

MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Location: School Committee Room
February 3, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

In Attendance:

George Scobie
Jessie Harrington
Gail Holloway
Dottie Kauffman
Meghan McCrillis

Joined Via Zoom
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Casey Handfield	Leah Gauthier (via Zoom)	Jasmyn Gates (absent)
Beth Chamberland	Kerry Astrella (via Zoom)	Aaron Zheng (via Zoom)
Cecelia Wirzbicki		

CALL TO ORDER:

At 6:30 p.m., Mr. Scobie called the meeting to order and asked if anyone else 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 Joan A. "Red" (Adshead) Polakowski, 78, passed away peacefully in the loving presence of her husband James R. Polakowski, on Monday, January 18, 2021, in the comfort of their home.

She leaves their son, Timothy J. Polakowski, of Campbell, CA; her siblings: Jane McGrath, of Worcester, Richard "Rick" Adshead and his wife Darcy, of Arizona, and Tom Adshead, of Florida; her brother-in-law, Philip Polakowski and his wife Renee, of West Boylston; her nieces and nephews as well as many friends and neighbors who were with her for her 10-plus years of suffering. Joan was predeceased by her daughter, Kristin Marie Polakowski, and her parents, Richard and Constance (Brissette) Adshead.

Born in Worcester and raised, educated in Auburn, Joan was a 1961 graduate of Auburn High School. She then attended Worcester State University, where she received her Bachelor's degree in Education, and later, her Master's. Joan married the love of her life, James, on November 21, 1964 and shared the next 56 years together in Auburn where she also spanned her 42 year-long career in teaching in the Auburn Public Schools.

Dr. Handfield asked everyone to join him in a moment of silence to Mrs. Polakowski.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES INTRODUCTION / REPORT

Aaron Zheng and Jasmyn Gates

Aaron Zheng was in attendance to provide his report. He reported that nothing much has happened; that things are the same as usual with COVID still being a major factor. He noted that teachers and

students are maintaining regulations to stay safe. The We the People competition took place on Saturday, January 30th and he stated that it was still fun to compete remotely and people joined from around the country, which was “super cool!” Aaron stated that it had been fun to reconvene as a class as he hadn’t seen Cohort A students in a long time! They did well getting third place to East Hampton who won the nationals last year. It had been a stressful three weeks leading up to it. Next week is the Student Council’s Winter Carnival and he noted that it will be nice to have something normal. Aaron was thanked for his very informative report.

Jasmyn was experiencing internet problems at home and could not connect to the meeting; however she did provide her report via email: “School is still going very well. It is so nice to hear people laughing in the halls again (even if it's rare). It is still very difficult due to the current circumstances to feel motivated as I am sure we are all aware but, being in the building I personally feel helps tremendously! Teachers have been extremely fair when it comes to due dates and extensions. Students continue to abide by our Covid regulations that have been put in place which is great to see! Other than that, there is not much more I can think of at this time.”

MINUTES: 1/20/2021 for Approval

Mrs. Harrington made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 20th meeting; Dr. McCrillis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Donation of PPE to Pakachoag School

Dr. Handfield shared that Mrs. Stanick recently informed him that the Pakachoag School Nurse received a donation of 50 sponge shields from 1800shields in Beverly Hills, CA. He recommended that the Committee accept them with gratitude. A thank you note from Mrs. Stanick was included in the packet.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to accept with gratitude the 50 sponge shields donated by 1800shields to Pakachoag School; Mrs. Harrington seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

COVID Update

Dr. Handfield reported that it had been a good couple of weeks with respect to COVID Positives with 8 cases last week (Monday 4, Tuesday 1, Wednesday 0, Thursday 2, and Friday 1) and one so far this week on Wednesday, Feb 3rd. COVID Positive cases are trending downward, which is encouraging. He noted that we are, however, far from “out of the woods.” Wearing masks, sanitizing hands, and avoiding large crowds will continue to be important for the foreseeable future as vaccination efforts slowly ramp up across the state and country.

Dr. Handfield noted that we are fielding many inquiries regarding the status of school moving forward as vaccinations are starting to occur, noting that we are prepared to begin vaccinations as soon as we receive them. We are currently scheduled in Phase 2.3. The best estimate currently has school personnel receiving Dose One at the end of February. From there, it will be approximately 4-6 weeks before Dose Two is available. From there, it will be 2 weeks for full efficacy to be reached. We are also watching the potential for a March surge that may or may not happen due to mutations of the COVID virus. That is where we are right now. He will keep everyone apprised as developments unfold over the next two months.

COVID Presentation

Leah Gauthier, APS Nurse Leader and Pakachoag School Nurse, Kerri Astrella, were in attendance to share the presentation that she and our other nurses held with our faculties two Wednesdays ago. This was a proactive presentation the nurses sought to create and share with the school community to remind and reassure all that we are as safe as we can be given the situation we found ourselves in at the moment. Leah and Kerri went through the presentation quickly and also discussed how the Central Office, the Nurses and Auburn DPH triangulate findings and work together to assess, diagnose, and resolve issues related to COVID.

Mr. Scobie noted that it was a great presentation, providing us with confidence that our kids should be in the buildings. He noted that other districts don't have this kind of system in place. It truly is amazing to see how well we are doing, how hard our nurses are working and how much they care.

Superintendent's Entry Plan

Dr. Handfield provided an update for the Committee on the beginning of his entry plan: surveys have been sent out to faculty and families over the last two weeks. He has had about 300 responses, with some incredible amounts of positive comments but, more importantly, some really thoughtful feedback about places we can grow as a district. He will bring preliminary findings to the Committee in March and a final report at the close of the school year. He thanked everyone for taking time to complete it, stating the information is really rich.

NEW BUSINESS:

M.A.S.S. Mid-Winter Meeting

Dr. Handfield shared that he had the privilege of attending the MASS Mid-Winter meeting (remotely) in early January. The featured speaker was Dr. Mark Brackett, the founder of the Yale University Center for Emotional Intelligence. Dr. Brackett had presented the highlights from his powerful new book titled "Permission to Feel." His book captures his 25 years studying emotional intelligence and the presentation of a new mindset around the power of emotions to transform our lives. Using science, passion, and lively storytelling, this book serves as a guide for understanding our own and others' emotions, as well as providing innovative strategies for developing emotional intelligence in adults and children so that emotions help, rather than hinder, our success and well-being. Dr. Handfield noted that he found it to be authentic and relatable from the point of view as an adult, child, parent, teacher, human, pretty much everyone. He provided each member with a copy for their own personal review and reference. He noted that he and Dr. Chamberland will be reading it and seeing where it might fit in with our current SEL approaches in the District.

AMS/AHS Honor Rolls

Dr. Handfield noted that, as we do every year, we celebrated our students at AMS and AHS for academic excellence at the conclusion of the first trimester. This year we took a different approach than in past years. Mr. Desto and Mr. Delongchamp penned letters of congratulations to students and disseminated them and we posted a Superintendent's Scroll of Honor on our website and on Facebook. Dr. Handfield noted that it was a pleasure to recognize so many students, and he said he looks forward to doing the same thing at the conclusion of the next two trimesters.

AMS NJHS Induction

Dr. Handfield stated that he and Dr. Chamberland had the pleasure of attending the middle school's NJHS induction ceremony on Thursday evening, January 28th via Zoom. This year thirty-five 7th graders and one 8th grader were found by the faculty selection committee to have satisfactorily met the five tenets of membership which include: scholarship, character, leadership, service, and citizenship. He offered his congratulations, again, to this year's class and also thanked the faculty, the administration, and advisers, Mrs. Melissa Dupuis and Mrs. Sherrie Watson for putting this together. He also offered kudos to, the current president of the NJHS, Cam McLaughlin, who also did a great job.

We the People

Dr. Handfield shared that the 2021 "We the People" competition took place virtually through the Edward M. Kennedy Institute at UMass-Boston on Saturday, January 30th. Forty-Seven students participated under the direction of faculty advisers Mr. Spencer Kennard and Mr. Vincent Benacchio. He noted that Aaron very much understated himself a lot. Our kids took third place going up against outstanding schools in the state and came in right after them.

TEACHING/LEARNING REPORT:

SeeSaw

Dr. Chamberland shared that Seesaw is a communication platform that was purchased for use by Bryn Mawr and Pakachoag Schools for this school year. This platform allows teachers to assign activities, provide feedback to students and to create a portfolio of work for each student. Students can complete activities and assignments in the virtual platform using drawing tools, writing tools, along with video and audio recording. Seesaw contains many accessibility features and thus, she noted, we have expanded the use of Seesaw to our substantially separate classrooms across the District. This has been very well received by families and staff and is a great addition to our programming.

Tiered Focus Monitoring

Dr. Chamberland shared that every three years the Office of Public School Monitoring (PSM) conducts a review in the areas of special education and civil rights through a process called Tiered Focused Monitoring (TFM). This year PSM will be conducting approximately 130 reviews; our District is scheduled for a TFM-Group B review during the 2021-2022 school year. All districts scheduled for a TFM-Group B review during the 2021-2022 SY will be conducting a self-assessment through the Web-based Monitoring System (WBMS) this year.

Dr. Chamberland noted that the Tiered Focus Monitoring Process requires a significant amount of data collection, document collection, data analysis, surveys, reflection and discussion. The Self Assessment window opens February 1st and will end in May of 2021. Site visits will take place next school year.

BUSINESS/FINANCIAL REPORT:

Establishment of Scholarship in Memory of Edward Bedard

Mrs. Wirzbicki informed the Committee that the Auburn High School community wanted to establish a scholarship in memory of Edward Bedard, a long-time technology teacher there who passed away a year ago, to be awarded yearly to students who are enrolled in Technology classes at Auburn High School. The scholarship will be funded by donations collected at the annual home basketball games between Auburn High School and Oxford High School and other donations will be accepted too. However, Mrs. Wirzbicki noted that in order to accept these donations, a special revenue account will need to be set up with the Town which requires the Committee's approval.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to approve the establishment of a special revenue account entitled, "Edward Bedard Memorial Scholarship," in order to accept donations and award scholarships yearly; Mrs. Harrington seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

On boarding of a Chef/Culinary Manager

Mrs. Wirzbicki notified the Committee that Mrs. Janice King, Director of Food Services had included in the packet a memo recommending the hiring of a Chef/Culinary Manager to begin working at Auburn High School due to a recent vacancy occurring through a department transfer. This newly-defined position will help to expand our District culinary training for all school cafeteria managers and staff, while performing the role of AHS Cafeteria Manager. The position will not only expand the skills of our staff, but also assist in preparing menu options and supporting promotions within the District that will help to attract increased student participation at each school.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to support the hiring of a Chef/Culinary Manager to work at the Auburn High School and all District schools, to provide culinary training and student outreach through expanding menu choices, enhancing food preparation skills with staff and supporting efforts to increase student participation. Mrs. Harrington seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Bus Application for 2021-2022 School Year

Mrs. Wirzbicki sought the Committee's approval of the bus application for the 2021-2022 school year, noting that the fee remains at \$100 for those students who have to pay (Grades 7 through 12 and Grades K-6 who live less than 2 miles from the school they attend) with a family cap of \$250. The late fee remains at \$100 per child, no cap. The due date will remain at June 1, 2021.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to approve the bus application for the 2021-2022 school year; Mrs. Harrington seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Year to Date Budget Report

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided a year to date budget report.

Budget Transfers

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 as presented; Mrs. Harrington seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

POLICIES:

There are three policies for approval on 2nd Reading:

BB, School Committee Legal Status on 2nd Reading

BDA, School Committee Organizational Meeting on 2nd Reading

IHBF, Homebound Instruction on 2nd Reading

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to adopt the above-names policies on second reading; Mrs. Harrington seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Prior to adjourning for the evening, Dr. Handfield shared that Mrs. Ailaine Zautner, his Administrative Assistant, had tendered her intent to retire effective August 31, 2021.

Adjournment:

At 7:30 p.m., there being no further business to discuss, Mrs. Harrington made a motion to adjourn for the evening; Dr. McCrillis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Ailaine Zautner

Referenced Documents:

Minutes of 1/20/21

Thank you to 1800Shields for Masks

Request to establish Ed Bedard Scholarship

Request to add Chef/Culinary Manager at AHS

Year to Date Budget Report

Transfers

Bus Application for 2021-2022

Policies on 2nd Reading: BB; BDA, IHBF