

ANDOVER SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 6, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: S. McCready, Chair
L. Conoscenti
E. DiCesaro
T. Spruce, Vice Chair
S. Wright

MEMBERS ABSENT

OTHERS PRESENT: M. Parvey, Superintendent
K. Taverna, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration
J. Riley, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
Daniel Shin, SGA student representative

II Reorganization – Elect Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for 2023-2024

Ms. McCready stated that the first School Committee Meeting after Town Elections is the reorganization meeting to elect a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson for the term of one year. The newly elected Chairperson and Vice Chairperson will take office at the first regularly scheduled School Committee meeting after Town Meeting.

Election of Chairperson

Ms. McCready asked for a motion to elect a new Chairperson.

A motion that Ms. Spruce be elected as Chairperson of the Andover School Committee effective at the conclusion of the 2023 Town Meeting was made by Dr. Conoscenti and seconded by Mr. Wright.

Ms. McCready asked Ms. Spruce if she was willing to accept the nomination. Ms. Spruce agreed to accept.

Roll call Vote: S. Wright – yes L. Conoscenti – yes S. McCready – yes
T. Spruce – abstain E. DiCesaro – yes

Election of a Vice Chairperson

Ms. Spruce, as nominated Chairperson asked for a motion to elect a new Vice Chairperson.

A motion that Dr. Conoscenti be elected as Vice Chairperson of the Andover School Committee effective at the conclusion of the 2023 Town Meeting was made by Ms. Spruce and seconded by Mr. Wright.

Ms. Spruce asked Dr. Conoscenti if she was willing to accept the nomination. Dr. Conoscenti agreed to accept.

Roll call Vote: S. Wright – yes L. Conoscenti – abstain S. McCready – yes
T. Spruce – yes E. DiCesaro – yes

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

Ms. McCready, Chair, called the Regular Meeting of the School Committee of April 6, 2023, to order at 7:15pm in the School Committee Conference Room.

B. Recognitions/Communications

Dr. Parvey's Administrative Updates included her school visits at Andover High School for Step-Up Day for Doherty Middle School 8th graders, attending World Autism Day at Shawsheen and attending Beauty and the Beast at West Elementary. She also visited a South Elementary Social Studies class who was studying the history of Andover, Wood Hill Middle School for the Trial of Julius Caesar, Sanborn Elementary Staff Focus Group for the Principal search, Andover High School Drama Guild "*Advice for Astronauts*", the Read Aloud Program at Bancroft Elementary School and attended the production of The Addams Family at Doherty Middle School.

Dr. Parvey's Administrative Updates included a review of the Andover High School Building Committee meetings, the PAC meeting at Doherty Middle School, AEA monthly meeting, attending the Project Bread Forum as a panelist regarding universal free meals, and Institute for Learning hosted learning walks for the Middle School math program. Dr. Parvey held office hours on Saturday, March 25th in person and a few parents attended. The next office hours will be held virtually in May. The Data Wise training for leadership is continuing. Dr. Parvey attended a meeting for the Equity Audit which will take place in the fall. She also attended the swearing in of the Town and School officials and congratulated Dr. Conoscenti on her reelection to the School Committee.

Drop Ins with APS staff continue. The second round will begin next week with Andover High School, High Plain Elementary, Shawsheen Preschool, West Middle School South Elementary, Bancroft Elementary, Wood Hill Middle School and West Elementary.

Dr. Parvey congratulated Donna Ruseckas who received the MA Association for Health, PE, Recreation and Dance Award known as the Joseph McKenney Lifetime Achievement Award.

Dr. Riley thanked the students who participated in sports events, theater, arts and Sean Walsh for all of his work. MCAS are underway. The Institutional Self Evaluation through the Department of Education and Data Wise protocols continue. Title IV and Anti-Bullying training for students has taken place.

Mr. Taverna attended Moana Jr. at South School as well as the All-District Band concert and both were very well done. He had lunch with Ms. Allen's 5th grade class at High Plain Elementary. The students expressed their concerns about lunch. Andover High School Financial Simulation took place as a precursor for Credit for Life and was a great success.

Ms. DiCesaro also attended the All-Bands concert which ran very smoothly and was enjoyable. She also attended The Wizard of Oz at Bancroft Elementary and participated in the Community Read Long Program.

Ms. Spruce stated that the Andover ELPAC meeting is tomorrow at 9:30am in the School Committee Meeting Room. The next informal School Committee forum is scheduled for

April 27th at 7:00pm and will be virtual. Ms. Spruce congratulated the Andover Girls Basketball team on winning state championship. She also acknowledged the show choir competition which included show choirs from around the country coming to Andover High School to perform. Ms. Spruce congratulated the Drama Guild who competed in the finals of the Massachusetts Educational Theater Guild Competition.

Dr. Conoscenti attended the production of *The Addams Family* at Doherty Middle School as well as *Moana Jr.* She also attended the All-Strings Night which was wonderful. There have been a number of Andover High School Building Committee Meetings.

Mr. Wright participated in the Read Along Program at Bancroft Elementary and he promised to share the student's suggestion of no homework. The students are doing a research project about not having homework and will share it with the School Committee. He attended the DEI Community Outreach at the Oak & Iron with Women in Business Leaders. Sophia Miele was the moderator at the event, and it was an inspiring experience. An informal School Committee forum was held April 1st at Memorial Hall Library with a small group of parents attending. The feedback was shared with Dr. Parvey and Principals who are following up.

Daniel Shin presented a statement drafted by the students regarding the construction and renovation of the high school. The students support the full reconstruction of the high school building and he read the statement to the School Committee. The students are concerned with the disruption due to construction.

Also, the Andover High School Quiz team is in the semi-finals of the High School Quiz Show.

Ms. McCready acknowledged the artwork on display at Central Office from all the Middle Schools. Art from Andover High School is on display at the Robb Center. She attended the Trial of Julius Caesar and two Credit for Life events for municipal budget simulation and the 6th Credit For Life Fair held at the high school for seniors. Ms. McCready thanked everyone involved with the events.

- C. Public Input** – Kevin Coffey, 1 Stafford Lane, asked the Committee to share specific measures of educational outcomes of the student achievement and the preparedness used to monitor the effectiveness of our school system. He is concerned that the ranking of APS has declined over the past 20 years. The Andover High School building project cost is high and asked if improving academics is an outcome of this expenditure. He believes the commitment should be to the educators, students, support staff and materials. Kerri Costello, AHS Student Government Association, thanked the Student Government reps who helped draft the statement. Andover High School had two students attend Student Government Day at the State House.
- D. Response to Public Input** – Dr. Conoscenti addressed the rankings comment by stating that there are a number of ranking services that take into account the condition of facilities.

Andover High School does not do well when ranked on facilities but does very well in other categories.

Ms. McCready added that Dr. Parvey often provides information on the success of APS and the data measured during School Committee meetings.

E. Education - None

F. New Business

1. Field Trips:

a. **WHMS 7th grade students to Camp Kieve-October 2023.** Patrick Bucco presented the field trip to the School Committee. The students will be traveling October 2-6, 2023. This is a leadership school to build skills for problem solving, relationships, making smart choices, etc. There is financial aid available to families assisting with the cost of the trip.

A motion that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the proposed extracurricular trip for Wood Hill Middle School students to travel to Camp Kieve in Nobleboro, Maine from October 2-October 6, 2023 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” was made by Dr. Conoscenti, seconded by Mr. Wright and unanimously approved by a vote of 5-0.

b. **AHS Andover Fine Arts to New York-April 2024.** Sean Walsh presented the field trip to the School Committee. The students will be attending and performing at the Heritage Festival in New York City from April 11-April 14, 2024. The itinerary was reviewed including a possible college visit on the way to New York City, a Broadway play, performances, mini-clinics and comments and sightseeing. Performing at cultural sights promotes a stronger social and emotional connection for the students. A parent information session will be held. 10:1 student/guardian ratio for this trip. There is financial aid available for families. Ms. Spruce reviewed the fundraising guidelines.

A motion that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the proposed extracurricular trip for the Andover High School Fine Arts students to travel to New York City from April 11-April 14, 2024 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” was made by Ms. DiCesaro, seconded by Ms. Spruce and unanimously approved by a vote of 5-0.

2. Presentation: Debt Limit & AHS Building Project – Patrick Lawlor presented to the School Committee on the Debt Limit. He informed the Committee that exempt debt is what would be used for funding the AHS building project.

Debt service is payments related to principal and interest for borrowing. 13% of the average 2024 single family real estate tax bill is allocated to debt service. There are 3 categories of Debt Service: Non-Exempt Debt (General Fund) for capital improvement projects, Exempt Debt which is excluded from Proposition 2½ and approved at Town Meeting and at the ballot, and Enterprise Fund Debt like water and sewer.

Debt limit is governed by MGL Chapter 44, section 10 which limits a town's authorized indebtedness to 5% of the full and fair cash value of real property in a community. Andover's current debt limit is \$510 million with \$101 million of qualified debt, resulting in \$409 million available in debt capacity. There is certain debt that is outside the debt limit such as water and sewer, landfill capping, school building projects in partnership with MSBA and debt specified by legislation. The biggest debts taken on by towns are school projects. The school projects without MSBA funding must be funded within the debt limit.

Exempt debt service, reserved excess levy capacity, and unused excess levy capacity was reviewed. Exempt debt has a dedicated funding source from property taxes which expires when the debt is fully amortized. Debt exclusion requires approval at Town Meeting and at the ballot box. Debt exclusions are used for larger projects or initiatives that cannot be funded through CIP or other funding sources. Mr. Lawlor reviewed the projects remaining under debt exclusion, when they will be fully amortized, and how they impact the average single family real estate tax bill.

Ms. DiCesaro asked if it was realistic that the legislature will address the debt limit. Mr. Lawlor informed the Committee that he has been speaking with our legislators about it. Andover is the first community to consider a project that would require borrowing this amount of money without MSBA partnership. There are a few other communities getting close to where Andover is in this process.

Dr. Conoscenti added that other schools have built schools without MSBA funds, such as Brookline and a few others.

Mr. Lawlor stated that any legislative change will not occur until July/August.

Mr. Wright asked if we could apply for MSBA funding? Andover is in the midst of constructing West Elementary/Shawsheen Preschool, so our chances are not very high.

Ms. Spruce stated that it is shown to be less expensive to move forward without MSBA funding due to the extended timeline and rising construction costs.

- 3. Presentation of Recommendation from AHS Building Committee** – Mark Johnson introduced the members of the building committee in attendance. He also reviewed the timeline and schematic design timeline of the building committee which included 74 meetings, 6 community forums, 2 AHS tours, sustainability charrettes, and touring of other high schools. The future demographic of the high school was researched, and it is estimated that 1900 students is the number construction should be based upon. Mr. Johnson reviewed the options discussed at meetings, which option was decided upon, and why it was chosen. Campus 2 with a new Auditorium was unanimously voted as the preferred option.

James Liebman reviewed the timeline for Campus 2 with a new Auditorium. The feasibility phase and cost analysis process were reviewed as well. There was a high-level construction cost information comparison between all 3 options for decision making purposes. The team will use industry standard multipliers to translate preliminary construction cost analysis to rough total project costs. Campus 2 with new Auditorium was the least expensive option. Mr. Liebman reviewed the difference in the cost of the three options discussed. He also reviewed the soft costs and costs broken down by percentage of the total cost. Potential Add-Ons, items the community has expressed they

want to include, were also reviewed and the additional costs. These will be addressed during the schematic design. The building costs being reviewed are current as of March 10, 2023.

The proposed building construction was compared to MSBA guidelines for net square footage. The MSBA guidelines are the standard for what they are willing to reimburse and the building committee expects space in each category to be “right sized”. The Field House would not be included in MSBA guidelines.

The MSBA process is being followed with clear modules starting with the eligibility period, forming a project team, and feasibility study. Schematic design will begin in May 2023.

The construction of Campus 2 with a new Auditorium will take 38 months to construct and will have a low impact to the students. The pros and cons of all three options were reviewed.

Mr. Johnson added that the new building will bring new educational opportunities to the students.

Dr. Conoscenti stated that a lot of community feedback had been received in the past 7-8 months. Families of current students and future high school students shared their thoughts and concern with the length of construction.

Mr. Wright thanked the building committee for their effort in obtaining feedback. He also asked how 1900 students was arrived at.

Joe DeSantis explained that an enrollment study was conducted to determine the enrollment. Historical enrollment, the housing market, etc., were reviewed and 1900 is appropriate.

Mr. Johnson added that there is a push from the Commonwealth to increase housing, so we need to plan for this possibility and future needs to be met. There needs to be flexibility to educate students in the future. The current plan is to plan for 85% utilization rate with room for an increase.

Mr. Wright stated that Andover High School is our flagship school and deserves attention and support for our students. The people in the building make the difference and the building is just as important. We need to be able to provide opportunities that allow all of our students to succeed.

Ms. Spruce thanked the committee for their work and thoughtful process. She supports the Campus 2 with new Auditorium option.

Ms. DiCesaro appreciated the attention to detail and the cost of doing nothing is too expensive to try to maintain the existing building.

Dr. Conoscenti added that the students are our priority, and the existing building is holding them back.

A motion that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Andover High School Building Committee’s recommendation to move forward with the building project option titled Campus 2 with new Auditorium was made by Ms. Spruce, seconded by Mr. Wright and unanimously approved 5-0.

- 4. Universal Free School Meals** – Ms. DiCesaro drafted a proposed resolution for the Committee to consider to express support for universal free school meals. The program was successful in Andover with a high number of participants. This resolution will be

added to the list of towns supporting the program. Mr. Taverna suggested sending a letter to our legislators as written testimony for Andover. Our participation rates are up, and this program removes a barrier. Ms. Spruce agreed the Committee should send the letter to all representatives, senator and governor.

A motion that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the letter to be sent as written testimony to Andover's elected representatives at the state level for universal free school meals as presented was made by Ms. Spruce, seconded by Dr. Conoscenti and unanimously approved 5-0.

- 5. Special Education Funding** – Ms. DiCesaro stated that the 14% tuition rate increase for Out Of District tuition is an unprecedented spike considering the increase over the last 13 years has averaged 2% annually. On March 20, 2023, the Governor signed a bill to address the imminent strain on school budgets which includes \$75 million in reserve for extraordinary relief for school districts. Andover is on the cusp of qualifying for this relief. Ms. DiCesaro drafted a letter stating that the bill is unnecessarily complicated which may leave many districts with no supplemental assistance. Ms. Spruce suggested a correction in the letter, and it be sent to representatives, senator and the Governor.

A motion that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the letter to be sent to Andover's elected representatives at the state level for special education funding as presented and amended was made by Dr. Conoscenti, seconded by Ms. DiCesaro and unanimously approved 5-0.

- 6. Financials** – Mr. Taverna presented the February 2023 financials. We are on track as the previous months. He will review the savings and prepaying tuitions at an upcoming meeting.

G. Consent Agenda

- 1. Grants/Donations to District** – Andover High School from Digital Federal Credit Union for Andover High School scholarships in the amount of \$7,500.
Andover High School from Andover High School PAC for Andover High School Teachers Wish List in the amount of \$500.00.
- 2. Minutes from February 16, 2023 and March 16, 2023.**

A motion that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented was made by Ms. DiCesaro, seconded by Ms. Spruce and unanimously approved 5-0.

A motion was made to adjourn the Andover School Committee meeting at 9:50pm by Ms. Spruce, seconded by Mr. Wright and unanimously approved 5-0.

Submitted By: _____
Lynn Viselli, Recording Secretary

Approved _____
Date

Per the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the following is a list of documents that were either distributed to the Andover School Committee before the meeting in the packet or at the meeting.

1. Agenda
2. WHMS Field Trip
3. AHS Fine Arts Field Trip
4. Debt Overview
5. Andover High School Building Project Update
6. Universal Free Meals Letter
7. Special Education Funding Letter
8. February Financials
9. Consent Agenda