

***MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT***  
School Committee Meeting  
Nipmuc High School, Professional Development Room  
Monday, February 28, 2022

Committee Present:

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

Administration Present:

Maureen Cohen, Superintendent of Schools  
Cheryl Kirkpatrick, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Jay Byer, Business/Finance  
John Clements, Principal, Nipmuc Regional High School  
Wendy Bell, Principal Memorial Elementary School  
Leslie McInnis, Nurse, Nipmuc High School

**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 to Amend the Posted Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to amend agenda to include minutes February 7 and February 14

VOTED: Unanimously

Approval of the Amended Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to approved the amended agenda

VOTED: Unanimously

Approval of the Open Session Minutes from February 7, 2022 and February 14, 2022

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to approve Open Session minutes from February 7, 2022 and February 14, 2022

VOTED: Unanimously

**II. CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS - NA**

**III. STUDENT'S COMMENTS**

*Memorial ES Students:* Mr. David Heath, Memorial ES music teacher  
Wendy Bell introduced 8 fourth graders and music teacher David Heath from Memorial.

Mr. Heath discussed the music curriculum at Memorial Elementary School.

- First steps in music – tuneful, Beatful and artful and 8 musical ‘workout’ activities
- Videos shown with examples of the activities
- ‘Musician of the Month’
- “Doing” Music

8 Students demonstrated the Ukulele with 2 songs and a video of 4<sup>th</sup> grade chorus singing Here Comes the Sun was shown.

When asked by the School Committee the students commented learning new chords is the hardest part of the ukulele.

Student Rep Michel shared and update to the MASC conference where both student representatives attend 2 weeks ago. He stated it was a great opportunity to attend in order to meet other student representatives all over MA. Great ideas to make their term better. He also stated Model UN will be traveling to Bridgewater State to complete in current events. Winning team gets a trip to DC to compete nationally. Model UN has been in touch with Irish Consulate and discussed coordinating a visit.

Student Rep Diya updated also commented the MASC conference allowed her to attend workshop sessions for communication and curriculum and it was an invaluable experience. She informed the School Committee Inspired Learning Day is now March 17. Students will be participating in different workshops. Michel commented for the music program there will be a piano workshop with a profession concert pianist to give 'lesson' and perform at the end.

It was asked by the School Committee if there any action items from the MASC for student representatives? It was noted the student reps are meeting with Dr. Cohen to formalize a presentation to the School Committee.

#### **IV. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

Before allowing for community comments, Chairperson Kerry Laurence reviewed the School Committee policy on public comments.

Sean Nicholson made a motion to allow a break in the current mask policy to hear from parents who would like to comment but refuse to wear a mask. This motion was not thus no vote was taken.

Other community comments included the following:

- Comment regarding lifting masking as of 'tomorrow'? Responded it was not part of the discussion today out of an abundance of caution due to school vacation.
- Comment regarding new CDC guidelines will be discussed later this evening. Discussion of research for kids under 5 and how masking is affecting the children. Disappointed this district did not go mask less today and did not make sense. School Committee needs to start making the children a priority.
- Comment concerned about School Committee made the decision when vacations did not show a spike in cases and reject the CDC recommendations
- Comment believes it is safe to unmask when there are zero cases in the school and School Committee has a responsibility to protect the vulnerable.

#### **V. SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS AND ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS**

*District Updates* - Dr. Maureen Cohen

*Principal Search Timeline*

Dr. Cohen stated the search started last week and the district is receiving a good number of candidates. Dr. Kirkpatrick is leading the screening committee. The data on the focus group will be reviewed when looking at the job applications. First round of interviews will happen next week. The process is moving quickly since there is are other openings and the district wants to get the best candidate however the search committee is doing its due diligence. It was commented it is not really possible to bring new hires earlier than July 1 to assist with the transition.

### *Mask Flexible Transition Planning*

Dr. Cohen commented she hears the frustration that maskless was not implemented today but from Administration point, the extra days gave the opportunity to speak with students and develop a good policy. She is confident cases will be good at the end of the week.

Dr Cohen stated there was a mixed reaction from the staff. The admin is communicating the following:

- DESE guidelines and protocols remain in place;
- MURSD protocols include air filtration; disinfecting/cleaning/hygiene protocols;
- daily and weekly COVID data tracking; access to vaccinations and boosters and KN95 mask for staff;
- access to weekly opt-in testing for staff/students and continued symptomatic testing; lastly as always stay home when sick.
- Each school is updating signage and meeting with students to discuss; updated FAQ; check-ins with staff and communication to families.
- Masks required in school health offices and 6-10 days after covid; unvaccinated individuals and immunocompromised individuals; masks will continue to be available to staff/students. This is to maintain a safe, supportive and respectful environment.
- Federal regulations changed where masks are no longer required on buses/van.

Dr. Cohen stated we are in a good place and mask optional will be happening soon. There will be a phased approach for mask optional and a transition for lunches and breaks for social distancing. Most changes will take place at Nipmuc; however, the elementary schools will phase in changes. There will be sections for students returning from COVID days 6-10. Dr. Cohen stated it is probable 'safe' spaces will be created. It was also commented students will be excited on Monday but there will be students who will have anxiety as well. Dr. Cohen recognized the principals of each school for the great job pulling the transition plan together.

### *Assistant Superintendent Updates-Dr. Cheryl Kirkpatrick*

#### *Acceleration Academy Highlight:*

Good news: Math Acceleration – 40 students enrolled. Proud and pleased how the program worked

- Last day of the program was snowed out and teachers had activities for students to do at home.
- Visited the program where archery, coloring and other activities were used.
- In April, there will be 100 students participating.

#### *iReady Mid-year Data*

iReady are formative assessments for grades K-8

- Teachers build these assessments in their daily work
- MURSD has the advantage of iReady and this has been used as a tool.
- Benchmark assessments in the fall with diagnostic assessments in early Feb. there is a 95-99% completion rate at each school.
- Assessments take on average 45-60 minutes
- Demonstration of understanding the fall results in Math
- Demonstrations of the improvements since the fall in Math and Reading
- This data is able to be compared to State and National data from 2018-2019 (pre-pandemic)
- Data shows the children are doing ok and are resilient with a lot of hard work from staff.
- The platform provides typical growth and how to improve individualized teaching.

Sean Nicholson would like to see the data of Massachusetts data pre-pandemic. It was noted this the first year we have comparable data. Taking the assessments is part of the district's curriculum which generates the 95-99% completion.

Other comments include: At some point, this data can be shared with parents; Testing is different than MCAS but correlates to MCAS testing; Embedded tools allow teachers to design individualized lessons; Personalized instructions is also included in the program. Professional Development includes time to allow the teachers to learn more about this program.

Erick Brown would like to see data on Miscoe Hill school and not have elementary data combined. It was noted, this program allows district to do this and there will be another testing in the Spring.

Phil DeZutter asked how are we assessing students vs MCAS being one and done. Dr. Cohen stated iReady has added a good assessment in the toolbox. District is still looking at MCAS and iReady is additional information and professional development has been very helpful to train the staff on this program. Lastly, SEL will also be assessed with Panorama program.

## **VI. SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

Budget Subcommittee noted the Open Budget is Monday, March 14th and there will be a Budget Subcommittee meeting on Monday, March 7th.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### *Model UN Out-of-State Field Trip Approval*

Dr. Cohen commented after a few years of not being able to have Model UN in person, our advisor, Mr. Brian Moloney, was able to find an excellent Model UN opportunity for our students. The program is out of state in Woodstock CT. The School Committee members were given a brief overview of the Model UN trip.

### Approval of the Model UN Out of State Field Trip

**MOTION:** On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Sean Nicholson, to approve the Model UN Out of State Field Trip

**VOTED:** Unanimously

### *FY2023 Budget Presentations – Maureen Cohen and Jay Byer*

Dr. Cohen presented the FY2023 Budget. Highlights of the presentation follows:

- Student population will be 2,141 students and a breakdown of race and ethnicity was shown
- Importance of MURSD experience today
- Dr. Cohen noted the Strategic Plan, Inspire, was developed in 2018
- Outline of the events over the last 2 years; commented progress was made despite the challenges however impact of program has been affected.

**SWOT of the District:**

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b>          Talented and dedicated staff          Forward-thinking strategic plan          Parent collaboration and support          High quality core instructional materials and technology          Commitment to SEL          PLTW in grades 7 and 8          Bridge fully staffed.          Intervention coordinator to support MTSS          Robust music, art, technology and Phys ed offering.</p>	<p><b>Opportunities</b>          Innovation Pathways and Grants          Community partnerships          Shared resources and personnel across both elementary schools.          Shared resources and personnel across MS//HS          Shared services with municipal partners          resources          Expand use of VHS          WIN Block</p>
<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b>          Limited HS tech/ humanities offerings          Limited MS world language/wellness          Increasing class sizes          Staff attrition due to budget uncertainty          Limited recurring funds allocated for technology replacement          Insufficient athletic facilities</p>	<p><b>THREATS</b>          Negative impact of uncertain budgets on staffing, enrollment, resources, &amp; culture          Limited funding beyond fixed costs          Aging facilities and infrastructure          Reduced state aid</p>

- Strategic goals of the District are engage, support and understanding. This guides what is needed in the budget.
- FY23 Budget Development Goals include level services, critical needs/mandated positions and strategic investments. Thus, focus is Optimal Class Sizes, Student Safety/Supports and Robust offerings

**Key Investments- Proposed Staffing**

Maintain Level Services/ Optimal Class Size	Critical Needs/ Student Safety	Critical Needs/ Mandated Positions	Strategic Improvements/ Robust Offerings
Grade 4 Teacher (Clough)	ES Assistant Principal	Library/Media Specialist (HS)	Math/Computer Science Teacher (HS)
.8 Grade 5 Teacher (MS)	Athletic Trainer from PT to FT	Wellness Teacher (MS)	Stipend for eSports and Robotics Club
Tech support staff (shared cost/service with Upton)	School Resource Officers in all four schools (Cost neutral)	English Language Teacher (Grant Funded)	Library/Media Aide (MS) (Reallocate position from HS to MS) (Cost neutral)

**Outline of past, present and future planning needs:**

Department	Previous	FY23	Future Planning
Academics	Instructional Coach, Math K-8, Science 6-8, Reading Specialists	ST Math, Foundations, MS Wellness	HS Soc. St., & ELA, MS World Lang, Instructional Coach
Athletics	Added E-Sports, summer clinics to support programing, new uniforms	FT Athletic Trainer, Replace Scoreboards, Cheerleading Mats, Fitness Equipment	Recurring uniform funds, improve fields, resurface gym floor, LT outdoor facility
Facilities	Miscoe backstops, stairs, parking and driveway, Well on football field, Security cameras, Sound system Nipmuc & Miscoe,	Nipmuc Boilers, Miscoe & Clough Water Treatment, Memorial AC Media Center	Roofs, Carpets, Doors, Energy Management, Concrete Stairs, Aging Equipment, AC units
Music, Visual, Fine Arts	Music instruments, Computers for Graphic Arts,	Marching & Concert equipment Return to festivals,	Choral Risers, Instruments, iMacs for Music/Art, Media Arts Instructor, Miscoe Stage Floor
Professional Development	iReady, Thrively, Panorama, Bridges Math, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Applied Behavioral Supports	Multi-tiered Systems of Support, Co-Teaching, Project-Based Learning, Guided Reading	Multi-tiered Systems of Support, Co-Teaching, Project-Based Learning, Early Literacy Instruction
Student Support Services	School Psychologists, Digital Assessments, Adjustment Counselors, BCBA	Skill-based Courses, Specialized programming	PK expansion, Inclusion Teachers, OOD Coordinator, Align Pre-K-12 Services
Technology	1:1 for staff/students, WiFi upgrades, Renew PC/MacBooks	ECF Grant for 7-12 iPads, Streaming equipment,	Recurring Funding for iPads, Additional Tech Support Staff

FY23 Initial Budget Proposal is \$39,909,817. This is a 2.1% increase over last year's request.

**State Revenues:**

<b>Regional Transportation</b>	<b>Circuit Breaker</b>	<b>Charter School</b>
Governor: \$77,801,545	Governor: \$414,619,357	Governor: \$219,424,271
FY22: \$82,178,615	FY22: \$373,333,860	FY22: \$154,604,742
FY21: \$82,178,615	FY21: \$345,154,803	FY21: \$117,357,887

**State Aid**

Chapter 70 (2,100 x \$30/student)	\$12,511,846	\$12,574,216	\$62,370	0.50%
Transportation Reimbursement (est. 75% of FY21 actual)	\$1,269,020	\$1,179,965	(\$89,055)	-7.02%

Charter Tuition Reimbursement	\$24,316	\$51,477	\$27,161	111.70%
<b>Total State Aid</b>	<b>\$13,805,182</b>	<b>\$13,805,658</b>	<b>\$476</b>	<b>0.00%</b>

***District Revenue – increase E&D contribution to \$700,000***

E&D	\$600,000	\$700,000	\$100,000	16.67%
Vision, Sped Tuition, Interest	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$0	0.00%
Debt Service Bond Premium	\$3,309	\$2,206	(\$1,103)	100.00%
Transfers In-Revolving Accts	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0	0.00%
Interest	\$0	\$10,000	\$10,000	100.00%
Medicaid Reimbursement	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$25,000	100.00%
<b>Total School District</b>	<b>\$853,309</b>	<b>\$987,206</b>	<b>\$133,897</b>	<b>15.69%</b>

***Upton Assessment –(MLC 55.64%)***

<b>Minimum Local Contribution</b>	<b>\$9,543,250</b>	<b>\$10,105,781</b>	<b>\$562,531</b>	<b>5.89%</b>
Transportation & Fixed Assets (Net of State Aid)	\$1,123,250	\$1,427,631	\$242,674	27.10%
Operational Additional	\$2,437,937	\$2,111,634	(\$326,303)	-13.38%
<b>Subtotal (not including debt)</b>	<b>\$13,104,437</b>	<b>\$13,645,046</b>	<b>\$540,609</b>	<b>4.13%</b>
<b>Debt Service</b>				
Long Term Debt Clough/Memorial School	\$326,809	\$308,467	(\$18,342)	-5.61%
Long Term Debt Miscoe Green Repair	\$79,126	\$77,563	(\$1,563)	-1.98%
<b>Subtotal Debt Service</b>	<b>\$405,935</b>	<b>\$386,030</b>	<b>(\$19,905)</b>	<b>-4.90%</b>
<b>Total Upton Operational Assessment (including debt)</b>	<b>\$13,510,372</b>	<b>\$14,031,076</b>	<b>\$520,704</b>	<b>3.85%</b>

**Mendon Assessment (MLC 44.36%)**

Minimum Local Contribution	\$7,697,151	\$7,935,812	\$238,661	3.10%
Transportation & Fixed Assets (Net of State Aid)	\$895,531	\$1,128,968	\$233,437	26.070%
Operational Additional	\$1,943,689	\$1,651,884	(\$291,805)	-15.01%
<b>Subtotal (not including debt)</b>	<b>\$10,536,371</b>	<b>\$10,716,664</b>	<b>\$180,293</b>	<b>1.71%</b>
<b>Debt Service</b>				
Long Term Debt Clough/Memorial School	\$314,941	\$300,583	(\$14,358)	-4.56%
Long Term Debt Miscoe Green Repair	\$70,164	\$68,631	(\$1,533)	-2.19%
<b>Subtotal Debt Service</b>	<b>\$385,106</b>	<b>\$369,214</b>	<b>(\$15,892)</b>	<b>-4.13%</b>
<b>Total Mendon Operational Assessment (including debt)</b>	<b>\$10,921,477</b>	<b>\$11,085,878</b>	<b>\$164,401</b>	<b>1.51%</b>

**Net Revenue Increase**

\$39,090,339	\$39,909,817	\$819,478	2.1%
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**Total Estimated Revenue School Choice/Circuit Breaker**

	FY22	FY23	\$ Change	% Change
School Choice Appropriation	\$920,000	\$800,000	(\$120,000)	-13.04%
Circuit Breaker Reimbursement	\$774,812	\$896,786	\$121,974	15.74%

Jay detailed the grants the district received in FY22 and the anticipated amount for FY23

**Anticipated Expenditure Increase and Decrease”**

Salaries - Current Employees	\$983,379	Negotiated 2.5% COLA plus step/lane changes
Salaries - New Positions	\$427,408	Restoration/Level Service/Strategic Investments
Health Insurance	\$259,200	Based on estimated 8% increase



Worcester Retirement	\$88,753	9.6% increase
Transportation	\$81,200	Pre-K - Grade 12 Transportation to/from School
Out-of District Tuition & Transportation	(\$515,453)	24 Students, a Reduction of 7
Application of FY22 IDEA 240 Carryover	(\$323,196)	Carryover Grant Funds must be used in FY23
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,001,291</b>	<b>Revenue/Expenditure Shortfall: \$181,813</b>

### ***Revenue/Expenditure Shortfall***

<b>Revenue – Expenditure Gap</b>	
Revenue ( <i>estimated</i> )	\$39,909,817
Expenditures ( <i>estimated</i> )	\$40,091,630
Shortfall	\$181,813
<b>Potential Offsets:</b>	
Health Insurance Less than 8%	Every 1% = \$45,000
Additional State Aid - Regional Transportation Reimbursement	TBD

<b>Non-resident Vocational School</b>	
Additional Norfolk Aggie Tuitions	\$24,572/student plus SpEd Services \$6,417/student
Other Non-Resident Vocational Tuitions	Applications to Tri-County & Keefe Tech \$18,000/student
Other Non-Resident Vocational Transportation	\$54,000/student/school

MURSD will not have final numbers on these until mid-July at the earliest

Jay commented Remaining Budget items:

- Health Insurance
- Finalization of non-resident vocational tuitions
- House and Senate budgets
- Potential retirements and staff movement
- Enrollment shifts
- Kindergarten and SI Kindergarten registration

Phil DeZutter commented showing the true operational budget by incorporating the grant monies would be good. It was noted the increase the difference between towns is due to student enrollment.

Phil DeZutter asked about the current year expenditures and how the FY22 budget is performing. It was noted it would be discussed at the Budget Subcommittee.

Next Steps:

- Budget Subcommittee (March 7)
- Mendon Presentation (March 9)
- Budget Hearing (March 14)
- House/Senate Budgets (Mid May)
- Mendon Annual Town Meeting (May 6)
- Upton Annual Town Meeting (May 5)

Sean Nicholson commented it was a great presentation.

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

Kerry Laurence noted the CDC had updated guidelines to eliminate the mandate for mask wearing on school buses. It was noted this was currently in the MURSD policy since it was a federal regulation.

#### Approval to Amend the MURSD Policy on Mask

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to remove the following line from the Mask Policy:

*By federal public health order, all students and staff are required to wear a mask on school buses.*

VOTED: Unanimously

### **IX. CORRESPONDENCE**

Kerry Laurence noted there had been many emails received about the mask policy the last 2 weeks. She thanked all who emailed for their respectful emails.

### **X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

### **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: On motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Dorothy Scally to adjourn

VOTED: Unanimously

Sean Nicholson, yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.  
Minutes by Kelly McElreath