

MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Committee Meeting

Nipmuc High School, Professional Development Room

Monday, October 4, 2021

Committee Present:

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

Administration Present:

Maureen Cohen, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Cheryl Kirkpatrick, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Jay Byer, Business/Finance
Jen D'Angelo, Director of Student Support Services
David Quinn, Director of Instructional Technology
Joe Leacu, Director of Technology Operations
John Clements, Co-Principal, Nipmuc Regional High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Kerry Laurence.
Pledge of Alliance was recited

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approval of the Agenda

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

VOTED: Unanimously approved

Approval of the Open Session Minutes from September 13, 2021 and September 29, 2021

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve Open Session minutes from September 13, 2021 and September 29, 2021

VOTED: Unanimously approved

II. CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS

Kerry Laurence discussed a future agenda item regarding transparency and improved communication by the School Committee. School Committee should discuss more formal actions to improve transparency.

Phil DeZutter noted there are workshops available where the role of the school committee is discussed. Open meeting is reviewed but also training for members to understand everyone roles. Past sessions included a 3rd party come to workshop to lead it. It was determined to look into setting up a workshop.

Dr. Cohen noted Tracey Novick is the district field rep is willing to come to conduct a workshop. Phil DeZutter will reach out to set something up.

III. COMMUNITY COMMENTS – NA

IV. **STUDENT'S COMMENTS**

Memorial Elementary School Student Highlight – Wendy Bell

Ms. Bell presented what does learning math look like at Memorial School:

- There are 2 curriculums at Memorial: Bridges in Math and ST Math curriculum
- ST Math – puzzles that feel like a video game
- ST Math program was paid for through a competitive grant that includes \$30K for program
- Incorporated ST Math in student learning goals
- All classrooms are through 10% through the program. Bulletin board shows the progress of the school
- Two students were present to discuss their experiences:
 - Brayden Martin – teaches math and fun. When he fails, he can do again with clues and paper and pencil and try again. He likes to do because it is fun. His stats include 330 minutes on the app last week and is at 30%
 - JJ Hastie – likes video games and it is creative. When he does the math, 'GG' goes to different places and when stuck will try to remember what he has learned. He will use his white board when he is stuck. JJ likes to see where GG goes
- Bridges in Mathematics: K-5 after a curriculum review
- Very pleased with the program
- Pictured Kindergarten students - learning about numbers 1-5 by using their sneakers and not using handbooks
- First Grade – work places to work in small groups with hands on manipulatives
- Second grade – Number rack is used looking for doubles and patterns
- Third grade – playing a game and needed to figure it out
- Fourth grade – number corner each morning where on Friday small groups work on string of problems

Dr. Cohen's goal is rotate through the different school buildings for student highlights so School Committee members can see what is happening

V. **INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS**

COVID-19 Updates: District Data, DESE Updates, Vaccine Rates

Dr. Cohen provided the following update:

- District launched a data dashboard found. It can be found on the MURSD website under COVID 19 resources
- District reports number of cases to DESE every week and dashboard is updated each Thursday
- Last week 4 positive tests with 6 close contacts. District has seen a decline since the first week of school
- Extension of masks requirements by State until November 1
- It was noted State regulations state if 80% vaccinated, masks not required
- Nipmuc is at 71% vaccinated based on student data. Important to get student vaccinated. Staff stats are based on a survey where more information is being collected
- Miscoe Hill is at 7-8 grades and the rate 62% in 7th grade and 72% in 8th grade
- There will be a Flu clinic this Friday for staff and students
- COVID clinic on October 22 where 25 appointments need to be booked.
- District will be looking to schedule a covid clinic once younger age vaccines are approved

Introduction of Interim Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Cohen introduced Interim Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Cheryl Kirkpatrick. She noted out of 20 applicants, Cheryl rose to the top. Dr. Kirkpatrick has 5 years of experience working in and with public schools as a middle school Social Studies Teacher, researcher, and school/district administrator in Boston, Lowell and Chelmsford; she brings to Mendon-Upton a diversity of experiences that have all focused-on building cultures where students and educators thrive and grow. Dr. Cohen also stated other qualifications and with these qualifications Dr. Kirkpatrick which will round out the leadership team. Her official start date is October 18th but meeting with principals in the meantime.

Dr. Kirkpatrick is excited to be here and getting to spend more time to ensure excellent instructions to students. Excited to apply for this position and working with Dr. Cohen. Her door is open to any of the school committee members. Dr. Kirkpatrick spoke about her passions and how this regional district attracted her to this position.

Student Representative to the School Committee

Dr. Cohen discussed revamping the role we have had in the district. MGL recommends to have a student rep and be a liaison and a voice for the student body. Dr. Cohen drafted language for one position for applications. Student Council/student body would have an election. This person could become an engaged member of the committee and contribute with the conversation although a non-voting member. Expectation would be for them to stay for the whole meeting. This received positive feedback from School Committee members but need to ensure the student is aware of time commitment.

VI. ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Technology Department: Grant Award, Joe Leacu and David Quinn

District received a federal competitive grant in the amount of \$488,000 for devices and internet connectivity. This is very exciting because it will fund 1190 new iPads and 30 New MacBook Air laptops. This first round funded \$1 Billion of an expected \$5.7B in total funding. The iPads purchased will replace current iPads in grades 6-12 that are 3-4 years old. Many of the users are reporting battery issues and some device failures. The funding allows the district to replace these devices with new ones with new warranties and brings them to the same version or newer as the ones purchased last year for the elementary schools. The MacBook Air laptops included in this award will be used to provide devices to staff members currently using iPads and struggling with their work with the limitations of a tablet. District plans to place an order next week and hope to take delivery of the devices by the December break. The older iPads will be remarketed using the same process we have used in the past with our remarketing vendor, SecondLifeMac. It was noted the equipment will be ordered through Apple and it is good to be in the front of the line. The grant also give access to students who do not have access to internet. Devices are apple products but look like laptops - \$429 each unit for device and includes 2 year of apple care

It was asked about developing a long-term plan to keep this sustainable. It was noted this demonstrates the district looks to find funds beyond the operating budget. School Committee thanked Joe and David for their efforts and it is great to have this. District will also purchase devices for the 5th grade. It was noted the last total refresh of devices was done in 2018. It was noted in the past, devices purchases are usually purchased by one time money vs a budget expense and this should be looked as a future item.

Finance Department: FY 22 Financial Close-out, Jay Byer

- School Committee members received detailed documents regarding FY2021
- FY2021 budget closed out with an uncommitted balance of \$917,558
- 4 accounts showed positive balances; also, transportation (vendor kept the reduced rate) and Health insurance account contributed the uncommitted balance
- Accounts showing positive and negative balances are monitored throughout the year
- Documents were filed with State for E&D certification
- Discussion followed regarding account structure that allows State to report data on per pupil spending and how invoices are processed

VII. SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Budget Subcommittee

Phil DeZutter stated there is a meeting on October 5 for further review of budget and begin the process for the upcoming budget to avoid past years issues

Policy Subcommittee

Vikki Ludwigson stated this committee is meeting next week

Superintendent Search Subcommittee

Vikki Ludwigson stated the committee met before this meeting. The invitational letter was discussed and the application date deadline was determined.

Focus groups were discussed and it was determined there would be 2 focus groups for parents & community members (evening/daytime); 1 for students; 1 for school staff and 1 for community members. 2 dates for parents and community members are October 25 and November 4. There will be a survey for people who cannot participate. Draft press release was shared with the School Committee members. Once online links are set up, letters will be sent to various participants. Town Officials, Administrations and staff are encouraged to join screening committee.

Approval of the Invitation Letter

MOTION: On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve the Invitation Letter.

VOTED: Unanimously approved

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Calendar Update Re: PD Day and Prom Change

Dr. Cohen stated the School Calendar needs to be updated in regards to PD date and prom date. The original prom date has been changed from the 13th to the 6th and thus PD dates needs to be changed.

Approval of the School Calendar to change PD to May 6th from May 13th

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve the School Calendar to change the PD to May 6th from May 13.

VOTED: Unanimously approved

Development of School Committee Goals (Discussion)

Kerry Laurence noted this was discussed under Chairperson comments.

IX. Other Matters Not Anticipated by The Committee Within 48 Hours of the Posted Meeting

Sean Nicholson is looking for information/resources for parents for special education based on comments from the community. Dr. Cohen is looking to have a rotation from the district leadership and Special Ed will be at the next meeting. There is also SEPAC link on the website where parents, especially new, can get information.

X. CORRESPONDENCE

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- School Improvement Plans

XII. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTED: Unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.
Minutes by Kelly McElreath