

WOBURN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
April 10, 2019

A Regular Meeting of the Woburn School Committee was held on April 10, 2019 at the Joyce Middle School Conference Room, 55 Locust Street, Woburn, MA beginning at 7:00pm.

There was a moment of silence for former hockey coach Mr. Bob Connolly.

ROLL CALL

Chairman Mulrenan-Present, Ms. Chisholm-Present, Ms. Crowley-Present, Mr. Demers-Present, Mr. Kisiel-Present, Mr. Metters-Present, Dr. Wells-Present

APPROVAL OF RECORDS

A motion was made to approve the school committee minutes of 3/12/19.
Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Mr. Ryan Qualey was not present.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

There were none.

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON

Mr. Concannon was not present.

REPORTS/PRESENTATION OF SUPERINTENDENT & STAFF

SRO OFFICER

Officer Ed Fumicello from WMHS gave the committee updates on vaping and the health risks. Vaping and e-cigarettes are the same. There are different brand names like jewel, dabs or tanks. It is important to know how they evolved. They are all a nicotine delivery device. He brought in generations of 1, 2, and 3 vapes. They have gotten very creative and brought in different ways to vape. They moved up to allowing these devices to supply you with not only nicotine but marijuana and THC. They now have marijuana infused tubes. There are many devices out there. Vaping is addictive; nicotine is an addictive drug. These electronic devices are battery charged, apple charged; all electronic no flame involved. Instead of burning tobacco you are getting the nicotine in a mist. It is dangerous because you do not even know what is in there. There are different flavors out there. The jewel pods are sold as refills; they are a simple thing with flavored fluid in there, like mint or cherry. One pod alone is the equivalent to a pack of

cigarettes. On top of that these devices have e-liquids and e-juices. Some of them have heavy metal like tin, lead or nickel; e-juices have formaldehyde. There is a lot of research that says it is starting to cause lung disease like popcorn lung, COPD and lung inflammation. We need to get the word out that these are harmful in the long run. Advertising is regulated through the FDA and that is their focus. The advertising is out there and they are not doing a good job of curbing it according to Officer Fumicello. The FDA should step up. One student got pop up ads to purchase a jewel. As far as marketing goes, they are doing a great job. These are sold everywhere from gas stations to convenience stores. Kids see all of these products and want them. He knows of parents buying them for their own kids; not understanding how dangerous and addicting they are. Officer Fumicello believes it comes down to educating the students about what they are putting into their bodies. Parents should be talking to the kids about the dangers of vaping as early as middle school. Education classes through our health and wellness, maybe through the science department. He also suggested having a class on this subject and the different metals they are putting into their bodies. There is a great website called smoke free teens. Officer Fumicello believes vaping is an epidemic. These companies are making billions of dollars at the expense of our youth. Drift is a spray like Binaca and it has THC in it, you just spray it under your tongue. Edibles are starting to show up, chocolate has become popular. There are now flavored drinks that have marijuana in them. The dirty drink or purple drink; take soda and mix it with a prescribed cough medicine that has codeine in it and throw in hard candy, shake it up and drink it. Winchester hospital averages 2 or 3 kids being seen per week drinking something that is marijuana laced. We have banned smoking, did a great job with teaching and educating about smoking. Now with e-cigarettes we just re-normalized smoking again. He knows the schools takes vaping very seriously and there are regulations in the handbook. Ms. Crowley asked about vaping in Woburn and its level of high concern. Officer Fumicello took an educated guess of 30% at the high school and he has heard about vaping in middle schools. Ms. Crowley invited Officer Fumicello to come to one of their policy subcommittee meetings.

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Athletic Director Mr. Duran gave an update on the athletic department.

He started by saying for him every year there are bussing issues.

He feels his budget is pretty good. Contracts and bussing would be areas that would go up in cost. Officials cost is not going up.

Sports - we have not been winning as much this year. Our teams are still doing very well. We do not have any league champions so far this year. Outdoor and indoor track huge numbers.

Mr. Duran is not in favor of implementing fees. Out of 1400 students, we have close to 600 -700 students in sports. These kids are off the streets and involved in school.

We tried to ad boys swimming. This year we had one boy that was going to do a co-op with Winchester but decided not to. Boys' swimming has early morning practice in Medford.

Ice at the rink, pool time rental, everything is just about the same as it was last year.

Dr. Wells - wrestling team - one female all was globe all scholastic. As he was reading about it, he read they were not able to fill all the weights. Do we have a feeder program? Mr. Duran said yes, we have between 40 and 60 kids in the feeder program. (youth program) When they get to the high school it is a commitment and a lot of hard work. Numbers are dwindling due to the demand of the sport.

In regard to gymnastics the numbers were ok this year. At times we have been at 30 and this year we had 15 -16. We had 9 freshmen this year.

With girls' hockey, the numbers are not what they have been in the past. We probably have 10 girls attending private schools.

Mr. Metters asked if there are any emerging issues with the MIAA.

Mr. Duran feels they do a good job. It gets costly because we have to have a person at every site. We are not getting the crowds that we use to get and this is across the Middlesex league. Kids are on twitter, kids can text the scores.

Mr. Kisiel asked about the MIAA no smoking, no drinking policies. Mr. Duran commented vaping goes under the no tobacco policy. Mr. Duran said he has been the athletic director for the past 15 years and probably has had 10 chemical violations until recently. There have been 12 vaping violations this year and half. Mr. Duran feels the percentage of student's vaping is very high.

Chairman Mulrenan asked Mr. Duran to speak of our level of athletics in Woburn. Mr. Duran said we have tried to keep a lot of our freshmen sports. It is a good way for kids to mingle and when they get to high school in the fall, they know at least someone. The numbers might be low but we do have field hockey, soccer, volleyball, basketball, baseball as freshman sports.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR CURRICULUM

Ms. Wendy Sprague gave an update on Learn Together and curriculum updates.

On April 1, 2019 our coordinators and department heads along with one of our stem coaches presented curriculum updates at the library. Learn Together the Tanner Way. There was a pretty good crowd at the library. It began with a meet and mingle. It was well received, great questions were asked. The coordinators talked about what they have been working on all year, what they are focused on and what they are working towards. An exit survey was done via scanning a code so you could do it online. Red Sox tickets were raffled off for those who completed the survey. We asked why people came to this event, what else do you want to see. The after piece went for a great amount of time. Great conversation and great feedback was given.

Ms. Sprague said the library was a great venue and thanked them for allowing her to use their space.

Mr. Demers had a suggestion for the administration. If we get information at the end of an event if there could be a public follow up on the website after an event. The more information we put out there for parents to understand would be beneficial and a great resource.

Dr. Wells made a motion to send a thank you note to the library for letting the curriculum department use their space.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

FY20 BUDGET REVIEW

Superintendent Crowley prefaced the budget conversation by saying we are currently facing a significant budget challenge. It is a result of a couple of different issues. One is the escalation of our special education out of district tuitions and the transportation affiliated with out of district tuitions; coupled with our contractual obligations. Proactively, Superintendent Crowley, Ms. Sprague and Mr. Elia met with Mayor Galvin yesterday to update him on this potential gap. At this point our FY20 projected expenses are hovering around 8% beyond FY20 anticipated revenue. This is not necessarily a Woburn issue; but as a public school district in Massachusetts, we are facing the escalating costs. Complicating this issue however, during this FY19 school year we discovered that the expenses for out of district tuitions and transportation were not aligned with what was submitted to Mr. Elia for FY19. Consequently, as we prepare for FY20 the Superintendent is seeking actual numbers that are reflective of truly where we are and where we will be on July 1st. Superintendent Crowley wants to be transparent and clear with the committee as possible.

Superintendent Crowley was at a meeting this afternoon hosted at Edco in Burlington, it is called sub-urban districts. Multiple districts were represented and one of the things that came out of it is there is an effort being made to inform our state legislators of this growing need of escalating costs. The Superintendent in Saugus took lead and made a compelling presentation to state legislators and also presented at the meeting this afternoon. They nicknamed it as Intervention Culture. We are in this intervention culture for public schools right now. Our out of district placement costs are up, out of district tuition is up and transportation is up. This is fresh in Dr. Crowley's mind from the meeting he attended this afternoon. One of the things as communities we are facing is the societal impacts. We have behavioral health issues that are different than 5 years ago; we have poverty at the highest level, addiction, and vaping. One of the things we underestimate is kids coming to school with trauma. We have kids that are broken when they walk in through our doors and it's our job to try to fix them. Our nuclear family has changed. We have more kids being raised by grandparents than ever in the history of the United States. Public schools in Massachusetts may be reaching the tipping point at this time in history. We are not funded to the level that we need to be funded to provide the services that we need to provide to our kids. Coupled with that in Woburn there are demographic shifts that we need to try to meet as well. Dr. Crowley wanted to share contextually some of the issues other surrounding

communities face. We are working not only in Woburn but through the M.A.S.S. to lobby for increased funding on Beacon Hill. The two major areas we are seeking to increase are circuit breaker for special education to 75% and out of district transportation. Those are issues that reach all communities. The funding formula needs to be changed. Everybody is facing the circuit breaker and transportation issue. Dr. Crowley wanted to share the conversations he is having with other districts. Dr. Crowley talked about the out of district spending trend in Woburn. There is a percent increase of 35.95% between 2017 and 2020. While we received increases to our annual budget, our annual budget cannot possibly keep pace with this percent increase. Our district budget is increasing but our out of district budget is simultaneously increasing. It is a significant amount of money and there are many factors that lead to this. Before we delve into budget, we need to deal with real numbers. We have other areas that are escalating but we have no control over our Sped costs, people move in. Dr. Crowley did not want to move the budget forward without letting everyone know where we stand.

Dr. Wells commented this was inevitable and the Commonwealth needs to take on the responsibility of the out of districts. We can handle the day to day costs of the school district, we cannot handle this.

Ms. Crowley stated this is special education we are talking about. This is a federal government that reimburses the states at about 18%. The IDEA is a federal law. It goes beyond Massachusetts. Chapter 70 is only a small piece of the larger puzzle that the federal government is not adequately funding the IDEA and children are suffering because of it.

Mr. Demers said at this juncture, he prefers to be a bit more pragmatic and say what are we going to do now about it and what are we going to be doing long term. He would be interested in looking at this as a two prong approach; right now and long term. Can we help ourselves by enhancing our programming within the district to bring more of these dollars back into our district as opposed to them remaining outside the district? This is something that has been talked about for many years. There has been some hesitance as to us really rolling up our sleeves but now is the time rather than relying on the state and federal government coming to our rescue.

Dr. Baldassarre said that work has begun. One example is the addition of a 3rd classroom in our GAIN program at the Goodyear. At this time we have 5 or 6 seats available in our GAIN program. We have students who are in out of placement now who are eligible to return. We need to make sure this program is the right fit for the student. Five students coming back from out of placement would probably return to the district \$300,000.00 in what we would pay in tuition and another \$80,000.00 in transportation.

Ms. Chisholm said right now we have a budget that we have to pass. There are kids who do not have a choice; we also have to be realistic for the severe kids.

Ms. Crowley commented we are going to be improving our in-district programming and doing some things around that. The school committee is not going to get involved in children returning back to the schools; that is up to Administration. We are in a shortfall. She asked the Superintendent what the Mayor had to say.

Dr. Crowley said he spoke to the Mayor yesterday; he listened and asked some questions. They are meeting again tomorrow and will continue to dialogue.

Ms. Crowley asked how much are we in a shortfall?

Dr. Crowley said it is approximately 2.9 million.

Ms. Crowley asked why they didn't know about this shortfall.

Dr. Crowley responded it is a combination; the numbers submitted to Mr. Elia last year did not include any increase in the out of district tuitions or transportation. This year we were covering through circuit breaker which we now exhausted and so we are trying to make up two years in one. Mr. Elia said he did not have budgeted increases in tuitions, he did not have additional costs for the move-ins and new placements. The budget did not reflect any of these costs.

Dr. Baldassarre said no cushion was built in for kids who move in or need placements.

This accounted for over a million dollars. Dr. Baldassarre said we will see an increase in circuit breaker but not until 2021. Ms. Crowley suggested the finance subcommittee meet every other week. Dr. Wells said the finance subcommittee depends on the numbers they are provided.

He commented there is a flow of information that did not make it down the chain.

How in the future can we prevent this and make sure the flow of information is correct?

Ms. Crowley would like to have a firm action plan in place. We have to pass a budget.

Mr. Elia said right now the budget is looked at every week. We are good for this year.

The next budget year does not look good. Mr. Kisiel asked if part of the conversation with the Mayor is about infrastructure and what we would like to do to hopefully save some money. Dr. Crowley said yesterday's conversation was fiscal only. Mr. Elia has talked to the Mayor about establishing a stabilization fund. Mr. Elia is not in favor of this because you can put money in the account, and as he has seen in the past, all of a sudden it stops. What he feels needs to happen is the city take care of the out of district tuitions and transportation costs. The school department can control the rest of the budget. These two accounts are totally out of our control.

Dr. Crowley said we are all responsible for our kids. We need to work collaboratively to make sure they get the services they need.

Mr. Metters does not dispute what everyone has said. He said they have an obligation as a fiduciary duty to understand how we got to this problem. He still has questions about this.

Dr. Wells commented there is an internal issue here that needs to be looked at. How the flow of information through Joe did not reach the committee. We want to make sure there is a culture of information flow.

Ms. Crowley had two suggestions. One is asking the Chair if he wants to form a special subcommittee to create an action plan along with administration to determine what the next steps will be. The other is to put a special meeting on next week to discuss this issue and decide what we are going to do. We need to do something immediately.

Dr. Wells agrees with the committee to deal with the budget issue but he also believes as a school committee a separate subcommittee is also needed. Mr. Metters said he would take the lead, have one person from finance also. He does not want to forget the underlying issue here.

Mr. Metters commented we could say the Mayor might have this in his budget, but does not believe these funds are readily available. He hopes he is wrong.

Chairman Mulrenan concluded by saying the Supt. will be meeting the Mayor again.

Perhaps later in the week we will have some sort of direction.

Superintendent Crowley will share any information he gets as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Demers had one final question, the 3 million dollar issue; is it over or is the real number going to be less because it is taking all of the discretionary money we may have had in the next budget. Mr. Elia said it is over the 3.5% that the Mayor had said that he would give us.

Dr. Wells wanted to clarify if we stayed leveled programming we would have to cut 3 million.

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL VOTE

The Superintendent recommended the last day of school will be June 19, 2019.

A motion was made to accept the Superintendent's recommendation for the last day of school

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

SCHOOL CHOICE VOTE

The Superintendent made a recommendation to continue to not allow school choice.

We are required to vote annually, we are cautious of our class size. It has been past practice to maintain quality and excellent education for our students in Woburn.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Subcommittee

Dr. Wells met on April 3, 2019.

They reviewed the list of bill and found them to be in order.

They reviewed the balance of accounts.

List of Bills

A motion was made to approve the list of bills.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Balance of Accounts

A motion was made to approve the balance of accounts.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Resource Utilization Subcommittee

Mr. Kisiel they have not met.

Dr. Wells asked if the air quality issue from the dust particles at the Altavesta could be addressed.

Ms. Chisholm asked if the committee could have a copy of the five year plan from Mr. Dunkley.

Personnel Subcommittee

Ms. Chisholm they met on April 5, 2019.

Dr. Crowley updated the subcommittee of the happenings in the HR department.

Ms. O'Neil has been attending many job fairs.

Ms. O'Neil is working on the employee handbook and will have a draft to the committee in May. She is hoping to have it for new employees in the fall.

She is streamlining her onboarding process.

Technology interviews are taking place this week.

Curriculum and Professional Development Subcommittee

Mr. Demers said they met last week.

They discussed the middle school programming.

We are working with consultants, having a second set of eyes looking at the middle school programs.

The subject of recess was discussed, assigning credits to recess time. The state is looking into this.

Dr. Wells asked about the art fair this year. He wanted to find out why we did not have any finalists and wanted to know if we had any participants. Mr. Demers will look into this.

Ms. Sprague told the committee the WCEF awarded a grant to our STEM coaches.

They purchased robots and were experimenting with them. The robot for the younger group used a xylophone and you can code it through your ipad so it moves across the room. The coaches will be visiting classrooms and making the robots available.

Policy Subcommittee

Ms. Crowley is in the process of forming a meeting.

Officer Fumicello will be coming to a meeting.

Some of the agenda items include the resurrection of the wellness committee, vaping, elementary school handbooks, and taking a look the agreement between Woburn police and the school district.

Mr. Demers commented about the characterization of our new lunch policy as being cruel and unusual punishment to our students by folks on social media and in the news. He was very disconcerted.

He would like to make the policy public, letting the public know the changes in the policy; what we do and do not do. We are not taking food away from children. The lunch policy should be made available on the front page or our website. Make it a convenience for our parents.

Student Services and Achievement Subcommittee

Mr. Metters said last night SEPAC had their meeting and program fair at WMHS
A SSA meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 22, 2019.
They have a very robust agenda.

Communication and Community Relations Subcommittee

Chairman Mulrenan said they have not met.

The Superintendent received a letter from the Governor congratulating Woburn Public Schools for being awarded a Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) and FY20 (pending continued appropriation) Fund Code 336 Improving Student Access to Behavioral and Mental Health Service grant, in the total amount of \$40,000.00

Dr. Baldassarre spoke about the grant process and what the money will go towards.

CORRESPONDENCE

Field Trip Requests:

Joyce Best Buddies to Chunky's Movie Theatre - Nashua, NH 6/12/19

A motion was made to approve.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Kennedy grade 8 to Washington DC - May 2020

A motion was made to table this request.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Dr. Wells the school start date to be put on the agenda.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 25th and Friday, April 26th Performance of Grease at WMHS.

Tannerfest will be held on May 8th.

WCEF first annual Hall of Fame Induction will take place on Saturday, June 15.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A motion was made to move the April 24, 2019 school committee meeting to April 22, 2019.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

A discussion was had on the scheduling of another budget meeting.

A motion was made to schedule a budget meeting on April 30th at 7:00 PM.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were none.

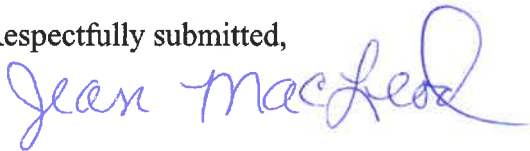
ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn.

Motion was seconded, all in favor. Motion passed 7-0.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jean MacLeod". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jean MacLeod

Recording Secretary