

MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Location: School Committee Room
March 10, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

In Attendance:

George Scobie
Jessie Harrington
Gail Holloway
Dottie Kauffman
Meghan McCrillis

Casey Handfield
Beth Chamberland
Cecelia Wirzbicki

Gregg Desto
Karlie Beamenderfer (Project 351 Ambassador)
Jasmyn Gates
Aaron Zheng Absent

Visitor: Jack Generelli

CALL TO ORDER:

At 6:38 p.m., after some technical difficulties, 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: Casson Foster Photography

Mr. Jack Generelli, parent, was in attendance to discuss Casson Foster Photography, noting they have been around for a while. He had spoken to Mr. Desto and wondered if a survey might be done to determine if families are happy with Casson Foster. It used to be Life Touch and maybe it's time to invite another photographer to participate. Dr. Handfield stated that he would look into it to see if there are any other complaints but noted that he was not aware of any issues with Casson Foster over the last 10 years. Mr. Generelli asked who is responsible for hiring the photographer and Dr. Handfield stated that it has traditionally been done at the building level, with contracts being entered into for 3 years usually. He will do some research on what contracts are out there and will report back to Committee on where we go from here.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS:

Dr. Handfield reported that Sarah Lemovitz, the nurse at the Auburn Integrated Preschool, was recently awarded two grants from the Auburn Cultural Council. The first, **Read Across Auburn**, which has been awarded many times at our Preschool, will supply **three months** worth of books for all students, remote and in person. One new book a month will be sent home so that children can increase their in-home libraries, and explore new age appropriate titles.

The **Upstander Project** is a new grant that was inspired by the Social Justice initiative started at the beginning of the school year. Here is a grant summary:

The purpose of this project is to encourage and promote lessons of kindness, equality, and justice among our littlest scholars in the town of Auburn. During the month of February, our students receive an introduction to Civil Rights, as well as lessons of caring, compassion and kindness. The goal is to communicate the need and importance of standing up for each other, by introducing an unfamiliar term to them: upstander, which is defined as "a person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, particularly someone who intervenes on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied", and rewarding our students when those behaviors are displayed. In teaching our littlest Auburn citizens to be kind, caring individuals, we promote a generation of acceptance, and in turn, allow for more students to have confidence in their educational experience, as well within their own identities.

Project 351 Ambassador

Mr. Gregg Desto, Auburn Middle School Principal, was in attendance via Zoom to introduce this year's selection to be the Auburn Community's ambassador for Project 351 is 8th grader Karlie Beamenderfer. Karlie is the daughter of Adam and Kathy-Jo Beamenderfer of Auburn. She is and has been an outstanding student throughout her years in the Auburn Public Schools. She is currently, once again, a high honors student while taking our most challenging classes, including Algebra, Accelerated English and a high school level Virtual High School Spanish class.

Karlie is an officer in the National Junior Honor Society and takes the lead on many activities and initiatives that enhance our school and our community. To name but a sampling of her outstanding service, Karlie has had a leadership role in a variety of fundraisers and food drives for AYFS as well as collecting clothing for Andy's Attic. Additionally, she helps organize and run dances and other activities at AMS (when we could do such things!) and regularly spreads kindness and positive vibes through the school.

Karlie is also an accomplished Irish step dancer who has performed across New England and in Ireland. We are proud to have Karlie represent our school and our community.

Mr. Desto offered his congratulations to Karlie's parents too and noted that she has twin brothers in the 7th grade and it is a joy having all three in school.

The Committee wished Karlie the best and asked that she keep them posted on her work as the Ambassador.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES INTRODUCTION / REPORT

Aaron Zheng and Jasmyn Gates

Jasmyn was in attendance via Zoom and noted that she hoped everyone was healthy and well. She was happy to report a lot of excitement about the full time return to school on April 5th ...to get back to regular schedule as best as possible. She will be interested to see how everyone does. Jasmyn mentioned freshman, Anielaysha Milinazzo, who is working with Mr. Delongchamp to put together an ASL club at AHS. She is really trying to get that off that ground, with 8 students being interested in doing that. The more inclusive we can be shows the type of community we are. Jasmyn stated that she is just a freshman so it shows a lot of about her character. She has great spirit, always brings a smile and so much more.

Aaron was unable to be in attendance but provided his report to Jasmyn ahead of the meeting: the Model UN had a great conference on March 6th and he was happy to report that the Band will be happening in person for Tri III.

MINUTES: 2/24/2021 for Approval

Mrs. Holloway made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 24th meeting; Mrs. Kauffman seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Donation from Old Navy

Dr. Handfield was recently notified that Eric Bouvier's daughter, Lauren, who works at Old Navy in Millbury, donated three boxes of masks to the District. It was his recommendation that the Committee accept this donation with gratitude. A thank you note has been sent to Old Navy.

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to accept with gratitude the donation of masks from Old Navy; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

COVID Update

Dr. Handfield shared that, as a District, we continue to see our COVID numbers decrease across as reported daily to the community. He reminded everyone we do have an interactive COVID Count chart on our website. We are continuing to maintain our safety precautions and will be doing that for the foreseeable future.

April 5th Return to School

Dr. Handfield shared that we are on track for our April 5th return for all students. We will hold transition days on March 30th and April 1st. We are working out before and after school care possibilities, (limited openings) as well as what Wednesday will look like (half or full day) and likely will have information to share by Friday of this week. The Commissioner handed out his 16 page guidance for return to school. We are ahead of that. It was really just a reinforcement of things handed out over the summer time.

2021-2022 School Year Calendar

Dr. Handfield shared the first review of the school calendar for the 2021-2022 school year. He noted that it kept to the same format as in previous years and it will be brought forward at the next meeting for approval. There are ongoing conversations as to whether half days are necessary or not.

June 19th is Juneteenth (Sunday) and will be observed on June 20th, unpaid.

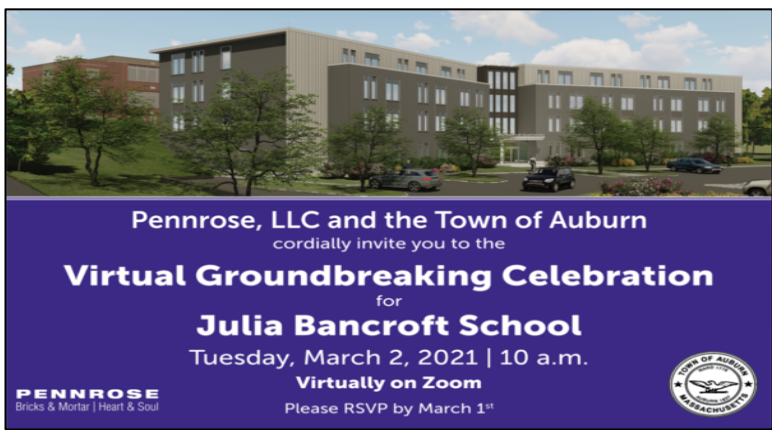
FY '22 Budget Update

Dr. Handfield shared that he and Mrs. Wirzbicki continue to refine the FY'22 budget. As mentioned two weeks ago, the Governor's House 1 budget is working its way through the House and Senate Ways and Means Committee. The Board of Selectman endorsed our budget at their most recent meeting. We will present to the Finance Committee (March 17), review the budget one more time for you to review and adopt March 24th, hold our Public Hearing (April 14th) and send the final budget to the town for Town Meeting (May 4) vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

Julia Bancroft Groundbreaking (3/2)

Dr. Handfield noted that he had the pleasure of attending the virtual groundbreaking of the senior housing project at Julia Bancroft. Between Julia Bancroft and Mary D. Stone, 100 units of affordable, high quality senior housing have been added for our citizens, while also creating a new tax revenue stream for the town of Auburn. This is a "win win" for all involved.



Warrant Articles for Annual Town Meeting

Please be advised that, at the Selectmen's meeting on February 22nd, the Board voted to open the warrant for the May 4, 2021 Annual Town Meeting. Submission of articles for the warrant will close on Monday, March 15, 2021 at noon. The School Department's proposed articles were attached for the Committee's review and approval.

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to approve the warrant articles for the Annual Town Meeting on May 4th as submitted; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

TEACHING/LEARNING REPORT:

Professional Development Days

Dr. Chamberland noted that given that we have two professional development days coming up, each school will be utilizing these days to prepare for the return of students on April 5th. Schools have created teams to prepare

routines and processes to ensure the physical and emotional safety of students and staff. Teachers will be provided with planning time to prepare transition lessons for students, some who may have been in the hybrid model and others who may have been in the remote model up to this point. Teachers will focus on the social and emotional well being of students from the start with a gradual increase in the academics and remediation. Below, you will find a summary of the data received from the survey that went to all parents this past week regarding their learning model choice for their child.(As of Thursday, March 4th). Schools are directly calling families who have not yet responded. Anxiety on behalf of staff and students on reentry.

	In Person(# of students)	Remote(# of students)
Auburn High School	524	76
Auburn Middle School	496	48
Swanson Road	453	57
Bryn Mawr School	203	22
Pakachoag	235	27
TOTAL	2060	278

Dr. Chamberland noted that the Auburn Department of Public Health continues to work behind the scenes to get our teachers and staff more access to vaccine and that just the prior evening, they notified Dr. Chamberland that they heard that Harrington Health had 800 vaccines dedicated to teachers. As of that day, March 10th, 191 of 358 staff members who preregistered with her for vaccines have had at least their first one, which is a really remarkable shift in a day.

BUSINESS/FINANCIAL REPORT:

Natural Gas Bid Award:

Mrs. Wirzbicki notified the Auburn School Department and the Town of Auburn have joined with Webster Public Schools and West Boylston Public Schools, in collaboration with Competitive Energy Services, to procure natural gas pricing for a period of 24 months beginning in November of 2021. Competitive Energy Services works with the French River Collaborative members, assisting with the procurement of both Electricity and Natural Gas contracts with responsible and responsive vendors. The School Department was able to negotiate a contract price of \$5.93 per Dekatherm for a 24 month period, when at present we are currently paying \$6.25 per Dekatherm. The new rate will provide the District a savings of \$3,531.00 from our present contract. The new contract will unite the Town accounts with the Schools, as we have done previously with our Electricity accounts.

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to approve the school department entering into a natural gas contract with Sprague for their buildings starting in November 2021 for a 24 month term at a price of \$5.93 per dekatherm; Dr. McCrillis seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

End of Year Auditor’s Report

Mrs. Wirzbicki included a copy of the FY2020 End of Year Audit Report. She noted that there were a few minor findings, which have been corrected and the amendments have been posted with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. In addition, the Audit mentioned issues pertaining specifically to the School’s Chart of Accounts and the Town’s Indirect Cost Agreement, which have been brought forward to C.F.O. Kazanovicz. The School Department will collaborate with the Town to begin addressing these points.

Year to Date Budget Report:

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided a year to date budget report dated March 1, 2021.

Budget Transfers:

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided budget transfers between the same series for the Committee's information.

Revolving Accounts Update:

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided an updated listing of all School Department Revolving and Special Revenue accounts for the Committee's review.

Bus Application for 2021-2022 School Year

The bus application for next school year has been shared with all families via One Call e-mails and will continue to be. Hard copies will be sent home with Tri II report cards at the end of March. It is also posted on the website. Please note the deadline to register for busing, for everyone, is June 1, 2021.

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent Job Description for Update

With Mrs. Zautner retiring in August, Dr. Handfield noted that it was time to update the job description for the position of Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent to include additional responsibilities that have been added to the job.

Mrs. Harrington made a motion JH/GH to approve the updated job description for Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent as presented; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 7:44 p.m., there being no further business to discuss, Mrs. Hollowing made a motion GH/DK to adjourn for the evening; Mrs. Kauffman seconded it and it was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Ailaine Zautner
Recording Secretary

Referenced Documents:

Minutes from February 24, 2021
DESE Handouts
2021-2022 Draft School Year Calendar
Warrant Articles
End of Year Report for FY 2020
Year to Date Budget Report
Transfers
Revolving Account Update
Job Description: Admin. Assistant to the Superintendent