

**North Adams Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
December 4, 2018**

MINUTES

The School Committee of the North Adams Public Schools met Tuesday, December 4, 2018, in the Office of the Superintendent, 37 Main Street, Suite 200, North Adams.

Members present

Mayor Thomas Bernard, chair
Ian Bergeron
Karen Bond
Nicholas Fahey
James Holmes
Tara Jacobs

Members not present

Heather Boulger, vice chair

Also attending

Dr. Barbara Malkas, Superintendent
Carrie Burnett, Business Administrator
Kimberlee Chappell, Literacy/Title I Coordinator
Sandra Cote, Principal Greylock Elementary School
Amy Meehan, Principal, Colegrove Park Elementary School
Nancy Rauscher, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent
Kimberly Roberts-Morandi, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
Thomas Simon, Director of Student Support Services
Carolyn Wallace, Principal, Brayton Elementary School

Press

Tammy Daniels, iBerkshires

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bernard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The mission of the North Adams Public Schools is to help every child learn every day and empower all students to recognize and optimize their full potential.

HEARING OF VISITORS

There were no visitors to be heard.

READING AND APPROVAL OF RECORDS

A. Minutes of November 7, 2018, School Committee meeting

The committee considered the minutes from the November 7, 2018 School Committee meeting.

It was **moved** by committee member Jacobs and **seconded** by committee member Holmes to approve the minutes of November 7, 2018.

Action #6131: minutes	
Ayes	5
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

B. Balance sheet

Business Administrator Carrie Burnett provided the balance sheet as of October 31, 2018 and confirmed spending is tracking according to the FY19 budget.

No action was required.

C. Personnel Report

Superintendent Malkas reviewed the personnel report. Superintendent Malkas indicated that a new first grade teacher, Allison Meehan, is being hired at Colegrove Park Elementary School. As Ms. Allison Meehan is the daughter of Principal Amy Meehan, Superintendent Malkas attached a copy of the DISCLOSURE OF APPEARANCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST AS REQUIRED BY G.L.c. 268A, 23(b)(3) to the personnel report. Superintendent Malkas indicated that this hiring process reflects an established procedure for cases where there is the possibility of the appearance of a potential conflict of interest. Specifically, at the time the application was received, the Principal removed herself from the hiring process for this position. As is the practice, another administrator, Literacy/Title 1 Coordinator, Kimberlee Chappell, replaced Principal Meehan for the remainder of the search and hiring process. The Dean of Students, Jonathan Slocum, will be Ms. Allison Meehan's supervisor and evaluator going forward.

Committee member Bergeron inquired as to the status of the open teaching position at Greylock Elementary School. Superintendent Malkas confirmed a new fourth grade teacher has been hired and would be starting next week. Long-term substitutes are in place for any remaining open positions.

It was **moved** by committee member Jacobs and **seconded** by committee member Bergeron to place the personnel report with attachment on file.

Action #6132: personnel report with attachment	
Ayes	5
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

A. Circuit Breaker Presentation

Director of Student Support Services Simon and Business Administrator Burnett provided a combined overview of Circuit Breaker and Federal Grants revenue. Director of Student Support Services Simon explained that Circuit Breaker is a state special education reimbursement program that provides additional state funding to districts for high-cost special education students. The threshold for eligibility for reimbursement is tied to four times the state average foundation budget per pupil (currently \$44,106) as calculated under the Chapter 70 program. Districts are reimbursed on the amount spent in excess of that number. The FY18 reimbursement rate is 72%. The rate varies from year to year and has typically been in the range of 68% up to a maximum of 75%. Districts are reimbursed at the current rate on anything over and above the benchmark of \$44,106. The district may spend the reimbursement revenue at their discretion on Special Education expenses. The money must be spent within two years of having received the reimbursement.

Director of Student Support Services Simon also reviewed the components of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. A key component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act is to ensure that children with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive setting possible.

Literacy/Title 1 Coordinator Kimberlee Chappell addressed the impact and focus of the Title 1, Title IIA, and Title IV grants.:

- Title I: To improve academic achievement for students in areas affected by economic disadvantage. Supports equity in student learning and seeks to close achievement gaps.
- Title IIA and Title IV: To create safe, healthy and supportive, high-quality educational learning environments for all. Supports professional development for new teacher induction/mentor programs and literacy and math programs.

No action was required.

B. Grants Overview

Business Administrator Burnett continued the review of revenue sources with a focus on federal grants to the North Adams Public Schools. FY19 Federal Grant revenue to the North Adams Public Schools is \$1,198,546. Grant expenditures include costs associated with administrators, support staff, stipends, contracted services, travel supplies, fringe benefits, and instructional/professional expenses. Business Administrator Burnett noted that, similar to the general appropriation, the largest expense category is instructional/professional, accounting for

84% of grant expenditures. Business Administrator Burnett noted that the MTRS implements a 9% surcharge for any employees that are grant funded. Business Administrator Burnett noted this expense as “fringe benefits” and explained that this is the only expenditure category that does not go directly to support student learning. If this category were to go from 2% to 7% of grant spending, it would represent a \$53,000 shift—the cost of one teacher or the equivalent of 3.5 teaching assistants. It was noted that thirty-one teacher assistants are currently grant funded. As the federal grant revenue is used to fund positions, any additional burden on grant spending, ie, an increase to the fringe benefit allocation, would mean a loss of funding for positions.

In closing, it was stated that these grants, often referred to as “entitlement” grants as they’re based on enrollment, still serve specific purposes, have detailed requirements, and are highly variable. Business Administrator Burnett indicated that federal grant revenue has been decreasing in the last few years and we now assume a year over year decrease of 6%.

Chair Bernard thanked the presenters and commented that the presentation helped to illustrate that the obligation for the schools’ expenses does not fall entirely on the taxpayer.

No action was required.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Declared Surplus Items at Brayton Elementary School

Superintendent Malkas submitted a request from Principal Wallace providing an inventory of materials to be declared as surplus by the School Committee. Principal Wallace’s request indicated that the materials were too dated to be of sound instructional use. It was noted that the intent is to clean out a section of the second floor closet to create a teacher book room.

It was **moved** by committee member Fahey and **seconded** by committee member Holmes to approve Principal Wallace’s request to declare the listed inventory as surplus to be disposed.

Action #6133: declare surplus items at Brayton	
Ayes	6
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

B. Alternative Structured Learning Day Program proposed policy

Superintendent Malkas presented the proposed policy for the Alternative Structured Learning Day Program, also known as the “blizzard bag” policy (FILE: IHBHE). Superintendent Malkas explained that as this would be the first winter of its implementation, the policy presented would be viewed as a pilot program and continued input is welcomed. Superintendent Malkas emphasized that the development of the proposed policy had been a highly collaborative process. Input was provided by other districts who had implemented a similar policy, parent groups, and the North Adams Teachers Association.

Components of the policy include:

- Only enacted after three of five snow days have been used
- Assignments to reflect ongoing classroom work and help to avoid regression
- Students to have one week to complete assignments
- Grades on related assignments to be issued on a pass/fail basis
- 50% student participation required to qualify as a school day

Committee member Jacobs suggested that the community be given ample notice to prepare for the possibility of an Alternative Structured Learning Day.

It was **moved** by committee member Fahey and **seconded** by committee member Jacobs to approve policy IHBHE.

Action #6134: approval of policy IHBHE	
Ayes	6
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

C. Student Fundraising Activities proposed policy

Superintendent Malkas presented the proposed policy for Student Fundraising Activities (FILE: JJE). Superintendent Malkas noted that crowdfunding activities would be for school related projects only, including service learning projects for credit. Projects would need to be approved prior to launching and then monitored on an ongoing basis by administration. The oversight required by the policy assures the authenticity and effectiveness of a given program. Superintendent Malkas noted there was a typo in the proposed policy and the word “employee” would need to be changed to “student.”

It was **moved** by committee member Jacobs and **seconded** by committee member Holmes to amend the proposed policy JJE to change “employee” to “student.”

Action #6135: amend policy JJE to change “employee” to “student”	
Ayes	6
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

It was **moved** by committee member Holmes and **seconded** by committee member Jacobs to approve amended policy JJE.

Action #6136: approval of amended policy JJE	
Ayes	6
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

D. Field Trips and Student Travel Regulations proposed policy

Superintendent Malkas presented the proposed policy for Field Trips and Student Travel Regulations (FILE: IJOA). Superintendent Malkas noted that the proposed IJOA policy, would replace the current IJOA-R policy. The policy has been updated to indicate “all trips allow student access without regard of family ability to pay” as it had been erroneously left out of the most recent iteration of IJOA-R.

It was **moved** by committee member Fahey and **seconded** by committee member Bond to approve policy IJOA.

Action #6137: approval of policy IJOA	
Ayes	6
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

REMARKS FOR THE GOOD OF THE COMMITTEE

Committee member Jacobs encouraged community citizens and representatives to support foundation budget advocacy, including the opportunity to go to Boston to address the statehouse on behalf of the school district. Committee member Jacobs underscored the goal of an “education-first” budget. Committee member Jacobs stressed the need to be vocal about addressing and fixing the inequities of the current foundation formula in support of our district.

Chair Bernard echoed committee member Jacobs’ statements regarding the foundation budget and indicated the next legislative session will provide the opportunity for the state to signal its priorities and intent with regard to the impact on the foundation budget.

Committee member Jacobs shared that she recently attended the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents’ annual joint conference. The conference was highly informative and provided opportunities to connect with other districts throughout the state, underscoring the notion that we need not be limited by our geography. Committee member Jacobs enjoyed visiting the vendor exhibits at the conference and brought back an American Heart Association CPR training kit to share with the schools as an educational tool for students.

Chair Bernard thanked everyone who contributed to the City of North Adams 2018 Holiday Food Drive. The effort resulted in a record-breaking 1,044 pounds of non-perishable food and personal items being delivered to the Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative’s Al Nelson Friendship Center Food Pantry on Monday, November 19, 2018.

Chair Bernard thanked the City of North Adams staff for their ongoing participation in the 2018 United Way workplace campaign. The North Adams Public Schools have completed their contribution to the campaign with a participation rate of 32% and donations of \$6,556 to the Northern Berkshire United Way.

Chair Bernard thanked Central Office staff for their creative contributions to the Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity showcase of trees fundraiser held on December 1, 2018. Habitat for Humanity representatives had expressed appreciation for all the efforts put forth by the

Central Office staff, including favorites such as the “Riddle Tree”, the “Crocodile”, and the highly coveted abominable snowman tree, also known as, “Bumble”.

Chair Bernard thanked everyone who participated and attended the City of North Adams’ tree lighting on November 21, 2018. Chair Bernard gave a special thank you to the Drury High School band.

Chair Bernard noted that winter sports are beginning and encouraged everyone to attend these fun events and to show community support for our school district’s teams.

Chair Bernard thanked staff for participating in a recent photo shoot for the MIIA annual report.

Superintendent Malkas announced that the schools’ new facilities director, Mr. Robert Flaherty, has started and is currently working alongside retiring facilities director, Mr. Matt Neville. With winter weather continuing, Mr. Flaherty has needed to jump right in to work with the Superintendent and interface with various North Adams City departments to understand our needs and be adaptive while working with real-time weather predictions.

Chair Bernard shared that he had participated in an event at the North Adams Public Library on December 4, 2018 to announce the remarkable gift being donated to various city organizations from the Estate of Gailanne M. Cariddi. Chair Bernard stated that the distribution from the estate designated to support the Drury High School library will be presented at an upcoming School Committee meeting.

Chair Bernard thanked all North Adams Public Schools’ staff, educators, and families for everything they do in working together throughout the year to support our community and benefit our students. The Chair expressed best wishes to all for a happy holiday season.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

As per M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21, Chair Bernard made a motion to adjourn to Executive Session to conduct a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, including the Superintendent and Business Administrator.

It was **moved** by committee member Bergeron and **seconded** by committee member Holmes to approve the motion to adjourn to Executive Session to conduct a strategy session in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, including the Superintendent and Business Administrator.

Action #6138: Motion to adjourn to Executive Session	
Ayes: Ian Bergeron Karen Bond Nicholas Fahey James Holmes Tara Jacobs Chair Thomas Bernard	6
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

Executive Session started at 7:25 p.m. and ended at 7:58 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Following the Executive Session, Chair Bernard indicated that there was no more business to come before the committee.

It was **moved** by committee member Holmes and **seconded** by committee member Jacobs to adjourn the meeting.

Ayes	6
Nays	0
Result	Motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Rauscher
Administrative Assistant
/nr