



Framingham Public Schools

Robert A. Tremblay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Adam Freudberg, Chair • Gloria Pascual, Vice Chair • Tracey Bryant, Clerk
Noval Alexander • Geoffrey Epstein • Richard A. Finlay
Beverly Hugo • Tiffanie Maskell • Scott Wadland
Yvonne M. Spicer, Mayor
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SCHOOL COMMITTEE: OPEN MEETING MINUTES

DATE AND TIME: June 5, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Memorial Building-Blumer Room
150 Concord Street, Framingham

MEETING CALLED BY: Chair Adam Freudberg

PRESENT: Noval Alexander
Tracey Bryant
Geoffrey Epstein
Richard A. Finlay
Adam Freudberg
Beverly Hugo
Tiffanie Maskell*
Gloria Pascual*
Mayor Yvonne Spicer*

ABSENT: Scott Wadland

ALSO PRESENT: Nicholas Small, Chair of Student Advisory Committee
Dr. Tremblay, Superintendent
Lincoln Lynch, Director of Finance and Operations
Rose Bailey, Student Advisory Committee
Matt Torti, Director of Building and Grounds

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Call to Order

The Chair announced that this meeting was being broadcast live on local cable, as well as for later playback, and on Facebook Live.

Public Comment

Ron Chick said he is a representative for the Sue Haskell Watershed for Framingham, and he brought Riverfest brochures. He said that there are many events coming up, including a water cleanup on June 22nd at 151 Central Street starting at 8:00 a.m., and a senior tour of the river at 11:00 a.m. He said he is looking for volunteers, especially student volunteers, for various clean ups in the area, and would like to work with the Ecology Club at the High School. He said he is working on a project on invasive vegetation on the Cochituate Rail Trail in Saxonville, and eliminating invasive water chestnuts on the Sudbury River. He suggested that students could possibly get credits for volunteering. He said he is also the Chair of the Friends of Saxonville and welcomes participation. The Chair asked the Superintendent to have someone from his team follow up on the ideas regarding student participation.

Noval Alexander said he wanted to make a brief comment on commemorating D-Day tomorrow and asked for a moment of silence. He said that on this day 75 years ago, hundreds of thousands of young soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen were staging in southern England to commence Operation Overlord, otherwise known as D-Day, where they crossed the English Channel to liberate Europe from Nazi Germany. He said that no matter what race, religion or natural origin, all had the common purpose to defeat the tyrannical German dictator Adolf Hitler. He said that day, over 10,000 allied soldiers died on the beach in Northern France, and he would like to take a moment of silence and remember that.

Richard Finlay said he wanted to send get well wishes to Mr. Wadland who is home recovering.

Announcements from the Chair

No announcements from the Chair.

Student Advisory Committee Presentation on Intramural Sports and School Spirit

Student Advisory Committee members Nicholas Small and Rose Bailey presented a report based on a survey sent to students regarding interest in intramural sports and thoughts on school spirit. They said that they found from these surveys that a large number of students are interested in intramurals, and school spirit at FHS is good but could be improved - with ideas such as adding more pep rallies, themed events and improved faculty support at student events.

Questions. Mr. Epstein asked what the next steps are in regards to starting intramurals. Mr. Small said they had a brief discussion with Mr. Spear, the Athletic Director, and he said that the biggest issue would be space, but an intramural like Dance would be more do-able because there are specific classrooms that could accommodate Dance. Mr. Epstein said that there are a lot of high intensity sports that take over all the facilities and a lot of money spent on those: Maybe they could skip those sports one day a week or use the facilities when they have games out of town. He said there is a need to look at how to service intramurals, rather than just say it is an interesting idea that we cannot do.

Action Civics Commission Presentation on Homework Policy

Dr. Tremblay said starting the Action Civics Commission was one of his goals, and it will provide grades 9-12 with a representation of government. Action Civics Commission members Mira

Donaldson, Hailey Vanaelstyn, Laura Scaria, Anne Culhane-Williams, Sanga Esther Kalemba, Ava Caiola, and Harold Pacheco Diaz presented their proposed homework policy, which they developed after they had reviewed other policies from other schools, and news articles, as well as taking information from interviewing students and teachers. Ava Caiola said that along with the proposal of no homework for those who are in MCAS testing, they also want to add the ACCESS testing for ELL and ESL students, but that was not included in this draft. She said that they also met with the faculty to present their draft, get feedback, and answer questions on their proposed policy. Mira Donaldson added that edits from that meeting were able to be added to the policy.

Mr. Freudberg said that last year this policy was voted on to refer to the Policy Subcommittee, so now they have some insight to determine next steps.

Questions. Mr. Finlay spoke about the stress on students for homework and having to balance it with extracurricular activities and sports. Ms. Bryant asked which neighboring schools' policies were looked at, as well as how they decided that homework on weekends should not exceed that of a weekday. She added that sometimes students who have extracurricular activities during the week, use the weekend to catch up on schoolwork. Mira Donaldson said they looked at policies from Hopkinton, Holliston and Natick. Ava Caiola said that the biggest issue seems to be that whenever there is time to relax, teachers have tried to fit an extra assignment in to fill the time, and students have felt a bit of an overload. She said that they felt that students should still have homework on the weekend, but with a limit; this will allow students to still be able to do activities they want to do, while still staying involved with school. She added that this is the same with school vacations - for students to keep on track and be thinking of school work, but also be able to enjoy time away from school. Ms. Pascual suggested the possibility of forms being used for the observance of religious holidays, to be able to make it clearer to teachers to put this consideration into action, for equity, and forms could possibly be used for other things going on in life besides just holidays. She also suggested that teacher communication to students be improved - such as the family and guidance counselor being contacted after two missing assignments, so everyone is aware before students get too far behind, and are not able to recover. Ava Caiola said that teacher feedback suggested the possibility of students being referred for after-school help with peer tutoring after a few missed assignments. Ms. Pascual said there is a need to look at holding teachers accountable for putting this into place, and making sure there is a measurement, as well as to allow teachers, counselors, and parents to know when there is a need to help students and get them that help. Ms. Maskell asked what the expectation for the amount of homework per night is currently, and suggested that there be a defined amount of time for homework; since students work at different levels and if they can't master it by a certain point, should they really be spending hours on it. Mira Donaldson said that the current policy has a three hour minimum and no maximum. Anna Culhane-Williams said that when they talked to the teachers this came up, and they discussed how the amount of time each student spends on homework depends on each individual student, and defining a specific time would be a bigger discussion. Ava Caiola said they also discussed possibly defining it per department, but this again would be a larger conversation, and would take more time to get into and implement.

*Mayor Spicer arrived at 7:40 p.m.

Ms. Maskell said that the proposed policy notes that homework is lessened for all classes, except for AP classes. Laura Scaria said AP classes have a set curriculum to get through for the year in order to take the AP test, so it is hard to limit the homework. Ms. Maskell said she's

sure some kids would abuse it if there was a set amount of time defined, but the majority of students seem to be working hard at whatever level they are at. Hailey Vanaelstyn said that AP tests happen earlier than the end of the year testing, so that time is made up in the school breaks, which is why a break is not listed during vacation week for AP classes. Ms. Hugo asked if the students researched the types of homework that seemed to be most beneficial vs. homework that just seemed like busy work; and if they had researched flipped classrooms where students listen to the lesson at home and do a project or discussion in class. Esther Kalemba said she had talked to a teacher about flipped classrooms, and it seems like it wouldn't work for all teachers. She added that it seems like it would mostly work for math classes, but for English and history it would be harder for students to do at home, and harder for teachers to create a lecture. Anne Culhane-Williams said flipped classrooms would possibly take away from in-class learning - being able to learn and ask clarifying questions, and she thinks it would vary between students if it would be beneficial or not. Hailey Vanaelstyn said a lot of students' complaints were that teachers were assigning busy work to just give homework. Ava Caiola said it was a point of contention with teachers, as teachers argue that they can think everything they assign is important and beneficial, and pushed back on how the students define what's meaningful. Mr. Epstein said part of this touches on learning style, and asked how many students contributed feedback when they were gathering it. Anna Culhane-Williams said they asked friends, along with the members of the Commission, but it was not sent out as a survey. Mr. Epstein asked if students find that teachers coordinate homework assignments, and suggested that teachers look to spread out the homework and coordinate, so not everyone is assigning a lot on a certain night. Mira Donaldson said teachers within the same department sometimes coordinate, but the classes are not always at the same place in the curriculum. Ava Caiola said if all teachers used the same program, such as Google Classroom or Canvas, they could see what other teachers assigned, but teachers all use different programs and there is no coordination; students can have multiple tests on the same day. Mr. Epstein asked if students felt that homework was graded in a timely fashion. Hailey Vanaelstyn said that it varies widely depending on the teacher, and that it seems that teachers may not be able to keep up with grading the amount of homework that they are assigning. Mr. Epstein asked that the administration look into an information management system, so teachers can see who has homework assigned etc., as well as keep track of when it is graded. Ava Caiola said within this proposed policy, they added that teachers try to give a weeklong look at homework, so students are able to plan ahead.

Update on BLOCKS Capital Project

Director of Building and Grounds Matt Torti gave an update on the Blocks Capital Project. He said that the library, which is now closed, was being used as breakout learning spaces for special programs and multiple functions, and these programs are now displaced. He said that in January there was a roof leak, and once opened up there was some structural damage and the insurance company would not pay for any remedial work. He said they have enlisted the services of an architect to do a preliminary design, provide cost estimates, and that the project still needs to go out to bid. He said that this is past the date of the Capital Project Request, so this has been deemed as an emergency capital budget request. He said that the Chair has sent a letter to the Mayor asking for additional funding, but they are currently paying for the architect out of the operating budget to make sure the project is started as soon as possible. He said they are presenting on this to the City Council on June 12th, and the full vote is on June

18th. Mr. Lynch said, originally they were thinking to swap out this project with the Potter Road project, but that is no longer the case. He said that they are keeping the initial request and adding this project on top of the Capital Budget Request, which increases the request from \$3,295,277 to \$3,785,277. Mr. Freudberg said this does not need a vote from the School Committee since it is an off-cycle appropriation, and the City Council voted last night to refer it to the City Council's Finance Subcommittee. He said it is a 2,500 square foot room that cannot be currently used. Mayor Spicer asked if there are plans to add anything besides the original footprint. Mr. Torti said the cost estimate is to just refurbish and put the area back to the former use. He said that due to it being an added modular unit, they were able to completely isolate it from the rest of the school and no-one is allowed in there, as it is currently an unsafe situation. Mayor Spicer suggested there be a complete assessment of all the buildings done in order to determine if any more of the buildings are currently in jeopardy, and going forward, to prioritize project order based on building conditions. Mr. Torti said the only other modules are at the Hemenway and Brophy Schools. He said that they do periodic inspections, annually have the City's Building Department perform inspections, and get occupancy permits. He said that this roof was different than the other modular units.

*Ms. Pascual left the meeting for a short break.

Approval of Proprietary Specification for the Fuller Building as Required by the MA School Building Authority

The Chair said that the School Building Committee voted to approve the proprietary specifications for the Fuller Building Project this past Monday night, and a step required by the Massachusetts School Building Authority is for another elected board, in this case the School Committee, to concur with the vote.

Motion: To affirm the vote of the School Building Committee to accept the approval of proprietary specifications for the Fuller Building Project.

Moved: Ms. Bryant **Seconded:** Mr. Alexander **Vote:** Unanimous (7-0-0)

(Yes: Hugo, Finlay, Freudberg, Alexander, Epstein, Maskell, Bryant. Ms. Pascual had stepped out of the meeting momentarily at the time of the vote.)

Mr. Torti said that the Design Day for the **McCarthy Playground** is tomorrow, hosted by Kaboom who gave the grant, and will involve the PTO, volunteers, parents, and children and they can help with the design. He said that TJX Sierra Trading Post is a main donator, and are providing 120 volunteers on build day. Mr. Freudberg asked about keeping the tires that are in the current playground, and asked for scheduling between the build day and construction on the Fuller Project. Mr. Torti said they will be planning in conjunction with the Fuller Project, due to parking. He said that they cannot put in new tires because of code issues; but they are going to try and leave the current tires in place. He said that most of the existing playground will be removed to make way for new equipment, and the total value is probably upwards of \$120,000.

Progress Report on Superintendent's Goals

Mr. Freudberg reminded members that the Evaluation of the Superintendent is due June 11, 2019. Dr. Tremblay presented an orientation on the evaluation and went over his progress report on his goals, and said that in the Team Drive there are items of evidence, which is also embedded within his progress report. He said that last year members gave feedback on him

being more involved in the instructional practices, and he believes that he has been fully invested in that this year, including the visits to the schools every morning, meeting with senior team and principals. He asked that if members had any questions on any of the indicators, or want to see any other evidence, to let him know. He said that this upcoming year is going in to the third and last year of the current Strategic Plan, and they will be starting to work on the next Strategic Plan in August. He also spoke about the progress that has been made within the District: The dual language programming will be expanded to four elementary schools beginning next year and they already have a wait list; they created a Bilingual Parent Advisory Council; senior advisors have been going to events in the community to engage with families and constituents in a program they call "Be Heard Tours" - to talk to them about their needs in school; they have expanded the King School autism strand; and by moving away from ACCEPT for transportation, the District saved \$800,000 in next year's budget; and many other accomplishments.

Questions. Mr. Finlay asked if there were any grants available to start implementing free Pre-K programs, such as they used when the District implemented free universal Kindergarten. Dr. Tremblay said part of the current research is to find out how Pre-K - K programs are being funded, as well as the availability of money and a location. He said that this can be worked on with the Strategic Initiatives and Financial Oversight Committee. Mr. Finlay said that there was \$75,000 earmarked for a feasibility study for Hemenway, and he would like to see this be done. Dr. Tremblay said they have already done this, and the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the Feasibility Study and will be looking to see other possible viable options in the City. Mr. Epstein asked if Barbieri's small cafeteria, that has five lunch sessions, will be looked into. Mr. Lynch said this will be looked at next year. Mr. Epstein asked about the role of online and remote instruction in the high school, and suggested offering this to students who are advanced and want more material, or for the lower-enrolled classes that sometimes get cut. Dr. Tremblay said that they have online credit recovery, and many teachers use a hybrid approach with online elements. Dr. Tremblay said they have looked at Virtual University, but would need to look at the space to do this which would come into play in the next phase of the High School Space Study. Ms. Bryant said time in actual classes also help students learn socialization, how to ask for help, and how to interact with authority figures - so we would need to balance any online classes, and use them to augment the students' experiences. Mr. Alexander asked about the use of technology such as using blizzard bags when there are snow days. Dr. Tremblay said that currently DESE has put a halt on approving any more districts using blizzard bags, in order to take a look at the districts that are currently implementing it, to see if they actually are meeting the requirements of the 180 school days. Dr. Tremblay said they are piloting a 1:1 with chromebooks in some of the schools, and will see what kind of problems they encounter, such as internet accessibility at home. Ms. Hugo said she did not see any S.M.A.R.T. goals in the Strategic Plan. Dr. Tremblay said that the Strategic Plan is the framework, and the School Improvement Plans improve upon it, and they show the percentages and S.M.A.R.T. goals, as they are different for each school. Ms. Hugo said she only saw one mention of advanced learners, and nothing about SAGE. Dr. Tremblay said the plan for these are within the budget documents, and he will also do a presentation at the next meeting with the SAGE Department Head Judy LeBlanc about the forward movement of SAGE and investments in it. He said part of the discussion at the schools with the principals is how they are differentiating between English Language Learners, gifted students and special needs students. He said that they have more work to do for gifted kids, but first they are looking to make sure they are providing for ELL and

special needs students. Mr. Alexander asked about the lottery system and what the plans are for the goal going forward. Dr. Tremblay said he is continuing to try and fix school choice every year, it is very difficult to fix and the majority of students are largely in one part of the community, while the majority of the schools are on the other side. He said there are only so many seats available in each school, and the District looks to make sure there is a good representation of our kids across all the schools; they look to spread ELL and special needs students throughout to be balanced, and there has been an increase of ELL students. He said that they were able to accommodate 91% or so, for first choices and are constantly looking to see how to make it better. He added that they are looking at this within the Equity, Diversity and Community Development Office, in conjunction with the Parent Information Center. He said he is not sure it will be fixed without considering another school, possibly on the South Side. Mr. Alexander asked if parents are getting a basic overview on how it works, when they come to place their student in the lottery, as he is getting the sense that they don't know exactly what the process is. Dr. Tremblay said they talk about it at Kindergarten Orientation Night, and provide the information in multiple languages. He said that he is striving to make every single one of the nine elementary schools desirable, then it will not matter what choice you get.

*Ms. Maskell left the meeting at 9:15 p.m

*Mr. Finlay stepped out of the meeting from 9:15-9:18 p.m.

Superintendent's Update

Mr. Lynch said that at the meeting on June 19th, he will be giving a full narrative with recommendations for any end-of-year transfers for **FY19**. He said that there is just under 80% expended, and salaries are not encumbered. He added that he will have a projected end budget for June 30th. He said that the food service negative balance will be covered by the operating budget before June 30th.

Mr. Lynch said that last night was the first reading by the City Council on the **FY20 Budget**, the second reading will be on June 18th. He said that the current District proposed budget is the 4.11% the School Committee voted on.

Ms. Bryant asked if there is currently a soft freeze. Mr. Lynch said that there was, but they are still spending money - departments and schools just have to submit what they want to expend, with information on amount and what for, to get approved; and salaries still need to be taken out.

Dr. Tremblay said that the District participates in two educational collaboratives, he is the voting member for ACCEPT and the law requires a formal vote for him to continue in that capacity.

Motion: To appoint Dr. Tremblay as the School Committee's representative to the ACCEPT Board of Directors for the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Moved: Ms. Bryant

Seconded: Ms. Hugo.

Vote: Unanimous (7-0-0)

Subcommittee Reports

Policy

Motion: To approve Policy JJF: Student Activity Accounts for a first reading.

Moved: Ms. Hugo

Seconded: Mr. Alexander

Discussion: Mr. Epstein asked for a friendly amendment within this proposed policy, as it is not clear if there are other accounts besides the agency account and the checking account, and he

thinks the structure should be explained - the hierarchy of accounts should be part of the definitions. All in agreement. Mr. Epstein will work with Mr. Lynch on adding this information.

Vote: Unanimous (7-0-0)

Finance and Operations. Mr. Epstein said that two warrants were signed. He said that the Finance Subcommittee met and the auditor will be making one amendment to the audit report in order to follow the DESE requirements. He said that then, from the subcommittee's view, the audit will look complete, acceptable, and satisfy the requirements. He said that the audits for FY19 are going to be different: Next year the School Committee will hire their own auditor as opposed to being part of the City's audit, and will be in charge of how it is done, what they should be looking for, what level should be considered acceptable, and the timeframe. Mr. Lynch said that he will look into material donations that were brought up in the subcommittee meeting, and will report on these to the subcommittee as it comes in.

Approval of Grants/Gifts/Field Trips

Motion: To approve the Open Session Minutes of April 24, 2019 with the suggested minor amendments.

Moved: Ms. Bryant **Seconded:** Mr. Finlay **Vote:** 6-0-1
(Yes: Hugo, Finlay, Freudberg, Alexander, Epstein, Bryant. Abstained: Pascual)

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Mr. Epstein **Seconded:** Mr. Finlay **Vote:** Unanimous (7-0-0)
Meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Meeting Materials

Agenda

Student Advisory Committee Presentation

Action Civics Commission Presentation on Homework Policy

BLOCKS Estimate Report

Proprietary Specification Vote for Fuller Project

Progress Report on Superintendent's Goals

FY19 Year to Date Budget

Food Services Negative Balance report

Memo on ACCEPT Collaborative Representative

Policy Summary

Policy JJF: Student Activity Account Audits

Warrants

April 24, 2019 Open Session Draft Minutes

These minutes were approved at the School Committee Open Session held on July 17, 2019.

These minutes were sent to the City of Framingham for posting on July 18, 2019.

