

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, June 15, 2020

Via WebEx Meeting Number (access code): 132 512 2533

Meeting Password: tcSKfMM3R72 (82753663 from phones and video systems)

SCASA / CAPSS SUPERINTENDENT STUDENT AWARD RECOGNITION

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Steven Fleischman, Chair; Mr. Dan Cowan, Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Vice Chair; Dr. David Ross, Ms. Joyce Shavers and Dr. Michael Strambler.

STAFF: Mr. Robert Gilbert, Superintendent; Cheryl Mammen, Special Services Director; Al Pullo, Director of Business Operations/Services; Analisa Sherman, Principal; Doreen Merrill, Assistant Principal; and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Dan Chase, Carson Echeverry, Kim Franklin, Katie McCollom, Visa Ngov and Nancy Smerekanicz, Grade 6 Teachers; James Crawford, Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; parents of each recipient.

Superintendent Gilbert recognized each Grade 6 CAPSS recipient – Janet, Fan, Chase Kinton, Cristian Luciano, Viviana Pfannenbecker, Mary Sampara, Ada Wu and the two Grade 6 SCASA recipients – Minha Kim and Nathaniel (Nate) Luciano. Each student is a shining example of all of the good things that happen at Beecher Road School. The Board and administration extended their congratulations.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, June 15, 2020

Via WebEx Meeting Number (access code): 132 979 3480

Meeting Password: SdJRJzJ3r73 (73575953 from phones and video systems)

CALL TO ORDER: Dr. Fleischman, Chair called the meeting to order (7:00 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Steven Fleischman, Chair; Mr. Dan Cowan, Ms. Maegan Genovese, Secretary; Mr. Jeff Hughes, Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Vice Chair; Dr. David Ross, Ms. Joyce Shavers, Dr. Michael Strambler and Dr. Jeffrey Townsend.

STAFF: Mr. Robert Gilbert, Superintendent; Cheryl Mammen, Special Services Director; Al Pullo, Director of Business Operations/Services; Analisa Sherman, Principal; Doreen Merrill, Assistant Principal; and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Sandy Stein, BOS; Joi Prud'homme, PTO; James Crawford, Larissa Crocco, Kristin DeManche, Carrie Fanelli, Kim Franklin, Stephanie Goldberg, Lori Patrick, Nancy Smerekanicz, and Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; Kit Dunbar, Wendy Glynn, CSEA; Jay Dahya, Ryan Errico, Pua Ford, Michele Goglia, Ruchi Jain, Althea Marshall-Brooks, Dr. Mohini Ranganathan, Jane Roddy, David Schroeder, Erin Williamson, community.

CORRESPONDENCE – None

PUBLIC COMMENT – Ms. DeManche expressed her dismay at the elimination of her position for the 2020/21 school year and outlined her various responsibilities and how they differ from the recommended hiring of a school psychologist.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

REPORTS

PTO Update – Ms. Prud'homme noted that each 6th grader received an Amity gift bag and tee shirt, yearbooks will be distributed in the coming week and listed the rescheduling / preplanning of events as a result of Covid. The Board and administration expressed their appreciation to the PTO for all of their efforts to support Beecher children.

Superintendent Report – Superintendent Gilbert apprised the Board on the recently held Ad Hoc Safety meeting, the Diversity Committee meeting and the SRO Committee meeting. Summer programs will be held virtually, conclusion of the food service program on June 30, distribution of *The Bridge* to all families and selection of the 2020/21 Teacher of the Year – the entire BRS teaching staff.

Beecher Road School Update – Ms. Sherman extended a sincere thank you to parents, students, teachers and staff for their support, understanding and tireless work during a most unique and unusual school year. Virtual celebrations inclusive of the end-of-year staff breakfast and 6th grade graduation were held earlier along with distribution of summer reading lists and math activities.

Distance Learning Survey – Surveys were conducted with teachers, teacher assistants, parents and students in Grades 3-6 to ascertain feedback, identify challenges and development of potential next steps with distance learning implementation. Each survey had high response rates. Overall staff reflections were that while staff felt fully supported, distance learning is a time-consuming, challenging process that requires clearer expectations for what should be done in the future. Parents have a desire for more live student interactions, social opportunities, small group work, increased special area instruction, and more printed material with less screen time. Students missed being in their classroom, interacting with their teacher and/or classmates, were very comfortable with the use of technology / learning tools yet not necessarily happy with being with their siblings / family members all the time. Once administration has had an opportunity to aggregate the data, assess overriding themes, and dependent upon guidance and direction for the fall, follow-up training and/or professional development may be required to juggle competing demands.

Community Diversity Committee – Committee members Dr. Ranganathan, Mr. Dahya and Ms. Williamson gave a presentation on their work since 2017 when the committee was established. The committee meets on a fairly regular basis. Their focus has been on engaging the community as well as staff on inclusion and diversity conversations, educating children to be open and accepting, creating and expanding more inclusive libraries by diverse authors, sharing their work and experiences through the Principal's messages / Superintendent Updates, coordinating community books reads on the topic of diversification, identification of parent resources on talking to children about racism and implicit bias presentations to staff as part of professional development activities. Future activities include a Superintendent's Forum, incorporation of race conversations into the curriculum to improve inclusivity and teaching culturally responsive practices, improving recruitment to attract and retain diverse staff reflective of the student body, creation of an online library of resources, hosting of more diverse community events, speakers, artists, etc., training for staff as well as Board members by Ms. Althea Marshall-Brooks and to be at the forefront of the state in raising the bar. There is a desire to have more conversations around these topics to learn more and to do better.

Suggestions were made to include a Board member on the committee, for applicants to submit a diversity statement as part of the standard interview process, conducting an audit at Beecher, creation of a specified curriculum with benchmarks, recruitment of candidates from historical black colleges, conducting parent and student surveys to empower students to discuss these issues both at home and school, utilizing Columbia Teacher's College as a resource for curriculum development and identification of interventions to start the dialogue / process.

Upcoming Meeting Presentations – In preparation for the reopening of school in the fall, it was suggested that the annual Wellness Report be pushed back to August.

Facilities Committee – Mr. Hughes reviewed the meeting held on June 5 which highlighted the painting, cleaning and general cleaning work around the building as a result of the building being vacant.

Finance Committee – Ms. Shavers noted that the school year ended with a surplus of \$186,000 as a result of special education out-of-district costs and Covid. The Town authorized use of half of those funds to pre-purchase for the 2020/21 school year. It was suggested that given the unknown costs associated with Covid, consideration for exploring the generating new revenue streams in association with after-school programming for high interest areas as well as continuing discussions with the Bethany School District on cost sharing services.

Superintendent Gilbert presented adjustments to the 2020/21 budget inclusive of restoring the 0.50 FTE Social Worker, increasing the Library Media Specialist from 0.70 FTE to 1.0 FTE, maintaining a 0.50 FTE psychologist position and reducing miscellaneous office supplies/postage/ equipment by \$53,10, health insurance by \$9,222 and technology equipment by \$60,578. While administration believes that a full-time psychologist would provide more flexibility in day-to-day responsibilities, they have heard the desire of several Board members to adhere to an integrated model at Beecher. It was noted that there is a distinct difference in the populations serviced as a social worker is usually general education and the psychologist special education. Also, the National Association for School Psychologist advocates for having a social worker on staff so perhaps consideration should be given to reassigning daily responsibilities and caseloads to improve and ensure efficiency within the special education department.

MOTION #2 – 2020/21 BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS

Move that we adjust the 2020/21 budget to restore the Social Worker position to 0.50 FTE, the Library position from 0.7 FTE to 1.0, reduce miscellaneous office supplies/postage/equipment by \$5,310, health insurance by \$9,222 and technology equipment by \$60,578.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Ms. Genovese
IN FAVOR: Dr. Fleischman, Ms. Genovese, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross, Ms. Shavers
Dr. Strambler and Dr. Townsend
AGAINST: Mr. Cowan
MOTION PASSES 8-1-0

MOTION #3 – PREPURCHASING

Move that as outlined by the Superintendent we authorize prepurchasing from the 2019/20 budget surplus in the amount of \$43,980*, Covid expenses in the amount of \$46,491 and return \$95,581 to Town.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Mr. Cowan
UNANIMOUS

**Restore partial technology \$11,700, IEP/Frontline Testing Software License Renewal \$10,000, Renaissance Learning Testing Software License Renewal \$9,000, Mobile Device Management Renewal (JAMF) \$6,900 and CISCO Support \$6,380.*

MOTION #4 – 2020/21 BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Move that we authorize reconciliation of the 2020/21 Budget as presented by administration.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Ms. Genovese
IN FAVOR: Dr. Fleischman, Ms. Genovese, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross, Ms. Shavers
Dr. Strambler and Dr. Townsend
AGAINST: Mr. Cowan
MOTION PASSES 8-1-0

CABE Liaison Report – Ms. Genovese noted that she would contact CABE regarding obtaining their best practices on the topic of inclusion and diversity. It was suggested that the Board reconsider the SRO in light of how people of color perceive SRO’s in schools.

NEW BUSINESS – None

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (9:21 PM)

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Dr. Townsend
UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board