MASCONOMET REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

February 14, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT:	M. Ogden, Chair, Topsfield	J. McLean, Vice Chair, Boxford
	T. Currier, Middleton	J. Horrigan, Boxford
	W. Hodges, Topsfield	Z. Bhuju, Topsfield
	C. Bolzan, Boxford	E. Clements - Boxford
	D. Casamassima, Middleton	K. Petrone, Middleton

MEMBERS ABSENT: M. Alexander, Middleton

OTHERS PRESENT: M. Harvey, Superintendent (zoom)
J. Sands, Assistant Supt. & Chief Procurement Officer
L. Bennett, Assistant Supt. For Student Services

A. **Call to Order** – M. Ogden, Chair, called the Regular Meeting of the School Committee of February 14, 2024, to Order at 7:03pm, in the High School Library.

B. Remarks from the Chair – M. Ogden wished the teams and student athletes good luck in their upcoming tournament games.

C. Public Comment –

Michelle Voner, Topsfield, believes combining the Department Heads for Music and Performing Arts is a detriment to both departments. They are separate positions. She reviewed the activities scheduled and run by the departments.

Catherine Vasilakis-Scaramozza, Topsfield, spoke against combining Music and Performing Arts Departments.

Elizabeth Young, Boxford, asked the cost benefit of combining Department Heads and hiring a consultant. The money saved should be used for the FTE Music Department Head.

Emma Smith, Middleton Masco 8th grader and Noah Bollinger, Topsfield Masco 8th grader, presented a petition signed by 100 people, mostly made up of students, against the proposed budget impacts on the Music Department. They informed the Committee that the MS band members are afraid of losing their band director.

Renee Deal, Middleton, read statements from 2 Masco graduates. She believes having music classes during regular school hours will hurt the music students.

Sharon Murphy, Masco faculty, believes that staffing adjustments, reducing the number of teachers and an Adjustment Counselor is not a level services budget. Smaller class sizes are better for the students to address learning deficits and help top learners. Students emotional needs are at an all-time high. She stated that the Department Heads are doing the work to be done by the Director of Teaching and Learning.

Sophie Gustafson, Topsfield Masco 11th grade student, stated there are big changes in store for the Performing Arts Department next year. A specific Department Head is needed to assist with these changes. Both the Music and Performing Arts Departments are award-winning and successful, combining the departments would be a detriment to the departments and the students.

Stacy Mannheim, Masco Art Department Chair, stated that Masco has one of the top Arts Department in the state. She reviewed the benefits to the students of Masco and the Department Head responsibilities. She believes eliminating the Music Department Head will not benefit the students.
Susan Gilbert, Boxford, spoke regarding the Department Head covering more than one department and the issues it would cause. She spoke about her daughter's experience at Masco with the Arts Department and Adjustment Counselors.
Julie Fine, Topsfield, spoke about her daughter's Art experience at Masco and how important access to the Arts Department is for students. She also spoke about losing an Adjustment Counselor and the impact on the students.
Charles Posanka, Boxford, Masco 11th grader, expressed his concern with the combining of the two departments and the workload for one Department Head. He spoke about his experiences with the Music and Performing Arts Departments.
Amy K, Boxford, Masco 11th grader, spoke about her music experience at Masco and her concern with combining Department Heads.

D. **<u>Student Advisory Board Report</u>** – Allie Casamassima updated the Committee regarding the peer leader/freshmen meeting. DECA is handing out Valentine bags as a fundraiser this week. A St. Patrick's day dinner is being organized for the senior citizens and Student Council is organizing a food drive as well. Student surveys have been sent out and they are waiting for the results.

E. **<u>Track Spring Field Trip</u>** – Dave Mitchell, Track and Field Coach, presented a field trip to the Committee. The athletes will be traveling to Johns Hopkins University for an out of state track meet April 15-April 20th. Many athletes qualify for Nationals, which take place in June which is a busy time for seniors. He reviewed the anticipated schedule. The number of student athletes will be limited to returning varsity athletes and those who qualify**.** Trip insurance is being considered while finalizing the proposal. A Motion was made by E. Clements to approve the Track Spring Field Trip to John Hopkins University as presented, it was seconded by T. Currier and unanimously approved.

MOTION: Approve Track Spring Field Trip
VOTED: 10-0, Motion Passed.

F. **<u>FY25 Budget Deliberations</u>**

a. Department Head Reorganization

M. Harvey reviewed the Proposed Staffing Overview and the summary of the Recommended Staffing Adjustments. These adjustments result in $180,000 savings and a reduction of 1.8 FTEs.
Enrollment trends support the reduction of 5 FTEs with enrollment down 12.8% overall over the past 5 years. Enrollment for October 2024 was reviewed which indicates the MS enrollment remaining the same and the HS reducing by 2.6%.
Projected enrollments for FY25 -FY28 were reviewed by grade which indicate an increase in the MS enrollment of 1.5% and reduction in the HS by 1.1%.
HS and MS staffing, courses and class size for FY24 were reviewed.

Staffing recommendations were reviewed which include the reduction of 5 FTEs which would result in an average class size of 19.11 based on the current year's students. This does not take into consideration the estimated reduction of 26 HS students in FY25.

b. Director of Teaching and Learning Position

M. Harvey reviewed the Academic Department Head Structure which consists of 9 department heads who report to the building principals. He reviewed the job description and responsibilities of the Director of Teaching and Learning.

The Department Head teaching assignments were reviewed with the number of teachers and the number of teaching assignments. Coaches are counted as .33 FTE of a teacher.

M. Harvey reviewed the music programs offered at Masco at both the HS and MS and after school programs. There are no plans to make any reductions to the music program offerings for FY25. The jazz courses currently included in the after school program will need to be incorporated into the normal school day course schedule or as an extracurricular activity in order to comply with contractual requirements.

Consolidation of the Music and Arts Department Heads was reviewed. Support will be provided to the new Arts Department Head Position with mentoring and subject matter consultancy. The consultant is generally a retired, experienced music/arts teacher.

The existing band teaching position will become a 1.0 FTE. Support will be provided to the band teaching position with mentoring and subject matter consultancy.

Proposed department head reorganization and department head teaching assignments for FY25 were reviewed.

The position of Director of Teaching and Learning was reviewed with the Committee. The Director will report to the Superintendent and the job description was reviewed with the responsibilities. How the position will interact with the Strategic Plan to accomplish the goals of the Strategic Plan were reviewed, including curriculum, instruction, culture and wellbeing, and community. This position will strengthen professional practice and accomplish district data management and collection. The Data Wise model was reviewed for the Committee. This is a process of collecting and examining data to develop an action plan.

M. Ogden asked that a footnote be added to Health/PE to reflect the coaches as well as the teachers in the department.

J. McLean stated that grades 7 and 8 will increase in 2027 according to the budget book, however we still need to consider 45 students leaving the district between grades 8 and 9.

K. Petrone asked what the salary for the Director of Teaching and Learning is based upon. The salary is based on the experience and structure of the administration. This is the market rate for the experience and responsibility of the position.

K. Petrone asked if we could keep the Adjustment Counselor and if we could fill both Department Head positions in Art and Music. M. Harvey responded that the Music Department Head is retiring so now is the time to have this discussion regarding combining the positions. Discussion followed regarding ESSER Grant funds, their usage and discussions had in past SC meetings.

Z. Bhuju informed the Committee that 60 people attended the community relations dialogue and the most talked about topic was the combining of the Music and Performing Arts Departments. There is concern regarding the MS band teacher being able to cover

both the MS and HS programs. They would like the HS band teacher put back into the budget.
E. Clements agreed with Z. Bhuju and added that the challenge of hiring consultants is the level of detail and organization for every event scheduled and every student is not able to be met. She asked that both band teachers be kept in the budget.
T. Currier asked if adjusting the student fees for art/music activities would impact the budget enough to keep both band teachers.
C. Bolzan reviewed other schools that consolidated Department Heads. She asked if consolidation of smaller departments was considered.
J. Horrigan asked if the cost of the consultants is in the budget. Consultant fees are not yet in the budget.
Discussion followed regarding the duties of the band director and department heads and teaching requirements in the CBA.
A motion was made by C. Bolzan to ask the Superintendent to revise the recommended budget to reinstate the Music Department Head and provide a more detailed job description, it was seconded by J. McLean and unanimously approved.

MOTION: Revised recommended budget and provide more detailed job description
VOTE: 10-0, Motion Passed.

T. Currier asked if there is value in the ESSR funded positions.
W. Hodges stated that a reduction of 5 FTEs increases class sizes from 18-19 and given the declining enrollment, the SC "right sizes" staffing levels.
J. Sands reviewed each staffing reduction with the Committee. Discussion followed regarding attrition in the next 5 years and the CBA stipulations.
J. McLean added that the student enrollment has declined 11% over the past 5 years with the teacher reduction at 3% over the same time period.
J. Horrigan stated that he believes we will be hurting the reputation of Masco's education with a reduction in FTEs and encouraging students to transfer. He also stated that this will impact the school's ranking.
M. Ogden disagreed and that increasing class size by 1 student will not impact the classes.
K. Petrone asked when the Director of Teaching and Learning position will begin. The position would be posted in April as "anticipated" until after Town Meetings with a start date of July 1, 2024.

c. Review Revenue Sources and Preliminary Cherry Sheets
d. Review Pro-Forma Debt Service (Capital Plan)

J. Sands reviewed the Assessment Overview and the $388,081 decrease in revenue.
The Cherry Sheets are the official notification from the Commissioner of Revenue of the upcoming fiscal year's state aid and assessments to cities, towns and regional school districts. This was reviewed with the Committee.
Chapter 70 & Regional Transportation Aid was reviewed with the Committee. The minimum aid provision guarantees all districts receive at least the same amount of aid in

FY25 as they did in FY24 plus $30/pupil. The Regional School Transportation was reviewed and has been reduced by $170,000.
Charter Schools Sending Tuition and Assessment Reimbursement were reviewed. Charter School sending tuition assesses the sending municipality or regional school district, through the cherry sheet, for pupils attending Charter Schools. In other words, Charter School tuition charges are assessed against the sending district and paid to the Charter School district. The District's cost in FY24 is $108,000. Charter Tuition Assessment Reimbursement reimburses the sending districts, through the cherry sheet, for the student tuition and capital facilities tuition component they pay to Commonwealth Charter Schools. Our reimbursement is $45,000.
School choice receiving tuition provides funding to receiving districts, through the Cherry Sheet, for accepting pupils from other districts. Masco has 31 school choice students and receives $211,000.
School choice sending tuition assesses the sending municipality or regional school district, through the Cherry Sheets, for the pupils attending another school district under school choice. Masco has 9 students who have school choiced out of the district and the cost is $80,000.
Interest income, fees collected and miscellaneous receipts and fund transfers in were reviewed with the Committee.
Excess and Deficiency was reviewed. Every regional school district is required to maintain an E&D Fund on its books of Account. At the end of every fiscal year, any surplus or deficit in the district's general fund shall be closed to the E&D fund. A regional school committee may use all or part of the certified balance in the E&D fund as a revenue source for its proposed budget. If the certified balance exceeds 5% of the budget, the Committee must use the amount in excess of 5% as a revenue source in the proposed budget. We use the amount in excess of 4% as a revenue source in the proposed budget. For FY25 the excess amount is $453,619.
Medicaid reimbursement was reviewed with the Committee.
Capital Plan Pro Forma Debt Service key assumptions and the timelines were reviewed by J. Sands for the Committee. These include $5M BAN (bond anticipation note) for roof/hvac/BMS Project OPM & Designer work; $1.05M BAN for Category 3 project work; and $25M Construction bond for roof/hvac/BMS (building management system) project. J. Sands reviewed the short-term interest and pay downs which were broken down by year and the construction loan which will be paid in 30 years.
J. McLean asked to structure the payments on the construction bond for 20 years since the life of the project is roughly 20 years, not 30.
At the meeting on February 28th insurance increases and revised adjustments will be discussed.

G. **<u>Approve School Year 24-25 Calendar</u>** – Discussion took place regarding aligning elementary school PD days with the HS PD days. A motion was made by Z. Bhuju to approve the School Year 24-25 Calendar as presented; it was seconded by C. Bolzan and unanimously approved.

MOTION: Approve 24-25 School Year Calendar
VOTE: 10-0, Motion Passed

H. <u>Superintendent's Report</u> – M. Harvey congratulated the Masco School Store, which is DECA based, on receiving the Enterprise Gold Certification.
21 Students attended the Model UN conference in Boston with 2000 delegates from all over the world discussing international topics.
A Financial Literacy Speaker series will be held at the HS from February through June to help students learn to navigate financial challenges. This series is for grades 10 and 11.
The Parent Activities Committee is hosting a Comedy and Dinner Fundraiser on March 23rd at Teresa's Restaurant in Middleton.
The next HS coffee will be held February 16th at 8:30am.
MA Partnership for Youth is offering free MPY Solutions held at the library to help parents.

I. <u>Subcommittee Reports</u>
<u>Community Relations</u> – meeting with the Department Heads prior to the next meeting as a meet and greet for new Committee members.
All other subcommittee updates tabled.

J. <u>Consent Agenda</u>
1. Approval of Minutes of January 31, 2024.
2. Warrants signed since January 31, 2024, in the amount of $1,307,133.80.
3. Approval of MEF MS Band Grant in the amount of $2,000.

A motion was made by W. Hodges to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, it was seconded by D. Casamassima and unanimously approved.

MOTION: Approve Consent Agenda
VOTE: 10-0, Motion Passed.

The next meeting will be held February 28th, 2024, at 7: 00pm.The meeting was adjourned at 10:20pm by M. Ogden.

Submitted By: _____ Approved: _____
Lynn Viselli, Recording Secretary Date

Per the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the list of documents that were either distributed to the Masconomet School Committee before the meeting in the packet or at the meeting.

1. Agenda
2. Superintendent Report
3. Track Spring Field Trip
4. FY25 Budget Deliberation
5. School Year 24-25 Calendar
6. Consent Agenda