

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Thursday, March 25, 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 6:00 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 or live video with advanced registration as described on the posted agenda.*

II. Executive Session:

Susan McCready moved to meet in Executive Session pursuant to G.L. chapter 30A, section 21(a), purpose (3) to discuss strategy with respect to bargaining with union personnel, namely the Andover Education Association (AEA) Unit A and Andover Assistants Organization 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. The motion was 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.

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

Shannon Scully reconvened the School Committee to order at 7:05 PM. The meeting began with a Moment of Silence.

Shannon congratulated Susan and Tracey on their successful election to another 3-years as members of the Andover School Committee.

A. Reorganization – Elect Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for 2021-2022

Tracey Spruce moved that Susan McCready be elected as Chairperson of the Andover School Committee for 2021-2022 effective at the conclusion of the 2021 Town Meeting.

Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Susan McCready accepted the nomination.

Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Susan McCready asked for a motion to elect a new Vice Chairperson of the Andover School Committee. Shannon Scully moved to elect Lauren Conoscenti as Vice Chair of the Andover School Committee for 2021-2022 effective at the conclusion of the 2021 Town Meeting. Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Lauren Conoscenti accepted the nomination.

Roll call: S. Scully-Y, P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

B. Recognition & Communications

Ann McNamee, DMS teacher and the elected Chairperson of the Superintendent Preliminary Screening Committee, announced that the Screening Committee has recommended two finalist candidates for consideration for the Superintendent position. Each of the candidates rose to the top of the process. The candidates are: Dr. Magda Parvey and Dr. Stephen Zadavec.

Dr. Magda Parvey, is currently Chief Academic Officer of Middletown Public Schools in Middletown, CT. Prior to that, she served as the Interim Superintendent of City School District of New Rochelle, NY, and Chief Academic Officer. She also served as Asst. Superintendent for Instructional Services in North Carolina's Chapel-Hill City School District. Dr. Parvey is a life-long educator with a career spanning 25 years.

Dr. Zadavec is the Superintendent of the Portsmouth New Hampshire Public Schools. Prior to that, Dr. Zadavec was an Asst. Superintendent in School Administrative Unit 39, a Middle School Math Teacher and Curriculum Coordinator at Amherst Middle School in Amherst, New Hampshire. As a life-long educator with a career spanning over 30 years, he has served in additional leadership positions and as an interim principal.

Ann thanked everyone who participated in the process and helped to identify the candidates who endorse a student first philosophy, a forward-thinking lens, and model of high standards and guide for a vision of education in Andover. She thanked her fellow members of the Committee who work closely with the Superintendent giving them time to work together. In the coming weeks, the candidates will come together in a virtual meeting to meet the community. More information will be forthcoming from our HR Department. An on-line feedback form will be made available to all. The Preliminary Screening Committee was aided by Ray & Associates.

Dr. Bach congratulated Susan McCready and Tracey Spruce on being re-elected to the School Committee and to Susan for becoming the next Chair and Lauren as Vice-Chair. Claudia also recognized Paula Colby-Clements for her incredible commitment to the West Elementary/Shawsheen School Building Project. The March 17th MSBA meeting went very well due to our exceptional Building Committee and Architecture firm. We also have the 'Yes to WESP Group' who have been very active in supporting the program.

Nursing Director, Rita Casper reported that there has been a slight uptick in the positive COVID tests. Dr. Bach encouraged everyone to continue to follow the COVID protocols.

Jeffrey Connors, AHS Student Government, thanked the School Committee for sending a letter to DESE, supporting the students' views, on waiving MCAS testing for this year.

Susan McCready provided an update the West Elementary/Shawsheen School Building Project. The building committee, at it's last meeting reviewed the Construction Manager at Risk process, which is a requirement for public jobs over \$10M. The RFP has gone out and submissions will be reviewed on May 3rd. MSBA has determined that we are in good stead to be recommended for the project. Susan recognized Facilities Director Janet Nicosia for the

incentives earned for maintenance and scoring a 1.9 out of a 2.0. The MSBA Board and members of the West Elementary/Shawsheen School Building Project will meet on April 14 for a review of the progress. The project will be voted on at Town Meeting on Saturday, June 5th and if it passes, there will be a ballot box vote on June 15, 2021.

Susan also extended her thanks to our Chair, Shannon Scully who has done a tremendous job in managing many items on the Superintendent search.

Tracey Spruce reported on the recent SC Informal Forum that she and Susan held on Saturday morning, 3/20 with five people in attendance. There were good conversations on a number of different topics including the return of students to elementary school on April 5th and middle school on April 28th.

A. Public Input

Mike Van Dinther and Michelle Houlihan from Fusion Academy spoke about the application they submitted to be approved as a private school in Andover. It seems to them, that the School Committee will be denying their application and they are obviously disappointed.

Susan McCready reported on the emails received in School Committee remote.

C. Response to Public Input

Claudia Bach reported on the meetings with the AHS principal and assistant principals about the topic of opening AHS to in-person learning, which is our biggest challenge. The space constraints at AHS became obvious when the school's population reached 1,700 students several years ago, when you add in the constraints of 3' distancing and 6' distancing for eating time, it makes it even more challenging

D. Education

1. Field Trips:

a. New FT Submission: DMS to Panama

Steve Chinosi provided information on the Enrichment Trip from DMS. There will be a full refund through August 29th and after that a voucher system will be in place.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the proposed extracurricular trip for Doherty Middle School students to Panama on February 19-26, 2022 as presented and in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Andover School Committee Policy entitled "APS School-Sponsored Trip and Student Travel Policy". The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

E. New Business

1. Town Meeting Warrant Recommendations

Steve Nembirkow provided information on Town Meeting Warrant Articles for the School Committee's consideration.

Fiscal Year 2022 Capital Projects Fund: ARTICLE P5. To see if the Town will vote to raise by taxation and appropriate the sum of money for the purpose of funding the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriation for the Capital Projects Fund, or take any other action related thereto.

Susan McCready moved that the School Committee vote to recommend approval of the Town Meeting WA-P5 Capital Projects Fund for FY-2022. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Roll call: S. McCready, L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

2. NRT - Trombly Updated Transportation Contract

Steve Nembirkow reported that they have negotiated a reduced rate with Trombly Bros on transportation for the days there is no school. As we move into a full-five-day schedule, the contract will revert to 100% as negotiated by Peter McNulty who represented the Merrimack Valley Schools in a collaborative effort. The collaborative group retains the right to view the books of Trombly Bros. to determine if they received any Federal Funding due to the pandemic. Trombly Bros. is prepared to resume full service should all students return.

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve a Memorandum of Agreement between Andover Public Schools, NRT Bus, Inc. and Trombly Motor Coach Services, Inc. for services performed in accordance with the MOA as presented. Motion seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

3. Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with the Andover Education Association

Lauren Conoscenti moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the MOA of Agreement with the OP/PT's and Donna Martin that provides paid professional development opportunity for those who participated in the August 31, 2021 work stoppage. Paul Murphy seconded the motion. Roll call: S. McCready-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes: 5-0.

Tracey Spruce moved to authorize the Chair to sign the Memorandum of Agreement. Motion seconded by Susan McCready. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Additional Services MOA: Allows members of AEA to step in to take-on work assignments for other teachers who are on leave.

Lauren Conoscenti moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Additional Services Memorandum of Agreement with AEA Unit A as presented and to authorize the School Committee Chair to sign the Agreement on behalf of the School Committee. The motion was seconded by Tracey Spruce-Y. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

F. Continuing Business

1. Fusion Academy Private School Application

Sandy Trach reported on the application from Fusion Academy at the prior School Committee Meeting, copies of which were distributed to the APS District Leadership Team and School Committee to read and review. Sandy studied the application very carefully and engaged in several telephone meetings with Mike Van Dither and Michelle Houlihan. Sandy also made a site visit and requests for missing material. The Andover School Committee is required to factor in School Committee Policy LBC and *The Standards for Approval of Private Schools as outlined in the Advisory on Approval of MA Private Schools pursuant to MGL c.76* (review and approve the documents provided by applicants applying for a private school and that it equals the MGL Chapter 76, Section 1.).

Additionally, in light of MA DESE Commissioner's directive on in-person instruction and student learning time, Fusion Academy's application falls short. Commissioner Riley has made clear that asynchronous learning does not count as student learning time outside of pandemic circumstances. As such, Riley has directed schools to shift away from asynchronous, self-study digital instruction and return to in-person direct instruction as soon as possible. While Andover Public Schools is bound to these DESE regulations and private schools are not, the School Committee is required to determine if Fusion's programming equals the thoroughness and efficiency as APS, in terms of educational programming and student learning time.

- Elementary (K-8) 850 total hours/school year, 50 hours/per 2 weeks, 25 hours/per week live in-person for 2020-2021. In non-pandemic school years, the K-8 learning time is 900 hours/school year.
- Secondary (9-12) 935 total hours/school year, 55 hours/per 2 weeks, 27.5 hours/per week live and in-person for 2020/2021. In non-pandemic school years, secondary (9-12) learning time is 990 hours/school year.

Given this mandate, Fusion's approximately 9 hours/week of in-person instruction (according to their sample schedule), 23 hours per course/per semester, and 46 hours of in-person instruction/school year for grades 6-8 and 9-12 proposed school is far below the MA DESE standard and in turn, that of Andover Public Schools. Additionally, the asynchronous self-study digital learning module time does not meet the student learning time requirement for in-person instruction. Given the "thoroughness and efficiency" standard, the determination is clear that Fusion's application does not meet this requirement.

For this reason, along with the concerns outlined under 3) *Curriculum* which are also related to student learning time, Sandy Trach's recommendation is that the Andover School Committee deny the Fusion Academy-Andover application for approval as a private school under Policy LBC and standards for private school approval under MGL c. 76 section 1.

On behalf of the Committee, Shannon Scully thanked Sandy and her team for their time and due diligence to investigate the program and the thorough report.

School Committee Comments: The members of the School Committee provided individual comments on the request from Fusion Academy to approve their application to be a private school in Andover prior to voting.

Paul Murphy appreciates the enormous time spent reviewing the application. One-to-one instruction is so different compared to classroom teaching, a higher-level conversation on what is good for some kids, not all kids, has crept into his mind a lot this year due to the pandemic. This is a learning center who has done some work and filled a need during the pandemic. He struggles with equivalency, thoroughness and efficiency; asynchronous learning has jumped forward because it had to. Remote is not the same as asynchronous learning; a talented teacher can do a ton with the tools that are out there. At Fusion Academy, asynchronous learning is conducted within the building. Paul is not ready to deny this application.

Susan McCready thanked Michelle Houlihan who has become very engaged in the community and with the kids. If this were an approval for a resource center, she would not have any difficulty giving her approval. She understands there are different models and kids learn differently. If the School Committee is to approve Fusion Academy, it is saying to the community that it is consistent with what is happening at APS and that the learning would be similar. It was made clear during the first application that Time-on-Learning was a real concern; direct instruction and time with teachers is important. Many people who are staying with remote learning has more to do with parental concerns around safety. As educators, it was surprising that Fusion Academy presented the Time on Learning hours they did in the second application.

Lauren Conoscenti is troubled that the State requires us to make this determination. People have found a place at Fusion Academy for their children who are thriving from the experience. Fusion, in its capacity to tutor and enhance children's experience is of value, but asking to be approved as a private school is another matter. She is struck by the asynchronous piece, hearing from families throughout the year that asynchronous wasn't working for their children.

Tracey Spruce agrees that the State puts us in a difficult position to make this determination. She is concerned about the in-person instructional time, as she was before. We have heard significant feedback about asynchronous learning. Families who have been very happy with remote academy is because of the consistency time, which is an important factor to consider. She appreciates the value families have found in the Learning Center Model, she hasn't heard much about what Fusion Academy would be like for them as a full-time student in a private school. Tracey is still thinking through her decision, it does feel like comparing apples and oranges. For her, it will come down to student progress. She is concerned about some of the content of the report on acceleration and compression.

Shannon Scully appreciates, understands and values that some environments need to have flexibility for students. But she is not getting a sense that there is any consistency with the student model. There has to be some elements of a subject that are consistent for everybody. How does AHS respond to a request from a student to return to AHS from Fusion Academy if the content wasn't similar? Inconsistent content from student to student is a concern. Staff is hired based on need and she is not sure if that, coupled with the lack of requirements for teaching that class, is reassuring. The grading being adjusted to the elements of the reports is also inconsistent. Seemingly competing messages that Fusion Academy doesn't want to,

nor has the capacity to, offer special education classes but it seems that they are targeting special education families and students. Misconception on the process. Time on Learning is an issue. Should be some standard benchmarks and goals to allow students to earn credits.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to disapprove the Fusion Academy Application dated May 2020 to operate as a school in Andover Massachusetts. Motion seconded by Tracey Spruce. Roll call: S. McCready-Y, T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-N, L. Conoscenti-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 4-1.

2. FY22 School Budget

Chief Operations Officer Steve Nembirkow provided a review of the FY2022 School Department Budget.

The FY-2022 Budget meets the Town Manager's Recommendation of \$92,593,452.
Personnel: \$75,239,845 General Expense: \$17,353,607 Total Budget: \$92,593,452.

Areas of Cost Savings

Athletics \$50,000; Transportation \$10,000, Custodial Overtime \$15,000 and Substitute/Turnover savings of \$50,000.

Student Initiatives

Improving student performance in math and addressing the learning gap in math.
Implementing a new MS Schedule to provide additional time for academics and SEL.
Expanding supports for students with emotional and behavioral needs.
Improving operational effectiveness in HR and Finance Operations.

Areas of Focus for FY-22

Maintaining current staffing level.
Finding opportunities to expand direct instruction time.
Restore prior services and expand equity.
Adequate building-based support.

Priority one additions include the cost of adding the following for a total of \$198,072.

1.0 FTE Generalist	\$60,000
.4 FTE AHS Guidance	\$29,241
1.0 FTE Elem Math Coach	<u>101,631</u>

Other potential add-ons 9.5 Potential FTE's for a cost of \$673,675.

1.5 FTE MS Math Interventionists
3.0 FTE MS Guidance
3.0 FTE Music Teachers
1.0 FTE Nurse Team Leader
1.0 FTE Nurse at West Elementary
9.5 potential FTE's

Superintendent's recommendations

1.0 FTE HR Generalist
0.4 FTE AHS Guidance
1.0 FTE Elementary Math Coach
3.0 FTE Music Teachers
1.0 FTE Nurse at West Elementary

Band, Orchestra, and Chorus schedules affect school schedules which are built around when the music courses can be offered. With the additional staffing, they would decouple the levels in terms of how courses are scheduled providing more flexibility during the middle school day as well as at other levels. In addition, not all students are able to access music lessons before or after the school day. The additional staffing would provide equity and access for all students and AHS could offer more sections for students.

Rita Casper has concerns with the current limited stretched nurse staffing; it is important that we meet the standard of two nurses at West Elementary due to enrollment size.

We have the ability to absorb these costs into the recommended budget using circuit breaker reserve funding and some of the shared savings (receiving \$125,000 additional circuit breaker funds that we must spend) and would leave the Circuit Breaker account well above the range set for the future of that account.

The School Committee was appreciative of the information provided, and discussed the recommendations presented.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Budget Recommended for FY-22 as presented. The motion was 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. Consent Agenda

- a. Grants/Donations to District: Grants total of \$24,299.00
- b. SC Meeting Minutes - none

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

G. Adjournment

At 9:56 PM Paul Murphy moved to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of Thursday, March 25, 2021. Motion seconded by Susan McCready. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary