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SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, June 28, 2022

TIME: 7:00 pm

LOCATION: 123 Cambridge Street, Burlington, MA 01803
Administrative Offices, School Committee Room

ATTENDEES

MEMBER(S) PRESENT: Chair Mrs. Katherine Bond, Vice Chair Mr. Carl Foss, Ms. Martha Simon, Mrs. Christine Monaco, Superintendent Dr. Eric Conti, Assistant Superintendent Mr. Patrick Larkin, Director of Operations Mr. Bob Cunha, Business Manager Ms. Nichole Coscia

MEMBER(S) REMOTE:

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Mrs. Melissa Massardo

GUEST(S) PRESENT: Director of Mental Health Mrs. Christine Conceison

GUEST(S) REMOTE: Ways & Means Member Mr. Roger Riggs

PUBLIC PRESENT: Parent Mr. Matt Magnarelli, Parent Mr. Adam Senesi, Parent Mr. Jim Hanafin, Parent Mr. Benjamin Agati

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REMOTE:

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bond called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and read the following statement: The public can also access this meeting via WebEx Technology. The Burlington School Committee will hear public comment in person and virtually. Meetings are also broadcast live on Burlington Cable Access TV (BCAT) as usual. WebEx Meeting Number: 2345 071 7107 | Password: Tuesday

APPROVAL of WARRANT

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to approve the Accounts Payable Warrant as submitted¹; seconded by Ms. Simon. Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye. Motion Carried 4-0-0.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Before opening comments for public participation, Chair Bond read the following statement: "I would like to state that we know things occurred which have people upset. This is a very complex situation. Legally, an open session is not the appropriate place for personal attacks of school employees or for discussing in the first instance complaints against personnel or related personnel issues. In fact, the Open Meeting Law in Exemption specifically provides School Committees the ability to go into executive session 'to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual;' and further that the individual employee is required to be provided 48 hours written notice that such executive session will be taking place and the employee has a right to be present for such discussion. I will gavel and not allow such discussion to take place tonight; I encourage anyone who has any complaints against any school officials or employees to forward them in writing to the Superintendent or myself so they can be reviewed and handled in an appropriate manner. The School Committee takes this situation seriously. What occurred will be handled in the best possible way for everybody."

[\(BCAT News Story 6/29/22\)](#)

Parent Mr. Matt Magnarelli participated in person to address two policy issues. He brought to the school committee's attention that two links listed under [DEI and Mental Health](#) on the district website provided no information; specifically (1) [Policy](#) and (2) [Reporting Incidents](#). He would like to know what the policy is for DEI and Mental Health to know if our leadership, teachers, staff, administration are abiding by it and would like an opportunity for people to report any issues.

Parent Mr. Adam Senesi participated in person requesting School Committee support for addressing student and parent safety concerns/communication as well as a discussion on electronic and social media policy. He read the following: "... Children of young ages and verbal abilities don't have the developmental maturity to describe some of the behaviors they've experienced or witnessed in their classrooms. It's too much for us to expect them to have the awareness and coping mechanisms to process their experiences without giving them support in reporting incidents to their parents. Because young students cannot advocate for themselves, parents are required to intervene on behalf of their children which means they need their concerns responded to and acknowledged." "...Burlington is in a worse place this week than we were at this point a week ago. That doesn't mean we can't work together as parents, teachers, School Committee members and administrators for progress in the immediate future and beyond."

¹ Accounts Payable Warrants S44-22, NO S43-22, S45-22, S46-22, S47-22, S48-22, S49-22, NO S51-22, S52-22

Parent Mr. Jim Hanafin participated in person to ask the School Committee questions surrounding the Memorial School issue which included an investigation on the matter and a petition; he noted he wanted to have his comments on record. Chair Bond responded that any discussions would be held in executive session as she noted at the beginning of public participation.

Parent Mr. Benjamin Agati participated in person to advocate for the BEAM program at the middle school with the retirement of Ms. Rogers. In response to Mr. Agati's question, Dr. Conti responded that they are looking to modify the program to bring that type of enrichment to engage more students in the classroom. Mr. Agati's concern is that the additional enrichment this once core group of students received will be a lost opportunity.

INFORMATION / REPORTS

- A. Subcommittee**
None.
- B. Ways & Means**
Mr. Riggs had no new information to report.

LEARNING

- A. Last Day of School**
Dr. Conti thanked everyone for a challenging school year. He noted that while the last couple of months have felt more typical, we adapted to constant changes of managing the pandemic in the first 6-7 months of the school year. He particularly thanked Mr. Larkin, Mrs. Conley and the nursing staff for tremendous efforts above and beyond and appreciated all the work everyone put forth for a successful year.
- B. Elementary Enrollment**
Dr. Conti provided an update on elementary enrollment for 22-23². With the redistricting of students from the Avalon Apartment complex from Fox Hill to Pine Glen, we were able to free up one classroom space at Fox Hill and hope to free up more in subsequent years. He commented on how fortunate we are in Burlington to have the class sizes shown; overall elementary enrollment (K-5) is currently 1,635 students, 98 total classrooms, average 17 students per class. He noted that the Fox Hill elementary enrollment is closer in comparison with Francis Wyman so in terms of support staff and assistant principal needs, we need to keep a close eye.

EQUITY

- A. Reference the Equity Statement**
Educational equity means that every child belongs and receives whatever support he/she/they need to develop his/her/their full academic, emotional, and social potential to learn and thrive every day. This begins with kindness and valuing the humanity of every child/individual.

CULTURE + RELATIONSHIPS / THRIVING

- A. COVID Update**
Mr. Larkin provided a COVID update and explained that DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health will no longer supply self-tests or other COVID testing services to schools and districts beginning in the fall. Dr. Conti noted that we are planning for a more typical start to the school year and since the state will no longer be supporting the distribution of tests, families would be responsible for symptom management and testing similar to any other illness (ie - Strep Throat). ([BCAT News Story 6/28/22](#))
- B. Student Mental Health Update**
Dr. Conti invited our Director of Mental Health Mrs. Christine Conceison to provide an update on School Mental Health & Social Emotional Learning³. Mrs. Conceison began her presentation explaining why mental health and social emotional learning is important in schools and discussed the many benefits:
 - **INCREASE in:** academic performance, rate of attendance, productivity for all school staff.
 - **DECREASE in:** rate of crisis, behavioral concerns, rate of substance abuse, rate of incarceration, and healthcare costs.

² Elementary Enrollment Projections 22-23

³ School Mental Health & Social Emotional Learning Google Presentation

“Dr. Conti continued to impress me with the time and effort he puts into his role. He continued to adjust to the ever-changing COVID situation and stayed on top of best practices using all resources (internal and external) allowing everyone to have as safe of a learning environment as possible. He is respected by his peers as a leader which, to me, says a lot about how lucky we are to have him as the superintendent of our schools.”

Dr. Conti thanked the School Committee and noted that a Superintendent’s evaluation is also the recognition of work of many others. He thanked all staff, educators, and nurses for the work they do every day and is appreciative and humbled to serve in this capacity for the community.

B. School Committee Support/Minutes

Dr. Conti explained that the agenda and minute taking for the school committee meetings are a big time commitment and the structure of the job needs to change. While both Mrs. O’Meara and Mrs. Downie have done amazing work this year, the school committee work is a lot on top of their full time jobs. In addition, there is agenda and minute taking for the current Fox Hill School Building Committee and the upcoming High School Building Committee.

After discussing the job description⁵ that was handed out at the meeting, the committee would like a confidential support position for the current work being done by two in addition to support the policy work and other duties that are needed. Ms. Simon suggested the possibility of posting for two positions: one for the School Committee and the other for the Building Committee(s) and would like to add to the description a willingness to learn MASC regulations. Mrs. Monaco would like the position to spend some time in the building to functionally process the work that needs to be done and feels it could be posted as one job unless one person did not want it all. Mrs. Bond agreed with Mrs. Monaco in having their own support person for a variety of reasons. Mrs. Downie commented that the minute taking takes a significant amount of time; more so than she anticipated when she started the job a year ago. Dr. Conti summarized the conversation explaining that the confidential non-union clerical position would be posted as part time in the office and part time in the evenings to be able to provide the support needed with some flexibility; planned start date in the fall.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Cybersecurity Policy - Second Reading

Dr. Conti explained that the ISAAC (Information Systems Security Advisory Committee) is requesting the School Committee adopt the Town of Burlington Cybersecurity Policy⁶. As the Select Board has already adopted this policy as presented, Dr. Conti is recommending the School Committee to do the same.

Motion was made by Ms. Simon to approve the Cybersecurity Policy as presented; seconded by Mrs. Monaco. Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye. Motion Carried 4-0-0.

B. Burlington Public Schools Wellness Policy - Second Reading

Dr. Conti explained that the Wellness Policy⁷ is being discussed as a second reading and as it relates to the additional language that the Safe Routes to School Program recommends. Mr. Cunha confirmed that we only need to choose/edit one of the three suggestions presented by Safe Routes to School. After some discussion, members and Dr. Conti agreed to the following language:

The Burlington Public School District will strive to support safe walking and biking to and from school and to minimize driving and idling through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s Safe Routes to School program elements of education, encouragement, engagement, engineering, and evaluation.

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to approve the Safe Routes to School transportation language as discussed; seconded by Ms. Simon. Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye. Motion Carried 4-0-0.

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to adopt the Burlington Public Schools Wellness Policy; seconded by Mr. Foss. Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye. Motion Carried 4-0-0.

⁵ School Committee/Building Committee Secretary

⁶ Town of Burlington Cybersecurity Policy - Second Reading

⁷ Burlington Public Schools Wellness Policy - Second Reading

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion was made by Mr. Foss to enter into Executive Session at 8:31 pm; seconded by Mrs. Monaco.

Motion Carried 4-0-0 by Roll Call Vote: Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye.

- A. Executive Session pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21(a): Subsection (3) - To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School District and the Chair so declares - Union Contracts
- B. Minutes 4/12/22 and 5/10/22

RETURN from Executive Session

The School Committee returned to Public Session at 8:50 pm.

Motion was made by Ms. Simon to accept the Memorandum of Agreement with the BEA (Burlington Educators' Association) Unit A as agreed to and ratified by the Union last week; seconded by Mr. Foss. Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye. Motion Carried 4-0-0.

Motion was made by Ms. Simon to accept the new contract with the BEA (Burlington Educators' Association) Unit D; seconded by Mr. Foss. Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye. Motion Carried 4-0-0.

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to approve a 4% salary increase for FY23, a one time \$500 bonus, and an additional year to Dr. Conti's existing contract; seconded by Mr. Foss. Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye. Motion Carried 4-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to adjourn at 8:52 pm; seconded by Mr. Foss. Motion Carried 4-0-0 by Roll Call Vote: Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye.

SUBMITTED

Respectfully,



Kristen Downie
Recording Secretary

Date Submitted: 7/19/22

Date Approved: 7/19/22