

MEDFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting
February 13, 2023 - 7:00 pm
Medfield High School Library Media Center

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 opened the FY24 Public Hearing at 7:03 pm with a Roll Call:

- Timothy Knight - present
- Jessica Reilly - present
- Michelle Kirkby - present
- Leo Brehm - present
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke - present

PUBLIC INPUT

Colleen Tierney, 14 Hatters Hill Road, read a statement to the Committee that explained the reason for her appeal to the Superintendent's decision on the library books. She expressed her belief that parents' voices are being silenced and going through the reconsideration process confirmed for her that parents are being ignored. She stated that the reconsideration process lacked transparency. She asked the Committee to compromise by having the books in the library but requiring parental consent for students to take them out of the library.

Nancer Ballard, 139 Pine Street, read a statement about the School Committee's appeal process. She shared her concern that the Committee would be substituting its subjective cultural judgments for the decision-making of the school administration. She stated her belief that asserting broad authority over the administration's decision on content presents several dangers which could be avoided if the Committee review its motion and amend it to state that it will overrule the administration's decision only if it finds the administration has abused its discretion in determining that a book should be available to students. She stated that the addition of an abusive discretion standard pays respect to the professional expertise and ongoing daily direct experiences that our schools faculty and administrators have with children, and young adults

with school curricula. She explained that this standard is used across the country by appeal boards and courts that review factual determinations made by a lower fact-finding body that has firsthand knowledge of evidence and circumstances. She requested that the Committee's review of content challenges be modified to include an abusive discretion.

Laura Zembron, 151 North Street, via zoom shared her comments about the library book's decision and appeal. She read quotes from Medfield High School students who spoke at the October 13, 2022, School Committee Meeting. She stated that it was important for the Community to listen to what these students said. The quotes read highlighted the importance and necessity of having books with LGBTQ+ representation in our school libraries. She thanked the students for sharing their perspectives and experiences.

Chris Potts, 7 Curve Street, requested the MetroWest Adolescent Health (MWAHS) Survey results be released earlier in the school year especially since social-emotional learning is a priority in the district. She shared that she received feedback from the MetroWest Adolescent Foundation that most districts do their presentations in the fall. She stressed the importance of releasing the results of the MWAHS results along with the MCAS results together as early in the school year as possible so the District has a baseline for addressing social and emotional issues.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Ms. Reilly, seconded by Mr. Knight to approve the Regular Session Minutes from 1/26/2023.

The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Medfield High School Student Advisory - Update - presented by Student Representatives

The following Medfield High School students were in attendance and updated the School Committee on the activities for each grade level:

- Tess Baacke Class of 2026
- Sophie Shield Class of 2025
- Catherine Bannister Class of 2024
- Gaby Curl Class of 2023

MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Results - presented by Russ Becker and Mary Fitzgerald

Russel Becker and Mary Fitzgerald presented the results of the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health (MWAHS) Survey for Blake Middle School and Medfield High School. The presentation covered the following topics:

- Survey Background
- Survey Topics

- Substance Abuse
- Violence and Bullying
- Unintentional Injury
- Mental Health
- Sexual Behaviors (High School Only)
- Physical Activity and Weight
- Protective Factors
- Risk Behaviors on School Property
- General Health and Online Behaviors
- COVID-10 and Community Experiences
- Specific Socio-demographics and Other Student Characteristics
- Past Substance Misuse Initiatives - Medfield Outreach
- Upcoming and Ongoing Mental Health Initiatives - Medfiel Outreach
- Continued Areas of Need

The Committee shared the following feedback and/or questions on the presentation:

Ms. O'Shea Brooke asked if the MWAHS data on mental health matches what is being seen at the schools. Russell Becker stated that in his experience the number of students who he has gotten to know clinically has significantly increased and as well as the severity of issues being reported.

Ms. Reilly questioned how the survey addresses gender identity vs. sex with survey questions and results. Mary Fitzgerald explained that non-binary and transgender students' data is reflected in another graph. The EDC is working to have more representation and inclusivity moving forward.

Ms. Reilly questioned the low number of boys who are reporting anxiety. Russ Becker explained that symptoms of generalized anxiety are well-defined in the questions. He also stated that generalized anxiety is disproportionately affecting girls in our schools and the data supports it.

Mr. Brehm wanted to know how the data compares to other districts regarding generalized anxiety disproportionately affecting girls. Russell Becker stated that this disparity is pretty common both in MetroWest and across the United States.

Ms. Reilly inquired about adding more expansive questions about sexual activity to fully understand our students' sexual behavior including questions about access and use of pornography.

Mr. Timothy Knight asked how this data would be released to the Community. Ms. O'Shea Brooke stated that hosting a community event to share the information would be beneficial. Ms. O'Shea Brooke stated that Medfield Outreach, Medfield Cares About Prevention, and the Medfield Coalition for Suicide Prevention are looking for people to become involved in their organizations.

Mr. Brehm wanted to know what the collective next steps were to address the issues presented with the Community. Russ Becker explained that the survey results are the jumping-off point for initiatives and guide decision-making across the District.

Mr. Knight stated the MWAHS along with the data from the Panorama surveys will provide opportunities to drive more engagement with students and parents in the District. He recommended holding a Community Forum in the spring.

Mr. Brehm stated that this is more of a community-wide initiative and it would be a good idea to dedicate a specific night to share this information with the school community.

Dr. Marsden stated there have been many conversations about alcohol use with different community organizations and speakers. He explained there is a "work hard play hard" culture that exists in the Town and significant changes won't be seen until there is a shift in that culture. He also stressed the importance of getting the message out to parents of the elementary students in the District.

Appeal of Superintendent's Decision on Library Books - presented by Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke - Potential Vote

Ms. O'Shea Brooke explained to the Committee that their vote will decide whether or not to uphold the Superintendent's decision to keep the books *Flamer* and *All Boys Aren't Blue* in circulation at the Medfield High School Library.

Dr. Marsden gave the Committee a quick overview of the reconsideration process to date. All of the information on the reconsideration process for the books in question can be found on the Instruction and Innovation webpage page on the District website. (www.medfield.net)

Ms. O'Shea Brooke explained the criteria each School Committee member was tasked to review before this meeting. She asked the Committee to provide their feedback.

Mr. Leo Brehm made his statements in support of the Superintendent's decision on the library books.

Ms. Michelle Kirky made her statements in support of the Superintendent's decision on the library books. She also read excerpts from a letter from the ACLU and GLAD to School Superintendents on Equality, Free Speech, and Democracy-related Implications of Calls to Remove School Library Books.

Ms. Jessica Reilly made her statements in support of the Superintendent's decision on the library books.

Mr. Leo Brehm made his statements in support of the Superintendent's decision on the library books.

Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke made her statements in support of the Superintendent's decision on the library books.

The Chair opened the meeting to public comment on the appeal of the Superintendent's decision on library books:

Cailin Caskey, 15 Delaware Road, acknowledged that the schools do a great job to provide an ample amount of books for LGBTQ+ students. She explained that she searched the catalog using the term gay there were 107 books available for students. In addition, there are 57 books available under the heading Bullying, under gay teenagers there are 21 books, under lesbian there are 21 books, under transgender there are 47 books, under heaven there are 18 books, under sexually transmitted diseases there are 5 books and 1 book under abstinence. *Flamer* and *All Boys Aren't Blue* are just two of the over 100 books available. These two books were in question because they were promoted as being two of the most banned books and for their explicit and mature sexual content. She added that after listening to the MWAHA results books on substance abuse should be added to the library.

A motion was made seconded by Ms. Michelle Kirkby, seconded by Mr. Leo Brehm to affirm the Superintendent's decision to uphold the recommendation made by the Reconsideration Committee to keep the books *Flamer* and *All Boys Aren't Blue* in the High School Library.

A Roll Call Vote was taken on the motion:

- Timothy Knight - yes
- Jessica Reilly - yes
- Michelle Kirkby - yes
- Leo Brehm - yes
- Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke - yes

The motion passed unanimously.

School Building Committee Bylaw Potential Amendment - Discussion - presented by Michelle Kirkby.

Ms. Kirkby shared her concern that the perception of the current School Building Committee (SBC). The Bylaw states members serving on the SBC must be current members of the Committee they are representing. Ms Kirkby is was concerned on the impact to SBC when a current member is no longer serving on the Committee they originally represented and once a member is no longer on a Committee member it leaves the SBC open to revolving membership. Ms. Kirkby's initial recommendation was to amend the SBC bylaw but after a discussion and review of the bylaw with Selectboard Member Gus Murby which stated the appointing authority who initially selected such member will be responsible for selecting a member for the balance of the school project. The Bylaw doesn't state that the appointment has to be a current member. Based on this information, Ms. Kirkby recommended keeping Ms. Jessica Reilly on the SBC through the end of the school year if the Town Council agrees with the interpretation of the bylaw. Ms. Reilly would consider continuing on the SBC through the end of the fiscal year as long as there was a solid transition plan in place. Ms. O'Shea Brooke will reach out to Town Counsel and report back to the Committee.

Other items since posting on February 9, 2023

There was none at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

2023 - 2024 School Year Calendar - 2nd Draft - Vote - presented by Dr. Jeffrey Marsden.

Dr. Marsden asked the Committee to approve the 2023-2024 School Year Calendar as presented.

A motion was made by Ms. Reilly, seconded by Ms. Kirby to approve the 2023-2024 School Year Calendar as presented by Dr. Marsden.

The motion passed unanimously.

FY24 Budget - Update - presented by Mr. Michael LaFrancesca, Ms. Michelle Kirkby, and Dr. Jeffrey Marsden

Dr. Marsden explained the Warrant Committee has asked for the following list of items which have been provided:

- Payroll Summary Schedule: 2020 Actual - 2022 Actual compared to 2023 Budget and 2024 Request
- FTE Summary Schedule: 2020 Actual- 2022 Actual compared to 2023 Budget and 2024 Request
- ESSER III: Reviewed actual expenses as of 2/7 and projected until the end of the year. Talked about the FY24 carryover.

- Non-Payroll Expenses - Major line items Schedule: FY2020-FY2024 Actual vs Budget by Special Ed. Expenses, Transportation Expenses, Operational Expenses, Classroom Expenses, IT Expenses
- Payroll Audit: Ed Vozella did an audit of our payroll by selecting teachers at random comparing them on the teacher's scale to what they earned last year and tied it back to our master payroll spreadsheet. All of the selections are tied back to our master sheet.
- Revolving Account Schedule: Actual vs Budget from FY18-FY24

Dr. Marsden expects to have another meeting with the Warrant Committee at the beginning of March. He explained he hasn't received the final number from the Town as of yet.

Ms. Kirkby thanked Ms. O'Shea Brooke and Dr. Marsden for a successful contract negotiation in light of what is happening with other districts across the Commonwealth. She also reiterated that many of the FTE payroll increases are a result of positions that were previously funded by the ESSER III Grant and are now in the operating budget. These positions support the mental health services that are needed as a result of the pandemic.

School Building Committee - Update - presented by Dr. Marsden, Ms. Anna Mae O'Shea Brooke, Ms. Michelle Kirkby, and Ms. Jessica Reilly.

Ms. Kirkby shared that the first SBC meeting was successful and a good kickoff for the project. She explained that as the liaison to the School Committee, she wants to make sure to cover all the bases. The SBC also discussed the importance of trusted communication and whether or not to use a third party for communication. Ms. Reilly added that neutral trusted data collection is also important.

Dr. Marsden shared that a set of facts for the project will be established.

Ms. O'Shea Brooke stated there is baseline information needed from the School Committee.

Dr. Marsden stated that the most pressing issue right now is whether or not to submit another SOI at the beginning of April.

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

Ms. Kirkby stated that the budget mailer will be mailed out in April. Dr. Marsden agreed. Ms. Kirkby informed the Committee that their social platforms has increased by 40 who are now following and increased engagement continues on the Friday social media posts. The virtual informal School Committee conversation was successful and Ms. Kirkby recommended scheduling another one.

Ms. O’Shea Brooke stressed the importance of continuing the informal conversation with the School Committee in a virtual format to be most inclusive. She also stated that it is important to start getting the word out about the upcoming strategic plan forums to be held in spring.

Solar Panels - Update - presented by the Town of Medfield Energy Committee Representatives

Byron Woodward from Solect Energy and Penelope Conner from the Medfield Energy Committee were present and provided the Committee with an update on the progress of solar panels in the District. The presentation covered the following topics:

- Solar Panel Canopies at Medfield High School, Blake Middle School, and the Memorial School
- Project Development and next steps
- Preliminary Public Relations Timeline

Ms. Jessica Reilly shared that the Open Space and Recreation Committee had some concerns about access to handicapped parking and wants to make sure those spaces aren’t impacted. Mr. Woodward explained that would be taken into consideration during the engineering and installation of the project.

Dr. Marsden inquired if all the projects run concurrently or one project at a time. Penelope Connor explained that the work is ideally done in the summer to minimize disruptions to traffic at the schools. She explained that these projects have a timeframe of 18 months plus a 6-month extension.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

There were none at this time.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- **Strategic Plan**
- **Policy Updates**
- **Blake Middle School - Washington DC Trip Approval**
- **School Committee Member Transitions**
- **Potential Bus Fees**

Next Meeting – March 9, 2023

A motion was made by Mr. Leo Brehm, seconded by Ms. Michelle Kirkby to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 pm.

EXHIBITS AND DOCUMENTS

- 2/13/2023 Meeting Narrative
- DRAFT 1/26/2023 School Committee Meeting Minutes
- 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey Presentation 2/13/2023
- ACLU & LGBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders Letter to Superintendents School Committees - 1/23/2023
- DRAFT 2023-2024 District Calendar 2/13/2023
- PPA Proposal Power Options Medfield Public Schools

Respectfully Submitted,
Andrea Moores
Secretary

Minutes Approved by School Committee on March 9, 2023