda Allen, Jeffrey Ferranti, Lori A. Pacheco, Dean W. Packard, Kathleen E. Pastore; Heritage School teacher Nicole Brown; Charlton resident Stefan Sage; media representatives Rich Earle, audio-visual coordinator, Deborah LaPlaca, Telegram, Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Desto introduced Jason Tait, Education Director and Media Specialist, with the Office of Campaign and Political Finance, who conducted a training session, "Public Employees and Local Ballot Questions." This was held in preparation for the district's plan to present an override request to the towns.

Mr. Tait urged the committee to call the OCPF with any questions, or to check the website.

A public employee is defined as a person who is employed by a government agency and includes the employees of municipal/ regional, county, state or federal agency, or state college or university. Public employees cannot receive campaign contributions. Public resources such as telephones, paper, copiers, vehicles, postage, labor and employee time cannot be used to create or disseminate information about a campaign.

Other examples of violation include a teacher or public employee *liking* or *sharing* a social media post about a fundraiser. The spouse of a public employee may hold a fundraiser at their home if the employee is not present during the event.

Permitted actions by public officials and public employees include making donations, holding election signs on their own time, taking a position on a ballot question with documents. The public employee may attend a meeting with information about the campaign and may distribute documents only to those in attendance.

Public officials may urge voters during the meeting, can discuss a ballot question with parents, can support or oppose on their personal social media accounts and even attend a PTO meeting on their own time to discuss the initiative. The official may analyze the impact of a ballot question and provide copies at the meeting, and speak to the press. Superintendents may put information on the school or town website as it is not considered distributing, rather parents are seeking it out.

Mr. Desto will contact OCPF General Counsel Gregg Birne to determine whether public funds can be used to hire a public relations consultant.

Ballot question committees may be run by school committee and PTO members, who would complete the necessary state reporting forms. There are fines for late filers of up to \$5,500.

III. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, October 11, 2017

A motion by J. Pietrzak, seconded by R. Chalk to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of Wednesday, October 11, 2017, as amended, was approved by unanimous vote.

As corrected unanimous.

Minutes of the Executive Session of Wednesday, October 11, 2017

This item was held for discussion during the executive session.

IV. Approval of Warrant

The following warrants were distributed and signed by a majority of members without further comment or questions.

| Warrant # | Amount |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 37 | \$301,360.49 |
| 38 | \$14,486.77 |
| 39 | 0 |
| 40 | \$7,527.87 |
| 1170D | \$446,560.75 |
| 1170P | \$1,190,089.76 |
| Total | \$1,960,025.64. |

V. Citizens' Forum

No one spoke at this time.

VI. School Spotlight – Heritage School

Mrs. Pastore introduced student-experts Rileigh Zacek, Sophina Zacek, Bella White, Christian Sargis, and Michael Eisnor who assisted school committee members in using Little Bits. The technological

tools are used to inspire learning in the classroom. They were first used during Heritage School's After the Bell program and summer camp.

Fourth grade teacher Nicole Brown earned a scholarship from the Dudley-Charlton Education Foundation to buy her first toolkit of the ready-to-use bricks that help kids understand electronics such as elevators and iPods.

VII. Student Representative Report – Rebecca Moore

Ms. Moore is a senior at Shepherd Hill. She shared information about the new school newspaper and the accompanying journalism class, Student Council Spirit Week and the upcoming *Mr. Shepherd Hill* event sponsored by the Student Council. The National Honor Society will begin its Thanksgiving Food Drive for non-perishable items.

VIII. Communications

1. Mr. Desto reported on the follow-up to questions resulting from the Coordinated Program Review. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is asking the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District to pilot a new tool kit for reviewing materials for questionable content.
2. Mr. Desto received a letter from Senator Anne Gobi, thanking the committee for its support of Senate Bill 217.

IX. Superintendent's Report

1. Mr. Desto reported on State Auditor Suzanne Bump's student calling for a modernization of regional schools' structure. Mr. Desto said the key points of Ms. Bump's study:
 1. is an encouragement to towns to regionalize, while asking the state to fully fund them as the law requires.
 2. is a call to simplify the budgeting process by recommending a single tax rate in both towns and to consider independent taxation authority.

The Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools is hosting Ms. Bump at Assabet Regional Vocational School next Monday.

3. Mr. Desto provided an update on MCAS 2.0. Student scores will be mailed home next Monday with a description of the new test. Mr. Desto sent a letter to district families this week. There has been no change to the district's accountability level. This is a new test and more complex. Mr. Desto said it is the PARCC test in MCAS clothing.
4. Mr. Desto thanked committee members and community members for reading during the Community Reading Days. He thanked reading specialists for organizing the events.
5. John and Abigail Adams Scholarships were awarded to 80 Shepherd Hill students for their MCAS performance. Shepherd Hill will honor the students with a breakfast on Nov. 3. Committee members are welcome to attend.

6. Heritage School held a *Specials* night to highlight what goes on in art, music, health and physical education classes.

7. Mr. Desto has completed his review of the 10 students under consideration for the Award of Academic Excellence. Mr. Desto noted that all 10 students were involved in a sport, music or art, 6 of 10 were STEM pathway or GAP students. The students were also involved in clubs. This sends the message for all students to get involved in school. Mr. Desto will announce his selection at an upcoming meeting.

X. New Business

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

1. Mr. Mathieu said an additional \$10,000 has been donated to the John Paire Student Support Fund, bringing the total to \$18,000.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by R. Chalk to accept the donations to the John Paire Student Support Fund, was approved by unanimous vote.

2. Heritage School has also received a donation of Staples gift cards in the amount of \$250.

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by J. Pietrzak to accept the donation of \$250 in Staples' gift cards, was approved by unanimous vote.

3. Mr. Mathieu is preparing to go out to bid for the FY 19 oil contract with the French River Education Center. He will have results at the bid, FREC probably to the committee in December

4. Mr. Mathieu presented the General Fund quarterly update through September 30 and noted there are no issues.

5. Mr. Mathieu will have a special revenue report at the November 8 meeting, as well as the results of the bid for the high school generator.

6. The members of the Wage and Benefit Subcommittee met on Oct. 19 and discussed consolidating the van driver/kitchen helper positions. The positions are already benefits eligible. The position hours would increase to 32.5 per week.

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by J. Pietrzak to approve the consolidation of the van driver/kitchen helper position into one benefits-eligible position at 32.5 hours per week, was approved by unanimous vote.

B. Budget and Finance Subcommittee Report (*Vote May be Required*)

Mrs. Reed reported on the October 19 meeting of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee. The focus of the discussion was the proposal to seek a Proposition 2½ override. The district's budget will be formed based in part on principals' requests, much of which are the restoration of staffing that has been cut over the years.

Mr. Desto said principals are usually modest in their requests but are discussing extra help in mental health, maintaining class sizes, STEM staffing, and foreign language. There may be discussion concerning creating a technology position that serves as an integrationist for teachers.

The Town of Charlton has resumed its intent to study de-regionalizing the district. Mr. Desto said this may affect our talks next week with the Charlton contingent. Mr. Desto has spoken with MARS Executive Director Steve Hemman, who will provide data regarding the costs of breaking away from the region. Mr. Desto said this is not an easy process.

Mrs. Rabbitt expressed concern that the processes, should they be explored and analyzed, will distract us from the work needed on the FY 19 budget. Mrs. Rabbitt said we don't get to go back in time and make up for the education lost to any student due to the delay caused by the discussion of deregulation.

Responding to the discussion regarding the need for staffing in the area of mental health, student representative Rebecca Moore said Shepherd Hill has formed a Mindfulness Club.

C. FY 2019 Budget – Discussion

Mr. Desto said the November meeting of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee will be devoted to testing the Chapter 70 numbers, as well as the school calendars. Mrs. Antocci suggested challenging the 180-day rule, and Mr. Desto supported that from a financial standpoint. Fewer half days would save on budget and would impact parents as well.

Mr. Desto said he is really interested in this idea that could save money and give students a break. He is interested in finding ways to impact the budget that don't rely on the funding formula.

Mrs. Rabbitt suggested bringing this to the attention of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees' legislative subcommittee.

D. Consideration of Health Insurance Benefits Policy GDBD - First Reading (Vote Required)

The Policy Review Subcommittee has vetted this draft policy regarding providing benefits to the families of employees who have died while in service to the district.

Mrs. Rabbitt suggested adding references to the COBRA law to address any changes that might occur in the law over time. Mrs. Rabbitt said the fact that we are having to write a policy of this nature requires that we do it correctly.

Mr. Desto agreed to draft a revised policy to cite the law, and provide a bulleted list of steps.

E. Consideration of Request for Overnight Travel, Policy IJOA (Vote Required)

Mr. Desto presented the request by Global Awareness Program Director Mary Pierangeli for travel to Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, France and Spain in the spring of 2019. Mr. Desto said high school seniors often list their foreign language trip as one of the most meaningful experience.

Students will leave on Friday, April 12, 2019, and return on April 22, having missed one day of schools. The number of students has not been determined, nor have the chaperones. The cost per student is \$3,230. Mr. Desto recommended approval.

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by R. Chalk to approve the Global Awareness Program trip to Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, France and Spain in April 2019, was approved by unanimous vote.

XI. Next Meeting Dates

A. School Committee

- Wednesday, November 8, 2017, Charlton Middle School, 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, December 13, 2017, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 7 p.m.
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B. Budget and Finance Subcommittee, Thursday, November 16, 2017, 9 a.m. Shepherd Hill Regional High School

C. Wage and Benefits Subcommittee – Nurse Negotiations – TBA

D. Meetings with Town Officials

- Monday, October 30, 2017, Town of Charlton, Charlton Town Hall, 6 p.m.
- Thursday, November 16, 2017, Dudley and Charlton, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 6 p.m.

XII. Future Agenda Items – FY 2019 Budget, Spring 2017 MCAS Presentation, District Policies, school calendar, recap of MASC/MASS Joint Conference

XIII. Executive Session – *“to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining when an open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body.”*

The chair entertained a motion to enter executive session *to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining when an open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body,*” and to reconvene for votes if necessary and to adjourn, and this was approved by unanimous roll call at 8:13 p.m.

The committee returned to open session at 8:55 p.m.

A motion by R. Chalk, seconded by J. Pietrzak to approve the minutes of the executive session as amended, was approved by unanimous vote.

XIV. Adjourn

A motion by S. Reed, seconded by M. Antocci to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous vote at 8:55 p.m.

Items used for this meeting include:

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| Agenda for meeting of Wednesday, October 25, 2017 | Superintendent's Report of Friday, October 20, 2017 | Minutes of the regular meeting of Wednesday, October 11, 2017 | Minutes of the executive session of Wednesday, October 11, 2017 |
| Finance Director's Report of Friday, October 201, 2017 | GAP Request for overnight travel | MCAS letter from Acting Education Commissioner | Proposed Policy GDBD |
| Auditor Suzanne Bump study of structure and finance of Mass. regional school districts | Mass.gov press release regarding auditor's report | | |

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.