

**Andover School Committee**  
**Minutes of Thursday, November 19, 2020**  
**Virtual Meeting**

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**Participants from the School Committee:** Shannon Scully, Susan McCready, Tracey Spruce, Paul Murphy, and Lauren Conoscenti.

**Also participating:** Superintendent Shelley Berman, Assistant Superintendents Sandra Trach and Sara Stetson, COO Stephen Nembirkow, Director of Communications Nicole Kieser, Director of Innovation Stephen Chinosi.

**I. Regular Meeting**

**Call to Order/Moment of Silence**

Chairperson Scully called to order the Andover School Committee Meeting at 5:30 PM and the Committee immediately voted to meet into Executive Session. The Regular School Committee Meeting will be broadcast by Andover TV and on Comcast Channel 99, Verizon Channel 43 or streamed: [www.andovertv.org](http://www.andovertv.org). Public Participation via email: [scremote@andoverma.us](mailto:scremote@andoverma.us)

**II. Executive Session:**

Tracey Spruce moved to meet in executive session pursuant G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a) for the following purposes: Purpose (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining, specifically to deliberate regarding a response to the Level Three Grievances filed by the AEA Unit A regarding denied payment for alleged services on August 31, 2020; and to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with unionized personnel, namely AEA Unit A, AEA Secretaries and Andover Assistants because an open session may have a detrimental effect on the litigating and bargaining position of the Committee. The Committee will reconvene in regular session at approximately 7PM. The motion was seconded by S. McCready. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**III. Regular Meeting resumed at 7:00 PM**

Shannon Scully called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM The meeting began with a Moment of Silence.

**A. Recognitions/Communications**

Last week, Dr. Berman received the Mary Utne O'Brien Award from CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional learning organization, to celebrate a lifetime achievement of strong leadership in the field of social emotional learning. Dr. Berman also received a financial award which he donated to the Andover Coalition for education (ACE). Over his 28 year career in as a superintendent, Dr. Berman has implemented SEL programs in each of the four districts he has led. The Committee congratulated Dr. Berman on this distinguished award.

AHS Science Teacher Lindsey L'Ecuyer and her students in the AHS BioBilders Club met their deadline, despite Covid-19 school closures, to submit their research articles to the International Synthetic Biology Journal, *Bio-treks*. The student's articles were

published this fall and featured in today's *Andover Townsman*. Congratulations!

Dr. Berman acknowledged everyone at AHS on a successful Virtual Open House that went extremely well. Congratulations to Principal Caitlin Brown and to Director of Innovation Steve Chinosi and his team. The National Honor Society event went off well and Brian Shea will post the video on the APS Website of the 138 inductees who each had seven seconds to speak

The Committee also acknowledged Caitlin Brown, Scott Darlington, and Steve Chinosi and his team who worked to ensure the open house went off seamlessly. They also recognized Brian Shea and the AHS students who participated in the National Merit Society Induction Ceremony.

The virtual West Elementary Sustainability Charette was attended by 51 people which included staff from PMA and Andover residents. The attendees divided into four groups and the meeting confirmed the direction that has been taken by the Building Committee. The meeting was awesome, and the energy in the 'room' was palpable. Zoom made it possible for lots of people to be in attendance and to have lots of voices. SMMA was very receptive to the input on the use of materials and use of out-door spaces.

Paul Murphy announced that the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) will meet remotely on December 10, 2020. The meeting is open to anyone in the Town. They will also be sending out a needs survey providing information on services offered.

Shannon Scully reported on the meeting of the three Chairs (School Committee, Select Board, Finance Committee). The focus of the meeting was on the upcoming Tri-Board Meeting on December 9th and the discussion on long-term liability cost for West Elementary School. Dr. Berman, Shannon, and Steve Nembirkow attended last night's Finance Committee Meeting. The discussion included the FY-21 budget assumptions, updates on Chapter 70 State Aid, and a summary of Out-of-District expenses.

#### **B. Public Input**

Susan McCready reported that two questions have been received by email and will be addressed at the beginning of the Hybrid/Remote discussion

#### **C. Response to Public Input (see below)**

#### **D. Education**

##### **1. Update on Hybrid and Remote Learning**

Dr. Berman has been out at a number of school buildings and has seen firsthand the work being done to improve hybrid and remote learning and the dedication of teachers.

Question from Heather Ferro: asked about Andover High School going remote due to COVID cases.

Response There were three positive cases over a period of a week causing a significant number of faculty needing to be quarantined which then provided a limited ability to operate in a hybrid environment. Teachers taught remotely, rather than having a substitute in a room with a proctor, so they felt it was safest to be cautious. We are on the positive side of the consequences, very few of our faculty have been diagnosed. He

believes they will look at how they will do this in the future by exploring how teachers can maintain their distance with greater safeguards in the classroom.

Response Director of Nursing, Rita Casper said the main reason they closed AHS was due to inadequate staffing which will always be a factor in closing schools. This was a complicated situation because there were a lot of close contacts identified, it was not just in class but in the lunchroom and during athletics; there were multiple points of contact. The in-school transmission cases continue to be monitored very closely. They are looking very carefully at seating plans and what else they can do to reduce the distance between individuals in general, as well as reinforcing mask wearing and staying home if ill.

Question from Alice Palmer: What are efforts to getting our young students back into school in 2021.

Response Dr. Berman said we are ready to go if we have the viability, the vaccine is distributed, and we feel it is safe. As long as DESE requirements makes it impossible to transport all students and have students in classroom it makes it difficult. We are looking at how we can have the youngest grades back in and will continue to study ways we can enhance learning.

Question from Rhonda Muskar-Rosner: Are there any plans to form committees to look into ways to make this work that are safe for both students and teachers? Also, has Andover looked into the possibilities of a weekly testing protocol as a means of preventing asymptomatic positives in school buildings?

Response Rita Casper has talked with Director of Health, Tom Carbone who said trying to do testing on a large scale would be difficult and get the tests to a lab. This would be Antigen testing, which in Andover would still require that individuals also be tested with a PCR. The value of the test is not a complete one. The test is just a snapshot in time.

Question from Sara Walsh: Is there a plan to continue the shutdown for the week after Thanksgiving.

Response The Commissioner said this is a local decision but Dr. Berman is discouraging it. He hopes everyone will be proactive and take precautions.

Question from Frank McCall (Bancroft teacher): Has the School Committee considered any type of action, such as that taken in Littleton to require parents to adhere to the Mass. COVID travel and gathering restrictions over Thanksgiving?

Response Dr. Berman replied that it would be difficult for us to do, due to the size of our enrollment and he is not sure it can be enforced and not feasible. We have sent out the letter from the Commissioner.

Sandy Trach spoke about the process of parents changing their child(rens) education modality option: moving from hybrid to remote and remote to hybrid learning. A blackboard email message will go out to all parents. Information and dates to respond by are posted on the APS website. The deadline to submit requests to change for elementary and high school students is Friday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, the deadline for the middle schools is Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup>. Once the district receives the requests, the Steering Committee will look at a number of certain needs/requirements provided by DESE. Should a change be able to be made, parents will be notified in writing which will also include the start date. Please reach out to building principals if you have questions.

Steve Chinosi reported on the on-going professional development teachers are using to improve their teaching practice and sharing what they have learned with other teachers. Many teachers attend daily drop-in sessions and they are making steady progress.

The On-line Dashboard regarding COVID cases has been updated and is updated daily during the week. Rita Casper said if we have a complicated situation and have to verify situations there may be a delay in getting the information out, but the data to date has been accurate. Parents will only receive a notice if their child has been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed.

Lauren Conoscenti encouraged everyone to fill out the parent survey on remote learning. Dr. Berman said this is our opportunity to learn what is working and what changes are needed. Every survey is read and we learn from the responses.

## 2. AHS International Field Trip to Iceland

AHS faculty members, Seema Gupte and Melanie Cutler, with the support of Principal, Caitlin Brown, would like to provide an opportunity for approximately 12-15 students from the Global Pathways and Environmental Science classes to travel to Iceland through EF Tours. The trip would be an 8-day tour running through April vacation week of 2022.

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the proposed extracurricular trip for Andover High School students to Iceland on April 15-23, 2022 as presented and in accordance with the provision set forth in the Andover School Committee Policy entitled "APS School-sponsored Trip and Student Travel Policy". Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

## E. New Business

### 1. Flu Vaccine Requirements

Rita Casper, explained the State requirement for all children (remote and hybrid) to be vaccinated by December 31<sup>st</sup> and how the District will proceed to collect information from parents. There is an ability to opt-out for medical reasons with a physician's note and by religious exemption with a note of explanation from parent. A letter will go out to parents on Monday. The documentation can be emailed to the school nurse or dropped off the school.

### 2. Custodial Supervisor

This position has been advertised but has not attracted a sufficient candidate pool of candidates due to the fact that the District cannot guarantee the position for more than one year. Steve Nembirkow is proposing to make this a permanent position with a listed salary of \$70,000 - \$80,000. Dr. Berman said that this has been a budget request for many years and is now more critical than ever. We could not fill the position as a temporary position and are bringing this forward as a permanent position to recruit someone for the long term.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Custodial Supervisors Position as a continuing position in the budget as presented. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y,

L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

### Superintendent Search Firm

Human Resource Director, Jessica Porter provided an update on the process of submitting the RFP for the Superintendent search. The proposal was issued with all responses due by December 12<sup>th</sup> and three firms responded to the formal RFP seeking professional services to lead the search for new permanent superintendent. The Selection Committee reviewed the proposal and two firms, Ray and Associates from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and McPherson & Jacobson LLC from Omaha, Nebraska were chosen and interviewed today. It is the desire of the Review Panel to recommend one of these two firms and bring a recommendation to the School Committee for consideration. Shannon Scully said the School Committee will meet on Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> to vote on the decision.

## **F. Continuing Business**

### 1. FY22 Budget Development Assumptions and Guidelines

Steve Nembirkow and the Superintendent reviewed and provided the Committee with a draft of the FY-22 Budget Development Assumptions and Guidelines at the last School Committee Meeting. The revised document is available in the Dropbox.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the FY-22 Revised Budget Development Assumptions and Guidelines as presented. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

### 2. FY22 Enrollment Projections

The Superintendent reported on the enrollment projections for the 2021-2022 school year. It was more complicated this time due to so many students moving to home school learning, private schools, or defaulting to full-day childcare for kindergarten age students. It is uncertain if students who enrolled in a private school will be returning to APS. The enrollment projection shows some increase but not a significant one. He expects there to be some increase at the elementary level, a slight increase at the middle school level, and a slight decrease at AHS.

Dr. Berman is recommending that we maintain our staff at the same level because he believes that the measure of academic progress will show slight setbacks in both math and reading and smaller class sizes will be needed to address individual needs to bring students back up to the appropriate level. We don't know what the COVID situation will be going forward and if there is a resurgence next year that may cause us to return to remote or hybrid learning. Although we have a decrease in student population from 2019, it is dispersed across the district and will give us the ability to address needs we will confront in 2022.

### 3. Public and Community Input

The Town is in the midst of testing the "lobby" function of WebEx and there may be an ability to move those who would like to make a public comment during remote meetings to/from the lobby for that purpose. Shannon Scully said this is a conversation for the

Committee to have about how we could potentially expand our ability for the public to make 'live' comments rather than through email but through Web-X called the Lobby. There may be some merit doing what we normally do, taking comment on a topic as it is being discussed. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of this option, how manageable it will be, and ideas for improvement. The School Committee will target use of this option for their December 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Informal forums: Discussion on continuing in a virtual environment. Lauren Conoscenti would like to see the informal forum offered virtually and to think about what software product would be best for this. The Committee agrees to continue offering Informal Forums virtually.

#### 4. October Financials

The Superintendent reported that the October financials are significantly different than the September financials. There were some specific things that happened; legal fees from hearings and additional grievances so they have increased anticipated legal expenses. Special Ed Transportation Out-of-District costs has increased by \$90,000. In the last budget, we projected the Circuit Breaker would come in at 75%, we now know that the House bill is actually a 70% reimbursement for FY-21 and the reduction is \$243,000. The fourth major area of change is the position for Custodial Supervisor. We have assessed custodial overtime in a different way which may come in at \$37,000. Steve Nembirkow said utilities will be more expensive this year because we are running the HVAC units before kids get to school and after school. We expect to see a 15% increase. The 210 account for medical/sick leave includes salaries for two people. This is a helpful look at how COVID has changed our expenses.

#### **G. Consent Agenda**

Grants/Donations to District: As provided on Grant Listing.

School Committee Meeting Minutes: October 15, 2020 and October 20, 2020

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Lauren Conoscenti.

Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y.

Motion passes 5-0.

#### **H. Adjournment**

At 9:02 P.M. Lauren Conoscenti moved to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of November 19, 2020. Paul Murphy seconded the motion. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y,

P. Murphy-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Respectfully submitted

*Dee DeLorenzo*

Dee DeLorenzo

Recording Secretary