

MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Committee Meeting
Nipmuc High School, Professional Development Room
Monday, January 10, 2022

Committee Present:

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

Administration Present:

Maureen Cohen, Interim Superintendent of Schools
Cheryl Kirkpatrick, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Jay Byer, Business/Finance
John Clements, Co-Principal, Nipmuc Regional High School
Chris Schmidt, Athletic Director

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Kerry Laurence.
Pledge of Alliance was recited

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approval to Amend the Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Phil DeZutter, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to amend the agenda to include Superintendent Search Committee update after Student's Comments

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Approval to Amend the Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Erick Brown, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to amend the agenda to include approval of Executive Sessions Minutes

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Approval of the Amended Agenda

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

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Approval of the Open Session Minutes from December 6, 2021, December 13, 2021, December 20, 2021, January 5, 2022 and Executive Sessions December 6, 2021

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to approve Open Session minutes from December 6, 2021, December 13, 2021, December 20, 2021, January 5, 2022 and Executive Sessions from December 6, 2021

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

II. CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS

Chairperson Kerry Laurence expressed her heartfelt thank you to the staff for service to our children in a trying time. School Committee is aware and appreciate their hard work

III. COMMUNITY COMMENTS - NA

IV. STUDENT'S COMMENTS

Michel shared the following with the School Committee:

- Nipmuc Spanish Club first meeting tomorrow
 - Yellow group helps other students with their Spanish work
 - Red group weekly trips to elementary school to assist with Spanish immersion program
- Mentoring program for band members to assist middle school students with band
- Inspired Learning Day is coming January 13 across the district.
- Book club at Nipmuc. Media center and library at 2 pm January 25th

V. SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Phil DeZutter updated the School Committee on the following:

- The School Committee scheduled day in district for Wednesday 1/12
- Last week, District was informed Margaret Adams, external finalist was offered another position and withdrew from MURSD process

Phil DeZutter is looking to forgo day in the district and believe it would be best for School Committee to vote to move into negotiations with Dr. Cohen.

Vikki Ludwigson is in complete agreement. 2 candidates were put forth from the Screening Committee and believes this makes sense

Erick Brown agrees with the decision and fortunate to have Dr. Cohen

Sean Nicholson agrees

Kerry Laurence agrees and wanted transparency in this process. During this process stakeholders have had the ability to participate.

Approval to Enter into Negotiations with Dr. Cohen

MOTION: On a motion of Phil DeZutter, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to enter into negotiations with Dr. Maureen Cohen as the Superintendent of MURSD.

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Dr. Cohen believes it the search was a great process to go through and appreciates the efforts by the School Committee. Dr. Cohen looks forward to the conversation moving forward, enjoys being in the district and thanked the School Committee members for their confidence

VI. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS AND ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS

MUEF Presentation--Kathleen Moeckel and Jenn Conrad

Ms. Moeckel and Ms. Conrad gave an update to the School Committee on MUEF:

- MUEF is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, established in 2005 by a dedicated group of parents and teachers.
- Board of Trustees: Consists of parents, School Committee member, Superintendent (as *ex officio*)
- Meets 6 times a year in addition to fundraising efforts
- Supports all four MURSD district schools
- Raises money through fundraisers and by partnering with businesses, individuals and community members
- Distributes this money in the form of grants that are designed, written and submitted to us by district educators
- Funds creative, innovative and sustainable educational programming within or across classrooms, disciplines, grade levels and even schools
- Partners with individual school PTOs for some of our fundraising efforts (ie Harlem Wizards)
- Since its inception, MUEF has distributed over **\$255,847** in grants across all four schools.

Initiatives supported

- Fund innovative and pilot programming that is not included in the normal operating budget of the district. Without this funding, these programs would not otherwise be in place in our schools, especially with continuous budget constraints.
 - MUEF only funds materials and supplies if they are directly connected to innovative programming. In this way, we differentiate ourselves from PTOs.
- Funds are intended to encourage students and teachers to
 - think outside the box
 - apply real-world knowledge and collaboration to their learning experiences and to do so in fun, new ways
- Often pilot programs (iPad initiative)
- The experiences MUEF provides:
 - follow right alongside Strategic Plan
 - allow educators and students alike to reimagine education and learning

Jenn Conrad spoke about the recent grants MUEF was able to distribute even with COVID:

- Colorblind Glasses – Miscoe Hill – Jon Hansen; Video showing students who are colorblind using the glasses were recently received.
- Alcohol Impairment Goggles – Miscoe Hill – Sara Higgins
- Project Lead the Way – Grade 7 Project Lead the Way Computer Science Makers – Dave Quinn
- Nipmuc Justice Coalition, Anti-Defamation League Training - Johanna Annunziata, Lauren Blackburn
- Past Grants were discussed
 - Kathleen stated the Board is looking for new members; how people could join the team and play an important role in the district and community

School Committee members thanked MUEF for their hard work.

District Updates

Dr. Cohen provided the School Committee with the following COVID updates:

- Info sent out in newsletter
- Increase in cases
- Projection the cases will peak in the next week
- Looking for students and families to self-monitor
- Many updates have been issues and new protocols in December. This information has been distributed
- Masks extended until February 28
- There have been no plans for remote; if staffing is an issue, district needs to work with DESE and have COVID snow days to be made up
- Any changes will be distributed appropriately by newsletter, dashboard etc.
- This is a fluid situation and adjustments are being made as needed
- Students and staff have been doing great protocols
- Masks and home testing have been distributed and some meetings have been shifted to zoom
- Shifting some of our student performances such as musical and drama performances to future dates since so many students would miss these events due to absences.
- Athletic games will be limiting spectators to family members for this month.
- We are moving our Inspired Learning Day to February.
- We are moving some of our meetings with families to remote sessions for upcoming Kindergarten and SI Information nights.
- We are reaching out for any help from the community to assist with substitute coverage right now so we can keep our schools open.
- This Saturday the Board of Health will be hosting a Pfizer booster clinic from 10:00-1:00 at Nipmuc in the Media Center.

School Committee followed up with some questions regarding COVID protocols

Dr. Cohen updated the district has launched this year's Technology Planning Committee, District Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, and the half-day professional development day on Friday will be focused on approaches to better understand, support, and engage our students. The range of topics for professional development include behavioral support strategies, Panorama student survey analysis, Bridges Math implementation, early literacy interventions, and signs of suicide PD

Nipmuc Boiler Bid--Jay Byer

Jay Byer discussed and reviewed the bids received for the replacement of Nipmuc Boiler. 8 bids were received and NB Kenney is the low bidder including Alternates 1 (cast iron boiler) and 2 (demolish boiler vent stack) with a total bid of \$716,668. The initial estimate was \$750,000 and when 60% CD estimate the estimate was \$1.3m. Thus, low bid of \$716,668 is great news for the project. All companies submitted bids based on the bid specs issues. School Committee members asked various questions about the project

Approval to Award the Contract to NB Kenney to replace the Nipmuc Boiler.

MOTION: On a motion of Phil DeZutter, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to award the contract to NB Kenney to replace the Nipmuc Boiler.

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes
Phil DeZutter, yes

Athletic Fees--Nipmuc ESports--Chris Schmidt

Chris Schmidt, Athletic Director (remotely) updated the School Committee about Esports. The district began offering Esports and the only cost was the advising since the participants used free games to compete. The Athletic program is looking to expand the esports program in the Spring. There are 6 or 7 fee programs students are interested in participating in. Mr. Schmidt is looking to add 2 games Legends and Smash Brothers where the license fee of \$65 per seat. He also wants to create a 'uniform' for the students. Thus, he is recommending a fee of \$85 for the Spring season for students in Legends and Smash Brothers and \$20 for the Rocket league. This will pay for the licensing and the 'uniform'. Participants will still compete remotely but looking at options to bringing the program in the school next year. Thus, students are providing their own devices currently and school is purchasing the licensing. Students can participate in multiple leagues but this spring will be offered to participate only in one program for management purposes.

Approval to Award the institute a \$85 fee for the Spring Season of Esports.

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to award the contract to institute a \$85 fee for the Spring Season of Esports.

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes
Erick Martin, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes
Phil DeZutter, yes

Nipmuc Graduation Date-Calendar Change--John Clements/Mary Anne Moran

John Clements is requesting to move graduation from Friday, June 3 to Saturday, June 4, 2022 at 10am, which is a school calendar change. Senior class officers met with their advisors and asked if we could make this change. Administration agrees and think that this may become a permanent change, especially since it's hard to imagine large group gatherings in the gym for a long time to come

Approval to Change the Date of Graduation to Saturday June 4.

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Phil DeZutter, to change the date of graduation to Saturday, June 4

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes
Erick Martin, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes
Phil DeZutter, yes

VII. SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Policy Subcommittee

Vikki Ludwigson stated the School Committee members had received for the first reading for 2 policies. As a reminder to the School Committee, the first policy, ACAB-Harassment was updated to include updates in state guidelines and consistent language with the MASC policy. The second policy, FFA-Memorial Commemoration Policy is new. The district did not have a Memorial Commemoration Policy. It was concluded last year this policy was needed. She noted this policy is aligned with MASC recommended policy language.

Approval of the ACAB-Harassment and FFA-Memorial Commemoration Policy

MOTION: On a motion of Phil DeZutter, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to approve the policies ACAB-Harassment and FFA-Memorial Commemoration Policy

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Technology Department Budget Presentation

Joe Leacu and Dave Quinn presented Technology Budget to the School Committee. Highlights follows:

The district is a 1:1 K - 12 allowing students on-demand access to digital learning & creation tools. There is a maximization of free iPad apps with strategic investments in platforms that build conceptual knowledge & track growth / usage data. The district has modernized Wi-Fi infrastructure to ensure compatibility with the future technology operating systems. The Tech Department is a restructured department staffing based on ticket-data & needs. There is a three-year MURSD Tech Plan coming in March 2022

Current Staffing:

Administrative

- Director of Technology Operations (1.0)
- Director of Technology Integration (1.0)
- Support Team
- Computer/Network Support Technician (1.0)
- 1:1 Support Staff (2.0)
- District Data Administrator (1.0)

Numbers: 3,191 iPads, 450 Mac Laptops, 400 Window Desktop
2600 + users

75 Smartboards, 100 Projectors and 4 large venues

Major Investments:

- Purchased PK-4 iPads (FY21)
- MacBooks (FY21)
- New WiFi (FY22)
- ECF-funded iPads for 7 -12 with keyboard cases & Apple Care (FY22)

Grants:

- FY22 - ECF (\$488,000) Allows us to replace Student iPads grades 6-12
- FY21 - E-Rate Category 2 (\$119,659)
- FY19-22 - American Student Assistance (\$100,000) Miscoe Hill IIC Grant
- FY 21 - 24 - Project Lead the Way (\$50,000)
- FY 22: Project Lead the Way CS (\$25,000)

Return on Tech Investments

- Makes our students' thinking both visible and audible in ways never before.
- Enables students to develop and amplify their voice to global audiences.
- Connects students with external experts to engage in authentic, real-world learning experiences.
- Empowers students to explore new interests that develop into personal passions and career opportunities.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

Visible, enthusiastic team
Wide-spread staff adoption
Educator and students' devices <2 years old.
Quality Equipment

OPPORTUNITIES

Known entity to grant funders
Shared services with municipal partners
Strong networks for professional learning

WEAKNESSES

Limited recurring funds for student devices
Limited recurring funds for classroom hardware
Limited "after-hours" support

THREATS

Budget instability
Aging server infrastructure
Device Breakage
Facility Infrastructure

Investments Requests:

FY23

- \$60,000 for new data centers (Lease)
- \$10,000 Inspired Innovation Center Maintenance of Effort
- \$18,000 Instructional Software License Increase Costs

Beyond FY23

- Creation of a multi-year, phased-in leasing cycle for iPads
- Classroom hardware maintenance cycle (Projectors, Apple TVs, sound bars, interactive displays)

Phil DeZutter asked about the technology plan and the financial perspective. It was stated the MURSD Tech Plan will be reviewed by the School Committee. Costs for technology should be considered the 4th utility

Nipmuc Regional High School Budget Presentation, John Clements

Co-Principal John Clements presented Nipmuc High School budget to the School Committee. Mr. Clements reviewed Nipmuc's beliefs about learning, definition of Learning and Nipmuc School Improvement: Understand, Support, & Engage

Highlights of the Budget:

- Vision Aligned Practices
- SEL Learning and Supports
- Student Success
- Deeper Learning
 - John reviewed many details of the following Return of Investments:
 - Increase in authentic learning experiences (ILD, Legacy, Internships)
 - AP Enrollment and Achievement
 - Elective offerings for students in many areas
 - Data & staffing support for SEL
 - Powerful network of partners
 - Reductions, Efficiencies and Savings:
 - Limited department expenses (\$3400 average departmental budget)
 - Teacher designed curriculum - savings on textbooks (~\$30,000)
 - Para-supported media center for last 3 years (savings 1.0 FTE media center specialist ~\$65,000/year)
 - Reduction of 1.0 FTE history position (~\$55,000/1 yr)

- Reduction of 1.0 FTE English position (~\$55,000/5 yr)
- Reduction of 1.0 FTE technology position (~\$65,000/5 yr)

SWOT Analysis:

STRENGTHS

Talented and dedicated staff
 Guiding beliefs and vision
 Platforms for student voice
 Programming that aligns with vision

OPPORTUNITIES

DESE's Innovation Pathways
 Community partnerships
 Formalize the use of SEL data
 Collaboration across MURSD

WEAKNESSES

Technology & humanities electives
 Increasing class sizes
 Curriculum and instructional leadership

THREATS

Impact of uncertain budgets on staffing, enrollment, resources, & culture
 Limited funding beyond fixed costs

FY23 Investment Requests

- 1.0 FTE Math/Computer Science Teacher (\$55,000)
- PLTW Computer Science Curriculum, Materials, and Classroom Supplies (\$23,000 - possible grant funded)
- Virtual Learning Opportunities (\$5000)

Future Investments Request

- 1.0 FTE Business/Tech/Digital Media Teacher (\$65,000)
- 1.0 FTE History Teacher (\$55,000)
- 1.0 FTE English Teacher (\$55,000)
- PLTW, Innovation Pathways, Internships, Authentic Learning Experiences (\$10,000/yr)
- Facility Needs (varies)

School Committee asked questions about adjustment counselor hiring. Mr. Clements stated a retired Social Studies teacher was not replaced in order to support the adjustment counselor since it was felt the counselor was more important at that time. Asked about impact on class size, Mr. Clements stated every teacher is 5 sections. If class size is too high, there is a need to focus on core classes and not electives. Last year, creative writing is the only English elective at this time. In History, 2 electives were impacted with high class sizes. More questions were also asked regarding teacher driven curriculum.

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

X. CORRESPONDENCE

XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Departmental Budget Presentations
- Superintendent Goals

XII. ADJOURNMENT

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

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes
Erick Martin, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes
Phil DeZutter, yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.
Minutes by Kelly McElreath