

Andover School Committee
Minutes of June 9, 2016

Members in Attendance: Chair, Joel Blumstein, Vice-Chair, Susan McCready, Ted Teichert, Shannon Scully, and Paul Murphy.

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Dr. Sheldon Berman, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration, Paul Szymanski, and Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Nancy Duclos.

I. Regular Meeting

A. Call to Order/Moment of Silence/Salute to the Flag

The meeting began with a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Doherty Middle School student, Stephen Zang.

B. Recognition/Communications

End of Year events: Dr. Berman recognized the students, staff, and parents who participated and attended in the end of year school celebrations. The AHS graduation ceremony and speech given by Tim Chen was done with humor and sophistication. It was a moving event.

International Conference at MIT: Several AHS students from the iLab class showcased their self-made Augmented Reality Sandbox computer at the International Conference at MIT last week, which was impressive in itself as they were the first high school students ever to be asked to present. Two of the students along with Steve Chinosi, Director of Innovation & Strategy, and Dan Brennan, AHS Multi-media Production Specialist, guided the students in preparation of the conference, provided a recap of the day, and showed the video of the iLab presentation at MIT. In addition, iLab students working on a Food Computer Program made an impressive presentation.

Food Rescue/Zero Waste Program: Several parents responsible for orchestrating the Food Rescue/Zero Waste Recycling Program at Sanborn School talked about the process of implementing the program and the results in reducing waste and recycling food. The rescue food is given to Neighbors in Need in Andover. Students want to be more involved and the parents are hoping that the recycling program can be incorporated into the current curriculum while continuing to work on a plan to sustain the project in and outside of the classroom. Their proposal is to encourage School Committee members, teachers, parents, and community members to join the Green Schools Committee to work together to create a plan for environmental sustainability in the schools; the Facebook page is Green Andover.

Middle School Math Update: Dr. Duclos reported that as of June 6, eighty-six students took the Algebra I proficiency exam with twenty-three students passing. Sixteen students signed up for the APEX online course; nine students enrolled in Geometry and seven in Algebra I. Twenty-two students signed up to attend Algebra I and seventeen for Geometry at the AHS Summer School. Letters are going home to Grade 6 and 7 parents tomorrow and parents will have until June 16 to opt their child into the program if they have met the qualifications. There will be other opportunities for students who need assistance and other ways for students to accelerate if they want. Dr. Berman said it is better to have a solid foundation for future math now, then to rush by putting a student in an accelerated class. There are multiple pathways for students to follow.

Joel Blumstein attended the discussion on Pocket Parks at the Andover Historical Society led by two students in Melanie Cutler's Environmental Class, attended Senior Safari on Monday night, and the spring concert at DMS, all of which were wonderful events.

C. Public Input

Mr. Pierre Richard takes offense to comments made relative to the cost of student IEPs at a Town Budget meeting. He believes the system is flawed; a child with a disability should not be the enemy to fight. Parents have put time, money, and taxes into providing services.

Krystal Solimine does not believe the hiring process of Dr. Stetson as the Director of Student Services was transparent. The candidate currently has a NH license, and while a temporary waiver can be granted there were other finalists with Massachusetts licenses. The candidate has connections with CAST that Ms. Salimine is uneasy with and she requested the School Committee to further analyze and scrutinize the candidate. Jeanne Teichert, Dufton Road, commented that she has been emailing and requesting information from Human Resources. Dr. Stetson is coming from a K-8 district in New Hampshire and a much smaller school community compared to Andover. Mrs. Teichert is concerned with the out-of-state licensure issue and the learning curve to understand Mass Laws, would like the School Committee to reconsider this hire.

Matthew Bach, teacher at AHS, said it is essential that the School Committee address the resolution on capping charter schools, and he is excited to see the relationship with both the school and AEA on this issue.

D. Response to Public Input Dr. Berman responded to the public comment:

Dr. Berman said he does not interfere in any decision around a special education student, he has no right or authority nor would he exercise that authority if he did. He has been misquoted and taken out of context; there are situations where we have viable programs to match out-of-district offerings. There has never been a time that Student Services Administrators approached him on a decision. The issue is not about cost; it is about the credibility of our programs and our responsibility to offer quality programs, which we are improving, so that parents will choose us. We don't have a crisis in special education; we have a very solid special education program and very few dissensions on placements. He stands up for our programs and if inadequate will do all he can to improve them.

Issues regarding the hiring of the Student Services position: This was a very thorough selection process beginning with the Screening Committee, ten administrators were involved in collaborative interviews, a focus group of parents from each school, and the representation from SEPAC. In addition, a focus group of teachers and 5 other individuals conducted on-site visits that were intensive in nature and included talking to parents, teachers, officials and reviewing their programs. They were extraordinary candidates and after intensive conversations it was agreed that Dr. Stetson was the candidate most capable of doing the job. In addition, most Special Education Laws are Federal Laws not State Laws and there is little difference between NH and Mass laws - there are nuances that are fairly easy to understand. Andover has one concern that we haven't talked about, the problem of longevity within the position. Dr. Stetson made a long-term commitment of 17 years in her community and we expect she would bring the same commitment to Andover. In addition, Candace Hall contacted current and past references on Dr. Stetson and received strong affirmations.

In response to the question on CAST: Dr. Berman said he freely volunteers his time with CAST so there isn't any conflict of interest. Universal Design in Learning (UDL) is endorsed by the Federal and State Department of Education providing an extraordinary break-through in technology in services for students that will improve the lives of all students, not just special education students. As a Committee, their expectation was that every candidate would know about UDL - or they would be ignorant in federal law and state policy.

Joel Blumstein, said that he, Ted Teichert, Becky Franks, and many teachers, parents, and a member of

SEPAC were part of the preliminary search committee. After interviewing Dr. Stetson, the Search Committee was unanimous in their decision that she should move forward in the process. She was a consensus candidate and a consensus choice - let's judge her on the job she does.

Susan McCready said it seems Massachusetts has nearly full reciprocity with most states; the only Massachusetts licensure requirement looks to be the communications and literacy exam (MTEL) which is a basic exam and with her credentials a non-issue. Ted Teichert has no problem with hiring Dr. Stetson but asked how long it takes to get the license, which Dr. Berman stated a short-term amount of time, and a temporary license will be issued until then. Dr. Berman has asked Interim Director of Student Services to remain on the job to help with the transition. Shannon Scully stated that Candace Hall has more than adequately addressed the issues and questions posed in emails to her.

E. Education

1. Presentation of School Improvement Plans: Bancroft, Sanborn and Middle Schools

Elementary School: Brenda Lee, Assistant Principal Sanborn School, Norah McCarthy, Interim Principal Bancroft School, and Patricia Xavier, ELL Teacher Sanborn School, presented the Elementary School Improvement Goals for their schools highlighting student connections, social and emotional issues, mindfulness and the well being of students.

With newly adopted curriculum and a new innovation team formed this year, there was tremendous participation at Sanborn from teachers and subgroups drilling down into smaller focus areas. They worked to ensure that all families were involved in the Sanborn Community and the community as a whole. Opportunities were provided for students and families to connect with each other; i.e. Math and Literacy Night for parents, and in collaboration with parents Sanborn hosted an International Night with over sixteen cultures highlighting the diversity of the Sanborn Community that they are very proud of.

Norah McCarthy said Bancroft's goals parallel well with the goals of her previous tenure as principal at Bancroft, which was to create a strong community and high expectations for all so there is a comfortable culture with which students can work. It has been exciting to have the new parents from Shawsheen join us in making a school community one that is positive and one in which students feel safe. Today they held an International Coffee and are planning to host an International Night. A New Years Night where resolutions were made so that everyone would feel welcomed as a Bancroft student/family was also a highlight this year. The opening of the Innovation Studio in February has been very successful, they are continuing to bring parents into the community, and teachers are collaborating with their teams. Great progress has been made.

Middle School: Principals Robin Wilson (DMS), Becky Franks (WMS), and Patrick Bucco (WHMS), reported on the three areas of importance: teaching and learning, school climate, and data driven reporting. They believe in the importance of school climate because students cannot learn if they don't feel safe, supported, challenged and happy. It is also important to involve and engage students in leadership roles to have an authentic voice. Support from parents is necessary to help students navigate the middle school years. The social emotional and social climate goal was built to support the student's movement through middle school and to be prepared for high school and to allow young adolescents to open their minds to discover strengths they never thought they had. The New England Arts and Literacy Grant is one example that provided engaging experiences in real life problem solving and the data showed that the practice does make a difference with kids.

2. New Middle School Science Curriculum Adoption

Dr. Duclos and Steve Sanborn, K-12 Curriculum Science Coordinator, provided information on the adoption of the new science program, Science-Fusion from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt for the Middle

Schools in 2016-2017. A Program Review was completed last year with all teachers involved in the process and the consensus was to choose Science Fusion, a module program of 11 different units. Students will use consumable texts and there will be an electronic student edition with audio and digital lessons in a tutorial format. Andover is purchasing a hybrid program and acquiring a 5-year license, and each September a new set of consumable books will be provided for students. Lab resources have alternative levels of inquiry and teachers can decide which version to use; direct, guided, or independent. In addition, Science Fusion offers a teacher digital management center.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee Formally approve the new Middle School Science Curriculum Adoption for the 2016-2017 School Year in the Andover Public Schools. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy and voted 5-0 to approve.

3. Charter Schools Discussion:

The School Committee discussed the ballot initiative to lift the current cap on Charter Schools, which will be on the November ballot this fall, and whether or not they want to go on record to oppose. The current cap for charter schools is 120, the new legislation would allow for 12 new charter schools per year every year going forward. Communities are concerned with the loss of funding to their local schools because the number of students who choose to attend a charter school instead of their public schools reduces Chapter 70 funds from the State. There is no 'local' approval of Charter Schools; it is up to the State to decide. Dr. Berman encourages the School Committee to not support the ballot initiative. The School Committee shared their views of Charter Schools and will take a vote at their next meeting on resolution opposing lifting the cap.

4. Final Report: Strategic Plan Update:

Dr. Berman presented the final report on the updated Strategic Plan Report to be formally approved by the School Committee.

Shannon Scully moved that the Andover School Committee formally approve the final report of the updated Strategic Plan for the Andover Public Schools. The motion was seconded by Susan McCready and voted 5-0 to approve.

F. New Business

1. Superintendent Evaluation Process

Joel Blumstein reviewed the process being proposed to the School Committee for the evaluation of the Superintendent, which they are obligated by DESE to conduct. He proposes that the evaluation be based around the eight goals approved by the School Committee in a public session in December 2015 (copies of which were distributed to the School Committee) and requested that each School Committee member write a short overall evaluation of the Superintendent's performance over the past year. The School Committee will provide a narrative and ratings on the goals to Joel and he will compile the results.

G. Old Business

1. FY16 Budget Update:

Paul Szymanski provided an update on the status of the FY-16 Budget reporting that it appears we will close the year within \$250-\$280K of the budgeted amount and that the remaining dollars will be absorbed by the Circuit Breaker Fund.

2. Facilities Plan Update:

New updates from the June 7th MGT facilities presentation showed there is a lot of work to be done to our town/school facilities. Paul Szymanski read from a list of items that need to be addressed and decisions agreed by Town/School Administration on which items to move forward with now and which

to put on hold. Dr. Berman said the full report from MGT will be presented to the School Committee next week and another School Committee workshop scheduled for an in-depth conversation on what is viable, what the interest of the Committee is, and how to get the community involved.

3. Communication Task Force (CTF) Update

Susan McCready reported that members of the CTF have been meeting regularly since April through this past Tuesday and have met with different vendors to look at tools to foster communication. In addition, they have been working with Karla Kohl (Task Force Member and IT specialist) on the rollout of the new School Website (in conjunction with the new town website) which will not only include an updated site but will be easier to navigate, provide accessibility for those with disabilities, and include a mobile app for a parent link. Our Blackboard System version has been updated to bring us current with the vendor's supported version. The next step is to discuss what people want for communication, how often, and how they want it. The Community was invited to provide input and a fair amount of responses from parents was received fostering additional discussion. A three-question survey was developed which will take a very short period of time to complete.

4. Informal dialogues between SC members and residents

In response to requests for more two-way informal dialogue, the School Committee Business Meetings do not allow the opportunity for, two rotating members of the School Committee will be holding informal dialogues. Informal dialogues do not fall within the Open Meeting Law as they are not deliberating sessions and less than three School Committee members will be present. The sessions will not be recorded or minutes taken. School Committee members will not engage in discussions on personnel or individual student issues. School Committee members who participate in a forum will report to the other members of the School Committee items that should be put on the agenda for future meetings. The frequency and format of the regular School Committee meetings will not change.

H. Consent Agenda

1. Warrants: Expense SW1625, Payroll 16S049 and 16S050

Paul Szymanski reported that the Warrants are in order.

Susan McCready moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Paul Murphy seconded the motion and the School Committee voted 5-0 to approve.

I. Adjournment

At 10:46 P.M. on a motion by Paul Murphy and seconded by Ted Teichert, the Andover School Committee adjourned: Roll call: T. Teichert-Y, S. Scully-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, and J. Blumstein-Y.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary

Documents: Strategic Plan Final Report for 2011-2016
Superintendent's Goals Report for 2015-2016
School Improvement Plans: Sanborn Elementary, Bancroft Elementary, and Middle School.
FY-2016 Year to Date Financial Report
School Warrants