

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Thursday, March 4, 2021
Virtual Meeting

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

Others participating: Interim Superintendent Dr. Claudia Bach, Assistant Superintendent Sandra Trach, Assistant Superintendent Sara Stetson, Chief Operations Officer Stephen Nembirkow, Director of Innovation Stephen Chinosi, AHS Student Liaison Jeffrey Connors.

I. Regular Meeting

Call to Order/Moment of Silence

Chairperson Scully called to order the meeting at 6:04 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:

Tracey Spruce moved to meet in Executive Session pursuant to G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a), purpose (3) to discuss strategy with respect to litigation with Fusion Academy because an open session may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Committee. The Committee will reconvene in regular session at approximately 7:00 PM. 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

Shannon Scully reconvened the meeting to order at 7:08 PM. The meeting began with a Moment of Silence.

Shannon reported that an item under Education #5 has been added to the agenda which was received yesterday regarding vaccine distribution for educators and staff.

A. Recognitions/Communications

Dr. Bach recognized several of the people who were honored at the Annual Rotary Citizens that Care event last night who are connected to Andover Public Schools, including Lenore Price of the Andover Coalition for Education, AHS Student of the Year, Wilson Stecher, South School Teacher Faith Goldstein and her husband Rabbi Goldstein, former School Committee member Joel Blumstein, and the 2021 Teacher of the Year, Norma Villarreal. Congratulations to everyone!

Claudia signed onto a letter from the Mass Association of School Superintendents to the Governor and our local representatives encouraging them to move our teachers up in the vaccination line. Tomorrow we celebrate Employee Appreciation Day, we are enormously appreciative to all you do.

Sandy Trach also congratulated everyone recognized at the Andover Citizens that Care event. In addition, she recognized our teachers who are running eight professional development courses this spring. Emails were sent to Middle School families alerting them that that the hybrid/remote switch window will close on March 8th; the switch notification is also available on website. The opportunity for elementary families to request a move from Remote Academy to in-person learning for K-1 or a hybrid remote switch for grades 2-5 begins on Monday, March 8th, an email will be sent to all families. Additional emails will also be sent out for K-1 transportation and an email with information on MCAS for all families.

Sara Stetson thanked Andover SEPAC for a lively Q & A session at their meeting last week. She and Christina Ryan are looking forward to having more Q & A sessions. The next meeting on March 11th will include considerations that were put in place for the design of the new West Elementary School.

Steve Chinosi thanked everyone who helped with the Capstone Review of Literature Panels. Rebecca D'Alise and her Capstone Team did an amazing job organizing this panel for the students. Students are moving from their secondary research to their primary research. Lauren, Susan, and Tracey also participated in the Panels. This is a class the students are enjoying, they are loving learning and being able to research things that are meaningful to them.

Jeffrey Connors said the AHS PAC has a letter coming out that includes student fundraisers.

Shannon attended the Chairs meeting this week and provided the following updates: the Triboard Meeting has been rescheduled to Wednesday April 28th at 7:00 PM. The SC's vote for recommendations for the Finance Book is due by Friday, May 7th. Town Meeting will be held on Saturday, June 5th with a ballot box vote for the West Elem the following week.

B. Public Input

Krystal Solimine unable to connect

C. Response to Public Input

D. Education

1. Update on Learning Models (Hybrid/Remote/In-Person)

Dr. Bach reported that starting on March 8th the K-1 model for in-person learning will begin. Teachers, principals and students are very excited. All teachers will be provided with the KN95 masks which they specifically asked for. Next steps for in-school learning of other grades will continue to be discussed.

Sandy Trach said that they are continuing to look carefully at the logistics for K-1 return and possibilities for distancing for the return of the other grades. Parents will receive the MCAS letter soon, it is a fairly complex endeavor to administer this year given the learning models. The notion of changing a learning-model inside the window of testing is logistically not possible. The administrators are looking very closely at all of the pieces of

planning a learning model change that includes a very important factor in continuing with MCAS.

2. **K-1 Survey Update**

Hannah Tolla thanked all of the families who participated in the K-1 survey. It was helpful to have the information to then turn around to the principals and to Cindy Button for transportation planning and for planning for returning students in other grades.

Right now, roughly 20% of elementary students are in the remote-model district-wide (80% hybrid). The response from families interested in moving to in-person learning has increased about 87%. About 118 remote students expressed interest in returning to an in-person model and only a handful of students who are currently hybrid were interested in moving to the remote model.

Susan McCready asked how they will accommodate MCAS for remote academy students? Sandy said that Hannah Tolla, School Principals, and Assistant Principals have been working tirelessly on this. We have the uniqueness of having the Remote Academy students needing to come into the building for the testing. Some of the students are using school owned devices or BYOD devices. Our Digital Learning and IT Team have done an incredible job of working through the logistics and the devices. Dr. Bach said it will be a challenge to have MCAS in April and it may impact the April return to in-person learning.

3. **AHS Handbook: Modification of AP Policy (Scott Darlington)**

AHS Assistant Principal, Scott Darlington, with the approval of Aixa deKelley, Director of Guidance, is asking that the School Committee waive the requirement of taking the AP exams because of the pandemic this school year. This was a proposed change they requested last year as well.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the recommended change to waive the AP Exam requirement at Andover High School for the 2020-2021 School Year. The motion was seconded by Tracey Spruce. Roll call: S. McCready-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

4. **Resolution: MCAS Moratorium**

Sandy Trach explained that the MCAS testing window and the return to school is a tight window and the logistics will be challenging. It is very limiting and we have to work with the days students are here; students must be on-site for testing. We don't have enough district devices for the high school, and would rely on some BYOD and reserve devices for back-up. There is also the issue of device movement due to the window of testing being shortened, necessitating moving and sharing the devices around our nine schools. Many teachers have expressed concern with trying to keep pace with the learning, DESE has not communicated the standards the students will be tested on. Taking the MCAS is statutory, and we will be reaching out to all MCAS students in Grade 3 and up with a letter on how they are supposed to report to school for both hybrid and remote students. There also has been an impact to instructional time.

Lauren Conoscenti moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the resolution to call for the MCAS Moratorium and sending the information to Governor Baker and Commissioner of Education Jeff Riley Paul Murphy seconded the motion. Roll call: S. McCready-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

5. Letter: Local Vaccine Distribution

Susan McCready spoke about the draft letter she has prepared from the Andover School Committee asking Governor Baker and Commissioner Riley to reconsider supplying the vaccine to our local Board of Health so we can continue providing vaccinations to our community locally and more effectively. Susan spoke with Senator Finegold and Representative Tram Nguyen who are both supportive of this.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve a letter requesting they provide a supply of vaccine for our local Board of Health in order to host accessible and convenient Covid vaccine clinics for Andover Educators and Staff as presented and to send the letter to Governor Charlie Baker and DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

E. Continuing Business

1. FY-22 APS Budget Presentation

COO Steve Nembirkow presented an update of the FY-22 budget to the Committee. Our current and approved budget of \$92,593,452 (3.75%) is equal to what the Town Manager recommended. It is a level-service budget with possible room to work within the \$92.5M to fill in some targeted areas for improvements.

- The budget does not include long term subs to cover remote and in-person learning.
- Long-term subs to cover leaves of absence and vacancies are in the budget.
- Vacancies have been carried forward.
- An allowance for negotiated raises.
- An allowance for selected expenses associated with on-going Covid protocols.

The long-term subs to cover remote and in-person learning are not in the FY-22 budget.

Staffing Review: The total number of positions for the Preliminary FY-22 Operating Budget is 954.18 positions, an increase of 9.85 FTE's over FY-21. Most of the additional positions are incremental adds to existing headcount.

Included in the FTE's:

Human Resources (-.31) for Health Trust Funding, which may increase with the possible add of a 1.0 FTE as HR Generalist.

Two elementary secretarial positions increased to a 1.0 FTE from .77 each.

Teaching: Full-Day Kindergarten Instructional Assistants increase of 5.7 FTE's to the operating budget due to full-day Kindergarten expenses moving from the Revolving Account to the General Fund Account.

Special Education: Addition of a 1.0 FTE for a one-on-one nurse required for a Special Ed student and a .40 BCBA , for special education needs, .10 Special Ed Social Worker to meet the needs of students. The total FTE's also includes the addition of a 1.0 FTE Custodial Supervisor.

The Budget is a level service budget with contingencies for some Covid protocol. The budget does not account for or rely upon State and/or Federal Covid Relief Funds, the Budget allows for the ability to add additional resources within the 3.7%% preliminary budget.

Mr. Nembirkow reviewed the list of Priority One additions totaling \$245,785 that include: HR Generalist (1.0), AHS Guidance (.40), Elementary Math Coaches (1.0), Middle School Curriculum Advisor Stipends (.00), and a .50 AHS Engineering Teacher.

Other additions to consider for a total of \$673,675 include:

1.5 Math Support- Middle School Interventionists

1.0 Math Support K-5 Program Coordinator

3.0 MS Guidance Counselors

3.0 Music Teachers

Nurse Team Leader

1.0 RN for West Elem

0.5 AHS Engineering teacher

We have the ability to pay for the Priority One Additions as well as some other additions.

Math Support

Katherine Richard K-12 Math Program Coordinator along with Robin Wilson and Jason DiCarlo explained the request for math support for the Middle Schools and a K-5 Math program Coordinator to support the program. At the elementary level, they are proposing to increase the current math coaches from a .5 to a 1.0 FTE which would create equity across the elementary schools to have more of their time and a greater impact on students.

Math Coach Interventionist, supporting middle school students who aren't at grade level and kids who have been disengaged to work in small groups to provide additional time on learning.

Middle School Music Teachers

Sean Walsh, K-12 Fine Arts Coordinator, and Sandy Trach explained the request for 3 FTE's for the Music Department. These FTE's would support the programs providing equity to the elementary and middle school music programs. Currently, there are four instrumental teachers who cover nine schools in grades 3-12 and general music. By adding additional teachers, they can offer instrumental music during the school day at elementary. This would create opportunities for more music and other disciplinary programming, and allow for more flexible scheduling and configurations at different levels. Sandy, who is advocating for a change, said this would have a ripple effect across all three levels and opening up scheduling for all three middle schools to provide new configurations for new offerings, not just in music but other subjects. Music teachers would not need to travel across the district.

Middle School Curriculum Advisors

This is an opportunity for each Middle School to have a lead teacher in each of the core academics who would serve as building-based liaisons to the Program Coordinators and facilitate building-based conversations on curriculum, instruction and assessment in conjunction with the Program Coordinators and maintain and lead building-based data.

Engineering

The request for a .5 FTE for Engineering was presented by Steve Chinosi and Caitlin Brown. The Gr. 6-8 Engineering and Design Program at the Middle School level is thriving and what they developed at the Andover High School is waiting on this .5 position to further the sequence of work for Grades 6-12 ensuring that all students have equity and to develop new programs, extended time on learning, and enrichment opportunities.

AHS Guidance: .4 FTE

AHS Principal Caitlin Brown explained that the AHS Guidance Dept. has always been the backbone in support of students and this year they have stepped out and up in many ways to support our students with academic needs, social/emotional issues, family needs, college planning, and personal and social development. In looking at other communities, Caitlin feels that AHS is understaffed with our caseloads at the highest level

Middle School: 3.0 FTE's

About three years ago, the guidance counselor model changed at the middle schools.

Robin Wilson said the model was shifted to having social workers, phasing out our guidance counselors, losing our level of service needed for young adolescents and also to support families. Currently, our social workers are trying to cover all needs and many of our young people are being missed.

Nurse Team Leader and 1.0 Nurse at West Elementary

Rita Casper explained the request for a 1.0 FTE Nurse Team Leader and a 1.0 Nurse at West Elementary. There has been a shortage of nurses and they struggle to find substitutes to cover absences. This year, they had 8 out of 10 buildings uncovered on one or more occasions which is not an ideal or safe situation. Covid has exposed the need for nurses and the role they play in providing both general health care and public health services.

They are barely managing in the hybrid model at West Elementary and, given the number of procedures that have to be done in that building, it is impossible for one nurse to handle. A Nurse Team Leader would be a support for Rita, and the backup for the TOPS Program, training and support. Having someone consistent and part of our staffing is important.

Mental Health

Sara Stetson explained that there has been a significant increase in mental health situations across the District. We have not had a program, but we did have staff who were knowledgeable. They started with the Transition Program and added the At-Risk Program using existing staff. AHS, DMS, High Plain, and Bancroft all have Mental Health Programs that were developed over the past few years by restructuring their staff and consolidating their program managed by Rita Casper and Dr. Ryan Fielding using Grant monies and other creative resources. They would also like to add another psychologist to support these new programs at AHS and at WMS.

1.0 HR Generalist - Jessica Porter

Jess Porter reported that the HR department has had a staff of 6 FTE's going back to 2010. In FY 2020, it dropped to 5 FTE's while simultaneously seeing an increase in personnel. This position helps with risk management, benefit administration, and recruitment for both Town and School. Much of the work performed by labor counsel could be performed by staff. This person would create an exit interview process and work with IT to ensure all equipment is returned and identify any issues. Andover lags behind comparable communities with staff/employee to HR staff ratios.

Dr. Bach hopes everyone realizes how difficult it has been to look at the list knowing we must keep within the 3.75% and to start some of the building blocks and move forward.

The School Committee discussed the budget requests that were presented and will continue the discussion at their next School Committee meetings.

2. Superintendent Search: Screening Sub Committee

Jess Porter, reported that twenty-five people submitted an on-line application to be on the Screening Committee for the new School Superintendent search. The Committee members include: SC members Paul Murphy & Shannon Scully; Steve Sanborn, K-12 Science Program Coordinator; AHS Principal Caitlin Brown; DMS Teacher Ann McNamee; Town Manger Andrew Flanagan; Director of Facilities Janet Nicosia; Asst. Superintendent Sara Stetson; and Community Members Emily DiCesaro and Jayashree Mahandas. They hope to have their first meeting next week and are looking forward to getting the process moving. The applications are in from Ray & Associates.

Susan McCready read the emails from SC Remote.

Krystal Solimine, 2 Surrey Lane, realizes the SC deliberated over this at length at a previous meeting and requested that they reconsider the composition of the Screening Committee because two members from the whole community is not enough, you could trim the number of administrators and add additional teacher representation. The representation does not go far enough in representing the whole community. She would like clearer representation from the Town Charter Section #5, which states that a member of the Select Board, School Committee or Finance Committee can during their term be ineligible to hold another Town Office position. Have you received an opinion if the Committee complies with this Town Charter rule?

Shannon responded that being an established SC Subcommittee of the School Committee that SC members are able to participate in a preliminary screening committee. There are five elected officials on the SC who were elected by the whole community to be representatives of the Community on important matters. She does not agree that the process won't have representation by the whole community.

Susan read the comments from Lindsay Murray, 8 Ellsworth Road, that were emailed in earlier today. Susan said the comments are out of compliance with our policies because they are talking about personnel.. Ms. Murray states there are only two individuals who work in our schools that are on the Committee and that the community members on the

Committee is made up of a particular part of town, if we don't have proper representation from all parts of town we should reconfigure the subcommittee.

Susan McCready replied that the five members of the SC don't represent certain parts of the Town, they represent the entire school district. Tracey Spruce pointed out that members of the School Committee are parents of children from every part of Town and represent a good cross-section of the Community.

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee vote to establish a Preliminary Screening Committee with eleven members to conduct the initial screening process related to the hiring of a new Superintendent and including confidential candidate screening and first round interviews. The motion was seconded by Susan McCready. Roll Call Vote: L. Conoscenti-Y, P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Tracey Spruce moved that the membership of the Initial Screening Committee consist of the following members: Caitlin Brown, Steve Chinosi, Emily DiCesaro, Ann McNamee, Paul Murphy, Jayashree Mahandas, Janet Nicosia, Andrew Flanagan, Steve Sanborn, Shannon Scully, and Sara Stetson. 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.

F. Consent Agenda

1. Grants/Donations to District; Minutes from SC Meetings - None

IV. Adjournment

At 10:27 P.M. Paul Murphy moved to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of March 4, 2021. The motion was seconded by Susan McCready. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary