

MEDFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting
January 12, 2023 - 7:00 pm

PRESENT: Anna Mae O’Shea Brooke - Chair
Timothy Knight - Vice Chair
Jessica Reilly - Recording Secretary
Michelle Kirkby - Financial Secretary
Leo Brehm - Member at Large

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Jeffrey Marsden - Superintendent of Schools
Michael LaFrancesca - Director of Finance and Operations
Andrea Moores - Secretary
Lily Keefe - Student Representative

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm and took a Roll Call:

- Timothy Knight - present
- Jessica Reilly - present
- Anna Mae O’Shea Brooke - present

Ms. Kirby and Mr. Knight joined the meeting after the Roll Call at 7:38 pm.

PUBLIC INPUT

There was none at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Ms. Reilly, seconded by Mr. Knight to approve the Regular Meeting minutes From 11/29/2022, 12/1/2022, 12/6/2022 and 12/8/2022.

The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Ms. Reilly, seconded by Mr. Knight to approve the release of the Executive Session minutes from 8/11/2022.

The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement - presented by Nat Vaughn and Brenda Hagan

Dr. Marsden explained to the Committee that the development of this District Vision Statement is a result of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) work that has taken place across the district over the past few years. Blake Middle School Principal Nat Vaughn and Medfield High School Assistant Principal Brenda Hagan presented the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement (Vision Statement) to the School Committee for its approval. The Vision Statement was created by a working group of 35 teachers and administrators over the summer of 2022 to guide the integration of culturally responsive practices throughout all five schools and Mr. Vaughn reported that the Vision Statement is aligned with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Teaching guidelines and expectations. Once the Vision Statement is approved by the School Committee, it will be rolled out to all of the schools via faculty meetings and scheduled professional development time. Dr. Marsden explained that an affirmation vote from the School Committee would send a positive message to the teachers and administrators who worked on the vision statement, and show support for the ongoing DEI work in the District. Dr. Marsden asked the School Committee vote to support the Culturally Responsive Vision Statement as the District's explicit statement regarding its implementation of Culturally Responsive Practices.

The Committee members shared the following feedback pertaining to the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement:

Ms. O'Shea Brooke asked how this would be rolled out to all schools. Ms. Hagan explained that the first step would be to introduce it to staff at their faculty meetings and establish a plan moving forward.

Mr. Timothy Knight asked if the vision statement could be rolled out to the schools without a vote of approval from the School Committee. Dr. Marsden explained that it could be rolled out but an affirmative vote by the School Committee would send a positive message. Mr. Knight shared his concern that members of the community are just seeing the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement as part of the meeting and would like an opportunity for additional input before voting. In addition, two members of the Committee are not present at this time for the vote.

Ms. Jessica Reilly stated that she was in support of postponing the vote until the other two Committee members joined the meeting in order to allow for the full voice of the Committee to affirm the Statement.. She stated that she wants to make sure that the Committee is not putting themselves in the position of legislating something that is already the ethically and morally correct thing to do She stated that the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement is simply stating that every child, teacher and member of our community deserves to be respected from where they are within their culture.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke agreed with Ms. Reilly and stated that she was happy to take a vote at this time but is also willing to postpone the vote until Mr. Brehm and Ms. Kikby joined the meeting. Ms. O'Shea Brooke stressed the importance of the continuation of DEI work throughout the District and the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement presented gives the framework to do so.

Mr. Knight stated that a delay would create a healthy process to fully understand what would be done differently as a result of the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement. Ms. Reilly stated that it is Dr. Marsden's responsibility to manage the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement and the School Committee's responsibility is to ensure that it aligns with School Committee policy and what is best for students.

Dr. Marsden made the suggestion that the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement could be brought back to the schools and feedback from the schools could be brought back to the Committee on January 26th after the Public Budget Hearing.

Mr. Knight stated that he supports what is in the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement but would be open to hearing additional feedback and input.

Student Representative Lily Keefe was also in support of the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement and thought it was a good idea to have something in writing to be referred to.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke made the decision to table the vote on the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement until later in the meeting so that Mr. Brehm and Ms. Kirkby could be a part of the discussion and potential vote.

Madelyn L. Grant Scholarship - presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden

Dr. Marsden asked the Committee to approve the release of funds from the Madelyn L. Grant Scholarship in the amount of \$3000.00 each for MHS 2022 graduates Rachel Parry and Luisa Brooke.

A motion was made by Ms. Reilly, seconded by Mr. Knight to approve the release of funds from the Madelyn L. Grant Scholarship as presented by Dr. Marsden.

The motion passed unanimously.

Other items since posting on January 10, 2023

There were none at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

FY24 Budget Update - presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden

Dr. Marsden informed the Committee that he and Mr. LaFrancesca will continue to fine tune the budget and it will be ready for the public hearing in two weeks. The goal is to reduce the budget increase from the 5.65% increase that was presented at the December meeting. Dr. Marsden reported that utilities and Special Education costs are the areas that he and Mr. LaFrancesca are working through. There are few factors such as retirement, high school course selection, and future staffing that cause adjustments to the budget. The Annual Budget Hearing Notice will run in the Hometown Weekly on January 12th, 19th, and 26th which meets the required ten day posting requirement.

Ms. Reilly asked if Dr. Marsden had any additional information about the recommendation made by Massachusetts Superintendents to delay or slow a proposed 14% increase in the tuition rate for Chapter 766 Schools, which will significantly impact the Student Services budget Dr. Marsden explained that this most likely would not happen due to the transition to the new administration. Governor Healy's budget is expected later than usual because of this transition. Chapter 70 numbers won't be known until the budget is approved.. Dr. Marsden is hoping that it will be more than \$25.00 per student.

Appeal of Superintendent's Decision on Library Books - Establish Appeal Process - presented by Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke informed the Committee that she had consulted with the District's Attorney, Andy Waugh, for guidance to establish the process for an appeal to the School Committee to overturn the Superintendent decision regarding library books and other curricular material. At issue for this first complaint and appeal in the history of the District are the books *Flamer* and *All Boys Aren't Blue*. Ms. O'Shea Brooke explained the appeal to the Committee would be listed as an agenda item at the February 9th School Committee meeting. She asked the Committee to review the Reconsideration Committee's report and documents available on the website, read the books in question, and view the two School

Committee meetings during which the books were discussed. The Committee will deliberate and vote to affirm or overturn all or part of the Superintendent's decision on the matter at the February 9th meeting.

Mr. Timothy Knight asked if Mr. Waugh found a policy within the Policy Manual in which the basis for an appeal is clearly stated. Ms. O'Shea Brooke explained that it was stated in Policy IIAE under "ideology" and after that section in the policy it states the Committee will use adopted procedures. Ms. O'Shea Brok explained that a process had been created and followed up to this point, and that the final step outlined is an appeal to the Committee to rescind the decision made by the Superintendent, which was based upon the recommendation of the Reconsideration Committee. why Ms. O'Shea Brooke sought counsel from the school attorney to understand any legal or policy implications the Committee would need to take into account during their deliberation that might not be immediately evident.

Mr. Knight asked what would happen if the Committee decided to overturn the Superintendent's decision. Ms. O'Shea Brooke explained that any action that needed to be taken to implement the appeal to overturn, in whole or in part, would be part of the Committee's deliberation at the February meeting.

Ms. Kirky and Ms. Brehm joined the meeting at this time. Ms. O'Shea Brooke brought them both up to speed on the Appeal of the superintendent's decision on the library books in question.

Ms. Reilly asked Ms. O'Shea Brooke if the Committee was affirming that Dr. Marsden went through the correct procedure or would the the Committee vote to overturn because it believed that Dr. Marsden did not make the right choice for the students in our district. Ms. Reilly wanted to make sure that the Committee has a clear understanding of what they are voting on, given that those who made the original recommendation to continue access to the books had significantly more professional credentials and experience in a range of pedagogy and child development and social emotional support and learning. She asked the Committee for their feedback on this, given that in all other practices the Committee understands and is legally held to not evaluating or interfering with the professionals who report to Dr. Marsden.

Mr. Brehm wanted to clarify the interpretation of the policy, the role of the Committee and if Ms. Reilly is asking whether the Committee is voting a flawed process or flawed outcome.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke reiterated that the Committee is either affirming or not affirming Dr. Marsden's decision.

New Elementary School Project - Update - presented by Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke and Dr. Jeffrey Marsden

Dr. Marsden and Ms. O'Shea Brooke informed the Committee that the new Elementary School Building Committee is working toward having its first meeting in January.

Community Engagement and Communication - Update - presented by Ms. Michelle Kirkby and Mr. Timothy Knight

Ms. Kirkby informed the Committee that the next informal School Committee conversation will be held virtually on January 18th with Mr. Knight and Mr. Brehm attending. The meeting information and Zoom

link will be posted on the Medfield Patch and the Committee's social media platforms. Ms. Kirby informed the Committee that there has been increased engagement on the School Committee social media posts. Ms. Reilly gave a quick recap of the first School Committee information conversation that took place in December.

Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement - presented by Nat Vaughn and Brenda Hagan (Agenda Out of Order - Agenda Item Revisited)

Nat Vaughn and Brenda Hagan presented the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement again to the School Committee in order to include Mr. Brehm and Ms. Kirkby who were not present at the when the agenda item was first discussed.

Ms. Kirkby asked how the vision statement would be implemented at the schools. Mr. Vaughn explained that once the vision statement is approved by the School Committee it will be rolled out to each building via faculty meetings and scheduled professional development time. It will also be shared with the DEI Task Force, School Site Councils, and elements will also be reflected in the next Strategic Plan. The Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement will serve as a compass and checkpoint tool for the District to come back to.

Dr. Marsden stated that the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement clearly outlines the District's expectations in the classrooms and all of our schools.

Mr. Timothy Knight shared his concerns that the teaching and leading language was not included in the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement but that language is part of the language used by DESE. He made the suggestion to refine that bullet point and bring it back to the Committee.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke opened the meeting to public comment on this agenda item:

Chris McCue Potts, 7 Curve Street, stated that she agrees with the confusion on the vision statement whether it is an internal document for staff and learning or is it for the community at large. She stated that it was an excellent document and there is nothing in the document that she personally disagrees with and it reflects who the District should be. She expressed concern with a statement made that the vision statement aligns our policies. She stated our policies do not align with the vision statement because the policies are missing language that reflected in the vision statement. She stated that immigration status, gender identity are missing from certain policies. She stated that the vision statement is a wonderful document that should be adopted but the School Committee has work to do to ensure that their policies align with the vision statement.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke agreed that the policies do need to be updated and that work is continuing.

Mr. Brehm shared his concern that having a Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement separate from a Mission Statement is confusing and why couldn't the two be merged in some way, and questioned whether it was an external or internal document. Mr. Brehm stated that he agrees with items listed in the vision statement and if voting on it allows the District to move forward then the Committee should vote.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke stated that having this written document provides clarity and direction for the work to continue to move forward.

Mr. Knight expressed his wish that the vision statement include the teaching and learning in the title.

Dr. Marsden explained that this is an internal document that guides the faculty and staff for their continued DEI work throughout the District.

Mr. Brehm stated that if the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement does not replace the District Mission Statement and in fact are two different documents he recommends voting to support the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement so the work can continue in the District.

Mr. Vaughn explained that DESE put out the guidelines in addition to the Educator Rubric because it is important to have both of these things and the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement really clarifies the work.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke stated that she is comfortable with bringing this to a vote because of the due diligence that was done to create the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement.

A motion was made by Ms. Reilly, seconded by Ms. Kirby to approve the Culturally Responsive Practices Vision Statement as presented by Mr. Vaughn and Ms. Hagan.

There were 4 yes votes and 1 abstention and the motion passed.

Mr. Knight explained that his abstention was due to the fact that statement did not include "teaching and leading" language and he agrees with what is included in the statement.

Medfield School Committee Policy - 2nd Reading - Discussion - Vote Postponed - Draft Proposed BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings /Draft Proposed BEDH - E - Guidelines for Public Comment - presented by Mr. Timothy Knight

Mr. Knight presented the policies BEDH and BEDH-E for a second reading, explained the reasons behind updating these policies, and the revision made to policy BEDH since the first reading of the policy. He stated the current policy is confusing, inefficient, and can easily cause a policy violation. Specifically limiting the initial public comment to items not on the agenda and then reopening the meeting to public comment after each agenda item causes confusion. It is also cumbersome for a chair to manage throughout a meeting which puts the School Committee at risk for a policy violation. The proposed policies address these concerns but it did not address the importance of public comment after a School Committee discussion prior to a vote. The revised policy shared the following language to address this issue:

- For agenda topics that require a vote individuals may request to open up public comment after discussion and prior to the vote to address any discussion items which may have occurred amongst the School Committee should this occur. All guidelines for public comment will be maintained.

Ms. Reilly shared her concerns regarding instituting a policy that mandates that the Chair potentially must cede the order and efficient conduct of a business meeting when a member of the public determines they would like to speak. Ms. Reilly stated that the Chair always has the right to open the issue to comment before a vote.

Mr. Knight explained that he did contemplate having the Chair be responsible for deciding when to open public comment during a meeting but then if a chair chooses not to, it limits the public's opportunity to give public input.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke stated she liked the revised policy because it gives the public the opportunity to speak and the School Committee wants to listen to the public. The language clears the misconception that the Committee does not want to hear from the community.

Ms. Kirkby is in support of the new policies because they are more equitable to the entire community and requested that the Committee approve the new policies as soon as possible so that more members of the community engage in the meetings.

Ms. Jessica Reilly expressed her concerns with allowing members of the public to be recognized from the floor throughout the meeting and the impact it could have on the meeting. She suggested using the anticipated vote on the agenda item to indicate when public comment would be allowed prior to a vote.

There were no changes to Policy BEDH- E.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke opened the meeting to public comment on this agenda item:

Chris McCue Potts, 7 Curve Street, informed the Committee that she sent them an email prior to the meeting about this topic. She said that if the Committee will be using the Massachusetts Association of School Committees as an advisor on this project and paying them to manage the project it is important that Policy BEDH-E Guidelines for Public Comment does actually reflect the guidelines. She stated that these are School Committee meetings and it is up to the Committee to determine the agenda and who is responsible for that decision. She also made the statement that there are a lot of people in the Community who are really perplexed as to why these particular policies are rising above all of the other policies that in a lot of ways are more important and made reference to the recent changes made to the student suspension policies.

Donations - presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden

Dr. Marsden asked the School Committee to approve the following donations:

- \$2313.53 from Grynn & Barrett to the Medfield High School Student Activity Account
- \$1000.00 from Thornburg Investment on behalf of Robert Joseph Costello IV to the Memorial Gift Account
- \$378.89 from the Blake PTO to the Blake Gift Account for the Middle Ages Project
- \$825.00 from the Blake PTO to the Blake Gift Account for the Fun with Science

A motion was made by Ms. Kirkby, seconded by Ms. Reilly to approve the donations as presented by Dr. Marsden.

The motion passed unanimously.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Mr. Brehm reported that the Dale Street band concert was great and very enjoyable.

Student Representative Lily Keefe informed the Committee that Student Council will be running their Wooden Heart Fundraiser for this coming Valentines Day. All proceeds will be donated to Dana Farber.

Ms. Reilly reminded the Committee that the Wooden Heart Fundraiser for the Dana Farber Cancer Center began over 10 years ago as a way for the the Augustini family to honor their mother Jody, who was successfully treated at Dana Farber Cancer Center for many years before she died of complications of the disease.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- FY24 Budget Public Hearing (January 26, 2023)
- PreK-12 ELA Evaluation (January 26, 2023)
- MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Results (February 9, 2023)

Next Meeting – January 26, 2023

A motion was made by Mr. Knight, seconded by Ms. Kirkby to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 pm.

EXHIBITS AND DOCUMENTS

- 1/12/2023 Meeting Narrative
- DRAFT 11/29/2022 School Committee Meeting Minutes
- DRAFT 12/1/2022 School Committee Meeting Minutes
- DRAFT 12/6/2022 School Committee Meeting Minutes
- DRAFT 12/8/2022 School Committee Meeting Minutes
- Culturally Responsive Vision Statement - Final Draft (November, 2022)
- DRAFT BEDH - Public Comment at School Committee Meetings Revision and 2nd Reading 1/12/2023
- DRAFT BEDH-E - Guidelines for Public Comment - 2nd Reading 1/12/23
- Donations 1/12/2023
- School Committee Meeting Video: [📺 School Committee Meeting \(01-12-2023\)](#)

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Moores
Secretary

Minutes Approved by School Committee: January 27, 2023