

MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Location: School Committee Room
September 30, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

In Attendance:

George Scobie
Jessie Harrington
Gail Holloway
Dottie Kauffman
Meghan McCrillis

Casey Handfield
Beth Chamberland

Absent:

Cecelia Wirzbicki (attending FinCom Meeting)

Jasmyn Gates)
Aaron Zheng) via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Scobie, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked that everyone join him in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS: None

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS: Dr. Handfield shared that Mrs. Janice King (and Food Services Staff) had been awarded the 2020 Children's Friend Award by Auburn Youth and Family Services for their extraordinary efforts providing meals to students and their families since the beginning of COVID. To date, over 600 families are benefiting from our "Meals To Go" program. They will be honored at the AYFS Annual Meeting in October. Dr. Handfield shared that everyone is welcome to join the meeting virtually.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES INTRODUCTION / REPORT

Via Zoom, Dr. Handfield introduced and welcomed Ms. Jasmyn Gates as the Junior member to the Committee. She was joined by Mr. Aaron Zheng, the Senior member of the Committee. He noted that Jasmyn is not a School Choice student as originally stated and we are thrilled to have them both as part of the Committee this year!

Aaron noted that it has been a while (as a representative last year, he was not in attendance at any remote School Committee meetings. He stated that students are getting used to the remote and hybrid schedules, with not too many complaints from students. He and Jasmyn as both Cohort B students and indicated they were very excited to get back into a routine.

MINUTES: 9/17/2020 for Approval

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 17th meeting; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was approved 5-0.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

School Opening Update

Dr. Handfield reported that last week we opened our ½ day cohorts and this week we are in our full-day cohorts in preparation for the move to a 2-1-2 model starting Monday, October 5th. Understandably, there have been some things we needed to work through with buses, ZippSlip, and technology. We also had our first COVID scenario presented. He noted that all but 2 students have tested negative for COVID, as has the driver. We are awaiting the results of the 2 remaining students. He noted it has been

a trying time for everyone; however, he was pleased with where we are in the reopening process given the circumstances before us. He stated we will continue to work hard to ensure that we are providing the best education possible to our students, respond quickly to concerns, and make certain safety is our priority above all else.

Dr. Handfield noted that there have been some quirks with what it means to be remote and some changes should be happening in the next couple of days. They are revisiting simulcasting classrooms into homes and will narrow down what the best action is for our students.

In totality, we had to craft a pretty lengthy Return to School document, negotiate with unions, prepare school buildings, work with transportation and now the work is honing in on instructional delivery to our students. Some things still need to be ironed out. Dr. Chamberland provided the book, "99 Tips and Tricks for Creating Simple and Sustainable Educational Videos," to all teachers in the District and there will be another survey to families asking some very targeted questions around delivered and recording things to be watched later. Teachers are encouraged to share good ideas that work for them with their peers, to collaborate and share.

Mr. Scobie thanked everyone for their efforts and stated he was excited to see where this evolves, noting that it is about making the kids comfortable and will take time.

Smile Project

Dr. Handfield noted that with the sad passing of Michelle Fuller in August, one of her wishes prior to her passing was that all students see smiling faces upon their return to school. Dr. Handfield shared that she had asked him in July about an initiative titled, "The Button Project," which he was all for; however before they could discuss it further, Michelle passed. Thanks to AMS teacher Ali Shankle and Jessica Hughes of Jessica Hughes photography, they literally took this idea and made it happen. They raised almost \$6,000 within the Auburn community in about two days and every member of the APS family has been given two buttons to wear so students see smiles each day behind the masks. This was a very moving outpouring of love and thoughtfulness by Michelle for our children as she was close to leaving us, as well as by Ali and Jessica to get this done when Michelle passed, and Dr. Handfield wished to take a moment to recognize this within the Auburn Community.

Satellite/Galaxy Update

Dr. Handfield noted that in a prior meeting, it was stated we were looking to begin Satellite/ Galaxy on Monday, October 5th; however, we have made the decision to back that up to Monday, October 19th. He noted that first and foremost, it was decided to see how the 2-1-2 model begins prior to adding another layer to the increased days. Secondly, after looking at numbers of interested families, we are thinking it may make sense to keep the students in their home buildings versus moving them to another site in the District. Thirdly, we have the staff; however, we are still working out medical coverage that we are comfortable with for the programs. As you know, it was not easy staffing the schools this year with nurses who we felt were best suited to provide the level of care, concern, expertise, and professionalism we expect for our children. We are working through that now, as well, for Satellite/Galaxy and expect this to be resolved by October 19th.

PowerPoint Regarding Fall Athletics

As he stated at the last School Committee meeting, Dr. Handfield reminded the Committee that the preseason for fall athletics begins on October 5th. He shared a "Q & A" sheet as well as a letter to student athletes from Athletic Director Davis. These alterations to fall athletics came from the MIAA COVID-19 Task force composed of medical professionals, athletic directors, principals, coaches, MIAA representatives, the Lieutenant Governor, and DESE. Dr. Handfield noted that he will provide updates at the mid and end points of the season, or sooner, if needed. He noted that buses are limited to 25 students. No team roster can be higher than 22 students. The District had enough funds to accommodate busing for athletics.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

FY'21 Revised Budget

Dr. Handfield reminded the members that the Fall Special Town meeting is scheduled for October 27th at AHS. That evening we have the warrant articles going forward as discussed a couple of weeks ago. He also recommended that our final FY '21 number of \$27,214,157 go forward. This represents a decrease of \$461,898 from what was appropriated by Town Meeting in June. It was Dr. Handfield's recommendation that the Committee vote in support of this number at the meeting of October 14, 2020.

School Committee Meeting Dates in November

Dr. Handfield noted that the School Committee meeting dates in November were scheduled to be held on Veterans' Day and Thanksgiving Eve! Since neither of these dates is viable, he suggested holding the meetings on Thursday, November 12th and Tuesday, November 24th. There was discussion about the start time of the meetings with the consensus being that 6:30 p.m. was better for most and perhaps even 6:00 p.m. after the fall sports season comes to an end.

Mrs. Kauffman made a motion that future School Committee meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m. and that the Auburn School Committee will meet on Thursday, November 12th and Tuesday, November 24th in recognition of Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving. These meeting dates replace the currently scheduled November 11th and 25th dates. Mrs. Harrington seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

FY'22 Budget

Dr. Handfield noted that as the Committee was aware, the FY '21 budget was adversely impacted by COVID and a decline in local revenues during the fourth quarter of last fiscal year. Unlike last year, however, where we had three solid fiscal quarters and a weaker fourth quarter, this year we are into the fiscal unknown right away and we could be there for a while. Dr. Handfield noted that it is, however, time for us to start putting our FY'22 budget together. He noted that while it may seem redundant having worked together for quite a while (and he believes he knows what the Committee's answers will be), but he sought their priorities at this time to take back to the administrative team as we begin to orchestrate a fiscal plan for next year. He asked that the members email them to him. He stated that FY'22 is going to be challenging and we will be very lucky if we can hang on to what we have right now. We hope to weather the storm and, if so, will be in great shape.

Mrs. Kauffman hoped that the student to staff ratio can stay the same. Dr. McCrillis asked if there should be a nurse of the Leadership Team.

Riley Award Committee

As is done annually, Dr. Handfield shared that Mrs. Deb Gremo, Town Clerk, had asked that the Committee appoint an educator to serve on the John E. and Ethel E. Riley Award Committee. Dr. Handfield asked for volunteers from the AEA, who are Auburn residents, to serve in this capacity and the following teachers have responded that they would be willing to serve.

They are listed in the order in which we heard from them: Kim Levansavich, Preschool Teacher; Doreen Guittarr, Pakachoag 2nd Grade Teacher; Alicia Lapomardo; Elementary Psychologist and Megan Berg, Secondary School Social Worker.

The meeting to choose the recipient is coming up in October. After putting four names in a hat, Doreen Guittarr was the successful volunteer. Dr. Handfield publicly thanked Kim, Alicia, and Meg for putting their names forward.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to appoint Doreen Guitar to serve as the educator representative on the Riley Award Committee; the motion was seconded by Mrs. Holloway and received unanimous approval, with Mr. Scobie adding that we couldn't have found a finer candidate!

Field Rentals:

Dr. Handfield noted that the athletic fields had been reopened for community use this summer. He noted that we are fielding applications from non-APS groups to use the fields. Some are majority Auburn kids on athletic teams, while others are not. He sought the Committee's input regarding the allowance of field usage. He supported the use of fields for majority Auburn residents and students at this time, but he did not support the use of fields by non-majority groups.

Mrs. Harrington made a motion to allow APS fields only to be rented by groups containing majority Auburn residents and students until further notice and not to allow APS fields to be rented by outside groups until further notice. Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

TEACHING/LEARNING REPORT:

ZippSlip and School Reopening

Dr. Chamberland thanked the School nurses and the Auburn Board of Health for all their hard work helping with the two COVID related issues at the beginning of the school year. She noted that we continue to work to ensure students are registered for ZippSlip and are regularly completing the form each day. Our school nurse is compiling reports of any reported symptoms or contact and we continue to collaborate with the Auburn Board of Health to ensure we handle each situation thoughtfully and appropriately. She noted that we are working to ensure accounts are accurate and if we do not receive a ZippSlip, we are manually following up with each family to ensure students are safe to be in our buildings. As you know, each building is structured to ensure students are not in 'close contact' with other students or staff during the school day. There is still work left to be done but Dr. Chamberland believed great progress had been made.

The Committee requested the average daily absentee rate be provided at an upcoming meeting.

Dr. Handfield shared that Commissioner Riley reached out to him directly regarding the bus monitor situation and COVID. DESE is watching and supporting us publicly.

Dr. Chamberland noted that other districts do not have ZippSlip and are suffering because of that so it is well worth all the effort that our District is putting into it. She also noted that our Nurses will be sharing a Q&A with staff soon and then with families following that too.

Technology for Learning

Dr. Chamberland noted that as the Committee is well aware, technology is a key ingredient to the success of learning at home in either the fully remote or hybrid model. She stated that while we continue to work through a variety of small challenges, we have had exponentially more successes. Students are able to access their accounts, the ticket system to obtain help is working well and the number of requests for assistance has decreased significantly this past week.

BUSINESS/FINANCIAL REPORT:

Year to Date Budget Report as of September 25, 2020

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided a year to date budget report as of September 25, 2020.

Transfers Between the Same Series dated September 28, 2020

Mrs. Wirzbicki provided budget transfers between the same series for the Committee's information and between the Series for the Committee's approval.

Dr. McCrillis made a motion to approve the transfers between the Series; Mrs. Holloway seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Adjournment: At 8:15 p.m., there being no further business to discuss, Mrs. Harrington made a motion to adjourn for the evening; Mrs. Kauffman seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Ailaine Zautner
Recording Secretary

Referenced Documents:

Minutes from September 17, 2020
AYFS Letter to Janice King re Award
Q & A Regarding Fall Sports
Letter from Athletic Director Davis to Students
Policy regarding School Use and Rental
Year to Date Budget Report
Transfers