

**Andover School Committee**  
**Minutes of Thursday, January 7, 2021**  
**Virtual Meeting**

---

**Participants from the School Committee:** Chair Shannon Scully, Vice-Chair, Susan McCready, Tracey Spruce, Paul Murphy, and Lauren Conoscenti.

**Others participating:** Interim Superintendent Dr. Claudia Bach, Assistant Superintendent Sandra Trach, Assistant Superintendent, Sara Stetson, Chief Operations Officer Stephen Nembirkow, Director of Communications Nicole Kieser, Director of Innovation Stephen Chinosi, AHS Student Liaison Jeffrey Connors.

**I. Regular Meeting**

**Call to Order/Moment of Silence**

Chairperson Scully called to order the meeting at 6:00 PM and the Committee immediately voted to meet in Executive Session. The Regular School Committee Meeting will be broadcast by Andover TV and on Comcast Channel 99, Verizon Channel 43 or streamed: [www.andovertv.org](http://www.andovertv.org). *Public Participation via email:* [scremote@andoverma.us](mailto:scremote@andoverma.us)

**II. Executive Session:**

Susan McCready moved to meet in Executive Session pursuant to G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a), purpose (3) to discuss strategy with respect to litigation with the Andover Education Association (AEA) regarding wages for Instructional Assistants and Occupational Therapists, and Physical Therapists on August 31, 2020 (AAA Case Nos. 01-20-0015-7637, 01-20-0015-7640, and 01-20-0015-7643) and arbitration of disciplinary grievances (AAA case 01-19-0002-3290) because an open session may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Committee. The Committee will reconvene in regular session at approximately 7:00 PM. The motion was seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. . Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**III. Regular Meeting resumed at 7:00 P.M.**

Shannon Scully reconvened the School Committee to order at 7:04 P.M. The meeting began with a Moment of Silence.

**A. Recognitions/Communications**

Dr. Bach thanked everyone for welcoming her. She recognized the Central Office Team and staff who have been very welcoming and given her excellent updates. She is impressed with the huge amount of work they have done to date under extremely challenging conditions. Her meetings with the principals have been gratifying and the teachers and school staff have been very welcoming. She is grateful that Alison Phelan is still in position as the Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent.

In regards to the trauma that occurred in Washington, D.C., Claudia would like parents and teachers to have conversations with our children who might be feeling confused or even frightened and ensure them that they are safe here.

Shannon reminded the public that they can register via the link on the APS website if they would like to make public comment.

Sara Stetson reminded parents that their team of school counselors and psychologist to reach out if they need information on how to assist their children with recent events.

Sandy Trach announced that we are coming up on another opportunity for AHS parents to request a hybrid remote switch. There will be a link online and available tomorrow. More information will be coming forward for elementary and middle schools. The Department of Education has communicated that MCAS Testing time has been reduced for grades 3-8 and dates for testing have not been released. They will not be listing underperforming schools.

Steve Nembirkow reported that Bancroft School experienced two instances of small gas leaks this week with instances resolved within an hour. Busses were provided to keep students and staff warm. Today the students were transported to DMS to continue their learning for the day.

Lauren Conoscenti said that on Saturday, January 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM there is a public forum with the Town Governance Committee to look at the effectiveness of Town Meeting. The link is available on the Town website.

## **B. Public Input**

Windy Catino: Recognized the Bancroft School Community for their incredible hard work and is also grateful for the amazing SpecEd teachers we have in the District. She appreciates the letter Dr. Bach sent out and about a return to in-school learning. Windy would like to focus on the quality of asynchronous learning. There is a lot of push to use apps and Wednesdays are basically a half-day. She was disappointed that the schools returned to remote learning on December 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Alice Palmer, 9 College Circle: She acknowledged the tireless work of all school staff and staying safe while learning. She is witnessing first-hand the effect remote learning is having on our kids. They are losing their zest and experiencing loneliness. Witnessing such a dramatic shift in her child, drives her to get kids back to in-person learning. How can parents partner with the School Committee and work on a plan to return to reopening?

Beth Humberd, 15 Barrington Drive: Beth is part of a parent group to continue the dialogue to enter into discussions for opening up the schools for younger children. Parents need communication. Parents need assurance that you are trying and you are exploring ways to move to more in-person learning. They also need new data and request that a new district wide survey be sent out.

### **C. Response to Public Input:**

Dr. Bach thanked the parents who spoke about returning students to in-person learning and has heard parents asking what the plan is and spoke about having more communication. She is serious about increasing the communication and engaging the community and families and is a requirement of the Administration. She has been invited to several PTO/PAC meetings and will be going with Susan McCready to the Town-wide PTO meetings. Claudia is interested in giving all parents the opportunity to come forward with their suggestions and ideas. Getting requests for new data and surveys from parents is another way to hear from parents and to have important conversations. She has heard about the asynchronous learning concerns and has had several discussions with Sara Stetson and Sandy Trach about ways to improve the hybrid model or ways to bring kids back in steps or stages to more in-person learning. Parents want this to be given careful thought, students want to be back in school, and teachers want them back to. She would like to see the teachers included in the conversation too. Right now, is our worst moment, the surge within the surge, and that deeply concerns her. We are in for a serious time, and schools are safe places because we have had good mitigation practices. We need to see this as a whole community effort in order to flatten the curve and practicing the same mitigation strategies we are asking the kids to do.

### **D. Education**

#### **1. Update on Hybrid and Remote Learning.**

Sandy Trach and Sara Stetson provided information on the update. The Mass Board of Education adopted amendments to student learning time for districts operating hybrid and remote models. As of January 19, 2021, Districts must provide 35 hours of live instruction (in-person and remote) over a 10-school day period, and remote learning model districts must provide 40 hours of synchronous instruction over a 10-school day period. Students must have an opportunity to interact with their teacher each day for both models. Learning and live instruction is with teachers and with other students and requires daily live check-in between students and educators. APS was given preliminary clearance to meet these times for learning. We will make the necessary adjustments for our students to meet the DESE requirements.

Susan McCready said the requests for more communication is an opportunity to share the work that is going on within the school system from the people who are dealing with this on a day-to-day basis. Learning Time Requirements from DESE suggests adding more staff which is good in theory but is a management but also a funding issue. Being able to educate parents will be helpful to their understanding what the challenges are and will allow for us to communicate the real work that is going on.

Tracey Spruce also had conversations with parents and communications is just a piece of what we all do, and there is so much going on behind the scenes. We are hearing from parents to err on the side of more communication, but if parents have communication fatigue, parents can opt out at will. We should share what obstacles remain before us and if they can be addressed to take the next step. Staffing is an issue as is contact tracing. Communication can always help and she agrees we can always do that better.

Claudia said that it is interesting that we have put so much money towards making the buildings safe. One of the facilities workers said today that one of the advantages of COVID is that a major overhaul of the systems was done and tested making the schools a safe place to be. Teachers feel safe knowing we have gone through a tremendous effort.

Lauren Conoscenti shared her frustration about not getting assistance at the State level. Knowing that we will have the ability to start vaccinating teachers gives her hope and she wants to embrace that hope and leverage that to engage families and teachers on how to move forward.

## **2. Update on Flu Shots**

Rita Casper, Director of Nursing, reported on the status of the District's flu shot for students. DESE updated their requirements and delayed the due date to February 28, 2021. She is happy to report that before the holidays we were missing about 2,400 individuals who had not submitted evidence of flu vaccines, this has dropped to 1,000 missing vaccines. Their next step will be to work with parents with targeted communication.

As a reminder, all students and new students enrolling in Andover Public Schools are now required to have a flu vaccine upon entry. They will be working with principals to ensure those requirements are met. All students remote or in-person are required to submit vaccine information. If students are home schooled, they are not required to have a flu vaccine unless they are participating in any afterschool activities. There have been 41 new COVID cases since we returned from vacation.

## **E. New Business**

### **1. Superintendent Search**

Michael Collins and Dr. John Ramos (Regional Director from N.E.) from Ray and Associates provided an overview of their firm, a timeline of activities for the Superintendent search, and discussed their methods for gaining feedback on the Superintendent's role, including plans for meeting with various stake holders and constituent groups. The SC and the Community will be the ones who will guide them in their search. They pride themselves in engaging the community and from the profile, they will search for the right candidate. They also take pride in having placed over 40% of Superintendents searches with women or minorities. They will bring qualified candidates that are reflective of the community and reflective of who you want to recruit as a superintendent.

A summary of the timeline was reviewed. They will conduct an interview with every School Committee member individually, put up a community survey for input to develop the profile, and will contact constituents and stakeholders for input meetings. The constituent groups will be run similar to focus groups and they will schedule a workshop with the Committee to finalize the profile. In March, they will sit internally with the applications received and sort them through based on the profile and qualifications to select candidates to be interviewed. There is serious engagement in the front-end to determine the profile. The sub-committee will guide them through this process and then they will work through the list of finalists.

Shannon Scully said Nicole Kieser has been engaged in conversations about the survey, communications, and a timeline.

**2. Warrant Article(s) for Annual Town Meeting**

Information on the Warrant Article for costs related to construction of the new West Elementary and Shawsheen Building Project was presented by Steve Nembirkow. Also, there is a possibility of a Warrant Article to assist with a future AHS Schematic Design effort. Articles for Town Meeting are due to the Town Manager by Friday, January 8, 2021.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Warrant Article for costs related to construction of a new Pre-K to Grade 5 School located at 58 Beacon Street, as presented. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**F. Consent Agenda – N/A**

**G. Adjournment**

At 8:54 P.M. Susan McCready moved to adjourn from the meeting of January 7, 2021. Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Respectfully submitted

Dee DeLorenzo  
Recording Secretary