

***MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT***

Special School Committee Meeting

Nipmuc High School, Professional Development Room

Monday, August 16, 2021

Committee Present:

Sean Nicholson, Vikki Ludwigson, Kerry Laurence, Phil DeZutter, Dorothy Scally, Erick Brown (remote)

Administration Present:

Maureen Cohen, Interim Superintendent of Schools

Jay Byer, Business/Finance

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by Kerry Laurence.

Pledge of Alliance was recited

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Approval of to Amend Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to amend the agenda to include the introductory letter.

VOTED: Unanimously approved

Approval of the Amended Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Dorothy Scally, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to approve the amended agenda.

VOTED: Unanimously approved

Approval of the Open Session Minutes from June 21, 2021 – August 11, 2021

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve Open Session minutes from June 21, 2021 – August 11, 2021

VOTED: Unanimously approved

**II. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

Doctor from Upton with 3 children in the district. His statement was in support of a mask mandate in the district. He works with COVID on a daily basis and stated masks are needed to protect the unvaccinated.

An Upton resident also commented she is in agreement with the Doctor's comment and would like to see a mask mandate

Mendon resident addressed the School Committee. Thanked the School Committee for their work in protecting the children. He stated the School Committee does not have any medical experts to refute any of the information that has been presented to in favor or against mask mandates. Thus, School Committee should not be making any decisions and parents should have the option to make their decisions for their children. It was stated the School Committee was elected to make policy decisions for how the school operates that is appropriate to protect all students and the community.

A Mendon resident who is an educator read a statement against a mask mandate. She believes parents should be able to make the decision to choose and masks can be

harmful to the students. School Committee members responded they are looking at the studies and experts' advice to determine policy for MURSD.

Chairperson Kerry Laurence stated the district is working to assist students with their social emotional needs and it will be a focus for the next year.

### **III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS**

#### *Letter of Introduction*

Kerry Laurence discussed the letter of introduction of the Interim Superintendent, Dr. Maureen Cohen.

#### Approval of Introductory letter

**MOTION:** On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to approve the introductory letter.

**VOTED:** Unanimously approved

#### *Interim Superintendent Contract*

Phil DeZutter discussed the contract for the Interim Superintendent. The contract has been shared with the School Committee and reviewed with District Counsel. Contract provisions include Dr. Cohen's \$165,000 annualized salary and benefits remain the same. The term of the contract is from July 1 until a new superintendent is named.

#### Approval of Interim Superintendent's Contract

**MOTION:** On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve the Interim Superintendent's contract.

**VOTED:**

Kerry Laurence, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

Sean Nicholson, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Erick Brown, yes

#### *Superintendent Search Process*

School Committee discussed choosing a vendor to start the search process. Vikki Ludwigson spoke with one vendor. The vendor stated a search takes about 3 months and cost for the service is \$10,500. It was noted there are other vendors available. Phil DeZutter stated he would like a vendor who can focus on MURSD. Vikki Ludwigson will reach out to each vendor for more information. Jay Byer asked why the district is looking at a vendor. Phil DeZutter stated having a vendor to handle the logistics of facilitating the process would be beneficial and was strongly urged by District Counsel.

### **IV. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS**

#### *Entry Plan*

Dr. Cohen presented the Interim Superintendent's entry plan.

- Listen and learn what the community is looking for
- Re-establish a dialogue with stakeholders
- Take a fresh look at the district

This entry plan will also an opportunity for stakeholders to meet Dr. Cohen.

Dr. Cohen's 4 Goals include: Student experience, School Community Engagement & Communication, Organization Capacity and Strategic vision and goals. To achieve the goals, Dr. Cohen will have 3 phases: Listen & Learn; Review & Reflect; Report of Entry Plan findings. Dr. Cohen gave details in regards to the Listen & Learn phase.

### *Budget Resolution-Impact*

Dr. Cohen thanked the Town of Mendon residents for coming to the Town Meeting and voting to support the school budget. Due to the support, the FY22 budget has been resolved. Dr. Cohen updated the School Committee on the following:

- Tuesday after the meeting, 20 staff members were recalled and great responses from the staff.
- Reasonable class sizes will remain at elementary level.
- Multiple levels of restored programming that were originally cut. This will address the critical mental health of the students.
- Keep focus on strategic plans
- Release of 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget was received today from the State
- Some impact due to resignations of staff because of uncertainty. There are about 20 openings and district are hiring the best candidates on a short timeline
- Communications of class assignments will be available shortly

### *MURSD School Choice Openings, 2021-2022 School Year*

Dr. Cohen updated the School Committee on the School Choice openings as required by policy. There are about 145-150 choice in and 40 choicing out. Current openings consist of:

H.P. Clough Elementary School - K: 3, 1: 0, 2: 1, 3: 0, 4: 0

Memorial Elementary School - K: 0, 1: 0, 2: 0, 3: 0, 4: 0

Miscoe Hill Middle School - Grade 5: 0; Grade 6: 5; Grade 7: 9; Grade 8: 0

Nipmuc Regional High School - Grade 9: 1; Grade 10: 0; Grade 11: 0; Grade 12: 1

## **V. ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS**

### *Solar Contract Extension*

Jay Byer discussed the extension of solar contracts. District has 2 contracts and one of the contracts would like to extend it for an additional 12 years through 2048. District has currently saved \$400,000 over last 5 years and estimated will save over \$1M in the next 12 years. Jay Byer discussed with the contractor about a donation to Miscoe for a dishwasher and get rid of Styrofoam trays (like at other 3 buildings).

Further discussion on how the carports feed the school electricity and district save money but do not get any credits. Also, the carports are a good visual of how the district is committed to green energy. The Dighton site realizes more savings (24%)

Jay stated the contractor is looking for a decision soon. Phil DeZutter is in agreement with Dighton's contract extension but is concerned with carport extension. Jay will ask the contractor to come to next week's meeting.

### *Summer Maintenance Update*

Jay Byer gave the School Committee an update and the cost of the summer maintenance projects:

Cost	Normal Summer Projects
\$10,900	Boiler Cleaning and Inspections
\$60,000	Replace MERV 13 Filters and Air Purifier Filters
\$2,500	Replenish Wood Chips for playgrounds at Miscoe, Clough, and Memorial.
\$500	Routine summer cleaning, floor waxing, miscellaneous repairs
\$4,000	Tune up kitchen equipment at all four schools

Cost	Summer Projects - Based on Needs
\$100,000	Clough Water Treatment Upgrades - UV lights, Controls for well, pumps, and treatment system
\$20,000	Nipmuc clock tower needs repairs - should be an insurance claim

\$5,000 Repair Steamer/Boiler for Clough Kitchen  
\$12,000 Repairs to Miscoe Playground Equipment  
\$12,000 Replace Compressor and Condenser for Walk-in Refrigerator at Clough  
\$20,000 Replace Rooftop AC unit for Memorial Media Center  
\$8,000 Widening Driveway by Superintendent's office for parent drop-off and pick-up

Cost Future Projects - Summer 2022

\$800,000 Replace Nipmuc Boilers

School Committee members discussed the different projects.

## **VI. SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

### *Policy Subcommittee Update-EBCFA Face Coverings*

Vikki Ludwigson stated the Policy Subcommittee met prior to discuss existing policy. The CDC guidance and local vaccination data (55% for 12-15; 75% 16-19) were discussed during the meeting. Subcommittee is recommending to update policy to reflect the CDC recommendations. There were many comments from the community and the next steps is to meet again next week and discuss further. It was noted everyone should get vaccination in order to prevent the next wave.

Phil DeZutter stated the Budget Subcommittee needs to meet early September and Sean Nicholson stated the Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee will need a meeting soon as well.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### *Ratification of MOAs: Custodians and Cafeteria*

MOAs for the Custodians and the Cafeteria have been ratified by members. It was noted the Cafeteria/Food Service Staff has COLA and some additional monies for clothing. Custodians will now have a step schedule and the shift differential will no longer be included.

### Approval to Ratify the MOAs for Custodian and Food Service Staff

MOTION: On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to ratify the MOAs for Custodian and Food Service Staff.

VOTED:

Kerry Laurence, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

Sean Nicholson, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Erick Brown, yes

## **VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

## **IX. CORRESPONDENCE**

## **X. Other Matters Not Anticipated by The Committee Within 48 Hours of The Posted Meeting**

## **XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Presentation/approval of 2021-2022 District Action Plans
- FY2021 MURSD Budget Closeout
- Ratification of MOA for remaining bargaining units

- School Calendar
- Approaches to increase transparency in communications and decisions

## **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: On motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Phil DeZutter to adjourn

VOTED:

Kerry Laurence, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

Sean Nicholson, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Erick Brown, yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.  
Minutes by Kelly McElreath