

AUBURN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
MINUTES from April 22, 2020
Virtual Meeting:
12:30 p.m.

In attendance:

George Scobie
Jessie Harrington
Gail Holloway
Dottie Kauffman
Meghan McCrillis

Maryellen Brunelle
Beth Chamberland
Cecelia Wirzbicki

Visitor: Mr. Joe Shenette

Thanking everyone for joining remotely, at 12:35 p.m., Mr. Scobie called the meeting to order. He noted that a visitor had joined the meeting: Mr. Joe Shenette.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Having checked with Mr. Shenette, there were no Citizens' Comments.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS:

AHS Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Team

Dr. Brunelle shared that the Auburn Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Team had recently been awarded the Jack Doherty Sportsmanship Award for the 2019-2020 season, this from the Central Mass Hockey Officials. A copy of Dr. Brunelle's congratulatory letter to each girl on the team was included in the packet.

SUPERINTENDENT'S MEMO:

High Honor and Honor Roll Letters - Trimester II

Dr. Brunelle shared a sample Honor Roll letter that she and Dr. Chamberland had mailed to every deserving Auburn Middle and High School student who made it to the High Honor or Honor Roll for Trimester II, this to congratulate them on their accomplishment. She noted that it gives both Dr. Chamberland and her great pleasure in recognizing our students in this way.

Ongoing Collaboration

Dr. Brunelle noted that she was pleased to share - as has become the tradition in Auburn - that there are several ongoing collaborations between the schools and Town as we weather this COVID-19 pandemic together: Auburn's school nurses are assisting with "contact tracing" by outreaching individuals in Auburn who have tested positive for the Coronavirus to determine the individuals with whom they may have been in contact and then outreaching them as well.

Additionally, as per Town Manager Julie Jacobson's memo dated April 8, 2020 - please see the pertinent paragraph below - we have nearly 100 staff from the Auburn Public Schools devoting time each week to this initiative and Dr. Brunelle THANKED THEM sincerely for doing so!

Under the "Our Seniors Matter" initiative, town employees will call approximately 1,600 seniors to check on them weekly and guide them to qualified staff at the Senior Center who can provide technical and referral assistance and link those seniors with available resources. We want to be sure our seniors do not feel as if they are completely isolated or without support if needed. Often, just hearing a friendly voice from a personal phone call can help a senior feel less isolated during this difficult and stressful time.

Donation from Table Talk Pies to Grab and Go Food Program

Dr. Brunelle shared that Mrs. Janice King, Director of Food Service, had recently notified her of a very generous donation from Table Talk Pies: they will provide mini pies for the next four weeks to the Meals to Go Program. This donation has a wholesale value of \$700.00. A thank you letter to Table Talk Pies was also included in your packet.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to accept with gratitude the donation of mini pies to the Auburn Meals to Go Program; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

Award from Project Bread

Mrs. Janice King, Director of Food Service, also notified Dr. Brunelle that the first of three grants she has applied for has been received. Following is the email she received:

“Dear Janice King,

On behalf of Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger, Inc., I am pleased to award (Auburn Food Service Program) with a COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant for \$3,950.00. Thank you for serving meals to the kids and teens of your community during this unprecedented time, and ensuring that they can continue to receive the nutrition they need while schools are closed.

Again, thank you for the work you are doing to address the needs of your community. Congratulations, and we look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Natasha Smith

Director of Child Nutrition, Project Bread”

Dr. Brunelle informed the Committee that this grant funding will be utilized to directly offset some of the extra expenses for small equipment and carts, paper goods, and supplies of hand sanitizer, disposable gloves and personnel. She noted that we are very grateful for the continued financial support the Auburn Public Schools has received from Project Bread to expand access to healthy and nutritious foods for our students during this time of unanticipated school closure and also grateful for the response of so many volunteers who are making our Meals TO GO possible. Mrs. King noted that she was especially thankful for the many Food Service staff members who are working to prepare meals and make the service run so smoothly providing meals for pick up at Auburn Middle School, home deliveries, and to Auburn Youth and Family Service staff. It has been a great team effort! Thank you to all.

Mrs. Holloway made a motion to accept, with gratitude, this award from Project Bread – The Walk for Hunger, Inc., in the amount of \$3,950.00; Mrs. Kauffman seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

Donation to AHS Lacrosse Program

Dr. Brunelle shared that she was recently informed that Mike Jarvis, AHS Boys' lacrosse coach, completed a grant application through US Lacrosse for their “first stick program” which supports new(er) programs to build and help sustain by donating equipment. The girls' team was awarded the grant this year. It is a \$3,000 value and includes 20 sets of field equipment for players (stick and goggles) and one full set of goalie equipment. On behalf of her husband, Mrs. Tess Jarvis, who coaches

the girls' team, noted that was very exciting to have this opportunity for our new players that are energized to build on our team's previous success. AHS is going into the 4th Varsity season of lacrosse. The girls' team has made the postseason playoffs for the past 2 years. The interest and energy continues to grow for Auburn Lacrosse. This year, the boys' and girls' teams planned on full JV and Varsity teams, however, we now know that with the spring athletic season having been cancelled, this sadly will not happen.

Kudos to Mr. Jarvis for securing this donation.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to accept with gratitude the grant from US Lacrosse's "First Stick Program" for equipment for the girls' lacrosse team at a value of \$3,000; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

Donations to Food Service Program

Dr. Brunelle noted that Mrs. Janice King, Director of Food Service, recently shared with her that she had received two additional donations towards defraying the cost of student lunch debt and it was Dr. Brunelle's recommendation that the School Committee formally accept these donations with gratitude. They will be deposited to the Food Service Gift Account.

Mrs. Holloway made a motion to accept the (second) donation from Ms. Donna Bacon in the amount of \$50 and the donation from Mr. and Mrs. Adam Rinnus in the amount of \$200 towards defraying the cost of student lunch debt; Dr. McCrillis seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Reschedule of Annual Town Meeting to June 2, 2020

Dr. Brunelle informed the Committee that, as of this time, the Annual Town Meeting has been rescheduled to Tuesday, June 2, 2020 and will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the AHS Auditorium, with those details subject to change in response to conditions at the time, Governor Baker's updated orders and the health and well-being of all.

Student Opportunity Act Submission

Dr. Brunelle shared with the Committee that the deadline for the Student Opportunity Act Submission, as expected, has been extended to May 15, 2020 and may, per Commissioner Riley, be extended further, this dependent on what the legislature does with these funds and the potential extended closure. Dr. Brunelle will continue to keep the Committee apprised.

FY 2021 Public Hearing Reminder

Dr. Brunelle reminded the members that the School Committee Public Hearing on the FY 2021 Draft Budget was scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Monday, April 27th via Zoom, with the same having been shared with Auburn's Town Meeting Members, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Leadership Team and Town Manager Jacobson and CFO Kazanovicz.

FY2021 Budgetary Concerns: Memo from CFO Kazanovicz

Dr. Brunelle shared a copy of Mr. Kazanovicz's memo that went to department heads and herself on April 16, 2020, sharing his concerns, as well as Town Manager Jacobson's, regarding the impact of this pandemic on the FY2021 budget. Dr. Brunelle noted that she and Dr. Chamberland have had some preliminary discussions with them both and will be following up in the coming weeks, these discussions

to include Mr. Handfield, Dr. Chamberland, Mrs. Wirzbicki, Town Manager Jacobson, CFO Kazinovicz and herself. They will continue to keep the School Committee apprised.

Dr. Brunelle also shared that on April 16, 2020, she received an email communication from Mr. Nathan Dearant, Legislative Aide to Representative Paul Frost, which originated from Eileen McAnneny of the Massachusetts Taxpayer Foundation. Ms. McAnneny's email was shared with the Committee:

Dear Legislator,

“On Tuesday, MTF published our [revised tax forecast](#) for the state fiscal year 2021 (starts July 1, 2020) in conjunction with our testimony at the Virtual Economic Roundtable hosted by the Senate and House Chairs of Ways & Means and the Secretary of Administration & Finance. The projection estimates \$26.756 billion in tax revenue will be collected in fiscal 2021, a decline of \$4.4 billion, or 14 percent compared to the original consensus tax revenue estimate as a result of the rapid and devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Massachusetts economy.

Today, [MTF's new analysis](#) highlights the implications of our revised forecast on the MBTA, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), and other purposes supported by dedicated tax revenue. We estimate that compared to the original consensus estimate, the MBTA will receive \$53 million less in dedicated sales tax revenue, MSBA will receive \$174 million less, and there will be no transfer to the state's "rainy day" fund compared to the \$278 million deposit that was expected previously. After adjusting for these transfers, the state's budget writers face a tax revenue gap of nearly \$4 billion as they work to balance the fiscal 2021 budget.”

Regards,

Eileen McAnneny

President, Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation

Potential Relocation of Central Office

Dr. Brunelle shared a comparison from FY 2019 of the utility costs at the Auburn Police Station as compared to here at Central Office. She noted that as stated by Mr. Kazanovicz, the Police Station currently runs a “24/7operation” and that “the electricity cost to operate Dispatch alone is immense.”

Additionally, Dr. Brunelle included a 5-year history of monies spent on the HVAC system at the Police Station, to include both repairs and Preventative Maintenance (PM); and the Police Department provided information regarding capital improvement projects (CIP) that have been completed since FY 2011.

Dr. Brunelle noted that with her upcoming retirement, this seems a decision best made by the members as a Committee and Superintendent-Elect Handfield, because any potential relocation is likely not to occur for 2+ years, the specific timing as determined by the approval of the community to support the Public Safety Complex project and then construction of the actual facility.

Citizens' Leadership Academy

Dr. Brunelle notified the Committee that with not enough interest from Auburn community members and now in light of the current closures, the Citizens' Leadership Academy has been cancelled for this year.

Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes:

Mrs. Holloway made a motion to approve the minutes of the School Committee meetings of March 31st and April 9th; Dr. McCrillis seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

NEW BUSINESS:

School Department Fields and Grounds

Dr. Brunelle shared with the Committee that as they were likely aware, the Town announced the following on March 30, 2020:

“Playgrounds & Fields: All town playgrounds, tennis courts and basketball courts are closed. Fields are closed for organized sports, as well as informal games and activities of 10 people or more. No field permits will be issued. Parks remain open to the public, with the understanding that the public will follow all State orders. We ask for your cooperation in keeping gatherings to less than ten people to ensure that you are practicing social distancing with six feet between each individual in order to allow everyone to enjoy their recreation safely. If these guidelines are not followed, the Town will revisit this policy and may have to consider closing public parks as well.”

Dr. Brunelle continued that as has been reported to her by some of the members, there have been large crowds of people congregating on the fields/grounds/courts of Auburn High School, thus not following the social/physical distancing guidelines as set by Governor Baker and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. She noted that per the Centers for Disease Control website regarding why we should practice social distancing, they note the following:

“COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet) for a prolonged period. Spread happens when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and droplets from their mouth or nose are launched into the air and land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. The droplets can also be inhaled into the lungs. Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19.”

That same site went on to state: “When COVID-19 is spreading in your area, everyone should limit close contact with individuals outside your household in indoor and outdoor spaces. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others when possible, even if you have no symptoms.”

Dr. Brunelle went on to state that closing school grounds – until Governor Baker lifts the closure and social distancing requirements - seems to make great sense and may be an additional tool in helping to slow the spread of this insidious disease among others within our community and beyond, with the challenge being how to enforce this? There continued with a discussion amongst the members.

Dr. Brunelle noted that Chief Coleman and Chief Sluckis would have to be kept in the loop; that the closing of the driveways to the buildings would likely not be allowed in case of emergencies at any of the buildings which the Fire and Police Departments would need access for; even with the gates locked, people won't be deterred as they will just jump the fence and this will be a continuing problem as the weather gets better. Even more vigilance will be needed at that time.

Mr. Scobie noted that when children see adults not following the rules (social distancing, wearing masks, etc.), they only follow suit. So, noting that the decision was not made easily or lightly, at the risk of offending residents who are exercising the proper precautions, it was his recommendation that the grounds and fields be closed to the public during the period of closure, with the request that an email notification be sent to all our families, notifying them of such.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to close all of the Auburn the school grounds and fields, this in an effort to insist that social distancing be maintained on all school grounds; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

Dr. Brunelle will prepare an email to families to go out later in the day on April 22nd.

MIT Report on Remote Learning

Dr. Brunelle shared that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; the MIT Teaching Systems Lab reviewed state education agency guidance to identify areas of consensus and emerging practices. The report, [Remote Learning Guidance from State Education Agencies During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A First Look](#), provides objective recommendations and best practices for state education agencies providing remote learning guidance during COVID-19 school closures.

Massachusetts fulfills 16 out of 21 criteria outlined in the report, ranking the state second in the nation. The report and datasets are [available here](#).

BUSINESS/FINANCIAL REPORT:

Year to Date Budget Report

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided a year to date budget report as of April 21, 2020

Transfers

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided a listing of transfers, this time all within the Series.

Mrs. Holloway made a motion to approve the transfers within the Series as presented by the Business Manager; Dr. McCrillis seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

Bus Applications due by June 1, 2020

Mrs. Wirzbicki shared that as of April 21st, 429 bus applications have been received for the 2020-2021 school year and reminded the audience that all applications have to be date marked by June 1st in order to avoid a late fee.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

At 1:18 p.m., Mrs. Holloway made a motion to enter Executive Session per MGL Chapter 30, Section 21(a) (2) to conduct strategies for negotiations with union and non-union personnel and per Chapter 30, Section 21(a) (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. Mrs. Kauffman seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Roll Call Vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

The Zoom meeting ended at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ailaine Zautner
Recording Secretary

Referenced Documents:

Letter to Girls' Varsity Ice Hockey Team Members
Sample Honor Roll Letter for Tri II
Thank you letter to US Lacrosse
Documents re Potential Relocation of Central Office

Minutes of March 31, 2020 and April 9, 2020
Thank you to Table Talk Pies
Ed Kazanovicz Letter re Budget Concerns
Year to Date Budget Report and Transfers