

MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Location: School Committee Room
October 14, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

In Attendance:

George Scobie
Gail Holloway
Dottie Kauffman
Meghan McCrillis

Absent:

Jessie Harrington

Casey Handfield
Beth Chamberland
Cecelia Wirzbicki

CALL TO ORDER:

At 6:33 p.m., Mr. Scobie called the meeting to order and asked if anyone was recording the meeting; there being none, he asked that everyone join him in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

None

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Handfield shared that the Unified Athletic Program, under the direction of Mrs. Alison Deluca, received notice last week that Auburn High School has once again been named a Unified Champion School District. This will be the third year in a row our Unified Program has been recognized. Dr. Handfield noted that he wanted to take a moment to publicly recognize this achievement, and offer congratulations to Mrs. Deluca and all of the coaches, players, and families for this terrific accomplishment. The members echoed Dr. Handfield's congratulations, with Mr. Scobie noting that it was a heartwarming program.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES INTRODUCTION / REPORT

Aaron Zheng and Jasmyn Gates

Jasmyn checked in on Zoom and noted that while the daily checking in with each teacher was confusing; however, now that it's more permanent, meaning two days instead of only one, things like this will get easier.

Aaron was not able to connect through Zoom and his report is shared as an Addendum to these minutes.

MINUTES: 9/30/2020 for Approval

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 30th meeting; Dr. McCrillis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

School Opening Update

Dr. Handfield noted that he was pleased to report that we officially transitioned into our "2-1-2" hybrid model as scheduled on Monday, October 5th. Students now attend school 2 days a week in-person, are remote on Wednesdays with their classmates and teachers, and are at home checking-in with their teachers at a minimum of twice per period, in some cases more. From Dr. Handfield's discussions with administrators and teachers, visits to classrooms, and feedback from the school community, this change has had a positive impact on student engagement and accountability, especially in grades 6-12. He noted that we are continuing to explore ways to merge the cohorts as much as possible in a synchronous fashion. This is happening in a lot of places already as teachers are growing more confident and comfortable in their classrooms. We will continue to review and refine our practices in the coming weeks. He thanked the administrators, faculty, and staff for their hard work and our amazing families for their unwavering support during what will continue to be a challenging time for months to come, noting that he was pleased with where we are. Mr. Scobie thanked the teachers for going the extra mile.

COVID Update

Dr. Handfield provided a COVID update, noting that as the Committee had been previously informed, we had a COVID positive student at Auburn High School on October 1st. He was happy to report the student is doing extremely well, and we did not have any additional cases as a result of this situation. He thanked, again, Dr. Chamberland, our nurses, and the Auburn Board of Health for their joint efforts. We were able to quickly take action once aware of the student, identify any potential close and non-close contacts, personally reach out to them, and notify our community the same day. The plans we have in place are working and doing what they were set out to do. Mr. Scobie noted that the lack of negative feedback and "excitement" around the announcement was a good feeling. He was impressed with the way this was handled.

Satellite/Galaxy Update

Dr. Handfield reported that the delay in the start of Satellite/Galaxy until October 19th served us well, giving us sufficient time to make adjustments necessary prior to adding another layer of programming to our schools. He shared that we have also worked things out to keep students in their home schools, thus eliminating the need to bus

them to AMS or AHS. Dr. Chamberland reported that the enrollment is pretty low right now so it will be a very manageable group of students. She also noted that many of the staff couldn't wait to come back to the program.

Fall Athletics Update

Dr. Handfield shared that fall athletics successfully began on Monday, October 5th. This includes Boys' and Girls' soccer and cross country, and Girls' Field Hockey. As he stated last week, football and cheer is scheduled to take place during the "Fall 2" season mentioned last week. Dr. Handfield shared that as part of his late afternoon walks; he visited AHS to observe practices and was happy to see teams operating in accordance with MIAA rules. He was also pleased to see student-athletes and their coaches being diligent about wearing masks. He noted that he knows we are all happy to see the resumption of athletics, being another step in regaining a feeling of normalcy. He wished the student-athletes an enjoyable and safe season and noted that teams start competing on October 19th.

October 1 Enrollment

Dr. Handfield shared a copy of the official October 1st enrollment. He noted that we are down 118 students across the District compared to last year, with the bulk of our numbers concentrated at the Preschool and SWIS. This will have an impact on Chapter 70. How much of an impact remains to be seen at this time. All school districts in Massachusetts are experiencing this to varying degrees. The state is considering the uniqueness of this time period related to how much of an impact will be felt in Chapter 70 funding. He will share more on this as we move forward into the FY'22 budget season.

Donation from Gentex Optics, Inc.

Dr Handfield share that we recently received a generous donation of miscellaneous PPE supplies through Mr. Ed Chamberland from Gentex Optics, Inc. These supplies will be distributed to the schools. It was his recommendation that the Committee accept this donation with gratitude. He thanked Gentex Optics for it.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to accept with gratitude the donation of PPE supplies from Gentex Optics, Inc.; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Donation from Piercing Emporium

Dr. Handfield shared that similarly, we recently received a donation of nine cases of PPE gowns from Mr. Marc Williams (husband of AHS Secretary, Mandy Williams) of Piercing Emporium and Tattoo in Worcester. It was his recommendation that the Committee accept this donation with gratitude. He thanked Marc.

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to accept with gratitude the donation of nine cases of gowns from the Piercing Emporium and Tattoo in Worcester; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

FY'21 Revised Budget

Dr. Handfield reminded the members that the Fall Special Town meeting is scheduled for October 27th at AHS. That evening we have the warrant articles going forward as discussed a couple of weeks ago. We also will be asking Town Meeting to approve the revised FY '21 budget number of \$27,214,157, which represents a decrease of \$461,898 from what was appropriated by Town Meeting in June. He noted, however, before we ask the Town Meeting to approve that number, the Committee needs to make and accept a motion to approve the revised FY '21 budget number.

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to approve the revised FY '21 school district budget of \$27,214,157; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Dr. Handfield noted that the Committee usually meets prior to the Fall Special Town Meeting at 6:30 p.m. and asked if the Committee was in agreement that the meeting should be held then instead of on October 28th. Following questions from the members, he reported that the quorum for the Town Meeting has been lowered to 40. The areas that will be used will be deep cleaned both prior and after the meeting. Dr. Handfield will find out where the School Committee can hold its meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Mrs. Wirzbicki, who had been present at the Finance Committee's meeting the on September 30th, representing the District, noted that Mrs. Jacobson, Town Manager, had noted that she was thankful for the cooperation of the School Department during this trying time and Dr. Handfield stated that it was a pleasure to work with the Town Administration thus far.

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to change the School Committee meeting to October 27th at 6:30 p.m. at a place within the High School yet to be determined; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Dr. Handfield also shared that the USDA is funding meals for students at no charge through the entire school year, which was just awesome for everyone. The members asked that Janice King and staff attend an upcoming meeting to be recognized for their hard work.

NEW BUSINESS:

Superintendent's Goals for 2020-2021

Dr. Handfield provided his three goals for 2020-2021 (personal practice, student learning, and district - wide) that focus on his continued work with the New Superintendents Induction Program (NSIP), working with principals to understand and calibrate high quality virtual instruction, and evaluating the current Strategic Plan to see what, if any, changes might be made given the educational climate presented by COVID. He felt that all three goals had a strong focus on improving the day-to-day operations of the schools, as well as reframing the future of the District. He did ask, however, if the vote to accept them be delayed to the next meeting to allow him to make a change to one of the goals.

TEACHING/LEARNING REPORT:

ZippSlip Data

Dr. Chamberland shared that ZippSlip continues to serve as our first line of defense in tracking and monitoring COVID 19 symptoms and testing. As of October 9th, we have between 91%-95% of families regularly completing the ZippSlip form. We are pleased with this completion rate but will continue to work with families who are not yet full participants. She shared a summary of student symptoms up to this point, noting that you can see there has been a rise in reported symptoms and ZippSlip allows us access to this information quickly and nurses follow up with both families and staff on a daily basis. She noted that the nurses are on top of it as well as the Board of Health, stating that they have done a tremendous job.

Dr. Chamberland noted that she was not reporting on attendance because of difficulties with DESE's way of recording absences and linking with PowerSchool.

Teaching and Learning

Dr. Chamberland shared that she has started a monthly communication to all staff providing options for professional development and resources for teaching, noting that this is a continuation of our newsletter from last year called *Words from West*. Each month, she will provide staff with new resources, perhaps shared resources from colleagues in the District and maybe even an interview or two of staff that they might find helpful. It is her hope that this tool serves to link each of the schools together to not only keep everyone informed but also to share best practices. Upcoming Professional Development Days (full or half) will be used for parent/teacher conferences, the sharing of best practices and to provide teachers with additional preparation time.

BUSINESS/FINANCIAL REPORT:

2026 Capital Improvement Plan Approval

Mrs. Wirzbicki and Mr. Fahey, in consultation with the Leadership Team have provided the 2026 CIP Items as requested by the Town Manager, which require the School Committee's approval.

Recommended motion: Dr. McCrillis made a motion to approve the 2026 CIP as presented; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Year to Date Budget Report as of October 7, 2020

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided a year to date budget report.

Budget Transfers as of October 7, 2020

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided budget transfers between the same series for your information as well as transfers between different series requiring a vote of approval.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to approve the transfers between the series; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Adjournment: At 7:32 p.m., there being no further business to discuss, Dr. McCrillis made a motion to adjourn for the evening; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Ailaine Zautner
Recording Secretary

Referenced Documents:

Minutes from September 30, 2020
October 1 Enrollment
Thank you to Gentex Optics, Inc.
Thank you to Piercing Emporium and Tattoo
Superintendent's Goals for 2020-2021
ZippSlip Summary of Student Symptoms
FY 2026 CIP
Year to Date Budget Report
Transfers