

Quincy, MASSACHUSETTS – May 7, 2014

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Regular Meeting of the Quincy School Committee

A regular meeting of the Quincy School Committee was held on Wednesday, May 7, 2014 in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. Present were Mayor Thomas Koch, Mr. Paul Bregoli, Mr. Noel DiBona, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mrs. Anne Mahoney, Mr. David McCarthy, and Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Vice Chair.

Regular Meeting

Vice-Chair Presiding

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The Superintendent called the roll and all were present. Also present were: Dr. Richard DeCristofaro, Secretary; Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk; Mr. Michael Draicchio, Mr. James Mullaney, Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mrs. Maura Papile, Ms. Madeline Roy, Mr. Keith Segalla, Mr. Robert Shaw, Ms. Judy Todd; Ms. Allison Cox, President, Quincy Education Association.

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There was a moment of silence for members of the military serving overseas.

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Mr. McCarthy made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bregoli, to approve the Regular Meeting minutes for April 9, 2014. On a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Regular Meeting
Minutes Approved
4/9/14

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Hank Dondero spoke of his concerns about the proposed grade configuration for Sterling. He is also concerned about Common Core State Standards; the standards are not as rigorous and there are too many unanswered questions.

Open Forum

Lori Hagborg, Renee Czaikowski, and Annette Donohue spoke about enhancing the instrumental music program, scheduling time for band instruction during the school day, supporting the purchasing of percussion instruments, and providing additional staffing.

Bill Zamzow is concerned that the 3.2% increase budget for Quincy Public Schools is not equivalent to the 4.7% increase for other departments in the city. Quincy Public Schools budget cuts from earlier years have not been fully restored.

Students Timothy Nguyen, Shrina Pahla, Cindy Trang, and Rachel Holley all spoke in support of additional time for instrumental instruction and practice. More opportunities for students to attend as they balance academic performance and activities would be helpful. They also asked for assistance in purchasing instruments to expand the pool of students able to participate.

Bernazzani Elementary School Grade 3 parents Elaine Cronin, Joanne Petrongolo, Christina Dunn, Kendra Demopolous, Jenny Tobin, Mary Copp, Cynthia Donohue, and Kate Campbell all spoke in support of having an additional Grade 4 teacher at Bernazzani next year. The parents are concerned about class size and students on IEPs and 504 plans in the two classrooms.

Kathy Hogan spoke about learning Physics through Sports, an area that is underserved in helping students learn.

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Dr. DeCristofaro opened the Superintendent's Report with an *Inspiring Quincy* video, featuring *Annie* at Atlantic Middle School, the Central Middle School Science Fair, Montclair's Anti-Bullying, the Community Service Learning Celebration, and Wollaston's 100th Anniversary celebration.

Superintendent's
Report

Senior Director of Student Support Services and Special Education Maura Papile introduced Dave Smith and Jacob Yanovich from the Rural Lodge of Masons for recognition for their generosity to the Quincy Public Schools through the School~Community Partnerships. The Masons have an unwavering commitment to the students and families of Quincy Public Schools, including funding Rachel's Challenge for all Grade 7 students, the Chris Herren presentation for high school students, and generous donations for families in need during the holidays, gifts and meals. The Masons also funded Credit Recovery for 10 students, a life-changing event for these students allowing them to graduate with their classes. Mr. Yakovich spoke on behalf of the Masons that they are glad to benefit the students of Quincy; being of service to the community most important part of their mission.

North Quincy High School Principal Rob Shaw introduced the NEASC Preliminary Accreditation Report; both the full report and a summary were shared with the School Committee. A follow-up committee will be created at the end of the school year to begin work on addressing the recommendations. Mr. Shaw expressed his appreciation for School Committee support during the process.

Ms. Isola congratulated Mr. Shaw and the NQHS staff for their preparation for the process. She enjoyed the opportunity for School Committee to participate and noted that the recommendations are items that are easily integrated into the school.

Cleaner Greener Quincy was held on May 3 with QPS participation across the city, parents and students assisted staff in beautifying school and park grounds. The

Community Service Learning Celebration was a showcase for the many tremendous students of Quincy Public Schools and their consciousness towards the community.

A revised Spring Concert schedule was shared and Dr. DeCristofaro announced that Central Middle School would be presenting *Beauty and the Beast* on May 8 and 9. The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation Walk will be held on Saturday, May 31, at 9:00 am, beginning from the Beechwood Knoll Elementary School; 12 elementary and middle schools will be part of this year's walk.

Other items shared with School Committee included an updated Assessment Calendar, Aspen Publication #12, and an example of Home-School Connections: Monthly Newsletter from the Squantum Elementary.

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Mr. Bregoli said that at the May 5, 2014 Policy Subcommittee Meeting, the new revision of the Athletic Eligibility Policy (9.8.5) was approved to move forward for School Committee consideration and public comment. The revised policy will appear on the May 21, 2014 School Committee Meeting agenda for a vote. The revised policy is:

Old Business

Policy Update on Athletic Eligibility (9.8.5)

To be eligible for high school sports, a student may not have more than one failing grade during the last marking period preceding the contest. To be eligible for fall sports, a student may not have more than one failing grade on the previous academic year final report card. All incoming grade 9 students are eligible for fall sports. The academic eligibility of all students shall be considered as official and determining only on the date when the report cards for that ranking period have been issued.

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Mayor Koch gave an overview of the City of Quincy FY2015 Budget, a proposed appropriation of \$268,540,406, a 4.1% increase over last year. The Quincy Public Schools budget is an increase of \$2.9 million. Other areas of budget increases include Public Safety (Police and Firefighters) and Library (replacing state funding). Incremental increases are planned for the Assessing Department, capital outlay for computers, software, and vehicles. Quincy's debt is low compared to other cities and towns, and the bond rating was just increased. Community Preservation funds, the Hotel Tax, and the municipal Meals tax contribute to paying down debt. Revenues are generated through property taxes (74%); state aid (17%), and local receipts (9%). State aid has not recovered to the level of earlier years, but is up slightly. Stabilization has increased over time and property tax growth has continued to be substantially under state limits. Quincy has excess levy capacity of \$18.5 million, one of the highest in the state. Almost every city and town taxes homeowners to the legal limit each year.

New Business

FY2015 Budget Overview

All City Departments, including Quincy Public Schools will appear before City Council's Finance Subcommittee. City Council can change the Quincy Public Schools bottom line, but not individual line items. Mayor Koch said additional QPS funding will give School Committee the opportunity to work with the Superintendent and Leadership Team to make improvements and add value to existing programs.

Dr. DeCristofaro thanked Mayor Koch for the Quincy Public Schools budget appropriation. School Committee has worked to restore programs and services from the budget cuts of several years ago. The budget allocation will allow us to make appropriate decisions with students at the center of every decision. Dr. DeCristofaro is grateful for the opportunity to continue to improve the educational offerings to students and families.

He then reviewed that the budget process begins with the Superintendent meeting with Principals and Superintendent's Leadership about areas of consideration: enrollment and class size, program and student supports. In a series of scheduled meetings, a draft budget will be presented to School Committee, options are reviewed and prioritized, there is a public hearing, and then a final vote on the budget. Subcommittee meetings to be held on May 15, May 20, and May 28. The Public Hearing will be held on June 4 and final presentation and vote at School Committee on June 11.

Mayor Koch made a motion that the Quincy School Committee withdraws from the obligation to enroll non-resident students in the Quincy Public Schools for the 2014-2015 academic year for the following reasons: (1) Continued projected enrollment conditions at the elementary, middle, and high schools based on current and projected enrollments; (2) Policy of the Quincy School Committee to adhere to class size guidelines. Ms. Isola seconded the motion and on a roll call vote, the ayes have it 7-0.

School Choice

Ms. Isola made a motion to approve the Out of State Travel of Wollaston Elementary School Grade 5 students to Canobie Lake Park, Windham, New Hampshire on June 16, 2014. Mr. McCarthy seconded to the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Out of State Travel

Mrs. Mahoney requested that Dr. DeCristofaro share with School Committee a list of current Principals and Assistant Principals and their tenure in those positions. She also requested the timeline for posting the Central Middle School principal position that is going to be vacated July 1.

Additional Business

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Mrs. Mahoney announced the Special Education Subcommittee meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 14 at 6:00 pm in the Teacher’s Dining Room at Quincy High School.

Communications

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Mrs. Hubley noted that all School Committee and Subcommittee meeting minutes are posted on the Quincy Public Schools website: www.quincypublicschools.com.

Reports of
Subcommittees

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Mr. McCarthy reviewed the Facilities and Security Subcommittee meeting that was held on April 30, 2014. The Subcommittee discussed the preparation for the Sterling Middle School feasibility study, received an update on the Coddington Hall renovation, and reviewed the NQHS incident and high school lobby security.

Facilities and
Security
Subcommittee

For the Sterling Middle School project, city enrollment trends were reviewed, Sterling Middle School proposed grade configurations were discussed, along with the history of Della Chiesa, Lincoln Hancock, and Sterling current grade configurations. The process for working with the MSBA was outlined: the Eligibility Phase is in process right now and scheduled to conclude by October 30. In Module 2, a team of professionals is assembled including the Owner’s Project Manager and Designer, and in Module 3, the feasibility of proposed configurations are studied. At all stages of the process, the Building Committee and School Committee will meet with parents and community members for input.

Mr. McCarthy noted that on May 13, Dr. DeCristofaro, City Solicitor James Timmins, and Director of Public Buildings Gary Cunniff will meet with the MSBA about Enrollment Certification. Mr. McCarthy said that we have discussed the grade configurations as much as possible at this point, keeping in mind the desire for neighborhood schools.

Mr. Walter MacDonald then presented an update on the Coddington Hall renovation process. The project is on schedule and he is anticipating a late June/early July completion date. Mr. Draicchio updated the Subcommittee on the incident at NQHS, we had a quick and thorough response from the staff and the Quincy Police Department; we are working on eliminating the human factor in these event. For high school lobbies, procedures are in place for checking visitor identification, and there are several ideas for further research and discussion.

Mr. McCarthy made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 30, 2014 Facilities and Security Subcommittee Meeting. Mr. Bregoli seconded the motion.

On the motion, Mrs. Mahoney wanted it noted that she was not allowed to speak on

this topic at the last School Committee meeting, which is against procedure.

Mrs. Mahoney asked whether other configurations were submitted to the MSBA beyond Grades 4-8 and 5-8. Dr. DeCristofaro feels that these are the viable configurations and that is what will be discussed at the Enrollment Certification meeting. The Building Committee will hold its inaugural meeting later in May and will look to the next phase of hiring an Owners Project Manager and Designer to assist with the feasibility study. Dr. DeCristofaro said that grade configuration and possibly redistricting to alleviate pressure for other schools' neighborhood districts will all be part of this discussion.

Mrs. Mahoney asked whether the Lincoln Hancock community has been notified. Dr. DeCristofaro has spoken with the Ward Councillor Brian Palmucci, Principal Ruth Witmer, and Lincoln Hancock PTO Board. Mrs. Mahoney objected to the fact that no public forum took place before the enrollment projections were submitted; we should have public conversations before it is too late. She stated that Ward 4 has had several major issues impact the community with little public input. Quincy Public Schools will be treating these students inequitably by having Grade 4 students in a middle school building and she is very disappointed that this is what was submitted.

Ms. Isola said that School Committee has discussed this issue at three Subcommittee meetings and two School Committee meetings. She objected to the inflammatory way the question is being presented publicly and wants to reframe the discussion about how best to meet the needs of the community. Ms. Isola is relying on the expertise of Dr. DeCristofaro who has advised that this is a viable model. If there is a 4-8 school, we have the ability through leadership and staff, to create a program that provides the best opportunity for students. Framing this as throwing 4th graders into middle school is doing a disservice to the parents in Quincy. There are models that have K-8 in one building -- who are these 8th graders that we're afraid of being near our 4th graders? Teachers will ensure that students are appropriately exposed to age-appropriate ideas. Equitable does not mean completely the same. Our schools are all unique, tailoring their programs to the needs of the community. Sometimes we can provide things to our students that may look different. Going forward, she wants to emphasize her trust in Dr. DeCristofaro's expertise, knowledge, and caring. When the Grade 5 students moved to middle school, people were initially apprehensive, but their fears were not borne out. Going forward, she would like to have a conversation based on facts. We are not suggesting a middle school model for Grade 4 students.

Mr. DiBona attended the Daniel Webster/Point Webster School which housed Grades K through 8 in one building with separate entrances for elementary and middle school grades. He would like to see the new Sterling Middle School have separate entrances and different arrival and dismissal times. Mr. DiBona is very opposed to the idea of housing Grades 4-5 for both schools at Point Webster and Grades 6-8 at Sterling. The closeness of the new Sterling building to Lincoln

Hancock will be desirable for establishing a campus. Mr. DiBona said that Dr. DeCristofaro has done the research and at the same time, he understands Mrs. Mahoney's concerns. For Point Webster and Sterling, the elementary schools are straight feeders to their middle school, which is already a difference from the rest of the city.

Mrs. Mahoney said she has had many parents tell her that they are opposed to this idea and that now is the time to have this conversation. Six weeks ago was the first time it was presented to School Committee and she doesn't think we did our job in vetting this idea.

Mrs. Hubley said that she attended the Lincoln Hancock PTC to hear parent discussion on the topic; PTC president Kristin Perry is doing outreach to Lincoln Hancock parents through meetings and emails.

Mr. Bregoli expressed his support for the Superintendent and for neighborhood schools. The many buildings that were sold off during the 1980s showed a lack of planning, especially in southwest Quincy. Mr. Bregoli feels confident that we are not integrating Grade 4 students into middle school. He said that change is hard and this is not an easy decision for everyone. He also doesn't want to jeopardize the start of the project by adding other configurations to the discussion.

Mr. McCarthy said that when this was first proposed, his research showed the K-8 model without transitions is the most desired model. We have the opportunity to design this building; current Grade 5 parent from Sterling or Point are not concerned about the transition. If parents were concerned about this proposal, there would be lines of people to speak at Open Forum. Full-day Kindergarten has been very successful across the city. The neighborhood is ready for the change that the new school will bring and we have the opportunity to create a 4-5 academy. Redistricting is definitely in the cards and all neighborhoods are on the table. Cities change and numbers change, we have to be realistic. Mr. McCarthy is feeling positive about working with the Building Committee.

Mrs. Mahoney said she is not afraid of change, but different neighborhoods react in different ways. If this were suggested at Atlantic Middle School, parents would be immediately concerned. While she appreciates Dr. DeCristofaro's knowledge, Mrs. Mahoney wants to see the research that supports this idea. The Clinton, Massachusetts Grades 4-8 model is not a comparable since it is a much smaller school district with one school at this level. Six weeks is not enough time to prepare for a decision of this magnitude.

On a voice vote, the ayes have it.

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Ms. Isola reviewed the Teaching and Learning Subcommittee meeting held on May Teaching and

5, 2014. At this meeting, Foreign Language programs in other cities and towns were reviewed, along with the current Middle and High School programs in QPS. This was more about gathering information and beginning the conversation of adding more support for foreign language at the middle school level.

Learning Subcommittee

Ms. Hallett presented an overview on the music and choral programs at elementary, middle, and high school levels. Mrs. Fredrickson presented on the research done by the Data Collection and Storage Team on systems that would work with Aspen student

Ms. Isola made a motion to approve the Teaching and Learning Subcommittee Meeting Minutes for May 5, 2014 as amended by Mrs. Hubley. Mr. Bregoli seconded the motion.

On the motion, Mr. DiBona said that he liked Ms. Isola's idea of a magnet program for foreign language at the middle school level. Ms. Isola said that this was one of a number of ideas to be explored further.

On a voice vote, the ayes have it.

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Mr. Bregoli reviewed the Policy Subcommittee meeting held on May 5, 2014. The High School Principals and Community Service Coordinators presented their statistics on completion rates for seniors, who are close to being finished.

Policy Subcommittee

The Athletic Eligibility Policy was revised as reviewed earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Bregoli made a motion to approve the minutes of the Policy Subcommittee Meeting for May 5, 2014. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

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Mrs. Hubley waived reviewing the Budget and Finance Subcommittee meeting held on May 6, 2014 as the meeting was discussed under New Business.

Budget and Finance Subcommittee

Mr. Bregoli made a motion to approve the minutes of the Budget and Finance Subcommittee Meeting for May 6, 2014. Ms. Isola seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

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Mayor Koch made a motion to adjourn at 9:25 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. McCarthy and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Adjournment