



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: January 18, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Memorial Building - Blumer Room
 150 Concord Street, Framingham
 Remote Option via Zoom
MEETING CALLED BY: Chair Priscila Sousa
PRESENT: Jessica Barnhill
 Adam Freudberg
 David Gordon*
 Beverly Hugo
 William LaBarge
 Tiffanie Maskell
 Jennifer Moshe
 Valerie Ottaviani
 Priscila Sousa
 Mayor Charlie Sisitsky
ABSENT: None
ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Robert Tremblay, Superintendent
 Nilufar Noorian, Student Advisory Committee Chair
 Joanna Hastry, Executive Assistant for the School Committee

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., noted all in attendance, and said that herself and Mayor Sisitsky were joining remotely and School Committee member David Gordon would be joining remotely in progress. 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

There were no participants for public comment.

Announcements from the Chair

The Chair noted events in the community that some School Committee members attended including the Flyer's hockey game where they beat Natick and MLK Day of Service at Temple Beth Am where many of the recipients of the services were within the Stapleton and Harmony Grove Elementary Schools community. She noted that the School Committee met in a workshop earlier this evening for a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training facilitated by the Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Diversity, and Community Engagement.

Remarks from the Student Advisory Committee (SAC)

SAC Chair Nilufar Noorian said that it is midterm week at Framingham High School and January 23rd is the first day of Term 3.

Mayor's Update

Mayor Sisitsky said that he would like to invite all members to the State of the City address on January 31st in Nevin's Hall. He said that he has begun to take steps to put together a new School Building Committee hopefully for a new school at the Bethany property in South Framingham. He said they are making progress on purchasing that property and the District is working on a new application to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). He said that he is seeking support and feedback from the School Committee and Superintendent on if it would be appropriate to start this new committee in the spring. Members spoke in support of having it start in spring and noted that information was sent to the Mayor in October for guidance on the new committee.

Motion: Request that the Mayor begin the creation of the School Building Committee by April 1st.

Moved: Ms. Barnhill **Seconded:** Ms. Hugo **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (8-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Superintendent's Update

Fuller School Building Committee Closeout

Dr. Tremblay asked to take the agenda out of order, all were in agreement. He expressed appreciation for the taxpayers and all those who helped on the Fuller School Building Committee (SBC) and said that the project was on time, under budget, and had no work place injuries, all during a pandemic. SBC Co-Chair David Miles spoke to how the project was almost a 15 year project, there were over 90 meetings, all different perspectives went into the ideas for the building, and introduced the other members in the audience which included Co-Chair Ed Gotgart, Matteo Batista from Consigli, Project Manager Joel Seeley from SMMA, and Philip Gray from Johnathan Levi Architects. Members thanked all for their hard work, thanked the community for voting to get this approved, and noted that the project was \$4.3 million under budget, and 81% solar energy fueled. Mr. Seeley said that once the City submits the last payment requisition to the MSBA the MSBA will start their audit process which lasts a year to a year and a half, then the MSBA Board of Directors will vote to finalize the project and pay the last reimbursement check to the City. He said that there are a couple of items that Consigli will come back in the spring and touch up on, such as tree and shrub planting and testing the

firmness and quality assurance of the turf play fields. Mr. Gray said that the building has already been winning international awards and at the request from members said he will send the links to members for them to be able to share with constituents.

Discussion and Vote on Accepting Westborough Public Schools into ACCEPT Collaborative
Dr. Tremblay said that ACCEPT Collaborative provides special education services at a reduced rate and the more districts who join it could lower the cost of the membership. He said the request from Westborough to join was included in the packets and each member district needs to vote to approve.

Motion: To accept the Westborough Public Schools into ACCEPT Collaborative.

Moved: Ms. Hugo **Seconded:** Mr. LaBarge

Discussion: Ms. Moshe asked if there are any effects on how services are given, such as if they decrease due to demand, with the more districts that join. Dr. Tremblay said that they do not anticipate that being the case, he said that Framingham benefits from districts who are able to offer programming that Framingham doesn't have space for, so additional districts joining may expand opportunities in the future.

Roll Call Vote: Unanimous (8-0-0)

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

Announcements

Dr. Tremblay said that he is wrapping up his residency; this week he is at BLOCKS Pre-School and will then be at Thayer Alternative High School campus.

Executive Director of Finance & Operations Update

FY23 Operating and Capital Budget

Executive Director of Finance and Operations Lincoln Lynch said that the FY23 YTD shows 54% used or encumbered and is in good financial standing. He said that for capital projects they continue to do ADA upgrades across the District and are in the bidding process and planning for the Farley roof, exterior envelope work, and roof replacement study for Dunning and McCarthy Elementary Schools.

*Mr. Gordon joined the meeting remotely at 8:12 p.m.

FY24 Initial Budget Discussions

Dr. Tremblay noted that members of the District's Senior Leaders team were present in case there were any questions. Mr. Lynch shared a Preliminary School Department FY24 Budget Proposal presentation that included a trend analysis of the School Department Budget, the overview of proposed Fiscal Year 2023-2024 school budget, FPS Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Operating Budget drivers including personnel costs, Special Education tuition and transportation, big bus and homeless transportation, new positions, utilities, and preschool expansion, information on changes in practice for FY 2023-2024, items to reduce the budget to try and reach a target increase, FY24 summary, and next steps towards an approved FY24 School Budget.

Ms. Moshe asked why there are big differences in prices between the three pre-school sites and if the kids per location is the total enrolled now or for next year. Mr. Lynch said that they are all different entities with many different factors and there are discussions leading up to the agreed

upon numbers. He said the kids per location is for next year for the three sites in addition to BLOCKS Pre-School. Mr. Freudberg said that a lot in the budget will depend on the Chapter 70 number which should be submitted by March 1st in time for our submission at the end of March, suggested that the new position requests include information on why they are needed, such as for Special Education legal compliance, so members can help advocate for them, and noted that Unit N is not listed in the presentation since it is funded by a revolving account. He asked if there are any other revenues that the District brings in that could help offset costs with the City, such as the MassBay lease, and spoke about how the state's Operational Services Division (OSD) is showing a 14% increase now for out of district tuitions which is much higher than the average of 2-3%. Mr. Lynch said that they are watching the 14% increase which will be a state wide problem with an enormous impact on all districts and any change in that number would decrease our overall budget ask. He said that the District brings in some revenue through the Building and Grounds revolving account for any fees for facility use which mostly covers custodial overtime and supplies and in the past they have used \$100,000 to offset the Operating Budget which they are trying to move away from using and is not included in this proposal. He said that the Athletics revolving account has been used to offset transportation costs, but because there are no longer funds coming into that account this will be the last year for this. He said that they are looking at potential revenue from the MassBay lease to offset some of the costs in this proposal and they also have Title grants and Circuit Breaker that are used to offset the budget. Dr. Tremblay said that he has joined with other Superintendents to push back against the 14% OSD increase and have also reached out to the legislative delegation regarding the impact it will have on Framingham.

Transportation Update

Mr. Lynch went over the FPS Transportation Update that was in the packet that included driver attendance, NRT on time performance by school by bus, on time history of the percentage of buses to arrive after the bell, planned doubled up runs, number of drivers in NRT training pipeline, percentage of time Edulog mobile app up and running, athletics trips data, and neighboring districts transportation feedback. He said that the Vanpool information is not included in this report but on average there have been 7 drivers down for a total of 73 out of the needed 80 buses running. He said that the Special Education Department manages making sure the students get to and from their placements with Vanpool.

Ms. Moshe asked if there was a way to track what students may be arriving to school through other arrangements than their assigned bus when the buses are running late and if tracking that could help cut down on time with buses being late and doubled up runs. Mr. Lynch said that he can work with principals on getting the data, but to help with the routes there would not be a way to track this unless every parent whose student is using other arrangements called every day and they were able to radio the driver in time. Ms. Maskell spoke about students having to wait after school for long periods of time with no direction and said that we need to take responsibility and find creative ways to give direction for students that are consistently on doubled up runs and being impacted and should also track the time buses are arriving for pickup and not just arrival. Mr. Lynch, in response to a question from Mr. Gordon, said that the Athletics Department has been using the Flyer buses for transportation to games and they are driven by the Athletic Director, Assistant Director and any coaches that have gone through the

training with the Transportation Department. He said that they are 15 passenger buses and they would have to cancel games if they were not using them.

NRT staff Dave Lathbury, Peter Delani, and Edith Yambo shared their update that was provided in the packets on the screen. Mr. Delani said at the last meeting in November the committee had asked for a few action items and gave an update on them. The updates included that they reached out to five different transportation companies to see if they would be able to pick up any open routes and unfortunately they are not able to do so as they are dealing with some of their own driver shortages, Ms. Yambo who is NRT's Vice President for Talent Management is setting up a meeting with the District's Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and NRT's Senior Vice President of Operations Tim Sheehan welcomes the opportunity to meet with State Representative Sousa to discuss any ways the delegation can support issues around drivers. The presentation that was shared included information on the workforce landscape, 2022 Framingham recruiting performance, the path forward, and data on bus status and the driver training pipeline.

Mr. Freudberg asked if there were any results from the hiring event in December for small van drivers, if there is anything that they have seen with contract changes or funding to help solve problems, and if they have any thoughts on if changes to the budget may help with retaining drivers for next year as well as get as close to possible to 77 drivers for the rest of this year. Ms. Yambo said that she will get the results from the hiring event. Mr. Delani said that some communities where there was a significant increase in the budget did have a positive impact, but there have been increases in other communities without much impact on the driver situation. He said that the ones who saw a change were ones that increased from a lower base pay than others in the region and for communities that are in a competitive environment the increases do not always have the same change. Mr. Freudberg said that he challenges them to think about specifics when they work with the District staff for the March budget deadline to bring forward any concrete ideas to hire more drivers. Ms. Moshe said that because Vanpool is not included in the reports we are really down 24 drivers and not 17. She asked why the report shows data on how many staff were hired per month, but the number of drivers on the road has not increased. Ms. Yambo said that the number hired are for those who met the basic criteria, such as having a license for three years, and does not account for any who then fall out during the background check or training process. In response to questions she said that they need consent to run a background check and would not receive consent to do so unless there was an offer made. Mr. Gordon asked what relevance the hired per month number means for the District since the real relevant number seems to be the data for those in process and why there are not 6 more drivers on the road, which is the goal NRT had set in November. He expressed frustration that this is not showing any progress or a return on investment and gave the District a false sense of hope. Mr. Lathbury said that they had more people in the pipeline and had yet to experience the 7 drivers who are now on long term medical leave of absences. He said that the data shows how many people they need to speak to to get a licensed driver, just looking at the six months of data they need to talk to 180 people to just get to a few all the way through the licensed process, and said that the permitting process is very challenging. Mr. Delani, in a response to a question from Mr. Gordon, said that of the 8 in the pipeline now 4 are in permit testing and 1 is going into an accelerated training class with the hope to have them on a bus

driving in February. Ms. Sousa said that she wished they had reached out to her earlier to look at legislative solutions as Friday was the bill filing deadline for bills to be considered for the next two years. She said that the committee wants to be part of the solution and wonders why they were not called upon to help share information, such as recruitment events, etc. Ms. Maskell spoke about the neighboring district's feedback, that was provided in Mr. Lynch's report, and how it is frustrating that on a whole they seem to be doing a lot better than Framingham and some even have NRT for their transportation.

Discussion and Vote on School Committee FY24 Department Budget and Discussion and Vote on Proposal from Title IX Attorney Nuttal, MacAvoy, & Joyce P.C. to Raise Hourly Rate

Mr. Freudberg, as the Chair of the Finance and Operations Subcommittee, said that the subcommittee met on January 10th and voted unanimously to approve the three different items listed. He asked for a consent agenda on those items and there was no objection.

Motion: To put forward the Finance and Operations Subcommittee's recommendations to approve the FY24 School Committee department budget, amend the FY23 School Committee department budget that was previously approved to shift the graduation gowns from the high school line item to the School Committee line item, and to accept the proposal from the Title IX Attorney Nuttal, MacAvoy and Joyce, P.C. to raise the hourly rate as described in the engagement letter and the engagement letter will also be corrected with one small change to show that the firm will only be used for Title IX matters.

Moved: Mr. Freudberg **Seconded:** Mr. LaBarge **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Gordon, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Annual Evaluation of the School Committee's Executive Assistant

The Chair said that there were technical issues in completing the evaluation and unless there is an objection she would like to move this to the following meeting. There were no objections.

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. LaBarge said that the warrants were signed for a total of \$1,672,554.19 and a payroll total of \$4,853,827.59 on the dates of January 2nd and January 9th, 2023.

Ms. Hugo gave updates on organizations she is a liaison to that included that the newly voted Executive Director for TEC Collaborative is unable to start until the end of the school year so they voted for Dan Shovak to be the acting Director and Brad Jackson to be the Interim Assistant Director and they have also been speaking about 14% OSD increase, the Massachusetts Association for School Committees (MASC) had their annual retreat, they are building an anti racism toolkit that districts can send items to be included as best practices, and they are formulating a legislative agenda.

Ms. Hugo, as the Climate Change, Environment, and Sustainability Subcommittee, said that they will have to postpone the scheduled January 31st meeting as it conflicts with the Mayor's State of the City Address.

Approval of Minutes, Gifts, and Scholarships

Motion: To approve the \$500 donation from Edwards Church and \$100 donation from Laura Cressotti both for the FAESL+ Program.

Moved: Mr. LaBarge **Seconded:** Ms. Hugo **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Gordon, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

The Chair noted that the December 21, 2022 minutes are not ready yet and will be on the next agenda.

Additional Public Comment

Bob Bolles said that he is concerned every budget season as a retiree with no increases and with a lot of elderly people moving out of his neighborhood and kids moving in what the costs will be and said that we need to do whatever we can to keep the budget down.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Mr. LaBarge **Seconded:** Ms. Moshe **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Gordon, Moshe, Freudberg, Sousa, Ottaviani, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Meeting adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

Meeting Materials

Agenda

ACCEPT Statement on Westboro Membership

Westborough Public Schools Letter to ACCEPT

Press Release on Fuller School Building Committee Culmination

FY23 YTD

Preliminary FY24 School Department Budget Slides

FPS Transportation Update

NRT Transportation Update

Policy BK: School Committee Memberships

FY24 School Committee Department Budget Memo

Nuttall, MacAvoy, and Joyce Letter of Engagement

Warrants

Gift Memos

These minutes were approved by the Framingham School Committee in Open Session on February 15, 2023.

These minutes were sent to the City of Framingham for posting on March 2, 2023.