



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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2023 NOV 20 AM 8:52

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

School Committee

Date: 2023-10-05

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:**

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

Members - Not Present:

Charles Robinson

Others Present:

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Sarah Hardy, Superintendent Dr. Thomas Milaschewski and Student Emily Goodhue

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

Topics of Discussion:

A. Call to Order – Mr. Wise called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. to review the agenda.

Mr. Wise motioned to move item C1 out of order, seconded by Mr. Brandt, the vote passed 5-0.

C. Personnel

1. Introduction of 2023-2024 Student Advisory Committee including Student(s) Reports

Emily Goodhue, a senior at RMHS, gave a brief introduction as the School Committee student representative for the 2023-2024 school year and provided an update on the start of the school year. Some highlights to the start of the school year include homecoming week, Unity Day, the last home football game, the first unified basketball game against Watertown, the Triangle/EMBARC program field trip to the Red Sox, and the seniors have taken the literacy tests to earn their seal of biliteracy in different languages spanning from Spanish to French to Swedish.

Dr. Milaschewski provided some background on the student representative position. To comply with MGL, we are required to have a student advisory committee of at least five students. Elections are typically hosted in June, but since we did not hold elections, we opened it up to anyone who wanted to be part of the advisory committee. We have 21 members on the committee this year. Emily Goodhue is serving as the chair and served on the committee last year. This is a great way for students to have a voice and we expect to be in full compliance with MGL next year by holding elections in June.

B. Public Comment

Focus on Excellence

1. RMHS Rocket Ambassadors

Dr. Milaschewski introduced the agenda item 'Focus on Excellence' which will be an item going forward at each meeting. Students part of the Rocket Ambassador program spoke to staff on the first day of school about their experiences in the Reading Public Schools and we have invited students here tonight to share some of the stories shared on the first day of school so the community can hear from them.

Ms. Lynna Williams gave some context on the program noting it has been revamped over the years. Seniors Allyson Sumner and Edward Sanphy discussed their time as students in Reading reflecting on different experiences that have an impact on their life and education.

Ms. Lynna Williams applauded the two students for being here tonight. Ambassadors are nominated by staff and it's very clear why these students were selected.

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes (09-18-2023)
2. Unified Basketball Program donation
3. Reading Girls Soccer Parent Association donation
4. Coolidge School Store donation
5. Wood End Charitable Contribution
6. Acceptance of FY24 Earmark – RMHS Keyboards Award
7. Acceptance of FY24 Innovation Career Pathways Planning Grant
8. Acceptance of FY24 Innovation Pathways Implementation and Support Grant
9. Quebec Field Trip Request

Warrant Reports

1. 09-14-2023
2. 09-21-2023
3. 09-28-2023

Mrs. Gaffen motioned to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Mr. Brandt, the vote passed 5-0.

Reports

1. Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning – Dr. Hardy reported on two items, first giving a shout-out to teachers acting as mentors this year and secondly, discussing the launch of the Math Pathways Advisory Committee.
2. Superintendent – Dr. Milaschewski thanked all who came out to support the unified basketball kickoff game earlier today. We are looking forward to a great season!
3. Liaison/Sub-Committee
 - a. Mrs. Nazzaro – The Killam School Building Committee proposals are due next Wednesday from designers. It will take a few weeks to review the proposals followed by MSBA meetings in which we will have an approved designer.

- b. Mr. Brandt – Mr. Fidel Maltez has been appointed the City Manager of Chelsea. Mr. Maltez has been a great partner to the schools, and we wish him well.
- c. Mrs. McLaughlin – No report
- d. Mrs. Gaffen – No report
- e. Mr. Wise – Mr. Wise recognized that October is dyslexia awareness month.

E. New Business

1. Request of School Committee: Land at Birch Meadow Elementary for Dog Park with Potential Vote (A)

Community member, Mr. Cool presented a proposed plan to turn land adjacent to Birch Meadow Elementary School into a dog park. With this plan, there were multiple options presented to separate the dog park from the playground including a double fence, plantings, and a solid barrier.

There was consensus from the committee that if the space is actively used by students, it is difficult to give that up. It was also noted that the committee has not fully resolved future building plans and hesitates to give up land that could be used in the future.

2. 2023 MCAS Results Presentation

Dr. Milaschewski reviewed the 2023 MCAS district results highlighting the following areas:

- School Accountability Percentiles
- Elementary ELA Performance
- RMHS Math Performance.

These are great areas to highlight and show how the district is really moving the needle. Six out of eight schools set school records in school accountability percentiles, elementary ELA SGP was fourth out of 307 districts statewide, and RMHS set overall and subgroup records for math growth (SGP).

However, there are also areas of concern.

- Overall, there have been a lot of areas of growth. The percent proficiency has not reached pre-pandemic levels in most content areas.
- We are also seeing achievement gaps as there are areas where we closed the gap, but in some places, it has widened. We want to raise the bar for all students across the district.
- Dr. Milaschewski pointed out the Parker Middle School accountability result. We do have strategies to improve systems for instruction and a high-level overview will be outlined in the Parker Middle School annual school improvement plan.

Mr. Brandt pointed out it is very encouraging to see the student growth percentiles at the elementary level as this really shows a leading indicator of where the district is moving.

Mrs. McLaughlin noted it will be important to use the data to close the gap on targeted interventions as we have a lot of students impacted by the pandemic significantly.

As for moving forward, Dr. Milaschewski shared that individual student reports will be mailed to families early next week and are expected to be in mailboxes by Friday. Principals will be sharing an update with their community in their newsletters. They will also share this with their school councils and PTO. School improvement plans will be presented on November 2 and principals will host a session where anyone in the community will be able to attend and ask questions. We will share those session dates and times with the committee. Overall, even with the concerns that have been noted as a result of the MCAS data, it is encouraging to know we have already aligned ourselves to find solutions.

3. FY24 Enrollment Update

Dr. Milaschewski reviewed the enrollment update. One thing that sticks out is the number reported as students with disabilities. To provide some context, informally we have learned from other local districts that they are seeing an increase in this number as well. There are more referrals than before the pandemic and we saw a lot of learning loss during that period. Mrs. McLaughlin pointed out that 771 students on IEPs seem consistent with pre-pandemic numbers. That number dipped during the pandemic and went back up.

Overall, enrollment has jumped to almost 4,000 students in the district. The enrollment numbers are heavier in fourth grade which can be attested to students returning after going to private school during the pandemic. Mr. Wise noted it would be helpful to see FY23 actual numbers to be able to tell a full story.

A question was raised as to the district keeping to the School Committee's recommended class size guidelines. Dr. Milaschewski stated we are still within the class size targets. The school pushing the boundary the most is Birch Meadow Elementary where we are feeling it more in the younger grades.

4. Review and Approve Killam School Building Update for Town Meeting

Mrs. Nazzaro reviewed the draft letter, which, if approved by the committee, will serve as the update for the Killam School Building at the Town Meeting. One edit that has not been reflected is the addition of more description regarding the outreach efforts, including listening sessions, forums, etc.

Mr. Wise motioned to approve the Killam School Building Committee Town Meeting update as amended, seconded by Mrs. McLaughlin, the vote passed 5-0.

D. Old Business

1. Birch Meadow Phase II PARC Grant Surplus Land Discussion and Vote (A)

Mr. Wise briefly reminded the committee of the purpose of this discussion: The committee is being asked to allocate a small piece of land at Birch Meadow to the Select Board as part of their application for a \$500k PARC Grant. Some concerns have been raised regarding the potential impact on our athletes who currently use this land. Mr. Maltez and Mr. Wise have reviewed the map outlining the available space. It's worth

noting that the Recreation Committee is responsible for allocating space when it's not in use by the schools, which should provide assurance that athletes will have priority access to any available space.

Mr. Wise made a motion that pursuant to G.L. c. 40, §15A, the School Committee votes to declare the land in Assessor Parcel ID 27-0-342 as surplus, subject to the Town receiving a successful PARC grant award, and that the tennis courts be given priority use for High School Athletics as determined by the Superintendent, or their designee, and in alignment with the Recreation Committee's duties as outlined in the Town of Reading Home Rule Charter, seconded by Mrs. Gaffen, the vote passed 5-0.

Mr. Wise motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Brandt, and the vote passed 5-0.

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iB-4GNI-fDQ>
Meeting Adjourned 8:52pm**