



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

School Committee

Date: 2023-06-22

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: School - Memorial High

Location: School Library

Address: 62 Oakland Road

Session: Open Session

Purpose: Open Session

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Shawn Brandt, Carla Nazzaro, Erin Gaffen, Charles Robinson, Tom Wise and Sarah McLaughlin

Members - Not Present:

Others Present:

Superintendent Dr. Thomas Milaschewski, Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Teaching Dr. Sarah Hardy, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services Dr. Jennifer Stys, Director of Finance and Operations Susan Botton, and HR Director Michelle Roach

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Olivia Lejeune on behalf of the chairperson.

Topics of Discussion:

A. Call to Order – Mr. Brandt called the meeting to order at 7:05pm reviewing the agenda.

B. Public Comment – None

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes (06-08-2023)
2. Reading Lacrosse Association Donation
3. J.W. Killam Elementary School Donation
4. FY22 EOYR Audit Report

Ms. Nazzaro motioned to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Mr. Robinson, vote passed 6-0.

Reports

1. Student – No report
2. Assistant Superintendent of Student Services – Dr. Stys along with Dr. Hardy gave a shout-out to the YMCA for helping a group of students who had no engagement in summer programming. The YMCA was able to provide slots for the students to join a summer program as well as transportation. This is a great show of the Reading community coming together.

3. Assistant Superintendent of Learning & Teaching – No report
4. Director of Finance and Operations – Ms. Bottan acknowledged the facilities staff, IT/Tech staff, and Food Service staff for a number of projects and improvements made this school year.
5. Superintendent – Dr. Milaschewski congratulated the Boy's lacrosse team for winning the state championship last week. This is a huge accomplishment and we are proud of the individuals on the team and the coaching staff.
6. Liaison/Sub-Committee
 - a. Mr. Robinson – SWEC met last week to discuss and finalize the RFI to get a sense of interest and will meet again next week. The Recreation Committee met too to discuss the start of Phase 2 of the Birch Meadow project.
 - b. Ms. Gaffen – The Juneteenth celebration is this Saturday, June 24th on the Town Common.
 - c. Ms. McLaughlin – We will discuss in detail later during this meeting, but the Legal Counsel Subcommittee is moving forward with a recommendation tonight to hire a new legal counsel for student services.
 - d. Mr. Wise – The Audit Committee met last week to review the RMLD last Thursday. There were no findings and the committee will be recommending approval of the audit. Mr. Wise shared some final notes on behalf of School Committee Student Representative Jayda Hayes.
 - e. Ms. Nazzaro – There has been a change of events in terms of the Killam School Building Committee. Terva which is the company the committee approved moving forward with withdrew from the process. Terva is relatively new to the MSBA process and after they had some discussion with the town and MSBA they made the decision not to proceed. The committee will move forward with the second-place company Colliers. The Town Manager has been directed to enter into contract negotiations with Colliers. This was an unexpected turn of events, but grateful to Terva for allowing us to move forward.
 - f. Mr. Brandt – No report

E. New Business

1. SEPAC Year-End Update

SEPAC Board Members presented their year in review. This year, SEPAC has worked hard to get the word out and continue a strong momentum to strengthen internal culture. The board sent a survey out at the beginning of the year gathering feedback and from that feedback they found those who know what SEPAC is are engaged. For those who do not know who or what SEPAC is do not know the resources that can be offered to them. There are some specific initiatives those engaged in SEPAC are looking for in the new school year and the group will be working with student services to make sure everything is lined up for a successful year.

Some highlights from this school year include launching the new website, providing more social activities, and creating intentional connections with Friends of METCO. Part of the SEPAC's mission is to advise Student Services, the School Committee and Superintendent. As a way to keep the momentum moving, SEPAC would like to add a member to hiring search committees moving forward.

Looking ahead to the new school year, SEPAC wants to provide new social networking opportunities, expand workshops, expand Friends of SEPAC, explore fundraising, expand website partnership with the school, hold a Team Chair Meet and Greet, and continue the development of trusted partnerships with students' services and school leaders.

C. Personnel

1. SY22-23 Year-End Personnel Update

Ms. Roach shared some highlights of the work the Human Resource Department has been working on over the past year and also some highlights looking forward to the new school year. Ms. Roach reviewed hiring positions that are filled vs open for the new school year. As a reminder, this is just a snapshot of year-to-year recruitment. There are areas where we have made progress. Ms. Roach acknowledged the work of Food Service Director Ms. Franzetti who has been working hard on recruitment to fill positions in the food service area. In reviewing departures year to year, we are seeing retirement numbers going up and RTA exits going down. We will not have finalized numbers until the end of August so these numbers may fluctuate.

Initiatives for this past year included the development of an HR newsletter and competency and lane change forms and a formalized process. The department expanded the awards night which was well attended and we look to expand further next year possibly creating a standalone event and adding an academic excellence portion. We are receiving good data from exit surveys. When broken down, we see staff departure for similar positions and self-reported contributing factors.

Ms. Nazzaro motioned to move section E4 out of order. Mr. Wise seconded, vote passed 6-0.

E. New Business

4. Review Draft District Strategic Plan

Dr. Milaschewski gave a brief overview of the district strategic plan. There have been a lot of people involved in the process of creating the strategic plan and this is very much so a draft that will continue to be reviewed and revised. Thank you to all of those who have provided feedback over the last several weeks. We will add the strategic plan and feedback link to the website so community members can continue to provide feedback over the summer. The plan is made up of four strategic initiatives: Supportive, Equitable and Safe Learning Environments, Coherent Instructional Systems, School Operations, and Family and Community Engagement. The plan provided in the packet has live links which bring you to the logic models outlining action plans and outcomes.

A question was raised about the length of the plan as it only goes through 2025. This is an error and will be updated so the plan extends through 2026. The School Committee welcomed Theresa Wiggins and Barbara Best who walked through the Family and Community Engagement initiative.

The committee took a 5-minute break returning at 9:24pm.

1. Recommendation and Vote to Appoint Director of Finance and Operations (A)

Dr. Milaschewski recommended moving forward into contract negotiations with Dr. Derek Pinto as the Director of Finance and Operations. Thank you to the screening committee for being part of this process. It was a powerful team and they went through a series of interviews. This is a difficult position to hire in general right now and the bar has been set high by Ms. Bottan's great work. The committee interviewed a lot of strong candidates and we are fortunate to move forward with Dr. Pinto. Dr. Milaschewski outlined some of Dr. Pinto's background which is also shared in the memo in the packet.

Ms. Nazzaro moved to approve the appointment of Dr. Derek Pinto as the Director of Finance and Operations subject to successful contract negotiations. Mr. Wise seconded, vote passed 6-0.

2. Learning and Teaching Year-End Update

Dr. Hardy presented an overview of accomplishments from the 2022-2023 school year and reviewed plans for the 2023-2024 school year with a focus on the following areas: professional learning system, curriculum review process, and curriculum implementation.

3. Review and Approve Killam Principal Search Process (A)

Dr. Milaschewski thanked Principal Leveque for her services as Killam principal the last seven years. In the packet, you will find the Killam Elementary Principal search process. This is a standard process we have gone through in the past for principal searches. We are going to expand the screening committee on the staff side because we have had more interest than anticipated. A question was asked as to why we are going for a full-time search instead of an interim and what are the expectations around what the pool might look like? We feel we are in a window where we can land a full-time candidate. This position is being posted and the process is lining up to the same as last year's search for the Barrows principal. Knowing the outcome and success of the Barrows search it made sense to move forward at this time with a full-time search. We expect to be in an optimal position to find a full-time principal, but will be prepared to pivot to an interim if needed. We have optimism for a strong pool and some hesitation. This is a late time of year for hiring and not a lot of people applying for principal positions in general. However, we posted the position and already have 12 candidates. We will add a SEPAC parent as a representative on the screening committee. Ms. Nazzaro agreed to be the School Committee representative on the screening committee.

Ms. Nazzaro moved to approve the Killam Principal search process. Mr. Wise seconded, vote passed 6-0.

4. Review and Vote to Approve FY23 Budget Transfers (A)

Ms. Bottan confirmed nothing has changed in terms of the budget transfer since the last School Committee meeting on June 8th.

Ms. Nazzaro moved to transfer \$740,000 from the Special Education Cost Center to the following centers:

- \$645,000 to Regular Day
- \$35,000 to Technology Software
- \$60,000 to Facilities

Mr. Wise seconded, vote passed 6-0.

5. Review Legal Counsel Subcommittee Recommendation and Vote to Approve Special Education Counsel (A)

Mr. Wise reviewed the process the Legal Counsel Subcommittee underwent to select a new Legal Counsel to support Student Services. Fourteen firms were invited to participate in the process in which seven interviewed with an outcome of four finalists. One firm had to opt out at the last minute due to staffing limitations which left the subcommittee with three finalists to interview. The subcommittee agreed to recommend appointing Stoneman, Chandler, & Miller. The group negotiated a few financial incentives such as 10 hours of free transition services. Cases will be transferred and managed on an individual basis. Rates are commensurate with other firms.

Ms. Nazzaro motioned to appoint Stoneman, Chandler, & Miller LLP as Student Services Counsel, vote passed 6-0.

6. Letter in Support of PARC Grant Application (A)

Mr. Brandt gave an overview of the PARC Grant and what the money would support. Phase 2 of the Birch Meadow project involves redoing the area behind the high school to build a fully accessible playground where the "Tot Lot" is as well as a renovation of the basketball courts and additional parking. The town is applying for the PARC Grant, which has a submission deadline in mid-July. The grant award eligibility is up to \$500k to support the project. One nuance of the grant is that the property the grant applied to has to be owned by the Town and portions of the plot land are currently deeded to the school district. If the grant is awarded, the School Committee would declare the property as unused and deed it to the Town to give them control and accept the grant. The letter expresses support for the grant and expresses our intent to move forward with the transfer of land when or if the time comes.

A question was asked about the boundaries beyond the tot lot. Are the fields included and is there any risk to high school programs having priority to fields? It does not seem we would run into issues. To clarify this question, this letter just shows our

support and when the grant is awarded or executed we will have time to negotiate and express any concerns.

Ms. Nazzaro motioned to send a letter in Support of PARC Grant Application, Mr. Wise seconded, vote passed 6-0.

D. Old Business

1. Consider and Vote to Approve the Contribution to Special Education Stabilization Fund (A)

At Town Meeting, they approved the creation of the Special Education Stabilization Fund. The School Committee still has some work to do in creating policies, but at this time we have to determine an amount to contribute to the fund. Ms. Bottan is projecting a year-end balance of \$285,000.

The committee had discussions about money set aside in years past in the “backstop bucket” and how the backstop bucket is spent. The committee discussed what would be a reasonable and comfortable number to set aside.

Ms. Nazzaro motioned to contribute \$175,000 to the Special Education Stabilization Fund, Mr. Wise seconded, vote passed 6-0.

2. Policy Updates – Review and Vote on Amended Policies: GCJ, DGA, DH, DI, DIE, DJ, DJA, DK (A)

Mr. Brandt motioned to moves agenda items D2 and D3 to the next School Committee meeting, Mr. Wise seconded, vote passed 6-0.

3. Review and Vote to Revoke Policy DJG – Vendor Relations (A)

C. Personnel

2. Review and Approve Consensus Superintendent Summative Evaluation (A)

Mr. Brandt stated there were only two examples when the group was slightly inconsistent with their review and that was due to difference in opinion in how that specific goal is viewed. Otherwise, there was strong feedback across the board for Dr. Milaschewski’s review.

Ms. Nazzaro motioned to approve the Consensus Superintendent Summative Evaluation, Mr. Wise seconded, vote passed 6-0.

E. New Business

9. Annual School Committee Reorganization (A)

Mr. Brandt turned the meeting over to Dr. Milaschewski for the reorganization of the School Committee. Mr. Brandt and Mr. Wise were nominated for Chair. The committee is highly functional at this point and the other members agreed they would be happy with either person being chair. After some discussion, Mr. Brandt withdrew his nomination.

Roll Call Vote – Roll Call Vote for Mr. Wise, Mr. Robinson – yes, Ms. Gaffen – yes, Ms. McLaughlin – yes, Mr. Wise – yes, Mr. Brandt – yes, Ms. Nazzaro – yes.

Vote passed 6-0.

Mr. Wise took over the meeting as the new Chairperson for nominations for Vice Chair. Ms. Gaffen was nominated as Vice Chair.

Roll Call Vote – Roll Call Vote for Ms. Gaffen, Mr. Robinson – yes, Ms. Gaffen – yes, Ms. McLaughlin – yes, Mr. Wise – yes, Mr. Brandt – yes, Ms. Nazzaro – yes.

Vote passed 6-0.

Mr. Brandt made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. McLaughlin, vote passed 6-0.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3xwnofuKXw>

Meeting Adjourned 10:53pm.