

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Thursday, June 17, 2021

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

Others participating: Interim Superintendent Claudia Bach, Asst. Superintendent Sandra Trach, and AHS Student Liaison Jeffrey Connors.

I. Regular Meeting

Call to Order/Moment of Silence

Chairperson McCready called to order the 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

II. Executive Session:

Tracey Spruce moved to meet in Executive Session pursuant to G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a), purpose (2) to discuss strategy with respect to bargaining with non-union personnel and purpose (3) to discuss strategy with respect to bargaining with unionized personnel, namely the Andover Education Association (AEA) Unit A, Andover Administrators Association (Unit B), Andover Assistants' Organization, Occupational and Physical Therapists Association, Educational Secretaries Association and SEIU Local 888 (School Custodians) because an open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee. The Committee will reconvene in regular session at approximately 7:00 PM. Motion seconded by Shannon Scully. Roll call: T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

III. Regular Meeting Resumes

The regular meeting resumed at 7:06 PM. The Chair noted that under New Business, agenda Item #4 will not be on the agenda this evening nor will the School Committee Minutes of April 15th under the Consent Agenda. The meeting began with a Moment of Silence followed by a Salute to the Flag.

A. Recognitions & Communications

Dr. Bach congratulated the AHS Seniors on their graduation and to all the other students who are moving up. Congratulations and thank you to every single person at all of the schools who worked so hard this past year. The West Elementary/Shawsheen Pre-School Building Project was passed on June 15th with a 2/3 vote. DESE held a Zoom meeting yesterday stating that face masks are still obligatory for schools. There will be no masks required in the fall.

Shannon Scully also acknowledged the AHS and APS Team who made the AHS graduation happen and to all the other students who are moving up. Thank you to all who provided support for the West El/Shawsheen School project which passed at the ballot box and also at Town Meeting on Saturday, June 5th. Thank you to all for supporting the school ballot and related CIP articles. Tracey Spruce commented that the High Plain Elementary graduation ceremony was outstanding this year.

Lauren Conoscenti had the pleasure of celebrating with the 5th graders at South Elementary School with the Principal and Asst. Principal pulling off a great celebration despite the rain.

Susan McCready reported that the School Committee will be meeting again this year to address contract negotiations and other items on Friday, June 25th starting with an Executive Session at 8:00 AM followed by Regular Session. She also extended her thanks to everyone for approving the West EL /Shaw Project and recognized Paula Colby-Clements, Chair of the West Elem/Shawsheen Building Project. Thanks also to Jeffrey Connors and others at the AHS student government for their support of the younger students.

The School Bldg. Committee met yesterday to authorize SSMA to do the design and development phase closeout. Gilbane has been authorized as the Manager at Risk and to begin the pre-construction work. Two sets of estimates were completed prior to the ballot with a 3rd set to be done by Gilbane. Focus groups will begin again on next steps and moving toward construction starting in 2022.

Susan also congratulated all of the APS graduates. She attended the Sanborn School graduation ceremony and the WMS graduation ceremony. Susan also acknowledged our out-going School Committee Chair, Shannon Scully who presided over the SC for the past three years.

B. Public Input

Michael Silverman, 64 Tewksbury Street is intrigued about the School Committee being involved in electricity business with regard to the Warrant Articles for Solar panels. He is also supportive of the Instructional Aides who he believes deserve a much higher pay then what they are receiving.

Response to Public Input

Article 17 was to allow for leasing of solar panels to be installed on the School Roofs and Article 18 authorized the roof of the use at Sanborn. Our Facilities Department looks very carefully at our energy consumption and offer improvements whenever allowable. The School Committee has the authority to approve what happens on school property. Regarding the pay for IA's, the Committee feels very comfortable that the proposal offered is fair, provides for a living wage, and increases the starting salaries for IA's over 12%. We fully appreciate our staff.

C. New Business

1. Andover High School: Statement of Interest Submission (SOI) & Vote

Mark Johnson, Chair of the AHS Renovation Committee said the School Committee vote needs to include the minutes of the meeting to send with the SOI. The SOI highlights a number of priorities and identifies problems at AHS. There is no financial cost to the District to resubmit the SOI. There are a considerable number of schools across the State who apply each year, it is highly competitive. The School Committee thanked Mark for continuing to move this process forward. Shannon Scully read and moved to approve the Statement of Interest for AHS as presented. The motion was seconded by Tracey Spruce. Motion passes 4-0.

2. Contract: Interim Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Administration

Jess Porter, HR Director reported on the Memorandum of Agreement for the Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Administration between the School Committee and Paul Szymanski for a one-year period.

Lauren Conoscenti moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the employment contract between the Andover School Committee and Paul P. Szymanski for the position of Interim Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration as presented and to authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the Committee. Motion seconded by Tracey Spruce. Motion passes 4-0.

3. Collective Bargaining Agreements 2020-2021

Jessica Porter reported on the 1-year agreement with the Andover Secretarial Association for a 1% Cola and a flat \$300 payment for each member.

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the one-year employment contract between the Andover School Committee and the Andover Educational Secretaries Association as presented. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Motion passes 4-0.

4. Student Fees: APS Bus Fee, AHS Student Parking, AHS Athletic Fee, Pre-School Tuition

Due to the COVID school year, the district had to adjust the student fee schedule. For the 2021-2022 school year, they are reinstating the student fees back to pre-COVID times.

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee vote to reinstate those fees in effect during the 2019-2020 school year for the APS Pre-School Tuition, APS Bussing, AH Student Parking, and AHS Athletics as presented. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Motion passes 4-0.

D. Continuing Business

1. School start times 2021-2022

Susan McCready thanked everyone who participated in the on-line Google form for school start times and in the meeting held last week. School Start Times has been studied by the SC for the past three years along with a lot of conversation, analysis, and interaction with the community. Shannon Scully went through a review of the process including the status and updates. She began with the background of the examination of this issue which began in August 2018 starting with establishing guiding principles and a goal to make an overall positive impact on student well-being; physical health, mental health, and academic health for adolescents. Much of the information is a duplicate of earlier presentations and responses from surveys. Several surveys were sent out beginning in 2019, community presentations and outreach sessions held throughout 2019 and 2020, Working focus groups formed to look into logistic options, and transportation. The School Committee held meetings and informal forums as well as collecting data from surveys, school-based meetings, emails, transportation analysis, and a report from the start time working group.

Consideration of start times for next year:

Elementary	Start 9:00 AM	End 3:15 PM
Middle School	Start 8:15 AM	End 2:50 PM
AHS	Start 8:15 AM	End 2:51 PM

Lauren Conoscenti provided information on the data received from the June 6-16, 2021 survey, which had a single open ended question: If the start time of 8:15 AM was approved for the MS and AHS and a 9:00 AM start time for elementary schools will it impact you? Is so, show how? 1,673 unique responses were received.

Jeffrey Connors provided information on input from AHS students who found this issue to be very important. AHS student government conducted a survey and received over 200 responses with 70% of the AHS respondents in favor of a start time of 8:15 AM and recommend that the School Committee move forward with this for Fall 2021. Additionally, they believe that because of the 8:15 AM start time this year, the momentum gained will be lost.

Public Input:

Bonnie Zahorik, 172 North Main Street. Speaking from perspective of AHS parent she was pleased to hear that APS was considering an 8:15 AM start time. This proposal is attempting to respond to feedback, science, and experience this past year. There is always an impact. This is a 15-minute change for elementary students. Once we stop focusing on problems and focus on solutions, parents will be happy their children are doing well in school.

Kathleen Quill, 12 Cuba Street. Has been a proponent for later start times at MS/HS for a very long time. Her children benefited from the later start time coming from another district. She was amazed by the difference in her children physically and emotionally with a 30-minute later start time.

Mr. & Mrs. Justin Reyno, 86 Greenwood Road said the voice for the elementary students on the panel is not present. After-school activities for elementary students will be effected, 15-minutes is a safety hazard in the afternoon especially with the B-run. They pointed out that relying on the science, we are not following the science, 9:00 AM is not the science for elementary students.

Other comments:

Nick Stellakis, 4 Cindy Lane: There has been no consideration of the entire picture of all of the students in this District and where the burden is going to fall, which is on the elementary students and working parents which presents a serious problem. Households where both parents work are increasing in number in Andover. Reality is having to have a 2-parent household working who will have to find and pay for before school day-care. This proposal occurred on your May Agenda under New Business, this item has been rushed and expected to be implemented in eleven weeks. You just received the input from your Google survey and 3/4's of the AHS student body did not vote. If you make this decision today, you will not be making it on the best efforts.

Sephany Stellakis, 4 Cindy Lane: You have neglected to consider elementary school students and their ability to focus for a longer period of time. Their focus becomes less and less as the day goes on. The burden falls on the parent and also affects students with ADHD and find focusing difficult, by the end of the day they crash. Extending the school day and putting children in a morning program extends their day. Coming from a different angle having a child that needs to focus, this change would be detrimental. Please do not vote today, but take into consideration how this will impact our younger students.

Lauren Anderson, 12 Iron Gate Drive: Please delay a decision until a proposal can be developed to help all constituents. We can do better. There are concerns about the impacts on families with two working parents or a single working parent. Sounds like a community that makes it harder for those that either choose to or need to work an issue of equity. Details on new information on early drop off times should be confirmed before a vote is taken. This change will initiate years of additional childcare costs and remove the ability to see our children off to school each morning. Is now the right time to introduce a change that will create a roadblock for parents re-entering the work force? Consider an option that would work for all.

Jamie Laflamme, 89 Lowell Street: Please do not to make a change at this time, consider the stress and anxiety levels for next year, childcare, employment etc. We need to get more busses. No other elementary schools start at 9:00 AM, our town is severely under bussed and it is time to add more bussing. The majority of families in this town are not in agreement. Eliminate B-runs, and add more bussing.

Susan McCready reported that the School Committee has received many comments from the community. The public input ended at 8:51 PM.

School Committee Deliberations:

Tracey Spruce: Comment on 'choices we make' was related to a parent expressing concerns about after-school activities about which their students participate. There is always a different struggle at every different phase of your children's schooling. The proposal put out to the Community was in direct response to elementary parents' comments/feedback. It is our effort to strike a reasonable balance between the need for adolescents to sleep later and that the 'Flip' was not acceptable to elementary parents. Coming out of this pandemic year, we have kids at AHS who this year developed severe mental health issues.

Shannon Scully: This proposal is an attempt to balance the scientific proven start time for adolescents, and to minimize the change and impact. The Flip was not acceptable to our community. The science was clear that every minute helps; 8:15 AM is a compromise to finding a solution. Our job is to do the best for the most kids. The reality is that in the 13-years students spend in APS with 2-tier bussing, there will be years of the early shift and years of the late shift. She appreciates the concern about a lot of disruption and if this is the right time. She does not think we have all adjusted to a post-pandemic life. This seems like a good-time to start a new normal for when we go back to the school in the fall. At the end of the day, this is about the kids. Sleep is not the cure-all to mental

health issues but it helps. The proposal won't work for everyone, and agrees that APS had underfunded transportation for years, she suggests that we do change start times with the proposal before us and look at ways we can change the budget to add additional busses.

Lauren Conoscenti: She has an elementary school student with special needs who has therapy after school as well as activities. Any change to the elementary schedule impacts her family with both parents working outside the home. This plan does work for older students providing them more time to sleep and helps with our mental health crisis. We all recognize that helping students get more sleep is just one piece of the puzzle. Although it is not a perfect solution, it represents an honest effort to minimize impact at the elementary level. Teachers have expressed concern that younger students get tired around 2:30 PM, we need to think about how to make that time after 2:30 more useable. If we go forward with this change we will continue to monitor the outcomes. As the change evolves, we will evaluate if we need to move the elementary start time back to 8:45 AM.

Jeffrey Connors echoed the remarks of Tracey Spruce. The mental health of students at AHS has been declining and is concerning. He supports continuing with the 8:15 AM start time.

Paul Murphy submitted a statement. He can attest to sleep patterns that take place during adolescence. The School Committee is charged with making decisions that will affect the largest number of students. This is the time to make the change.

Susan McCready recognized Sandy Trach for leading this effort over the past three years working with transportation, parent groups and staff. Susan also thanked Sara Stetson whose department (Student Services) has done a voluminous amount of work on student's health, especially during the height of the pandemic. 70% of Andover's students are receiving mental health services. Susan is an advocate for all children. She ran to be a voice for kids and feels very strongly that she makes the best decisions for all students. She was a strong proponent for the Flip until she heard the incredible outcry from parents and because there wasn't any science about elementary students starting earlier. The SC has struggled with really hard decisions and what is best for everyone. There are a number of things we will have to continue to listen to and will need feedback on how the start change is going. She is committed in investing in transportation, she does not think this has been a rush decision. The work and analysis has been extensive.

Shannon Scully moved that the Andover School Committee vote to change the School Start Time for Middle School and High School to 8:15 AM and Elementary School to 9:00 AM beginning with the 2021-2022 School Year. Motion seconded by Tracey Spruce. Motion passes 4-0.

E. FY22 Budget Number Reallocation: Personnel & Expense

The preliminary budget was approved on January 21, 2021 by the School Committee with staff and expense changes approved by the School Committee at the meeting on March 25, 2021 and is reflective in the power point presented at that meeting and an additional adjustment for professional development for Dr. Parvey. The SC needs to approve the allocation of the overall approved budget based on decisions made. There is no change to the bottom line budget number.

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee vote to modify the FY-2022 approved budget split from Personnel Salaries \$75,239,845; Expenses \$17,353,607 for a total of \$92,593,452 to Personnel Salaries \$75,617,287; Expenses \$16,976,165 for a total of \$92,593,452 in order to reflect those personnel changes approved by the Committee for the final FY-22 APS School Budget of \$92,593,452 approved by the 2021 Annual Town Meeting. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Motion passes 4-0.

F. Consent Agenda

1. **Grants/Donations to District:** Grants/Donations to DMS
2. **Minutes from SC Meetings:**

Lauren Conoscenti moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Tracey Spruce. Motion passes 4-0.

G. Adjournment

At 9:36 P.M. on a motion by Tracey Spruce and seconded by Lauren Conoscenti the Andover School Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary