

Andover School Committee
Thursday, February 17, 2022
School Committee Room

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

Others participating: Superintendent Dr. Magda Parvey, Asst. Superintendent Dr. Julie Riley, Business Manager Paul Szymanski, AHS Liaison, Justin Jin.

I. **Regular Meeting**

A. **Call to Order**

Chairperson McCready called to order the meeting of the Andover School Committee at 6:00 PM in the School Committee Room and the Committee immediately voted to meet in Executive Session.

II. **Executive Session**

Tracey Spruce moved that the School Committee meet in executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws chapter 30A, section 21(a) for the following purposes: Purpose (2) to discuss strategy in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, namely Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Administration and Purpose (3) to discuss strategy with respect to bargaining with unionized personnel, namely the Andover Assistants and (AEA) Unit A because an open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee. The Chair so declared that an open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: S. Scully-Y, S. McCready-Y, P. Murphy-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y. Motion passes 5-0. The Committee will reconvene in regular session at approximately 7:00PM.

I. **Resume Regular SC Meeting** The meeting resumed at 7:05 P.M.

A. **Call to Order/Moment of Silence/Salute to Flag**

The Chair called the Open Session to order at 7:05 P.M.

The meeting began with a Moment of Silence followed by a Salute to the Flag.

The Chair shared the format of the open meeting.

B. **Recognitions/Communications**

Dr. Parvey thanked all of the building leaders for being here tonight for this important discussion.

Superintendent's Report:

- Andover High School is the face of the public announcement "*We're More Than Ready*" that DESE is promoting in a year-long initiative highlighting the importance of MA public schools.
- Dr. Parvey participated/attended in the following events:
 - School visits at AHS, WMS, South School
 - Read-along at Sanborn School on Feb 11th.
 - Robotics Competition held on Saturday, Feb 12th at AHS.
 - Professional Learning Committee
 - WestEl/Shawsheen Preschool Building Committee Virtual Walk Thru
 - Meeting with Public Health officials on Covid 19
 - Presented the FY-23 School budget to the Finance Committee
 - Met with Andover's DEI Director, Albert Pless at School SAT Mtg
 - Participated in Math Asset Walk thru Session with the Institute for Learning.

Dr. Riley reported that they are entering into a year-long study of math in the district and conducting a program review of math in K-5 grades. They are assessing the learning that is happening to help them research together as a team and define how we would facilitate professional development at grade levels and develop math language across the district. They will be starting the ELA class works next.

Paul Szymanski will present a progress report to the Committee on the implementation of the on-line purchase order system.

Paul Murphy reported that SEPAC is holding an online open forum for candidates on March 8th. Anyone interested in becoming part of SEPAC can sign up at <https://www.andoversepac.org/>.

Lauren Conoscenti commented on her visit to Mary Robb's Civics class at AHS which was about Shawsheen Village, it was a wonderful presentation.

Tracey Spruce reported that the West Elem/Shaw project is on track and on budget. Pre-construction work will begin during April vacation this year and the construction documents from MSBA have been approved. Information on the West Elementary and Preschool Project is available online.

Susan McCready congratulated Dr. Parvey on her first budget presentation to the Finance Committee which was well received. Susan also attended the DEI meeting and met with Albert Pless the new DEI Director for the Town. Susan thanked Jason DiCarlo, Principal of Sanborn School, for inviting her to read to the students.

C. Public Input

Holly Currier, 105 N. Main St., AHS Instructional Assistant, said that the IA's still do not have a contract and, while they await the mediator's report, the SC has not met with them. Instructional Assistants Linda Lawrence, 134 Lowell Street, and Susan Greco, 22 Summer Street, shared their disappointment of not yet having a contract or meetings to continue the discussion and read portions of Dr. Parvey' dissertation.

D. Response to Public Input

Dr. Parvey is honored that they read her dissertation.

E. Education

F. New Business

1. Discussion: Andover High School Statement of Interest & AHS Building Comm.

Mark Johnson, Chair of the AHS Study Committee, said the Building Committee continues to discuss submitting a Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) which needs the support of the SC and the Select Board. They have also discussed the alternative of a self-funded project vs waiting for MSBA.

Atty. Johnson's presentation included a cost comparison (which is not the total cost of the project, but a way to compare a new building if it were Town funded vs an MSBA project), as well as a comparison of a renovation vs an addition. It is the opinion of the Committee that Andover would not be accepted by MSBA before the West El/Shawsheen project concludes in 2025. We have applied 10 times for MSBA Funding for AHS and been denied every time; the earliest AHS might be accepted is 2026, and that is not a guarantee.

The dollar difference between a self-funded project and an MSBA project is smaller and smaller over time, as delays increase the cost of any building project and deferred maintenance costs increase as well. Additionally, MSBA has not increased their reimbursement to keep up with accelerated costs of construction. A self-funded project could allow us to build a new high school before the next decade, as opposed to 2031 at the earliest with a MSBA project.

The AHS Feasibility Committee voted to recommend that the Andover School Committee not pursue a SOI and that we pursue a self-funded project instead. Atty. Johnson provided an outline of what the makeup of a School Building Committee would look like based upon MSBA format.

The Committee agreed with the recommendations presented. Justin Jin feels that after seeing the building costs, it doesn't make sense to pursue another SOI Submission.

Shannon Scully moved that in accordance with Section 10(B) of the Town Charter, that the Andover School Committee request that the Town Manager appoint an Andover High School Building Committee for the following purposes: Soliciting public input on a potential project, developing recommendations for the School Committee and Select Board's consideration; and providing project oversight throughout each phase of the project. Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Motion passes 5-0.

2. Discussions & First Reading: EBCFA Face Coverings SC Policy

Susan McCready reported on the history and requirements of the face coverings policy EBCFA and thanked everyone who has sent in emails on this important topic. Policy EBCFA is being reviewed as a result of the expiring mask mandate of February 28th by the Governor and the DESE Commissioner. Dr. Parvey shared her recommendations for mask requirements for Andover Public Schools. Tom Carbone, Town Health Director, Director of Nursing Rita Casper, and Janet Nicosia were present for questions.

Tom Carbone provided information from different databases on Covid cases and the State database MAVEN that shares vaccination information about our community. Only lab positive cases are being tracked and not home antigen tests, so the data are inconsistent across sources. However, he stated that all sources indicate that Andover is trending in the right direction in terms of case counts for both the community as a whole and for the school-aged population. Rita Casper reported on the school data; over the last five weeks, the case numbers have decreased in all age groups and all levels. Information on the number of fully vaccinated, partially and unvaccinated shows that our school-aged vaccination rates are high; and better than the state average. Additionally, about 2000 APS students are enrolled to receive home tests on a biweekly basis.

Janet Nicosia Director of Facilities reported on the ventilation systems in the Town and School Buildings that has been increased way beyond what the standards are for ventilation. The exchange rates in the rooms occur 5-6 times in an hour. They have changed all the filter data at 8-13 MERV Rating with 13 as the best.

Recommendations:

- Encourage vaccinations
- Continued self-monitoring for symptoms
- Mitigation strategies by the district will continue that include cleaning of high touch areas, ventilation, distancing when feasible, symptomatic testing, DESE isolation and quarantine guidelines.

- DESE and DPH strongly recommend students and staff continue to follow the DESE-DPH protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios.
- Encourage enrollment in the DESE At-Home Testing program
- Masks are encouraged to be worn in school settings for people who are immunocompromised and those who are unvaccinated. Any individual who wishes to continue to mask, should be supported in that choice.

Dr. Parvey said the recommendation is to lift the district mask requirement on March 7th and make masks optional for individuals in school buildings. Based on the historical data of positive cases following school breaks, the district is delaying the lifting of the mask requirement following February recess until March 7th. Students will have the choice to wear masks and we promote supporting personal choices. We want to make sure that all of the protocols are followed.

Comments by the School Committee

Paul Murphy: Going mask optional creates added management issues within the schools, kids won't have to be managed and there will be some level of getting ready for that and allowing kids to feel comfortable if they want to wear masks. Masks have allowed us to be back at school and he is sure that teachers have had conversations in their classrooms about the wearing of masks; that there is a good reason, that they don't have to share. This is going to be a process. Have empathy for other people and that people have good reason for what they are doing.

Tracey Spruce: There is a level of anxiety of the lack of civility that has risen around this issue that has caused concern for students who will continue to wear a mask being made to feel different. Are there specific actions that building leaders are prepared to take if they see this kind of behavior? Rita Casper replied that prior to Covid, there were students who wore masks and were well supported by other students and their teachers.

Lauren Conoscenti: Knowing that removing a mask mandate may increase cases, how do we encourage more uptake of the at-home testing program? Rita Casper replied that they will continue to ask parents and staff to do in-home testing when they are symptomatic or know that they have been exposed, and hope more people take advantage of the free tests. In-school symptomatic testing will also continue. Tom Carbone said more people are vaccinated now and the guidelines encourage people to take personal responsibility.

Justin Jin read a statement from students in regard to the mask mandate. The responses to keep the mandate were mixed. They hope they can help the School Committee find a solution to mask mandates. He also gave a personal statement and hopes the community can stay strong and resilient together. Our community has been strong in adapting to change and cited that steps taken to date to return to normalcy have so far succeeded.

Discussion on before/after school activities, and off-site events that need to be further addressed. Students are required, per Federal orders, to wear masks while on a bus. The MIAA encourages following guidelines of the host school. Shannon shared her concerns with the policy and what items/wording she feels should be adjusted.

Public Input:

Many people in the audience provided comments urging the district to offer a mask optional environment and to rescind the current policy on Feb. 28. They urged the School Committee to vote on the policy change as soon as possible.

Susan McCready pointed out that the School Committee has to follow their process to have two readings on policy changes. The School Committee supports the recommendation to wait until after school vacation to vote on the policy change.

The Chair thanked everyone for their time and comments. The School Committee will meet on March 3rd and will vote at that time. She believes their recommendation is reasonable and achievable.

G. Consent Agenda: Grants/Donations to District; Minutes

1. **Grants/Donations to District** – N/A
2. **SC Meeting Minutes** – N/A

H. Adjournment

At 9:38 P.M. on a motion by Paul Murphy and seconded by Lauren Conoscenti, the Andover School Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting of Thursday, February 17, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary

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