

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

JANUARY 25, 2024

A meeting of the School Committee was held at 6:30 P.M. on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at the Central Middle School Media Center with the following members present: Melanie Fiore, Chair, Betty Pryor, Vice Chair, Nicole Nial and Megan Samborski. Also present was David Ljungberg, Superintendent, Kathy Martin, Assistant Superintendent and Leia Secor, Director of Finance.

Chair M. Fiore called the meeting of the School Committee to order at 6:30 P.M. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

A. Approval of Items by Consensus

ACTION: A motion was made by B. Pryor and seconded by M. Samborski to approve the minutes of January 11, 2024 and Warrant #2430 in the amount of \$1,020.71. The motion was approved 4-0.

B. Consideration for Items Withdrawn from Consensus

None

C. Public Comment

None

D. Student Representatives

Maddy DiLeo reported on mid-terms that took place last week, the beginning of quarter three, and the deadline to sign up for the Seal of Biliteracy exam is Wednesday, January 31. Tomorrow the senior class has Flannel Friday to raise school spirit among seniors and also the opportunity to get group pictures for the yearbook.

Danny Mirick reported on winter sports, the Interact Club and the beginning of class selection for next year. The SAT's that were scheduled for March 9th at the High School have been cancelled, more information to follow.

E. John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

Superintendent Ljungberg was proud to recognize this year's recipients of the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship based on their performance on the high school MCAS tests. This four-year scholarship will be awarded upon the student's acceptance to a participating Massachusetts public institution of higher education. There were 39 students who qualified.

Superintendent Ljungberg announced the names of the high school seniors who qualified.

The Chair called for a recess at 6:47. The Committee returned to Open Session at 7:04 P.M.

J. Wallace joined the meeting remotely at 7:04 P.M.

F. Aramark Client Business Review

Lisa Toumayan, Stoneham Cafeteria Director from Aramark, reported on the following:

- Free and Reduced Lunch Program: If Governor Healey cuts the free lunch program from the state budget, she will apply for the federal based free lunch program through CEP (Community Eligible Program).
- Federal, State and Local Regulation Update: the USDA Foods Program provides approximately 20% of the food served in the National School Lunch Program. We also receive an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables from the Department of Defense.
- Meal participation 2023: Breakfast – 39,405 (reduced from 96,942 in 2022 due to all students receiving to-go breakfast that stopped in 2023). Lunch – 214,106.
- Our workforce and professional development trainings.
- Our great Stoneham team players and examples of what we serve each day.
- Catering services
- Serving the community: 13,667 breakfast and lunches served this past summer.
- Health and wellness update.

G. Vote on FY25 School Budget

Superintendent Ljungberg reviewed the FY25 Budget Proposal that was presented at the January 11, 2024 Public Hearing. The total budget proposal is \$37,246,979 which is an increase of \$2,950,500 (8.61%) over the FY24 Budget. This increase includes all fixed costs, step increases, contractual obligations, out of district tuition increases and required fixed cost increases. The budget to maintain level services and include the asks/adds is \$38,277,327 which is an increase of \$3,980,848 or 11.6%. The Superintendent cuts in the amount of \$1,030,348 that were asks/adds to the FY25 Budget include:

RH: (1) Reading Teacher	41,000
RH: Take out Interventionist	-26,000
Elementary Health Curriculum	10,000
Elementary Literacy Curriculum	60,000
The Hill for Literacy Professional Development	40,000
Elementary STEM Supplies	3,000
Elementary ELL Supplies	1,500
BCBA Preschool (28 Students)	80,000
Preschool SLP (67 Students)	90,000
Four Preschool ABAs	180,000
Preschool Curriculum	5,000
Preschool Professional Development	5,000
District Technology Expenses	26,000
Athletic Transportation	20,000
CMS Health Supplies	1,200
Elementary PE Supplies	1,700
General Ed Summer School (Not Budgeted)	-
ESSER Funded Positions	138,000
Legal Increase	25,000
Emergency Preparedness	50,000
School Resource Officer (proposed add)	80,000
Professional Development Increase	20,000

Superintendent Ljungberg shared Governor Healey’s proposed FY25 budget that was released today and according to the cherry sheets, our increase is only about \$73,000 or 1%. Unless

there is a major change in the proposed state budget, we will need to cut 1.6 to 1.7 million dollars to our proposed budget.

The Committee discussed the two proposed budgets and recognizing that there are other town needs agreed that their job was to advocate for the kids and to recommend a budget of \$38,277,327, which is an 11.6% increase.

ACTION: A motion was made by J. Wallace and seconded by M. Samborski to approve a budget of \$38,277,327 in order to maintain level services and additional needs. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call.

H. School Choice Discussion

Superintendent Ljungberg stated that the Committee must vote on School Choice as required under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 76, Section 12B(d), and recommended that if the Committee were to consider this that it only be open to the ninth grade. The reimbursement would be up to \$5,000 per student and students on IEP would be reimbursed in full. It would be a blind lottery so we would not know if there would be additional expenses to special education. We would need to fill 20 seats to receive \$100,000 and Superintendent Ljungberg felt it was not worth the risk and therefore recommended the Committee vote to reject school choice for the 2024-2025 school year.

ACTION: A motion was made by J. Wallace and seconded by M. Samborski to not participate in school choice for the 2024-2025 school year. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call.

I. Draft School Calendar 2024-2025

Assistant Superintendent K. Martin reviewed the survey that was sent to the school community and staff on the six additional professional development half days that were added to the 2023-2024 calendar.

- Reduce the number of days: 78.1% community responded leave as is or don't care; 70% of staff wanted to retain the number of days.
- Friday worked for both the community and staff, the second preferred days was Wednesday for both.

The Committee discussed the proposed calendar and made the following suggestions:

- The two PD days in January were tough coming off of vacation. Suggest moving one of the days to March.
- Consider changing the High School conference days from right before Thanksgiving break to the following week.
- Change some of the dates so that it is not before a long weekend.
- Change the holiday break to two full weeks and change last day of school to June 12.

J. Preschool Tuition

Leia Secor reviewed the current preschool tuition and the comparison to other towns and other preschools in Stoneham. We are currently in the middle of the pact and recommended a small increase in tuition to \$8,494 to cover the cost of collective bargaining.

ACTION: A motion was made by N. Nial and seconded by J. Wallace to approve the preschool tuition for 2024-2025 at \$8,494. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call.

K. Committee Liaison/Subcommittee Reports

M. Samborski reported that the Stoneham Alliance Against Violence will hold a healthy relations workshop in partnership with Melrose and Wakefield on February 12.

M. Samborski also reported that the SBCEF will hold its annual Character Breakfast on March 2nd and their Trivia Bee on March 22nd. The spring grant award will open soon, see SBCEF.org for more information.

M. Fiore reported that the Stoneham Coalition is partnering with the Stoneham Board of Health to distribute free Narcom.

L. School Building Committee

N. Nial reported highlights from the Building Committee meeting this past Monday night:

- Were able to save \$2,267 on moving costs with Wakefield Moving
- Meander pattern was voted down and will be changed
- Voted to keep the blue track around the stadium field and additional costs for the spartan logo on the three fields
- Still holding with July 19 for A, B and C buildings and July 31 for D building
- Voted to place the time capsule outside of the building because it will give more time to decide what to put in there.

A tour of the building can be scheduled in February but it would need to be on a Saturday because so much is going on inside the building right now.

M. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent D. Ljungberg reported on the following:

- Attended MASS Mid-Winter Conference today
- Attended a Chiefs and Superintendents breakfast on swatting, bomb threats and threat assessment. Also attending was Representative Mike Day, Chief O'Connor and Chief Grafton.
- Preschool: Danielle Tucker discussing an after-school program with the Boys and Girls Club. Awaiting approval of our preschool Stoneham Early Learning Center.
- State Board of Education voted 7-2 against chronic absenteeism carrying more weight against districts; felt strongly it should not be counted where it is out of our control.
- Personnel update:
 - Hired Kevin Yianacopolus for the position of Building System Manager. We will send him for training to become certified.
 - Community Liaison position has been put on hold due to funding
 - Met with two finalists for the Director of Special Education position. Anticipate will have more info next week.
 - The two finalists for the Assistant Superintendent position, Kathryn C and Cari P, both had full day visits this week as well as a public forum. Will send out survey and post the recordings of the public forums.
 - Spring and summer athletic clinics, currently split funding at 75/25 will change to 50/50 to keep up with turf field maintenance.
 - Back bridge at Central Middle School – bid to repair came in at \$92,000. Committee asked if we could consider getting a sponsor.

Assistant Superintendent K. Martin reported on the following:

- Tiered Focus Monitoring for ELL
- ELLPAC met formally last night and appointed a chair; will be working with the chair to schedule the next meeting.

N. Discussion/Correspondence/New Items

Chair M. Fiore asked for an update on the solar. Leia Secor responded that she had a meeting with Mass Energy and they gave some recommendations on how we can communicate with our vendor to solve the problems.

O. EXECUTIVE SESSION

ACTION: A motion was made by M. Samborski and seconded by N. Nial to enter into Executive Session per MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(2), (3) and (6): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with STA Bargaining Unit, to discuss pending litigation and to discuss strategy in preparation for negotiation with non-union personnel – and the chair so declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body. The motion was approved unanimously by roll call at 8:45 P.M., not to return to public session.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED
DAVID LJUNGBERG, SUPERINTENDENT**