

MAYNARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
FOWLER LIBRARY
July 26, 2018

Present: Justin Hemm, Bethlyn Houlihan, Mary Brannelly, Dawn Capello, Maro Hogan.
Administrators: Dr. Robert Gerardi, Jr., Superintendent, Michelle Resendes, Business Manager

Due to the School Committee By-Laws, this first meeting of the fiscal year is always begun by the Superintendent until the chair is elected, and then the gavel is passed.

Dr. Gerardi opened the meeting at 7pm.

Dr. Gerardi asked for nominations for chairperson twice and then requests a vote. The newly elected Chair will then ask for nominations for vice chair twice and then request a vote.

Mary Brannelly nominated Justin Hemm.
Bethlyn Houlihan nominated Dawn Capello.

Vote held: 3 votes for Justin Hemm, 2 votes for Dawn Capello
Chairperson for the 2018-19 school year will be Justin Hemm.

Mr. Hemm asked for a nomination and vote for Vice-Chairperson.

Mary Brannelly nominated Dawn Capello. There were no other nominations.

Vote held, 5-0, Vice-Chairperson for the 2018-19 school year will be Dawn Capello.

Various sub-committees will need to be formed for the upcoming school year, Policy, Negotiation, Curriculum and Budget committees, as well as a liaison person for the Wellness Committee.

Mr. Hemm asked School Committee members to submit their top 3 choices for the sub-committee they wished to join by mid next week. He also noted that the Town Selectmen Committee would like to start looking at the Town budget soon.

The School Committee discussed the August meeting and if there would be a quorum to hold this meeting. The options were to move the August meeting to a different August date, or skip the meeting and move the agenda to the following date. Ms. Capello suggested if the August meeting did not have a heavy agenda, to skip it and push agenda to September meeting.

Mr. Hemm will confirm with bylaws to make sure they can skip the August meeting. If an August meeting was required, he will take a poll to find a mutually available date.

Minutes

Ms. Capello motioned to table the minutes to clarify some items missing. Ms. Brannelly seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Motion passed 5-0.

Chairperson's Report

Mr. Hemm stated that people reached out to him after the June 14th meeting about the School Committee vacancy when Mary Mertch resigned. According to Town Charter, the School Committee followed procedure. Deadlines to submit interest for this position were discussed at that meeting. It was also mentioned that that this would be posted on social media and the Committee is aware it was not. They apologized for the miscommunication and were looking into what happened. They acknowledged this mistake was made.

A member of audience thanked the Board for apologizing. Questioned the June 30 deadline and thought it was not in line with the bylaw, some were told that there would not be a deadline. She went on to mention that someone was told it was past the deadline and that they could not submit their name for consideration. Information was not consistently told to all parties of interest. She asked when there was an open position, was it required to be posted?

Mr. Hemm clarified that there was a discussion that in order to get the information to the Select Board by the July 3rd meeting, that they had decided to have the June 30th deadline in order to be able to review the information before the July 3rd meeting.

Ms. Capello said that she had checked Mass Laws and there was nothing regarding this. The intent was good.

Ms. Houlihan suggested that a School Committee Policy could be created to have a process that could be followed in the future.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Gerardi stated that a new crime bill was recently passed that will implement a School Resource Officer (SRO) program. There is a new statewide emphasis to have an SRO dedicated to the schools. Krista Mancuso will be Maynard's dedicated SRO and will be working with Principals of Operation and have more of a presence in our schools. This is a full time position that will align with the school day and she will have an office located within the schools. She will also be available to attend school dances and other school events.

Dr. Gerardi encouraged everyone to read this summer's book read, *The Energy Bus*, by Jon Gordan. He highly recommends it and said that there would be a School Committee meeting in September or October to discuss the book.

He also mentioned that there were concerns about communication and social media at the last School Committee meeting. Maynard Public Schools will be implementing a new website and App which will be rolled out on August 27th. There will be information about this sent out soon to the school community. This new technology will include live feeds, news feeds, social media etc.

Student Handbooks

Dr. Gerardi stated that the school handbooks have been reorganized so they are similar across the schools. Policies have also been revised to be similar across the schools and appropriate for the grade level. It is still a working document. He pointed out that Ms. Capello, Ms. Houlihan and Ms. Brannelly participated in a parent forum with Administrators and Union members regarding the contents of the handbooks.

Mr. Hemm stated a concern with the cell phone policy and suggested running it by the nurse. He noted that some medical devices, such as insulin pumps, run off of apps and those students may need to keep their phones on them. For these students it is a medical necessity.

There was discussion on how best to alert parents about changes to existing policies or new policies.

Dr. Gerardi said that every handbook included a sheet for families to read, sign and return to their school. This sheet states that the family has read and understands the handbook. He suggested that the sheet could include language such as “note the change to the student cell phone policy”. Handbooks may be sent electronically, but parents could request a paper copy of the handbook if needed. Some documents need a legal signature, so a paper form noting where to find the electronic copy of the handbook and to sign off will be sent home.

Ms. Brannelly noted that Green Meadow and Fowler required a parent meeting when a student was absent for 5 days, while MHS were allowed many more absent days, 7 days per term and that this policy should be looked into.

Parent, Danielle Pimenta asked about translated documents and what will be used to make these translations. She noted that the communications she receives in Portuguese makes no sense.

Dr. Gerardi stated that official documents go out to an official translator.

Mr. Hemm motioned to approve the Green Meadow, Fowler and High School handbooks pending some of the revisions mentioned by the board

Ms. Capello seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-1.

Parent, Natasha Rivera, mentioned that she was part of the communications task force who were working on a parent handbook, which was separate than the school handbook. This would include frequently asked information, such as “What to expect when my student starts at Fowler” or “What to expect the first day of Kindergarten”

School Committee FY19 Goals Discussion

Mr. Hemm noted that every year they looked back on last year to see what their goals for the upcoming year should be. He thought one goal should be around communication. A new Website and App were already starting for this year which would giving parents some control over the information they want to receive. He asked the Committee what were the other areas of need or focus.

Ms. Brannelly wanted to find out how to actively market how terrific the Maynard schools were, electives, PBIS, clubs, etc. Second, concentrate on the grade 6-8 curriculum and evaluations. She hoped that having the extra administrator in place will help the teachers.

Ms. Hogan suggested putting together some sort of rubric for communication that administration would check things off when they need to send information to parents (is there a date, spell-check, etc.). Similar to what the kids need to do for assignments. To make sure all their boxes checked off before they send it off.

She also would like to get together and figure out the process of doing and IEP for a parent, how they go thru the process. She felt it was not well known and it was difficult for someone who hadn't gone thru

it. If there were step by step procedures for parents to go thru so they knew what needed to be done, who to talk to, etc. Then to have a follow thru for the school system to use for the students who don't fall under an IEP.

Mrs. O'Toole from the audience stated that SEPAC would be willing to help with that.

Ms. Hogan also noted that the Fowler School Council came up with a family resource document and felt it was something that all 3 schools could use. This document is something that parents could use to find out what type of clubs are available, and has information about open table, the backpack program, MEF, how to volunteer, who to contact, etc.

Ms. Capello asked to continue with School Committee approval to have a parent conversation in early September regarding communication. Hold something to cover all 3 schools and maybe have several of these during the year to talk about how communication can look better. She suggested coming up with calendar of expected communications. Example: date when are school supply lists coming out, up-days, fine arts showcase. She also would like to see events happen before other school similar events, such as 8th grade up day before the Assabet day.

Ms. Houlihan liked how the Communication Taskforce was looking at the basics and would like to see response times shortened. She loved the pathway discussions, and wanted to find ways to harness strengths and give opportunities to students.

Dr. Gerardi stated that WAVM which has been a High School club for 50 years was just approved as a Chapter 74 program by the state. Students will have a vocation certificate in Radio and TV Production as well as a High School Diploma.

Ms. Brannelly wanted to start looking at the MCAS track record to see what areas are experiencing decreases and what could be done to improve this.

Dr. Gerardi noted that Jennifer Gaudet would be having discussion with teachers about how to use that data.

Mr. Hemm would like to see more community education continue, like the finance night. He wanted the community to understand what the School Committee did; they are involved with policies, budget, hiring and firing of the superintendent. Also to reflect on process which things are done, as in the announcement of budget cuts.

A member of the audience commented that they would like at least an acknowledgement from school staff when they receive emails, and asked if there was anything in place as to response time.

Ms. Capello said that Dr. Gerardi and Jen Gaudet can get input from school administrators at an MLT meeting regarding response times. Some of these goals will need staff input.

Superintendent's Evaluation

Ms. Houlihan said that they were using the Mass Association of School Committee form. The Superintendent fills out a mid-cycle and end-cycle. This would have been a midyear, due to new school committee members turnover it was changed. This evaluation reflects 6 months of progress.

Mr. Hemm said that they were out of sync with final evaluation and contract negotiations; this brings it back into sync. The last full evaluation was December 2017. They acknowledged giving a full eval much sooner, but wanted to get these 2 processes synced up again. This is still a draft until approved by School Committee.

Ms. Houlihan stated that the Superintendent collects data on goals which are used when the Committee does their evaluation independently. One person compiles the anonymous finished evals together. They also received feedback during the year and take that into consideration. There is a lot of behind the scene work that the public is not aware of which comes into consideration.

Four School Committee members completed the evaluations.

Mr. Hemm commented that Dr. Gerardi handled management of operations, always keeping a positive air, and has continued to do as much as he could with less.

Ms. Brannelly noted how it was clear we needed more administration at Fowler and how quickly he moved to fix that. He was constantly trying to find different avenues to move the system forward.

Ms. Capello stated how he has added more options for students, more language offerings, computer science, Chapter 74 and how he provides the School Committee very solid advice during budget season.

Ms. Houlihan commented that Dr. Gerardi had a strong team, and he found creative ways to be responsive. She would like to back to some of the basics and having some way to navigate better through communication and response times.

Mr. Hemm noted how the relationship with the Town has greatly improved. He commended him for his resourcefulness. He mentioned he would like to see Dr. Gerardi focus more on data with his smart goals. As well as to see an increased focus to anticipate problems and alleviate problems or prevent them. A lot of the critical feedback that occurs behind the scenes and he is always open to it.

Ms. Capello noted how they focused so much on communication and she I personally held Dr. Gerardi accountable for the building principals and expected increased communication from them.

Mr. Hemm asked the Committee if they were comfortable with this document and the accommodations given to Dr. Gerardi tonight, and if they were ready to move on. A motion was not required, but he could take an informal poll and move on. The committee indicated that they all agreed. Mr. Hemm asked if any of the public had comments regarding Dr. Gerardi's evaluation.

An audience member asked if Mary Mertch was given the opportunity to evaluate Dr. Gerardi.

Mr. Hemm said that she did and chose not to.

Parent: She felt he was adding a lot of things that look good on a resume, concerned about students losing class time to be serviced for IEPs. She commented that no one asked for a Strings program and showed concern the teacher didn't know how to teach strings or that they didn't have the instruments. She also mentioned that for the 3rd year in a row, her daughter has had a teacher leave during the year. She felt like she was in a different district from what the Committee described.

Ms. Houlihan noted that there were individual experiences and there are a larger picture, but didn't want to discount anyone's individual experience.

Ms. Brannelly said that this spoke to the whole communication piece.

Natasha Rivera asked that the results of the end of the year parent survey should be shared with parents. She noted that the evaluation stated that he was proficient in a lot of things, but it didn't talk about parent communication. She said she would like to see the evidence to back up, it wasn't specific and measurable.

Ms. O'Toole also noted that there needed to be more communication within Sped and helping the department get back to people in a timely fashion.

Ms. Pimenta said she didn't like the way it was worded on page 12 that he works with Director of Student Services to keep students in district, keeping costs down.

Dr. Gerardi said that in past programs had been offered for students with autism, and other disabilities. A recently created MHS program (The Oasis Program) will help some HS students stay in school instead of going out of district. This is a pilot to revive programs to help students.

Mr. Hemm said these students have a right to have an education among their peers. We have come up with ways to keep these students in district instead of sending them out of district causing for financial cost to district.

Ms. Pimenta suggested rewriting how it's worded, it's a public document and might be misunderstood as it was written.

Citizen's Comments

Ms. Pimenta asked if students in the Language Based classroom that has been put together so quickly for grades 4-6 in Fowler would be in that classroom for the entire day. She noted that legally speaking, parents need to be part of that decision. They were asking questions and not getting answers. They needed the opportunity to see if this class and have an informed decision about their students placement. She and several other parents read from a prepared statement with questions about the program effectiveness, curriculum and instruction, teacher and staff support, social emotional consequences, equal access and cost benefit. They submitted this statement to the School Committee.

Mr. Hemm said that the School Committee didn't have any purview over this since it's regarding operations.

Ms. O'Toole commented that it could be a really collaborative process with parents and SEPAC.

Ms. Brannelly asked if schools could communicate with parents about newly hired teachers before school starts.

Member's Comments/Questions

Michelle Resendes was asked to explain the chapter 70 funding now coming from the state. She said that although the town will receive additional chapter 70 funds, this increase is offset by the increased expense of students attending charter schools. The net effect is around negative \$19,000. We find out the

Charter School numbers every year at the end of October and are reassessed every January. She referenced an article on the Mass Budget website called Building and Education System.

http://massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=Building-an-Education-System-that-Works-for-Everyone.html

A motion was made by Mr. Hemm to adjourn the meeting by roll call vote to enter into executive session without the intent to return to open session at 9:35 p.m. The motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Andrade
Administrative Assistant