

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Thursday, February 27, 2020

Members in Attendance: Chair, Joel Blumstein, Vice-Chair, Tracey Spruce and Shannon Scully.

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Berman, Assistant Superintendents, Paul Szymanski, Sandra Trach, and Dr. Sara Stetson.

I. **School Committee Regular Meeting- Call to Order**

Chairman Blumstein called the School Committee to order at 7:35 P.M. in the School Committee Meeting Room located in the School Administration Building.

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

The meeting began with a Moment of Silence and a Salute to the Flag

B. **Recognitions & Communications**

The Superintendent made the following announcements:

~On February 11th, the Coalition for Special Education held a meeting at the State House on fully funding the circuit breaker. Feedback from the Ways and Means Committee indicated that the Governor's budget was about \$20M short of full funding; the legislature is anticipating having full reimbursement.

~WERWAC begins next week at West Elementary School

~Issues at South Elementary: Investigations and conclusion on complaint of a hostile work environment have been completed and action taken based on the determination that this is the case. We are moving forward with healing and reconciliation and have brought the former South School Principal, Colleen McBride, back to fill in for Tracy Crowley while she is on leave. Shelley will meet with the South School Faculty on Tuesday and hold a parent meeting soon after. Both Sandy and Shelley will be out at the school and working with staff.

Sandy Trach provided an update on this week's School Start Time (SST) Working Group Meeting. They have reviewed five SST sample scenarios that are posted on the APS website. Discussion included focus on the whole child, an overall theme of SEL, and reducing B-runs. There is a tremendous commitment to the well-being of the students. Sandy looks forward to providing a summary report soon with the parent's feedback.

Director of Nursing Rita Casper and Tom Carbone, Director of Public Health, provided an update on the Covid-19 virus and health guidelines. Paul Szymanski shared information on what school custodians are doing to keep the buildings clean. AHS Custodian Al Cataldo demonstrated how the Clorox Total 360 Electostatic Sprayer is used to disinfect and sanitize the buildings.

The FY-Y1 Preliminary budget goes to press tomorrow and is available on the APS website.

Sara Stetson reported that due to the unplanned and significant increase in out of district tuitions, the district is prepared to apply for extraordinary relief and has notified DESE. They will be submitting an application that would provide an increase in Circuit Breaker funds. Sara also talked about a new project Student Services is involved with called READ New England. Drexel University has invited them to develop modules in reading and modules on Dyslexia. Andover teachers will be able to use these modules for free.

Tracey Spruce attended the West Elementary School Building Committee meeting this morning and reported that they are preparing the Preferred Design Program to be delivered to MSBA on March 11th

Joel Blumstein said CREST Collaborative is planning to move to Shattuck Road in Andover. The CREST Board approved the financing and the project is moving forward. The next School Committee Informal Forum will be held on Tuesday, March 3rd at 7:00 P.M. at Memorial Hall Library (2nd floor). The School Committee will be meeting next on Thursday, March 5th and the meeting will begin at 6:00 P.M.

C. Public Input

Monica Cirino, 2 Winterberry Lane and current PTO present at South, spoke about South School and their amazing teachers. However, due to recent events, the school is broken. Please further elaborate on your plan to help heal South.

Teresa Schirmer, 80 Central Street spoke about the lack of leadership related to issues at South School. She read a prepared letter with dates of numerous complaints resulting in a hostile work environment and asks why Dr. Berman waited so long to respond.

Gerry Gustus, 5 Fern Road, is interested in receiving information on legal costs incurred and projected. He faults the School Administrators and School Committee for allowing financial statements to be issued on overruns placing blame on Special Education.

Brianna Rowley (Andover Warriors for Education AWE) and AEA President Matt Bach read a Coalition Statement on how to build community-based schools that reflect community values and initiatives they want to address. Leslie Ganley, Lauren McCarron, and Jen Maher talked about the quality of curriculum, inadequately staffed classrooms, teacher involvement and input on curriculum.

Former AEA President Kerry Costello said it is her understanding that the Special Education budget overrun is due to two students that moved into the district. She also spoke about the courage of the South School teachers who filed complaints relative to incidents of a hostile work environment created by their colleagues.

Becca Rogers, 28 Karlton Circle, spoke in support of the South School teachers. She is frustrated and dismayed with the handling of the events at South School and unsettling that they received little information. She asked for Dr. Berman to respond to the problem at South.

Jennifer Ross, 66 Brookfield Road, spoke about the AWE meeting where the shared consensus of the group of the need for an increase of counselors to address mental health, and for more connections with students/teachers.

Attorney Jeffrey Rosin, who represents Tracy Crowley, is concerned with the messaging regarding the problems at South School which is tainted by small packs of teachers and AEA leadership and messages not being sent out to parents.

Sara Sunman, Cassimere Street, said members of AWE will continue to increase efforts to improve school buildings, prioritize student learning areas, request an increase for intervention specialists, and address a policy for gifted students as well as trust and transparency in the budget process.

D. Response to Public Input

Tracey Spruce: We are all concerned about how we can help address the South School situation. The Committee does not have a lot of authority that could impact the situation but they do have the authority to make sure that policy is being followed and ensuring that all staff and students are working in an environment where they feel safe and comfortable.

Shannon Scully: The Committee is as dismayed as parents are; adults should be nice to each other. She thanked teachers who came forward with their concerns on harassment and that harassment policies were followed.

Joel Blumstein said the District could not have planned for the services required for two students costing the School Department an exorbitant amount of money prior to Town Meeting. Going forward with South, it is going to take a lot of work on everyone's part to heal the South School community. The School Committee has limits on what they can discuss and are not privy to personnel matters.

Dr. Berman said it would be next to impossible for others to know what happened at South and confidentiality is paramount. There is great respect for teachers at South School and we will continue to support and work with them and to heal the community.

E. Education

1. Field Trip: AHS Students to Spain: April 16 – 24, 2021

AHS faculty member, Sylvia Danos, with the support of the AHS Principal and the World Language Department would like to provide an opportunity for approximately 20 students in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades to travel to Spain.

Shannon Scully moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the proposed extracurricular trip for Andover High School Students to Spain on April 16-24, 2021 as presented and in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Andover School Committee Policy entitled "APS School-Sponsored Trip and student travel policy". The motion was seconded by Tracey Spruce and vote 3-0 to approve. Motion passes.

F. Continuing Business

1. AHS Facility Study Committee Update

An update on the recent meeting with MSBA was provided by Dr. Berman and Shannon Scully. Per MSBA, West Elementary is considered our priority school until the new building is completed; therefore, AHS will not be considered a priority school by MSBA until then. THE AHS Facility Study Committee is meeting tomorrow to discuss in further detail options to consider for AHS and the School Committee will consider the options at their next meeting.

2. Wellness Policy: Policy ADF Amendment

This is the Second Reading of proposed changes to the policy. Rita Casper agreed with all the minor changes but indicated that her department has an extensive protocol in place and the wording should say recess would not be taken away as a form of punishment. Dr. Berman explained why the policy is written to provide that faculty and staff will strive not to withhold recess as a form of punishment.

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve Policy ADF amendments as presented. The motion was seconded by Shannon Scully and voted 3-0 to approve.

3. One Community One Nation: March Institute Update

The Superintendent gave an update on the 3-day March OCON Institute focused on Women's Suffrage for the 5th Grade. This Institute is a pilot to access interest in future multi-district institutes going forward.

There are 38 teachers registered from 12 districts across the state with a limit of 40 participants; Andover is sending ten teachers. The core group will meet after the institute to see if they want to commit to future institutes and will be looking into grants to underwrite the costs of the institutes going forward.

The School Committee asked about the cost of conducting a multi-district institute as compared to an in-house institute for Andover staff as was done in the past. They also discussed the merits of an inter-municipal agreement and their concerns on risk assumptions for Andover, financial exposure, and level of staff time needed to enable multi-district institutes. They are also concerned with ensuring there is language inserted into the agreement that the intellectual property does not stay with the consultants. Dr. Berman said the project will develop over time and there is a solid plan for moving forward.

Joel Blumstein recommended scheduling an OCON 'Summit', after the March Institute, with School Counsel, School Committee members, and others involved to talk about all the issues and concerns the School Committee has.

The School Committee agreed to reconvene after the March Institute.

G. New Business – Hold for next meeting

H. Consent Agenda

1. Grants/Donations to Andover Public Schools

None

2. Minutes:

January 9, 2020, January 14, 2020, January 15, 2020 January 23, 2020, and January 30, 2020.

On a motion by Shannon Scully and seconded by Tracey Spruce the Andover School Committee voted 3-0 to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

I. Adjournment

At 9:40 P.M. on a motion by Tracey Spruce and seconded by Shannon Scully, the Andover School Committee voted 3-0 to adjourn the meeting of February 27, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo

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Recording Secretary