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SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, February 14, 2023
TIME: 7:00 pm
LOCATION: 123 Cambridge Street, Burlington, MA 01803
Administrative Offices, School Committee Room

ATTENDEES

MEMBER(S) PRESENT: Chair, Ms. Katherine Bond, Vice Chair Mr. Carl Foss, Ms. Martha Simon, Ms. Chris Monaco, Ms. Melissa Massardo, Finance Director, Ms. Nichole Coscia, Director of Operations Mr. Bob Cunha, and BHS Student Representative, Mr. Matt Shannon

MEMBER(S) REMOTE: Superintendent Dr. Eric Conti

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: None

GUEST(S) PRESENT: None

GUEST(S) REMOTE: Ways and Means, Mr. Steve Morin

PUBLIC PRESENT: None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REMOTE: None

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bond called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and read the following statement: The public can also access this meeting via WebEx Technology. The Burlington School Committee will hear public comment in person and virtually. Meetings are also broadcast live on Burlington Cable Access TV (BCAT) as usual. Chair Bond reminded participants that comments and statements are limited to 3 minutes each. Meeting Access Code: Meeting number (access code): 2343 406 4467 | Password: Tuesday.

EQUITY STATEMENT

Educational equity means **that every child belongs and receives whatever support he/she/they need to develop his/her/their full academic, emotional, and social potential to learn and thrive every day.** This begins with kindness and valuing the humanity of every child or individual.

Chair Bond informed the committee that Dr. Conti is at the AASA conference in Texas and is attending this meeting remotely.

Dr. Conti thanked the committee for their support and opportunity to attend this conference of the AASA, The School Superintendents Association.

APPROVAL of WARRANT

Chair Bond explained that the warrant approval process is required to approve the bills that the district is responsible to pay.

Ms. Monaco made a motion to approve the warrant as submitted; seconded by Mr. Foss.

Ms. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Ms. Massardo - aye, Ms. Bond - aye.

Motion Carried 5:0:0 by Roll Call Vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Simon made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended of 1/24/23; seconded by Ms. Monaco.

Ms. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Ms. Massardo - aye, Ms. Bond - aye.

Motion Carried 5:0:0 by Roll Call Vote.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

INFORMATION / REPORTS

Student Report

Mr. Shannon updated the committee that the Student Council Class of 2024 is having a fundraiser this Thursday at Flatbread Pizza. Two weeks ago, on February 2nd the administration had a career fair for the BHS Juniors and Seniors, which afforded the opportunity for students to meet with BHS alumni who are now in the workforce and spoke about their jobs. Lastly, the Drama Club put on a play on Saturday, and they are going to a festival and competing next weekend.

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. Foss stated the Select Board met on Monday, 2/13/23, and decided the town-wide DEI Subcommittee, that was formed over one years ago, is not going to be renewed at this time. It is unclear what the next steps are but for now will step back and re-evaluate.

Ms. Simon had no subcommittee report but requested that an update on the Field Study report be on a future meeting agenda.

Dr. Conti stated he has seen the draft of the Field Study report and it is being reviewed. There is also the BEAM report, which will be on the February 28th agenda.

Ms. Massardo stated she has received some general feedback on the bus company. Ms. Massardo noted she heard there used to be a bus subcommittee and she would like to be proactive this year and be ready in advance of the fall busing schedule. Ms. Massardo mentioned a few suggestions such as the possibly of adding a bus or putting out an RFP for a bus company.

Ms. Monaco stated she was previously on a bus committee and is interested in working with Mr. Cunha during the summer on a bus subcommittee.

Ways and Means Report

Mr. Morin has no updates at this time and there has been no Ways and Means activity with respect to the budget.

Other Announcements

Ms. Bond stated the Select Board mentioned renaming the road out front to "Dottie's Way" and suggested the committee approve it when it comes around to them. Ms. Bond noted that SEPAC, is hosting an event on March 7th at 7 p.m. If anybody wishes to attend, you must register. There are a few ways to get the information such as searching SEPAC, on Facebook, which will have a link. There will also be an email blast from the Director of Special Education, which will provide the QR code to register. In addition, you may email SEPAC, at Burlington SEPAC.com. The topic for this event is, A Basic Presentation for Burlington Special Education Advisory Council. Chair Bond explained this is a basic rights meeting for SEPAC, including evaluation and eligibility.

Dr. Conti congratulated the students who were accepted into the All-State Chorus. These students are Julia Boldezar as an Alto; Henry Estes as a Tenor; Steven Noonan as a Bass; Sienna Silva as a Soprano and Emerson Waisnor as a Soprano. Dr. Conti thanked Ms. Julie Weller and all the music teachers that helped these students excel. They will perform at Symphony Hall in Boston on March 4.

Dr. Conti congratulated the BHS Mock Trial Team on winning their third trial yesterday afternoon. The students for Attorneys are Mike Woodilla (captain), Leyad Abdirizak, Yonas Esayas, Vivaan Pandey, Tanush Naik, Priya Patel, Brenton Chu, Tessie Schultz, Alexavier Locke, Aakansha Agrawal, Anthony Saliba, and Stephanie Choi. The students for Witnesses are Layla Ahmed (assistant captain), Leisha Peddu (assistant captain), Aarushi Dayma, Evan Johnson, and Nathanael Chao. The student for Backup is Ismahan Yusuf. The team went 3-0 in the Preliminary Trials and will be facing off in a Regional Tiebreaker Trial next week.

LEARNING, EQUITY, THRIVING**Whitsons, Food Service Management Company**

Dr. Conti introduced Whitsons Food Service Management Company. Whitsons came out and met with Ways and Means Subcommittee and were also introduced to the staff and this is their first public presentation. Dr. Conti thanked Ms. Coscia for all her work.

Ms. Christine Catterton, who works in business development, and Mr. John Gersbeck, Senior VP of the Division in the area. Ms. Catterton informed the committee that Whitsons is a family-owned company based on Long Island, NY, and is a minority business enterprise. Ms. Catterton stated that Whitsons is the fourth largest food service provider in the United States, and we rank 16 out of the top 50 food service providers. Their philosophy is called simply rooted. Ms. Catterton confirmed that the team employees will remain district employee's, their salary and pay raises will stay intact. Ms. Catterton stated that the district employees are valuable as they interact with the students more than anyone in the business. Whitsons then proceeded with their presentation of the foods and programs that will be offered to the students.

Whitsons will launch the program on March 6th with a soft opening.

Superintendent's Operating Budget Overview

Dr. Conti stated this will be a brief overview and what we are trying to do is set up the budget calendar that will begin on 2/28/23. We have a guideline of a 3.75% increase over last year. Dr. Conti noted that all budgets have been received back and there are many more requests for positions that we cannot fill. Importantly and a requirement for the district is the committee approved planning for success in the fall. In the coming three weeks there will be similar three-year plans at the pre-school, elementary and high school

levels. Plans were shared with the staff and councils at all the levels and the formats will be similar and in alignment. Expect the budget binders prior to the 2/28 meeting with more detail.

Rising Costs for Special Education

Dr. Conti informed the committee that the next meeting will start with an executive session relative to Burlington specific mental health, special education, and English learner scenarios. Mr. Morin of the Ways and Means Subcommittee will be invited to this session. Changing demographics and students will be discussed.

Ms. Monaco stated that the SEPAC, parents are concerned about this item being on the agenda and she wanted to assure everyone that the district is committed to the special educational costs. Ms. Monaco expressed Burlington's dedicated to every program in place no matter the costs.

Dr. Conti stated the state is driving and has mandated a fourteen percent (14%) increase Dr. Conti added that there are expenses for Special Education that are out of Burlington's control, again, the state is increasing out-of-district tuition rates by 14% and all districts are experiencing these rising costs.

Ms. Simon stated she wanted to remind the committee about all the DEI positions throughout the district. There have been conversations around central office and building based positions. We now have an instructional coach with a DEI focus at the middle school. Ms. Simon would like to see budget requests for high school and elementary level positions as evidence of our values as the budget unfolds.

BPS District Library Programs Policy/Second Reading

Dr. Conti read the 1st reading at the last meeting and the policies for each level of schools that were combined into one policy. Dr. Conti recommends the committee approve this second reading of the BPS District Policy.

Ms. Foss made a motion to approve the second reading of the BPS District Library Programs Policy; seconded by Ms. Monaco.

**Ms. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon – aye, Mr. Foss – aye, Ms. Massardo – aye, Ms. Bond - aye.
Motion Carried 5:0:0 by Roll Call Vote.**

High School Program of Studies/Second Reading

Dr. Conti stated that the second reading of the Programs of Studies was omitted from the prior agenda although there was a preliminary vote at the last meeting. Dr. Conti stated it doesn't need a vote he just wanted to be sure it was added to the agenda in case there were questions and to confirm that the second reading and vote had indeed taken place during a public meeting.

Letter to MSBA for ARPA Pandemic Funds from the State

Dr. Conti defers to the committee regarding sending these letters now that the edits have been completed. Dr. Conti thanked Ms. Simon for editing these letters.

Ms. Simon moved to send this advocacy letter to our State Legislatures regarding MSBA funding; Mr. Foss seconded.

**Ms. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon – aye, Mr. Foss – aye, Ms. Massardo – aye, Ms. Bond - aye.
Motion Carried 5:0:0 by Roll Call Vote.**

MASC Policy Work Update

Dr. Conti updated the committee on the MASC policy work in process. Dr. Conti stated he will meet with Ms. Dorothy Presser, and she will review the list of policies and summarize the review that MASC has gone through and provide a list of the policies that are needed and updates for existing policies. Dr. Conti stated that the goal by the end of this year is to have an updated policy manual that is in a searchable, electronic form that is hosted on the MASC website for Burlington, specifically. After that, all updates and new policies will be available online.

FACILITIES / FINANCE

Finance Update

Ms. Coscia stated that this month looks different as she added another section with discussion of a capital plan. Ms. Coscia noted that

on page 1 and page 2, it shows all the open capital projects showing how much was appropriated originally, the year it was voted by Town Meeting, how much spent and encumbered, the remaining balance and the percentage completed for each project. Ms. Coscia stated the revolving, operating, and accommodated updates are on the following pages. All the revolving accounts are all in good standing and there are no concerns with either operating or accommodated right now.

Discussion ensued relative to the bubbler replacements and installation of filling stations.

Mr. Morin asked for a small write-up of the warrant articles with a zero percent (0%) that were not expended before 2021.

Ms. Coscia will put a list together to share with Mr. Morin by the next meeting on February 28th.

Dr. Conti explained that the revolving account relative to the cafeteria was different during the Covid years opposed to the prior years. Dr. Conti asked Ms. Coscia if it is correct that in a more typical year, we are not supposed to carry more than three (3) months of payroll in that particular line from year to year?

Ms. Coscia answered that it is actually three (3) months of average expenditures.

To be clear, Dr. Conti explained that if we have over that, those funds can only be used for the delivery of food service or for the cafeteria. Thus, we may have to spend money to bring it down. Dr. Conti asked Ms. Coscia what is the timeframe of that given the reimbursements that have occurred, or is the state being more flexible?

Ms. Coscia stated some of the funds are supply chain assistance funds which we are waiting for additional guidance as to when those funds need to be expended. The state took a position that they are not concerned about us having rising food costs and supply chain issues, but we need to address it, so we do not have too much money that we need to spend. Ms. Coscia stated that Whitsons will help us navigate and spend smartly.

Dr. Conti stated the three points he wanted to make is that it looks like we have more money than we do, depending upon what the state decides, and the second point is that we can't carry a huge balance even if its accurate. Dr. Conti noted that we really need to bring it down and use Whitsons to do that, but we can only bring it down by spending it on food needs or cafeteria needs; we cannot use it on anything else. Dr. Conti's third point is that the food service management contract is ensuring there is a surplus at the end of each fiscal year and that surplus is on top of anything that is already existing on the revolving account and there is a lot of uncertainty with how the state is handling those funds right now.

Ms. Monaco suggested to look for needed cafeteria equipment.

Dr. Conti agreed that we need to be well equipped.

Fox Hill School Committee Update

Dr. Conti stated that there was a Fox Hill meeting with the designer and the discussion was on the educational program and the focus on making sure that they have accurate information about the program. Dr. Conti noted the designer team needs accurate information about the program so they can create and maximize the space needed for Fox Hill.

Ms. Cunha stated the designer board panel has been approved by MSBA. There was a Communications Subcommittee meeting about the new website that will be slated for a future release to the public.

Ms. Massardo stated the designer presented to the committee and there are consultants already working on the project; we are full steam ahead with educational programs and feasibility study. The website communication should be ready by next week for the parents and the Town. The next public meeting is March 7th.

BHS Update

Mr. Cunha had no new update, and the next step is to address the warrant article to Town Meeting for a feasibility study.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chair Bond requested a motion to enter Executive Session.

Motion was made by Mr. Foss to enter Executive Session at 8:36 pm; seconded by Mr. Simon.

Ms. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - a, Mr. Foss - aye, Ms. Massardo – aye, Ms. Bond – aye.

Motion Carried 5-0-0 by a Roll Call Vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Simon made a motion to adjourn at 8:51 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Monaco.

Ms. Monaco - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Foss – aye, Ms. Massardo – aye, Mr. Bond - aye.

Motion Carried 5:0:0 by Roll Call Vote.

SUBMITTED

Respectfully,

Marianne Fabbri
Recording Secretary

Date Submitted: 2/28/23
Date Approved: 2/28/23