

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee held Wednesday, July 22, 2020 at 7 p.m., **Via Video Conferencing.**

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Kenneth J. Laferriere, Chair
Pauline J. Aucoin, Vice Chair, at 7:08 p.m.
Cathleen Carmignani
Jordan W. Evans
Catherine M. Kabala
Stephanie A. Reed
Jamie L. Terry

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; district administrators William F. Chaplin, Lori A. Pacheco, Christopher E. Starczewski, Kelly True; 100 community residents, including district staff, participated; Sandra Sullivan, secretary.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Moment of Silence

III. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of Regular Meeting of Thursday, July 9, 2020

A motion by C. Kabala, second by J. Terry to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of Wednesday, July 9, 2020, was approved by a vote of 6 in favor, one abstention.

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

Minutes of the Executive Session, Thursday, July 9, 2020

A motion by C. Kabala, second by P. Aucoin, to approve the minutes of the Executive Session of Thursday, July 9, 2020 was approved by a vote of 6 in favor, one abstention.

C. Carmignani - yes
J. Evans - yes
C. Kabala -yes
S. Reed - abstain

J. Terry - yes
P. Aucoin - yes
K. Laferriere - yes

IV. Approval of Warrant

Warrants continue to be approved electronically during the Covid-19 quarantine:

#95-110 – FY 20

#1-4 FY 21

V. Citizens' Forum

No one spoke at this time.

VI. Communications

Mrs. Reed shared a concern among parents about sufficient representation on the district's Reopening Committee. Mr. Lamarche said many members of that committee are parents of district students.

Mr. Laferriere said a community forum is scheduled for Tuesday, August 4, 2020 via video conferencing.

Mr. Laferriere read a statement from Ryan Moore, Shepherd Hill class of 2020 expressing concern that AP classes will be cut. He said AP classes are an integral part of our district's success. Mr. Moore lives in Oxford, and attended Shepherd Hill under the School Choice program. He said he decided to attend Shepherd Hill because of AP, and it allowed him to earn one year's worth of college credits, and thereby saving \$35,000 in tuition and other expenses.

VII. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Lamarche said he will post the recording of this evening's meeting as soon as possible to allow those who could not get into the Zoom meeting which is capped at 100. Mr. Lamarche said this will be corrected going forward.

1. Mr. Lamarche introduced Kelly True, the newly hired principal of Dudley Elementary School. Ms. True has over 14 years' experience as an administrator, and four years as a district supervisor. Ms. True is a champion of early literacy. Ms. True said she is excited to meet staff and students.
2. Mr. Lamarche recognized the Charlton Sewing Center, which has provided over 900 masks for the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District as well as other surrounding schools.
3. In response to Ryan Moore's letter, Mr. Lamarche explained that a quip was shared regarding AP classes during the meeting, and Stonebridge Press ran a story based on it. Mr. Lamarche said the district would not consider ever cutting the AP program; however, adjustments may be made from year to year based on staff or student enrollment.

Principal William Chaplin said Shepherd Hill department coordinators were asked to provide AP work last week. The AP program has actually been expanded this year to include the AP Capstone Research and Seminar programs. The goal is to continue to expand over the next five years.

Mrs. Terry thanked Mr. Moore for his well-written letter.

The chair addressed the items in the chat. Parents of incoming kindergartners will begin to get all the communications released by the superintendent.

VIII. New Business

The committee agreed to take the agenda items out of the order as published:

Item D. Progress report of the Reopening Committee – Steven Lamarche

The Reopening Committee has continued meeting as it works toward the deadline to submit a final draft comprehensive plan to the state by Wednesday, August 5. Mr. Lamarche said this is an aggressive timeline and the as the committee is in the throes of planning, he said it is difficult to present any details at this time. He said the Reopening Committee is tasked with reinventing the start of public schooling in Dudley-Charlton.

The state is qualifying three options for students to start school in September. The district must submit a plan to cover each option:

100% in-person learning

A hybrid of days in person and remote learning

100 % remote learning

Planning timelines:

July 20-24: District Administrators meeting to establish protocols

July 27 – The district will share a draft preliminary plan via email with Dudley-Charlton Teachers' Association, town health agents and the school committee, reopening committee and staff

July 28 – reopening committee and admin review plan

July 29-30 – Principals schedule video conferencing meetings with building staff

July 31 – prelim plan submitted to DESE. This plan can change

Aug. 3 – Plan distributed to families

Aug. 4 – Community Video Conference forum

Aug. 5 – Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee votes on the final plan

Aug. 10 – Plan submitted to DESE and all staff and families

Facilitators of the Reopening Committee's working groups offered updates:

Social-emotional Wellbeing – Lori Pacheco acknowledged team members Christopher Starczewski, Darin Haig, Kareen Powaza, Theresa Vaida-Veilleux. The team surveyed administered a staff survey, which elicited 296 responses. To the question concerning their thoughts about coming back to schools, 22.1% extremely anxious; 29.7 moderately anxious; 37% are somewhat anxious, with 17% saying they are not at all anxious. Areas causing the most anxiety among the staff are social and behavioral needs of our students, closely followed by needing to wear a mask all day.

4 action steps: virtual tours of schools, introductory videos of all staff, sending home social emotional resource numbers, embedding social and emotional learning PK-12

Survey sent to families, eliciting 618 responses. –

Parent concerns about sending students back to school: 23% extremely nervous, 26%, somewhat, 28% slightly, 21% not at all.

Concerns included child health and safety, emotional and behavior needs, rigor and regression, cleaning, health and well-being.

Parents were asked how to support students with social and emotional well-being: theme was the need for social interaction with peers and adults.

The subgroup will review the suggestions and create a to do list based on them.

Instructional Subcommittee: Dr. Ackerman acknowledged his subgroup members, Lorinda Allen, Shannon Sullivan, Nancy Eisnor, Becky Bussiere, Katie Gomes Lyons. Surveys elicited themes: Live direct instruction is the most important consideration. Students learn best with directly interacting. Pivot to remote was not easy. Grow instructionally, teachers need time to prepare and implement standards-based content. Assessment in grading needs to progress beyond pass /fail. Using Google as the hub of classroom learning makes sense. G Suite is district approved, cost friendly and available to all in K-12. Numerous pockets of excellence in the district. Instructionally, we have a collective skill set to build platforms, but professional development and collaboration are a high priority.

Resources and operations; Mr. Mathieu thanked his team members Marilyn Gerrard, Greg Duval, Chris Tittle, Matt Greenberg, Captain Dennis Carlson of the Charlton Fire Department. The subgroup had three goals: establish daily health and safety protocols, establish protocol for urgent safety concerns, deterring potential costs to accomplish goals 1 and 2. This is the largest challenge as we are still determining our needs, and funding is problematic. We have not final budget and there is no state budget at this point.

The chair asked for responses to items raised in the chat box. Mr. Lamarche has been answering them as they have been raised. He said remote options will remain in place for those who will not go to school.

Remote platform has not been selected other than G Suite. The state is investigating a full-time remote learning platform on a tuition basis.

Mr. Laferriere said questions can be asked and answered during the community forum on August 4. More details will be available starting next week.

Mrs. Carmignani said there is a space on the district's website containing all the covid-19 information that has been sent out by Superintendent Lamarche.

Due to safety concerns, there are no student members on the reopening committee.

Item C. Update on District Equity Committee – Dr. Brian Ackerman

Dr. Ackerman has established this committee which with pride and anticipation will provide a path for the future.

Dr. Ackerman said the committee held its initial meeting on Monday, July 20. The first piece of business was to get acquainted. The group then reviewed the scope of the previous group's work in 2018 – which focused on curriculum materials to detect bias. This committee will be charged with the expansive view of equity and diversity. Goal setting – the committee will aspire to establishing a 1, 3 and 5-year framework for its goals. Each goal needs a specific outcome.

Specific benchmarks are being considered to look at how to accomplish the goals, who will partner with the committee, and set a timeline. 1. Hire a consultant from a traditionally marginalized group, examining materials for bias; 2. Examine an intentional shift in curricula to address issues of bias; 3. Collect and catalog a compendium of resources for anti-bias education including electronic and social media options; 4. Explore emergent pathways for staff to consider; 5 recommend tangible policy changes in grading and discipline to establish anti- racist and bias practices; 6 identification and training

of staff to ensure students in traditionally underserved groups that there are trusted adults in each building; 7. purposeful recruitment of educators with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

The committee is comprised of 11 members from different communities, and backgrounds, including staff, community and parents.

Item A. Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

Mr. Lamarche said there has been no update regarding the FY 21 budget, or Chapter 70 funding. The message has been that the state will provide a level-service *plus* budget which will include an additional \$225 per student. However, today's conference call contained information about a level-funded budget. This would be last year's money. The state is aware of the increased cost of opening schools.

The Student Opportunity Act was a change in the funding formula. Whether this will be a change in the finances of the budget, is not clear. Dr. Ackerman continues to monitor grant opportunities and has applied for a technology grant to provide Chromebooks-type device for all students. We are not currently a 1:1 district. Dudley and Charlton have received Cares Act funding.

Item B. Report of the Director of Finance and Operations

a. Donations

To Shepherd Hill Music Department from DonorsChoice for ukuleles	\$399
To Shepherd Hill Music Department from DonorsChoice for Virtual Choir Toolbox	<u>\$199</u>
	\$598

Mr. Mathieu recommended acceptance of this donation.

A motion by P. Aucoin, second by C. Kabala to accept the donations from DonorsChoice, was approved by unanimous vote:

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

b. Use of facilities by outside groups:

Mr. Mathieu said it is the administration's recommendation that schools prohibit use of inside facilities; and to keep fields and playgrounds closed until schools reopen.

A motion by C. Kabala, second by P. Aucoin to restrict all use of the buildings and field until further notice was made. Mrs. Aucoin withdrew her second, Mrs. Kabala withdrew the motion as Mr. Lamarche said the district does not have a capacity to police the use of outdoor facilities.

A motion by C. Kabala, second by P. Aucoin to restrict the use of indoor facilities until further notice was made. Mrs. Aucoin withdrew her second, Mrs. Kabala withdrew the motion after discussion about leaving this decision in the hands of the administration.

Mr. Lamarche said the district will exercise accessibility to the buildings in an emergency.

Mr. Laferriere said the school committee supports the administration's need to make decisions as necessary for the safety of our community.

c. Transportation Review

Following a review of bus routes, Mr. Mathieu said we are positioned to reduce a bus in each town. This is based on normal operations. There will be no action pending further guidance from the state.

d. Dudley Solar Project

The project at the old Dudley landfill has received approval, with the hope of getting funding through the 2.0 Smart Program. This will likely end up giving the district a 1 cent reduction in kw rate. While not a solution, every little bit helps. Mr. Mathieu will have an agreement reviewed by legal counsel and ready for the next school committee meeting.

e. Mass. Strategic Health Group:

Mr. Mathieu presented a balance sheet showing a net income of \$1.3 million with \$600,000 in the bank as well. He said reduced costs keep rates down. The group is considering allowing the town of Westford to join as this will only increase the viability of this group.

Item E. Human Resource Director Job Description *(vote required)*

Mr. Lamarche presented the job description for this position, which is in the budget. Mr. Lamarche the need for this position has been established by the study conducted by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools as well as the Massachusetts Association of School Personnel Administrators. It is an integral role in a district of our size as it impacts labor management and establishes the right culture in onboarding. Cost savings are invaluable, and a legal opinion is to make HR a priority. Mr. Lamarche said the district currently has a benefits coordinator who meets and exceeds the job requirements.

Mr. Lamarche recommends taking positive action to approve the position by approving the job description.

Mrs. Kabala said while in favor of the position, she has questions about the job description and asked if there can be separate votes.

A motion by P. Aucoin, second by J. Evans to approve the Human Resource Director position and the job description, was approved by a vote of 6 in favor, and one opposed:

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

Mrs. Kabala said the MARS report was basically insurance and labor relations. This version included educational sides, approving personal days and leaves of absence, which contradicts the language of the collective bargaining agreements. The job description provides additional facets to the position which may be overwhelming for one person and adds work, some of which may be administrative in nature.

Mr. Lamarche said whatever is in the collective bargaining agreement will be followed. The HR director will organize the leaves, while the superintendent remains as the approval path.

Mrs. Carmignani said this is an essential role, especially during this time.

IX. Next Meeting Dates

Community Video Forum, August 4, 2020

School Committee Meeting: Wednesday, August 5, 2020, Via Video Conferencing, 7 p.m. vote on final plan to be submitted on Aug. 10.

Budget and Finance Subcommittee: TBD

Policy Review Subcommittee: TBD

Curriculum Subcommittee for Teaching and Learning: TBD

Capital and School Safety Subcommittee: TBD

Mr. Lamarche said the DCTA is working actively with the administration in a collaborative approach.

Mr. Lamarche said there is a need to hold another meeting on Wednesday, August 26, 2020, via video conferencing at 7 p.m.

A motion by C. Kabala, second by P. Aucoin to suspend policy BE, Time and Place, 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

- X. Future Agenda Items:** Comprehensive Reopening Plan vote, Fiscal Year 2021 budget, Equity Committee Update

XI. Adjourn

A motion by C. Carmignani, second by J. Terry to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous roll call vote at 8:52 p.m.

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 Wednesday, July 22, 2020; Minutes of Meeting of Wednesday, July 9, 2020; Minutes of the Executive Session of Wednesday, July 9, 2020; Superintendent's Report of July 20, 2020; Report of the Director of Finance and Operations, July 20, 2020, with MSHG balance Sheet.

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, Secretary