



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Priscila Sousa, Chair • Jessica Barnhill, Vice Chair • Valerie Ottaviani, Clerk
Adam Freudberg • David Gordon • Beverly Hugo
William LaBarge • Tiffanie Maskell • Jennifer Moshe
Charlie Sisitsky, Mayor
Farley Building, 19 Flagg Drive, Framingham, MA 01702
Telephone: 508-626-9121 | www.framingham.k12.ma.us/schoolcommittee

SCHOOL COMMITTEE: OPEN MEETING MINUTES

DATE AND TIME: September 7, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Remote
MEETING CALLED BY: Chair Priscila Sousa
PRESENT: Jessica Barnhill
Adam Freudberg
Beverly Hugo
William LaBarge
Jennifer Moshe
Valerie Ottaviani
Priscila Sousa
Mayor Charlie Sisitsky
ABSENT: David Gordon
Tiffanie Maskell
ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Robert Tremblay, Superintendent
Nilufar Noorian, Student Advisory Committee Chair
Lincoln Lynch, Executive Director of Finance and Operations
Joanna Hastry, Executive Assistant for the School Committee

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m., noted all in attendance, and said that Mayor Sisitsky and Student Advisory Chair Nilufar Noorian were joining remotely and School Committee member David Gordon would not be in attendance due to a conflicting meeting and member Tiffanie Maskell would not be in attendance due to a family emergency. She said that the meeting is being broadcast live on the Government Channel and can be viewed Live on Facebook on the Framingham Public Schools Facebook Page. She noted information on how to participate in public comment in person and through Zoom. She asked for a moment of silence to think about all those lost and who are suffering in our community, nation, state, nation, and world.

Public Comment

FTA President Christine Mulroney said that they are proud and excited to work with the District on reinigorating the Parent Teacher Home Program and spoke to the five non-negotiables of the program including that the visits focus on building relationships of trust by asking families to share their hopes and dreams for their child. She spoke to study results that show that students who received home visits had 24% fewer absences at school, had a more positive attitude towards school, and increases in parent involvement and trust. She said that information will soon go out to the community with the mission of the program and the FTA can be reached out to for any questions.

Announcements from the Chair

There were no announcements from the Chair.

Mayor's Update

Mayor Sisitsky said that he has been having conversations with the District's administration and NRT regarding the transportation issue and has learned a lot about what NRT is doing to try and get new drivers, the issues with getting drivers properly licensed which is a national issue, and how they are reaching out to state agencies and federal representatives to help expedite the processes. He said that he notified NRT that he will be sending them a letter explaining the City's concerns with the situation and acknowledging that they feel that NRT is in violation of the contract and are reserving the City's rights to take action at any point in time to correct the problems with the contract.

Remarks from the Student Advisory Committee (SAC)

SAC Chair Nilufar Noorian said that last week the high school had three community days in order to build a sense of community as well as to allow younger grades to learn the schedule and routines.

Superintendent's Update

Back to School Update

Dr. Tremblay said that there was a meeting with MSBA regarding the application for a possible new school, that the MSBA has selected the project for an extended review, and we should be told shortly if we are invited into the pipeline or if we need to submit a future application. He said that they were also able to talk about the possibility of a preschool during that meeting. Ms. Barnhill asked if the topic of a southside location for the new school was brought up at this meeting. Dr. Tremblay said that a pre-feasibility study would need to be completed first, but the MSBA was glad that the City has put money aside for a southside location and for it to be a way to expand preschool education. Ms. Sousa said that the MSBA asked how the community feels about a southside location and they were able to talk about the need for it and how it can affect long bus rides and transportation of students across the City. Mr. Freudberg asked if they gave any indication of a timeline for a response to the application and what can be done to set us up for success going forward, such as if there needs to be extra money budgeted to account for escalation or creating a new building committee so that the MSBA can see that we are serious. Dr. Tremblay said that the MSBA said that they would give a response by the end of October so we are aware if we need to put in another application in the Spring and that we are at the next level of analysis.

Dr. Tremblay gave other updates including that the District is proud to partner with the FTA on the Parent Teacher Home Program which is another way to build relationships and trust with families and that his goal of a residency program has started, is currently taking place at Stapleton, and he will be holding a feedback forum at the end of each school to receive feedback. He spoke to some of the challenges with transportation that have come up such as traffic patterns, parking at the high school, and less buses which can lead to more traffic at parent drop off. Mr. Freudberg suggested updating each school's entire community once the residency is completed there to update them on what Dr. Tremblay did with his time there or learned there.

Executive Director of Finance & Operations Update

FY22 Operating and Capital Budget

Executive Director of Finance and Operations Lincoln Lynch said that they are working to close out FY22 with the CFO and Accounting Department based on the vote from the School Committee. He said that for the Capital Budget they are still working on exterior envelopes.

FY23 Operating and Capital Budget

Mr. Lynch said that there is just over 14% in expenditures and encumbrances for the FY23 Operating Budget. He said that capital projects they are working on include the Farley roof, ADA upgrades, and furniture purchases and they have finished the Barbieri Cafeteria. He said, in response to a question from Ms. Moshe, that in the next payroll all retroactive salary payments will be completed. He noted that they are about to open FY24 in a month.

Transportation Update

Mr. Lynch said that they have 60 busses running district wide, have had late busses as expected for the start of the school year, and more parents are having to drive students which has created issues with drop off and pickup and he has been working with staff and principals on this. He said they have been able to provide transportation to 84.22% of students who have requested transportation, with 5,266 requested and 4,435 students registered to the buses, with about 200 students that still need to be assigned buses. He said that they strive to go above what the law and policy require and are transporting 2,090 ineligible students across the District including 7-12th graders. He said that there are still 831 students that requested a bus and have not been assigned and they have contacted other bus companies in the area who are facing the same challenges. He said that they are also actively looking at purchasing additional bicycles to provide to students that aren't able to get on a bus, have a meeting with MWRTA to purchase around 5,000 passes to distribute to students, the Explorers Programs are trying to hire additional staff and increase scholarships for families, and they are sharing recruitment efforts and sending out information about the jobs available.

Vice President of Operations David Lathbury and Director of Customer Relations Peter Delani shared an update from NRT that included an overview of drivers, bus status, turnover information, driver training pipeline and road tests passed by month, a recruiting update, information on student management, and information on recruiting and retention. Members

expressed concern that there are 831 students who requested transportation and were not on a bus, and asked questions including regarding the tracking of staff in the pipeline as it does not seem to be adding drivers, if athletics will be impacted due to the lack of drivers which could lead to problems getting to games, and if special education transportation with Vanpool is fully covered. Mr. Lathbury said that they are anticipating relying on teams being able to use the Flyer's buses and pulling resources from other offices for athletics transportation. He said that all students have been routed through Vanpool and spoke to how it is much quicker to get a 7D license than a CDL which is required for the larger buses. Members asked if they hired any monitors for the buses, who the conduct reports are given to and if there are repeat offenders or common denominators of who and why students are misbehaving, and why we are not enforcing the Code of Character, Conduct, and Support and mitigating the behaviors so students can get to school safely and on time. Mr. Lathbury said that they have hired some monitors over the summer and some are in training now. He said that the conduct reports are collected daily by the Transportation Department. Dr. Tremblay said that the downside of taking away bus privileges as a consequence could mean the student can't come to school. He noted that it is hard to retain drivers if we are overlooking behaviors and the District has spoken to the drivers about the Code of Conduct and it is now time to enforce the language of the Code with fidelity. Discussion on how the conduct reports are given to Principals and Vice Principals and are entered into a Google sheet so the responses to those behaviors can be reported back to the drivers.

Ms. Barnhill asked if older students could be monitors for community service or if there could be some sort of staff bonus for any FPS staff who refers a bus driver that is retained for a certain amount of time. Mr. Lynch said that he could discuss the idea of a bonus with the Human Resources Department and can come back to the committee with a recommendation. Mr. Freudberg said that he created a spreadsheet based on the past public resources of data and the data seems to be showing a different story than is being reported. He said that it showed that the goal for contracted drivers is 77, it was down to 67 drivers for a while and now down to 60 drivers, and there were between 16 and 10 drivers in training for the first few months and recent months it fell as low as 4 and now back up to 10. He asked approximately what percentage of drivers in training are not making it through to the end to being hired, if that loss is due to how long the RMV and Federal Department of Transportation timeframes are, if a driver leaves is there any data to specifically reflect if they had consistent bus monitor or not supporting them on their routes, and did they leave in part of not having a monitor to help with student behavior. Mr. Lathbury said they are trying to figure out why drivers do not make it through the training program as well and noted that some drivers find that obtaining a 7D license is easier and do not continue on for a CDL license. He said that due to this they have changed their training program to help more with obtaining a permit by setting up a permit exam the first day of training and continuing training until that date. He said that drivers definitely rely on monitors, three drivers specifically left due to student conduct and went to neighboring districts and some left due to not living as close to Framingham. Mr. Freudberg suggested looking to change the pay scale for monitors and using state and federal connections, such as through the Mayor and Karen Spilka's Office to help with the RMV process.

Ms. Hugo suggested that for the future it may be helpful to do a study and look at data to see if privatization of bus drivers would be helpful. She said that it was decided years ago to not do it due to the cost of health insurance and benefits and would like to see if this has helped in other districts. Discussion occurred regarding being open to looking into this and how this study was requested in 2018-2019 but the City did not give the full study or details, how there is currently a three year contract with NRT, and there are hiring issues being seen in the schools as well and not just with NRT or transportation. Dr. Tremblay said that as a follow communication to the committee he can provide information on expectations on busses, identifying consequences for busses with a reference back to the Code of Character, Conduct and Support and possible policy language to free up spots on the bus if students cannot behave, protocol for communication around discipline and what actions will be taken at the school level for follow up, and if any commonalities can be discerned from the bus conduct reports.

Vote on a Request from the Disability Commission to Raise the Disability Flags During the Month of July at All Schools

Mr. Lynch said that he received a request from the Disability Commission for a vote to fly the Disability Flag during the month of July at all schools. He said that all schools currently fly the American Flag and Pride Flag and can only fly two flags at once, so for any request like this when that flag flies they would take down the Pride Flag and fly those in the lobby of the school where the public can see and once that month is over they would put the Pride Flag back up on flagpole.

Motion: To approve the request from the Disability Commission to raise the disability flag during the month of July at all schools.

Moved: Ms. Hugo **Seconded:** Ms. Moshe

Discussion: Mr. Freudberg recognized that a local businessman donated his graphic design services to design this flag.

Vote: Unanimous (7-0-0)

(Yes: Hugo, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. LaBarge said that the warrants were signed for a total of \$3,919,505.09 and payroll total of \$12,307,542.75 on the dates of August 1st, August 8th, August 15th, August 22nd, August 29th.

Ms. Barnhill, as the Chair of the Teaching and Learning Subcommittee, said that dates will be sent around to schedule the next meeting and reminded members of the Policy Subcommittee to submit dates as well.

Ms. Moshe, as the Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Subcommittee, said that she met with the Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Diversity, and Community Engagement Tiffany Lillie to work on a presentation for the next meeting which will be scheduled soon.

Ms. Hugo, as the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Sustainability Subcommittee, said that she has been speaking with many stakeholders in the City and planning to schedule meetings at the same time of every month. She reported as the liaison to the Massachusetts Association of School Committee's Delegate Assembly Resolution Task Force that only six

resolutions passed this year to be sent to the Delegate Assembly including the one from Framingham.

Ms. Ottaviani, as the Chair of the Health and Wellness Subcommittee, said they are starting the District Wellness Committee meetings next Wednesday to get back in alignment with DESE requirements and they have been meeting with DESE for some virtual training to get back in line. She reported as the Framingham High School liaison that there are now full members on the PTO but there is a lack of volunteers to help with the Booster Room that helps with scholarships and grants.

Additional Public Comment

Robert Bolles spoke in disagreement with having the transportation company being under the jurisdiction of the district as suggested earlier in the meeting. He said that he fought this for many years in the past, that the shortage of drivers is a national problem and not just a Framingham problem, and health care and pensions for drivers were costing us too much, and he saved the town millions.

Approval of Minutes and Gifts

Motion: To approve the Open Session minutes of June 29, 2022 and July 27, 2022.

Moved: Mr. LaBarge **Seconded:** Ms. Moshe **Vote:** Unanimous (7-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Ms. Barnhill **Seconded:** Ms. Ottaviani **Vote:** Unanimous (7-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Barnhill, LaBarge)
Meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Meeting Materials

Agenda
FY22 YTD
FY23 YTD
NRT Transportation Update
Warrants
Draft June 29, 2022 Minutes
Draft July 27, 2022 Minutes
A. Freudberg Driver Shortfall Spreadsheet

These minutes were approved by the Framingham School Committee in Open Session on October 19, 2022.

These minutes were sent to the City of Framingham for posting on October 20, 2022.