

**MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

ZOOM: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/77870173742?pwd=ZkdYNzFNMzJjd0JocW55dWxkZ0NsZz09>

JULY 22, 2020, 1:00 p.m.

In attendance:

George Scobie
Jessie Harrington
Gail Holloway
Dottie Kauffman
Meghan McCrillis

Casey Handfield
Beth Chamberland
Cecelia Wirzbicki

CALL TO ORDER:

At 1:02 p.m., the Chair called the meeting to order.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS: None

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS:

Harry Johnson, In Memoriam

Dr. Handfield shared that Harold E. "Harry" Johnson, Jr., 92, longtime Auburn resident, passed away unexpectedly on Wednesday July 8, 2020. He was a graduate of Auburn High School. Always present in the Auburn community, Harry was most well-known for owning and operating Johnson's Milk and Cream for many years, after which he worked for over a decade as a custodian for Auburn High School, retiring in 1992. He was predeceased by his wife Marilyn but leaves four children, two grandchildren and two great grandchildren; as well as three siblings.

Dr. Handfield asked that those present join him in a moment of silence in Mr. Johnson's memory.

MINUTES:

7/8/2020 for Approval

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 8th meeting; 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.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

U.S. News and World Report - Best High Schools 2020 Announced

Dr. Handfield reported that for the second straight year, and I believe three of the last four, Auburn High School was recognized by US News and World Report as one of America's best public high schools. He noted that we share this designation with several of our sister schools in Massachusetts. The recognition comes after a review of over 17,790 public high schools and how they rank according to:

- College readiness based on the proportions of 12th grade students who took and passed AP and/or IB exams.

- College curriculum breadth based on proportions of 12th grade students who took and passed AP and/or IB exams in multiple content areas.
- Math and reading proficiency, based on student performance on state-required tests.
- Math and reading performance, based on whether performance on state assessments exceeded expectations given the school's proportion of underserved students.
- Underserved student performance, based on how black, Hispanic and low-income students performed on state assessments compared with those who are not underserved in the state.
- Graduation rates, based on the proportion of students who entered ninth grade and graduated four years later.

The Chair thanked the Leadership Team, teachers and students who, he stated, always do their best.

Auburn High School Class of 2020 Commencement Ceremony

Dr. Handfield reminded the Committee that on Friday, July 31st, at 6:30 p.m. the Class of 2020 will receive their diplomas on Memorial Field. He stated that the ceremony will be held in accordance with the commissioner's graduation guidance published in May, a copy of which he included for the Committee's information. He noted that the rain date is August 1st or August 2nd should a second date be needed with the time remaining the same. He thanked Darlene Coyle, Joe Fahey, Town Manager Julie Jacobson, Commissioner Jeffrey Riley, and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito for their assistance with this event.

Dr. Handfield noted that on Tuesday evening, July 28th, the Athletic Sports Awards will be held in the same format as the Graduation.

Dr. Handfield noted that he will provide a seating plan for Graduation at next Wednesday's School Committee meeting.

Comments from the members included that they were very glad for the students that they will get an in-person graduation as it makes such a big difference to them, with some concern being expressed about the students who may have traveled out of state prior to the graduation and also the staff who were going to be in attendance too. Dr. Handfield noted that all will be wearing a face covering; students will sit in family groups, alphabetically arranged and socially-distanced on the field; they have been asked to arrive in one vehicle and it will be an expedited ceremony.

Appointment of Board Member to SWCEC

Dr. Handfield notified the Committee that as per the By-Laws of the Southern Worcester County Educational Collaborative, the School Committee from each member town must appoint a representative to serve on the SWCEC Board. With Dr. Brunelle's retirement, it was his recommendation that he take over this role as each Superintendent in the member districts are currently representatives.

Mrs. Holloway made a motion to appoint Dr. Casey Handfield, Superintendent of Schools, as the Auburn Public Schools' representative on the Southern Worcester County Educational Collaborative Board; 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:

Return to School Team (RTS)

Dr. Handfield reminded the members that the Return to School team has been meeting since June 8th to debrief about the remote nature of the third trimester, provide input into creating surveys of families and

staff regarding what a return to school might look like in the fall, and assist with the development of reports to DESE on July 31st and August 10th, regarding what a reopening would look like in the following formats: (a) full return to school at 3' of distance, (b) full return to school at 6' of distance, (c) a hybrid approach (in-person and remote learning), and (d) remote learning. He provided the link to the notes/information discussed within the committee.

He noted that in recent return to school meetings, survey data has been reviewed (this was also shared with the Committee). He noted that a high percentage of families indicated their hesitancy/unwillingness to return to school full time - at least initially. After completion of the Commissioner's "pressure test" of desks in classrooms at 3', the classrooms essentially look unchanged from the "norm" of how an empty classroom appears. This also did not take into account students in the room, their teachers, aides that may or may not be present supporting students. Last week, the Return to School team did not feel 3' of distance was a viable option - at least initially - due to concerns regarding COVID transmission.

Dr. Handfield further noted that a review of desks at 6' of space in classrooms, as requested by the Commissioner, created classrooms that could accommodate about half of the students it would otherwise hold under "normal" conditions. Again, this did not account for teachers or aides in classrooms. The Return to School team felt that 6' of space between students and teachers was plausible and agreed they were comfortable (as much as they can be) with this distance. This determination by the Return to School team placed the nature of reopening school in fall to a hybrid model.

Three hybrid models were discussed (all with understanding that substantially separate/EL students return fully):

- (a) Cohort A/Cohort B model where students attended school every other day in person;
- (b) Cohort A/Cohort B model where students in Cohort A attended school on Monday/Tuesday in person and Wednesday (all students remote) and Cohort B attended school on Wednesday (all students remote) and in person Thursday/Friday. Cohort A (Thursday/Friday) and Cohort B (Monday/Tuesday) will have work to do and remote sessions with teachers;
- (c) Cohort A one week in person / one week remote, Cohort B one week in person / one week remote.

Dr. Handfield reported that after discussing these options, the Return to School team's recommendation was Option (B). In a meeting with AEA leadership to review some of their concerns regarding return to school, they indicated on behalf of the membership they also support Option (B), as do the administrators of the District. As noted in the survey data, there was not a strong desire on behalf of families one way or another regarding a preferred hybrid model. There was, however, a strong desire on behalf of the AEA and Return to School team to get the academic model agreed upon and out to families for planning purposes. This recommendation comes with the full intention of moving faculty, staff, and students forward to a full-return to school when the Superintendent believes it is safe to do so. A decision to move toward full-return (or return to full remote) will be based on information that includes, but not limited to, data and recommendations from DESE, the CDC, or other organizations that would inform this decision.

Completely remote is being prepared by all school districts right now. All school districts are required to provide students who cannot medically return to school or have another hardship a remote learning option. This is the “homeschooling” option many people are discussing, Dr. Handfield believes, in the community. True homeschooling options must follow School Committee policy per DESE and is entirely different from “remote learning.” Dr. Handfield provided a copy of the Home School policy.

A lot of good discussion ensued with questions being posed by the members and answered by Dr. Handfield and Dr. Chamberland, with the administrators noting that there is still much to be worked out. The District doesn’t have answers for everything at this time. It is a difficult task that we face; it is all very rushed and may involve calendar adjustments. It has yet to be determined whether it is realistic that we can start off with the hybrid model on the first day of school.

Mrs. Kauffman then made a motion to recommend that the Auburn Public Schools adopt and implement Hybrid Option (B) as the academic model to start the 2020-2021 school year until such time the Superintendent determines, based on available information, that a modification to this model is warranted based on data and recommendations from DESE, the CDC, and/or other organizations that would inform this decision.

More discussion ensued with Dr. Handfield assuring the Committee that we are light years ahead of surrounding districts regarding returning to school and Mr. Scobie stating that this is one of the most important discussions the Committee will have and that he was confident that as a district we are doing everything we can to do the right thing for the safety and well-being of our students, families and staff.

Roll call vote: Dr. McCrillis - Yes; Mrs. Kauffman - Yes; Mrs. Holloway - Yes; Mrs. Harrington - Yes; Mr. Scobie - Yes.

Outstanding Information

Dr. Handfield noted that the District is still waiting for transportation guidance, budget guidance, and Athletics/PE/Music guidance from the state. He noted that a 19-page document outlining the initial medical guidance from the state relative to procedures and protocols to follow during reopening under COVID has been received and he provided a link to it.

TEACHING/LEARNING REPORT:

Teacher Planning, Preparation and Scheduling

As was noted by Dr. Chamberland in the earlier discussion regarding returning to school, nearly 90 teachers, special educators, guidance counselors, school psychologists, and social workers will be invited to complete 10 hours of work with building administrators on the first round of preparation and planning for the fall reopening of schools. Teams will be created at each building in an effort to begin the curricular planning for students. These staff members will also help to work through the details of scheduling students based on the recommended model that will be used in each of our buildings as we return to school. Guidance staff will also be working to create a plan that addresses the social-emotional needs of students and staff as they return to buildings. The Return to School model recommendation was determined in collaboration with the Return to School Team, the AEA and the Leadership Team. Upon completion of the 10 hours, a determination will be made regarding any additional time that may be needed to ensure schools are well prepared to welcome students.

DESE Reopening Plan Submission

Dr. Chamberland reported that on July 16th, the District received the template from DESE within which we need to submit our plan for the reopening of schools. The initial submission, due by July 31st is an overview of our preliminary plan for a full in-person learning model, a hybrid learning model and a remote learning model along with our plan in each of these models for the support of High Needs students. She noted that the Final District Reopening Plan is more comprehensive and requires information related to safety, wellness, and social emotional supports; planning and instruction; assessment; intervention; and the school year calendar, including the use of professional development days. This exponentially more in detail plan needs to be submitted to DESE by August 10th which will come before the Committee for their approval on August 5th.

BUSINESS/FINANCIAL REPORT:

Omnibus Information

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided Omnibus Transfers #7 for your information.

FY 21 Budget Transfers

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided the first of the FY21 budget transfers and sought the Committee’s approval on the transfer between the Series. Mrs. Kauffman made the motion to approve the transfer; 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.

FY 21 Year to Date Budget Report

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided a year to date budget report as of July 20, 2020. There were no questions.

Carry Forward Memos for FY20

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided two carry forward memos, one for Prior Year School Articles – 063002 and one for FY20 School Department Article – 023002. She sought the Committee’s approval of carrying forward the amounts listed:

063002 581114	A13ATM10-Special Needs	\$ 67,220.92
063004 581935	A13ATM18-Medicaid Receipts	\$122,214.79
023002 582030	A13ATM19-Medicaid Receipts	\$200,000.00

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to approve the carry forward balances as requested by the Business Manager; 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.

FY20 Carry Forward Request

Mrs. Wirzbicki has provided a memo requesting that you approve her request to carry forward \$168,487.89 to FY21; this to pay out in full previously encumbered expenses.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to approve the carry forward of FY2020 Appropriated School Budget encumbered funds in the amount of \$167,487.89 to FY2021 to be paid out in full; 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.

Capital Improvement Project Balances

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided a Capital Improvement Project Balance Update.

POLICIES:

FF, Naming Rights Policy

This agenda item was addressed by Dr. Chamberland who was requesting that under the direction/rules of this policy that the Committee approve, after a Public Hearing on the subject, the naming the Auburn Middle School Media Center as the Dr. Maryellen Brunelle Media Center in recognition of Dr. Brunelle's incredible service, over seventeen (17) years in total with the last twelve as Superintendent of Schools. Dr. Chamberland also noted that Dr. Brunelle had been an integral part of the new Auburn Middle School from start through to finish.

While the Committee in general felt this was something that would be very well deserved, they felt that the timing of the request was not good in the midst of the pandemic and the task of getting students back in school. The Chair asked that the item be tabled till a time later in the year when things were getting back to normal.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

At 2:33 p.m., Mrs. Holloway made a motion to enter Executive Session per M.G.L. Chapter 30, Section 21 (a) (7) to comply with M.G.L. Chapter 75, Section 5 regarding student residency; 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Ailaine Zautner
Recording Secretary

Referenced Documents:

Minutes 7/8/2020
Governor Baker Press Release
Email re Graduation
Home Schooling Policy
Omnibus Transfers #7
FY21 Budget Transfers
FY 21 YTD Budget Report
Memo re Capital Improvement Balances
Memos (3) from Business Manager re Carry Forward Amounts