

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Thursday, December 17, 2020
Virtual Meeting

Participants from the School Committee: Chairperson Shannon Scully, Vice-Chair 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, and 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 6:00 PM and the Committee immediately voted to meet in 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. Public Participation via email: scremote@andoverma.us

II. Executive Session:

Susan McCready moved to meet in executive session pursuant G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a) for the following purposes; to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with unionized personnel, namely AEA Unit A, and Andover Assistants and Occupational and Physical Therapists 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 7:00 P.M. 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.

III. Regular Meeting resumed at 7:00 P.M.

The meeting began with a Moment of Silence.

IV. A. Recognitions/Communications

1. Recognition of Dr. Berman's tenure as Superintendent

This is Dr. Berman's last School Committee meeting before he retires. Susan McCready recognized his notable accomplishments over the past five years, including the new school administration hires that made for an effective district leadership team, as well as new programs and initiatives implemented. He also partnered with the Committee to be much more effective in how they budget, plan, and collaborate for Annual Town Meeting. Susan thanked Shelley for his tenure and commitment to move the District forward and for his contributions to the community.

Former School Committee Chairs, Joel Blumstein, Annie Gilbert, Paula Colby- Clements, Andover School Principals, Tim Corkery, and Carol Green, and Town Manager Andrew Flanagan all wished Dr. Berman well on his retirement and spoke about their relationship and how they collaborated on all areas, not just the budget, that integrated the priorities of the Town/School.

Sandy Trach thanked Shelley for creating the Ethos of Learning in Andover and for his leadership in literacy in that all children can become successful readers and writers. Shelley's commitment in professional learning is at the heart of Andover's passion for learning. Sara Stetson thanked Shelley for supporting our youngest and most vulnerable population throughout the system, and for his understanding and support for literacy for everybody, support for Social Emotional Learning, and standing up for racial justice and for being 'our man in the arena'.

Dr. Berman expressed his thanks to everyone. He recognized the relationships developed and the team of the Andover Staff and School Committee(s) who have supported this collective effort. It is a real privilege and pleasure to have been working in Andover. Andover Public Schools is an extraordinary organization with amazing talented staff committed to the District. Dr. Berman also expressed his gratitude for his Executive Assistant, Alison Phelan, who keeps him and much of the district operating. She has been a key resource to the District stretching across three Superintendents.

2. Additional Recognitions and Communications

Tracey Spruce reported on the informal SC forum that was attended by four participants with topics related to hybrid and remote learning. There was an expressed concern about the frequency of dash-board communications, technology challenges, and going back-forth from remote to hybrid learning.

Susan McCready reported on the recent West EL/Shawsheen Building Project meeting. Architects went through the focus group meetings and discussions. Recommendations will be adjusted to the designs, and after formal decisions are made, they will start the process of sending out the RFQ for a contractor.

B. Public Input

Lauren Anderson, 12 Iron Gate Drive: What realistically is needed to get the kids back to school full-time. What can we as parents do, and you as school administrators do to get the children back into the classroom.

Tara Dunham, 22 Wabanaki Way: (a parent of 2 elementary students and a front-line worker in the mental health area). Tara is seeing a whole new class of anxiety amongst the students, every day she receives two referrals; and others in her field are experiencing the same high rate of anxiety amongst children. Other districts have used innovative ideas to bring the younger learners back into the classroom.

Jennifer Iocco, 2 Hickory Lane and a parent of 3 students: This year, she agrees that safety needs to be at the forefront of everything we do. But, seeing the email detailing why we can't get back to school hit home for her. What can we do to work together to get back to where we should be? We need to come up with a plan together to support the education of the kids. Our motto should be "How can we do it'.

Laura Gouveia, Elm Street: She is part of a group of parents who want students back into the classroom. She described the challenges her child and others are experiencing in the elementary grade level.

Email from Holly Breen. Please keep students home after the holiday break. Staff and students are concerned about COVID.

C. Response to Public Input

Tracey Spruce responded that we would need a lot of extra money, double/triple number of busses and a lot more space in the schools. DESE has to change the rules, we all very acutely understand the mental health challenges facing our kids. Since March, we have not stopped trying to overcome those challenges. The obstacles are real, they are not perceived. Creative ideas don't materialize \$5M out of thin air. We are going to have some troubles to overcome in the near term.

Dr. Berman said a great deal of time was spent this summer working on a plan to see if we could bring back students in the younger grades, and we are still looking at it. He hopes that with the vaccine, it may be possible towards the end of the year to bring more students back. Sandy Trach said the Steering Committee Team meets several times a week to scrutinize space, look at obstacles, and committed to looking at how to bring kids back into school and thinking creatively. She appreciates the comments, but we are also passionate about returning students to school.

D. Interim Superintendent

HR Director Jessica Porter recapped the process of finding an interim superintendent. Kathleen Smith received an offer from another community this week and made the decision to withdraw as a candidate for the interim position.

The Committee provided comment on the process, the candidates who applied, and feedback from the community. There are strengths from both candidates and we are well positioned to move forward. Susan McCready stated that each candidate brought different strengths and that both would serve well in different ways. Paul Murphy is disappointed we will not be having the conversation about Andover's needs and who best to serve those needs. Tracey Spruce felt strongly we would be in good hands either way. During difficult times, there is a lot to be said having someone familiar, and looks forward to the perspective on how Pike School did things. Lauren Conoscenti feels we were presented with two great options, we need to really look to the process of a longer-term superintendent, and seek out what the qualities are that Andover needs. Shannon Scully said this is a six-month position with either candidate being a good choice. We have hired a search firm to help us come up with a profile for the next Superintendent and we look forward to the conversations of what Andover needs from their next Superintendent.

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee appoint Dr. Claudia Bach to serve as the Interim Superintendent of Schools effective January 1, 2021, subject to the School Committee reaching an agreement with Dr. Bach on an employment contract motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

E. Education

1. Update on Hybrid and Remote Learning

A great deal of time has been spent looking at the consequences of increased COVID

cases after Thanksgiving and more once we return from the holiday break. We will be in for the long-term and on how to relieve the contract tracing process for the nurses. After consultations with the School Administrators and the Steering Committee, we have decided that as of Monday, December 21, we will be moving to remote learning for everyone except Cohort C students. We will continue in remote instruction from January 4-8th and reconvene in hybrid sessions on January 11th. It is critical we do not go through some of the experiences we previously had. An announcement will be sent out to the Community tonight. School will be in session Friday, December 18th.

The Commissioner has put forward a change in time for remote and hybrid learning. Hybrid districts (of which Andover is one) requires 35 hours of academic learning over a two-week period and Remote districts requires 40 hours of live instruction over a period of two weeks. Andover has met these expectations. Sandy Trach shared that all districts were required to submit their plan for student learning and Andover was preliminary cleared by DESE for their student learning time hours.

Steve Chinosi reported that on the December 9th professional day, they had 20 workshop sessions with a focus on blended learning, content area focus sessions, and a series of tech tools and techniques sharpening skills on how to navigate the synchronous and asynchronous hybrid remote. He spoke about the increase by parents, students, teachers, and instructional assistants using Schoology vs the use in October. In Google Classroom, the numbers are decreasing because of the increase in using Schoology.

1. **Parent Survey Presentation**

Hannah Tolla presented the results of the November parent survey. The survey was open for one week and 1,442 responses submitted with 78% of APS students enrolled in hybrid learning. Hannah provided a review of the slide presentation showing the hybrid and remote comments.

Hybrid Model: Parents were overall satisfied – My Child’s academic experience is overall rigorous. The concern about emotional had a high frequency of responses.

Next steps: Continue to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and develop a student survey to be sent out in January.

Lauren Conoscenti asked several questions about the response data from the survey and for the student survey. Tracey Spruce said there are things we could be doing better that we would like to know about that we could support.

3. **Update on Flu Shots**

Sandy Trach and Sara Stetson discussed the status of the requirement of the District’s Student flu shots. We are required to ensure by December 31st and, regarded as a local matter, to uphold Policy JLCB and JHD exclusions and exemptions. To follow through with our obligations for Pre-K-Grade 12 students to have flu vaccines, Andover school nurses will review incoming student vaccinations upon return to school in January. Verifying school vaccine records is expected to take several weeks. Students without a vaccine record on file will receive a form letter from the school, if the vaccine record is

not received, then a second letter will be sent, and if vaccine has still not been received, the student will be excluded from school per state law.

F. New Business

1. Agreement with AEA Unit A for paid professional development

Proposals were delivered to the AEA on December 1st that provided an opportunity for those to recoup their loss of pay (due to the August 31st work action) by completing 6.5 hours of defined professional development work by April 2021 to receive an equivalent amount of their per-diem salary. The AEA approved this agreement today.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the December 2020 Letter of Agreement with the Andover Education Association providing paid professional development for some members of Unit A, as presented and to authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the School Committee. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

2. Assistant HR Director Position for Town and School Department

The Committee discussed the proposed Asst. HR Director position which HR Director, Jessica Porter, is advocating for in her Department. The Town Manager said he and Shelley have been aligned in making this position a priority. There is too much for one person to do on their own and although it has financial implications, the earliest they could fill the position is February. As soon as a Generalist Position is listed in the budget, the Town will commit to covering a portion of that cost every year.

There are eight bargaining units on each side, there are some long-term savings by shifting some of the work done by labor counsel to herself or the Assistant HR Director. Jess Porter strongly supports hiring an Assistant HR Director. The SC policy GCA – Professional Staff Positions and agreed, in August of 2018 and noted in the budget book, that if there is a new FTE or change in position, it will come before the SC to review and approve the job description. The position is budget neutral with the Town helping with the increase.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Assistant Human Resource Director position for the Town and School Department as discussed. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

G. Continuing Business

1. FY22 Budget Update

Dr. Berman provided the specifics of the FY-22 Budget which they have spent a great deal of time and in-depth work putting together.

Preliminary FY-2022 Budget:

Personnel:	\$ 75,239,845	
General Expense:	<u>\$ 17,353,607</u>	
Total:	\$92,593,452	3.75% increase

The Town Manager's Recommended Budget: \$92,593,452 3.75% increase.

Dr. Berman is recommending that the current staffing be maintained to help close the learning gap due to the pandemic and to provide stability in our staffing which we have invested a great deal of time and in and, if we have to switch back to hybrid/remote, we will have the staff to do that. A review of the budget included the follow:

Budget updates:

- Addressing the learning gap in math.
- Implementing a new middle school schedule.
- Expanding supports for students with emotional needs.
- Improving operational effectiveness in Human Resources and Finance

Contract settlements/negotiations:

- Legal expenses increase budget by \$145,000
- Maintain Health & Safety measures including ventilation and cleaning measures
- Athletic Program loss of Revenue
- Full Day Kindergarten: How to pay for the cost of staffing to enable us to pay for the move we made to eliminate tuition.
- Special Education Savings in Out-of-District costs

Priorities:

- Human Resources Asst. Director
- Math support: Elementary Math Coaches, interventionist and a Pre-K grade 5 Math Coordinator
- Digital Learning Coach at AHS
- Assistant Accountant for the School Business Office
- Middle School Curriculum Advisor Stipends
- Expand Music Program at Elementary Level
- Webmaster .5
- Guidance Counselor at MS to provide mental health/behavior health support

Expense Items:

- New Student Information System replacing Aspen. A one-time implementation cost.
- Busses to enable later start times.

Shelley's recommendation is to hold a night of hearings in January where there can be some discussion of the priorities from the officials who have put these requests forward. The total budget is a 3.75% increase over last year and in-line with the Town Manager's recommendation.

2. November Financials

Shelley reported that we have a balance of \$320,000 and we are in good shape.

H. Consent Agenda:

Grants/Donations to District: ACE donations in support of District programs
SC Minutes: November 5, and November 19 2020.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y.
Motion passes 5-0.

I. Adjournment

At 10:21 P.M. Lauren Conoscenti moved to adjourn the meeting of Thursday, December 17, 2020. 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary