

**DANVERS SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING**

March 13, 2023

School Committee Members Present:

Eric Crane, Chair
Robin Doherty, Secretary
Alice Campbell
Joshua Kepnes
Gabe Lopes

VOTED: 2023-2024 School Calendar/Early Release Days –Mrs. Wermers recommended the approval of the 2023-2024 school calendar/early release days for a first reading. - Dr. Doherty motioned to approve. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: New Superintendent Contract - Mr. Crane recommended the approval and signing of the Superintendent’s contract. Mrs. Campbell motioned to approve. Mr. Kepnes seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Final Adoption of FY24 Budget– Mr. Wermers recommended the final adoption of the FY24 Budget. Dr. Doherty moved to approve. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. The vote passed with a 3 to 2 majority.

VOTED: Consent Calendar- Dr. Doherty motioned to approve the Consent Calendar items as presented. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Minutes – Dr. Doherty moved to approve and release the minutes from the February 13, 2023 regular meeting and approve and not release the minutes from the February 13, 2023 Executive Session. Mr. Kepnes seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Adjournment – Mr. Kepnes moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:38 p.m. Dr. Doherty seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Regular Meeting Call to Order

Mr. Crane called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance and the Danvers Public Schools Mission statement were recited. Mr. Crane inquired whether the meeting was being recorded by audience members and announced that the the meeting was being broadcast on DCAT.

II. ITEMS OF INTEREST

Superintendent: Mrs. Wermers announced that Dr. Elizabeth Englander was conducting a Zoom presentation on Thursday, March 16th at 6:30 p.m. The discussion was Help to Adjust: Screens, Social Skills & Avoiding Social Problems. The presentation was sent to parents via ConnectEd and advertised on Facebook and Twitter.

School Committee: Dr. Doherty asked that if any citizen has concerns regarding curriculum that they please address them to the Directors within the school system. The School Committee does not make any decisions regarding curriculum.

Mr. Crane would like to acknowledge the work that Mrs. Wermers and the Directors have done with the reading program. Mr. Crane thanked the Human Rights and Inclusion committee for the Joan & Loki presentation. It was enlightening and informative.

Community: Several parents from the Special Education community were present to address the concerns within the district regarding the education of their students. Mr. Bellott spoke that although this year has been better with communication, there still is work to be done. Ms. Soldani spoke to the many needs still needed to be met within the district. There is a lack of qualified aides working in the special education classrooms. Although the aides are very attentive, they are not meeting the needs of the students. Mr. Kelliher spoke on behalf of the concerns within the ILC classroom specifically at Thorpe. There are students in grades K - 5 in one classroom which is a concern. The Learning Centers at Riverside are K-2 and 3-5. Why is one school different from another?

Dr. Doherty thanked the parents for speaking on behalf of their students. Mrs. Campbell asked what the criteria was for placing a student into a specific Learning Center. Mrs. O'Neil addressed the question and explained that the ILC operates on an alternative curriculum. Mrs. O'Neil and Mrs. Wermers have been collaborating on strategies for this program.

SEPAC Co-Chair, Ms. Belotte shared the Annual SEPAC parent Resources Fair will be held on March 23, 2023 at HRMS and noted her contact information and facebook page. The Committee thanked SEPAC for their important work.

Mr. Onorio addressed the School Committee regarding a book that has been chosen to read to students, specifically the poem "No Voice Too Small". When parents were invited to view the books ahead of time, that specific book was not available. The poem is a concern. Mrs. Wermers advised that the faculty has been given guidelines on which poems would not be read aloud and this was one of them. Mr. Onorio is still concerned that it may not be read aloud but the book is still available in the schools. Mr. Crane expressed his confidence in the staff who have developed the curriculum for the district. Weeks also spoke on the issue that the book was not available for viewing and the Q & A that are held can feel intimidating and voices are silenced.

III. INFORMATION FROM THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Reese MacDonald advised that over 200 students from DECA recently competed at the state level. Of those students, more than 40 have qualified for Nationals being held in Orlando, FL in April. The Winter Guard placed first in the NESBA competition, Students in the 9th grade attended Romeo & Juliet at the North Shore Music Theatre, Academy Theatre held auditions for the Spring production, and students from the 8th grade visited the High School to view a day in the life of a high school student. Mr. Federico thanked Ms. LeBlanc for arranging the event for the students.

IV. INFORMATION FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

- A. Strategic Plan Presentation - Technology Update - Mrs. Wermers introduced Mr. Sullivan, Technology Director, who updated the School Committee on the initiatives that have been implemented. Mr. Sullivan also advised that in working with the Town the wireless system at Great Oak and Highlands is in the works.
- B. DPS Website Feedback Survey Summary - Mrs. Wermers explained that the goal has been to improve the usability of the district website. The community was sent a survey and the feedback was that the site was not easy to navigate. The district is moving forward with improving things.

Mr. Lopes felt that a 30 day turnaround was not enough time. The heat map was helpful but he would have liked to see the survey open longer. Mr. Kepnes asked what the time frame was for a refresh. Mr. Sullivan advised things were already in the works and hoped for things to move quickly. Mrs. Campbell expressed that the app was much easier to use than the website.

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. 2023-2024 School Calendar/Early Release Days – Mrs. Wermers recommended the approval of the 2023-2024 school calendar/early release days for a first reading. As voted
- B. Vote on New Superintendent Contract - Mr. Crane announced that Mr. Bauer was present this evening to sign his contract. Mr. Crane thanked the members of the committee for their work on the contract. Mr. Bauer thanked the school committee and is looking forward to beginning on July 1st. As voted

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Final Adoption of FY24 Budget - Dr. Doherty made a motion to reopen discussion on the FY24 Budget. Mr. Kepnes second. Mr. Crane asked if there had been any changes, Mrs. Wermers advised there were not. Mrs. Wermers did advise that there was favorable news in regards to Chapter 70. Mr. Kepnes asked about the \$725K line item that had been removed, could they put the line item back in before the Select Board meeting. Discussion followed. Dr. Doherty made a motion to close open discussion. Mr. Kepnes second. As voted. Mr. Kepnes made a motion to accept the budget as amended. Mr. Lopes second. Vote failed 2 - 3. Dr. Doherty motioned to accept the budget as presented. Mrs. Campbell seconded. Vote passed 3 - 2.

VII. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- A. Consent Agenda - motion to approve fundraising requests, homeschool requests and field trip requests as presented. As voted
- B. Minutes - Dr. Doherty moved to approve and release the minutes from the February 13, 2023 regular meeting and approve and not release the minutes from the February 13, 2023 Executive Session. As voted
- C. Communications

NEC - Mrs. Wermers said the NEC budget is in process with the second reading taking place in April.

- D. Legislation - Mr. Crane has had conversations with Senator Lovely and Representative Kearns regarding Special Education funding.

- E. Subcommittee/Liaison Update -

Curriculum & Equity Mrs. Wermers said the Equity subcommittee will be meeting in April

Policy - no update.

DEEP – Mr. Kepnes advised several events planned for the upcoming weeks. The the next meeting is Wednesday, March 15, 2023 at 8:00 am at the Brookline Bank.

DanversCARES – Mr. Lopes said covered at the last meeting were the topics of the Dr. Englander presentation and Light the Night Purple to be held in May.

SEPAC - Mr. Crane said this was covered earlier in the meeting.

DHRIC - Mr. Crane advised the next meeting is to be held on March 16, 2023.

VII. BUDGET

February 2023 Budget Report - Mrs. Crum shared the budget report for February 2023.

IX. PERSONNEL

Announcement of Resignations, Leaves of Absence and Appointments – Mrs. Wermers presented the memo dated February 2023 sharing personnel changes.

The next meeting will be held on April 10, 2023 at 7:00 p.m in Auditorium in Danvers High School.

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Robin Doherty, Secretary
Danvers School Committee