



BRAINTREE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Lisa Fiske Heger, Chairperson
Kelly Cobb-Lemire, Vice Chairperson
Karla Psaros, Recording Secretary
Thomas Devin
Matthew Lynch
Kathleen Tuffy
Charles C. Kokoros, Mayor

School Committee Meeting Monday, September 12, 2022 Colbert Administration Building Minutes

School Committee Present: Kelly Cobb-Lemire/Thomas Devin/Lisa Fiske Heger/Matthew Lynch
Karla Psaros/Kathleen Tuffy/Mayor Charles Kokoros (*Arrived at 7:03 p.m.*)

Administration: James Lee, Superintendent of Schools
Nora Vernazza, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Sara Kauffman, Director of Finance and Operations

Recorder: Mary Ann Cuddahy, Administrative Assistant

I. Call to Order

Ms. Fiske Heger called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

II. Public Comment

- Parent Jeffrey Keane and his daughter, Emily Keane - Mr. Keane introduced himself and his daughter, stating that they live on Kendall Ave. Emily Keane is a student at South Middle School. Mr. Keane was at the meeting following-up to his public comments at the July 18th School Committee meeting. He stated that one of the students involved in his daughter's assault last year has transferred to South Middle School and is on the bus with his daughter. Since last Friday, this student has been harassing and bullying his daughter since school started. He inquired if there would be monitors on the bus to protect our students on the buses as well as throughout the buildings. Mr. Keane added that he will be a staunch advocate for the students of Braintree to insure the students' safety. Emily also spoke, sharing that, a girl who she used to be friends with, is now at South with her and has been swearing at her and overall is not being nice to her.
- Flaherty Parents, Chris and Angela Peters - Both Mr. and Mrs. Peters spoke to the Committee about how their children (ages 8 and 9), as well as other Flaherty children, were asked to present themselves in front of the class with their full names and their preferred pronouns at the start of the school year. Mr. Peters expressed his concern and the inappropriateness of such a request. Both Mr. and Mrs. Peters sent emails to Principal Soto and received a response but felt that the issue was not addressed appropriately and she felt that she and the children were disrespected. They report many parents are angry and stressed that teaching this information at school is unacceptable, developmentally inappropriate and something that should start at

home. They stressed that it is their responsibility, as parents, to start these discussions and the parents were not notified and were never asked permission.

Mr. Lee responded that Ms. Soto has reached out to set up a meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Peters. He added that they agree that it is not developmentally appropriate, and that the staff member has been spoken to. Will continue the conversations when they sit down with Ms. Soto.

III. Routine Matters

A. Welcome New Student School Committee Representatives

Ms. Vernazza welcomed the 2022-23 student representatives to the School Committee, providing brief information on each student provided by their teachers and/or guidance counselors. The 2022/2023 student representatives include William Rafti, grade 12, (back for a second year), as well as first time student representatives Samantha Longobardi, Calvin O'Brien and Anika Teckchandani, all grade 11.

Ms. Fiske Heger also welcomed the new student representatives and asked the students why they wanted to be part of the School Committee. Each student shared their reasons to be on the School Committee as student representatives.

B. Consideration of Approval of Minutes: Open Session July 18, 2022

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Mr. Devin and seconded by Ms. Psaros to approve the minutes of July 18, 2022. Vote passed: 6:0

C. Communications & Commendations

1. July, 2022 MASC Bulletin

2. School Opening Update

Mr. Lee provided an update on the opening of the 2022/2023 school year, noting that it was a smooth start.

- a. Orientation programs at the high school took place prior to the start of school for the freshman, as well as teachers.
- b. The annual 911 luncheon honoring police, fire and EMS throughout the town was held at the Hollis Elementary School. It is the 20th anniversary of having this event.
- c. Transportation - Issues with staffing; still short staffed. Working to improve as it is a work in progress.
- d. Police Training - At the start of the year the Braintree Police Department presented to middle school staff around emergency responses and safety and security and have been scheduled to meet with the high school staff and elementary staff over the next week.
- e. Enrollment - Mr. Lee shared enrollment numbers as of Friday, September 9th. The enrollments represent increases at the elementary level (approximately 50 students); however, the district is down approximately 66 students since last January. Seeing some return in terms of the elementary level, slight increase at the high school and slight dip at the middle schools. Still registering students and the first official enrollment numbers are October 1st. Good class sizes; average class sizes are about 18.

D. Gifts to Schools

1. Cradles to Crayons; 100 backpacks

- a. Donation of 100 backpacks and school supplies for student's Pre-K through grade 5.

2. Ross Elementary School; \$2,000.00

- a. One check in the amount of \$1,500.00 from the members of the Tian Ann Temple in support of



the Ross Elementary School to be used at the school's discretion. Members of the Tian Ann Temple value education highly and are proud to be a close neighbor to the Ross School.

- b. One check in the amount of \$500.00 from Senior Master Tsai of the Tian Ann Temple to be used by the Ross Elementary School's discretion to advance their common mission to educate and to inspire.

3. Bay State Textiles; \$163.75

- a. Five checks from Bay State Textiles; \$21.00 (South Middle), \$19.75 (South Middle), \$35.00 and \$44.75(BHS) and \$43.25 (Colbert).

4. Braintree High School Athletic Department; \$1,150.00

- a. Two deposits from BHS Boys Soccer; \$900 in checks and \$250.00 in cash for a total of \$1,150.00.

5. East Middle School; \$5,000.00

- a. One check in the amount of \$5,000.00 from an anonymous donor to be used exclusively for East Middle School students in financial need. The donation states that the need will be determined at Mr. Sheehan's, or his designee, discretion.

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Mr. Devin and seconded by Ms. Psaros to accept all Gifts to Schools. Vote passed 6:0

E. Consideration of Trip Approvals

The trips listed below were presented to the School Committee for consideration.

Field Trip	School/Grades	Date of Trip
Quebec City Trip Quebec Province, Canada	Both Middle Schools Grade 8 French Students	May 18-21, 2023
Providence Bruins Game Providence, RI	Highlands Elementary School Grades 4 & 5	November 11, 2022
Providence Bruins Game Providence, RI	South Middle School Grades 6, 7 & 8	November 18, 2022

Ms. Ward and Ms. Cortez presented the Quebec trip to the School Committee for both East and South Middle Schools grade 8 French students. This trip was last held was in 2019. It is a 4-day cultural excursion in Quebec. The hope is to have 50 students participate. Same travel company that has been used in the past. Canada requires proof of Covid vaccination. It is recommended that parents take out insurance. Ratio of students to chaperones is 8:1 with a mix of teachers, parents and a nurse.

Ms. Tuffy asked how this trip will work in conjunction with the MCAS dates; Math and Science MCAS. Ms. Ward responded that the Science MCAS takes place after the trip. Ms. Cobb-Lemire asked if there is financial help for families who cannot afford to attend. Students are encouraged to do fundraising and there has been fundraising done through both schools. Ms. Cortez added that students do have an opportunity to do an online fundraiser. Both South and East offer financial assistance for families that request it.

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Mr. Devin and seconded by Ms. Psaros to approve the Quebec trip for May, 2023. Vote passed 6:0

Mr. Lee presented the Providence Bruins trip for both the Highlands Elementary School and South



Middle School. It is a trip that has occurred multiple times in the past where our students sing at the start of the game and during intermission. Parents are required to transport and chaperone their children.

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Ms. Psaros and seconded by Mr. Devin to approve the Highlands Elementary and South Middle School trips to the Providence Bruins Games. Vote passed 6:0



IV. From Superintendent and Staff

A. Consideration of Approval: Nurse Appointments

Mr. Lee stated that by law, the School Committee is required to approve all nursing appointments. Two nurses that have been recommended for appointment for the 2022-2023 school year were brought before the Committee for consideration; Sharon Heraty (Highlands Elementary School) and Stephanie Carr (Preschool Program).

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Mr. Devin and seconded by Ms. Psaros to approve the nursing appointments of Sharon Heraty and Stephanie Carr. Vote passed: 6:0.

Mayor Kokoros arrived at 7:03 pm

B. Consideration of Second Reading and/or Approval: 2022-23 Handbooks Districtwide

Mr. Lee again presented the 2022-2023 proposed updates to the handbooks; noting that the middle and elementary handbooks were before the Committee as a second reading.

Dr. Scully presented an overview of the proposed changes to the high school handbook. He shared that he presented his proposed changes to the subcommittee on September 8th. Dr. Scully shared the changes and the reasoning behind them.

1. Replace Failure Policy from page 17 with an updated Credit Recovery and Outside Course Work Policy

Any non-BHS course must be approved by the BHS administration to count for BHS credit; families are strongly encouraged to consult with the guidance department well in advance of beginning any outside course work.

Students may earn credit for courses taken outside of BHS under a variety of circumstances.

- A student who fails a course during the regular school year may make-up unearned credits by taking and successfully completing a BHS-approved outside course. The most common way of doing this is through on-line credit recovery providers who have been pre-approved by the BHS administration.
 - Students are eligible to take no more than two “Credit Recovery,” or abbreviated, courses for credit per school year
 - Students must earn a minimum grade of 40 in the original BHS school-year course to be eligible to earn credits through abbreviated course work
- A student who fails a course during the school year and is not eligible to enroll in an abbreviated course may make-up unearned credits by taking and successfully completing a BHS-approved outside course.
 - Students are eligible to take no more than two full courses to make up unearned credits per school year
 - To receive credit, the student must enroll in a “Full” or “Original” course that covers a curriculum determined by BHS administrators to be comparable to that covered by the corresponding BHS course
- A student seeking credit for an additional course taken outside of BHS (whether on-line or in person, and whether from a high school or a college) must have prior approval from the Director of Guidance, the appropriate Curriculum Director, and the Principal. No more than one such course per year can be taken for credit



- An outside course from another high school or an on-line provider cannot generally be used to replace a graduation requirement unless the student did not have the opportunity to take that course while at BHS. (This does not preclude students who failed a course with an average below 40 from taking an outside course for credit.)
- Dual Enrollment courses offered by an accredited college or university and approved in advance by BHS may be used to fulfill up to one graduation requirement per year

Exceptions to this policy will only be made for extenuating circumstances, and only upon review and approval by the BHS Principal.

2. Insert the following Class Rank Eligibility Policy immediately after the above section

The BHS administration will periodically determine students' Class Rank by calculating each student's Grade Point Average (using the system explained in the BHS Program of Studies) and comparing it to that of all of the students in a given class. In order to be included in Class Rank, a student must have been enrolled for two full semesters at Braintree High School and have letter grades for all courses completed.

At the conclusion of the third marking term, the BHS administration will name the senior ranked first in their class the Valedictorian of that class, and the student ranked second the Salutatorian. In order to be eligible to be named Valedictorian or Salutatorian, a student must have been enrolled for four full semesters at Braintree High School and have letter grades for all courses completed. Along with the honors that these titles confer, these students will be invited to speak at graduation.

3. Add the following Note under Excused Absences on page 42-43:

Any student who has qualified to represent their community, an athletic club, or other outside organization at a national or international conference or competition, will be granted up to 2 days of excused absences in a given school year, with official documentation from said organization and prior approval from their assistant principal. Any days beyond the two will be considered unexcused.

4. Add a section on BARK for Schools (copied from the Parent Square Jim Lee sent out earlier this year) that includes a statement about potential discipline (last statement in bold):

Braintree Public Schools utilizes a software program, BARK for Schools, to keep our students safe online. Bark is a program designed to promote digital safety, and was implemented in our school system during the Spring of 2021. Bark works to help BPS protect our students online and in real-life by monitoring students' school email accounts, network activity, and Google Drives. The use of Bark by Braintree Public Schools also keeps the district in compliance with CIPA or the Children's Internet Protection Act.

Bark monitors for signs of potential issues including:

Cyberbullying	Suicidal ideation	Sexual predators
Threats of violence	And more	

When possible dangers arise on school-issued accounts, Bark for Schools sends alerts to district and building administrators so that we can address the situation in a timely manner. These alerts also give us insights that help us promote the wellness of the entire student body. Depending on the severity of the threat or danger, Braintree school administrators will take the requisite action to ensure our students are safe, which may include contact with parents or even engaging with the Braintree Police Department when necessary. The program specifically monitors Gmail, Google Drive, Hangouts/Chats, and Chrome browser for BPS user accounts only - it does not monitor



personal accounts. Please note that if a BARK alert notifies administration of a concern, and if within that concern there is found to be in violation of any school rules, discipline may be issued in accordance with the BHS Student/Parent Handbook.

Ms. Tuffy briefly touched on the discussions at the Policy & Education Subcommittee, highlighting the proposed changes and the support of the subcommittee. Mr. Lynch echoed Ms. Tuffy's comments on the proposed changes and expressed his support for the credit recovery addition to the Braintree High School Handbook.

Mr. Devin asked if BARK works in conjunction with the security program that Ms. Psaros is part of. Mr. Lee stated that BARK is separate and explained how it works monitoring student email accounts in the district. The primary focus is to monitor students who are talking online about something that could be self-harmful. He added the monitoring gets shut off at the end of the school year and put back on at the start of the school year. It is a software that runs in the background to keep students safe.

Mayor Kokoros welcomed the student school committee representations. He also commended some programs that Dr. Scully had put in place; noting the college-like freshman orientation. Mayor Kokoros commended Dr. Scully and the staff for their work on this program.

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Ms. Tuffy and seconded by Ms. Cobb-Lemire to approve the 2022-2023 SY Handbooks at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Vote passed: 7:0

C. Administrative Updates

1. Consideration of Approval – English Department Surplus Materials
2. Consideration of Approval – Science Department Surplus Materials

Mr. Lee presented the surplus materials for consideration of the Committee to declare them as surplus so that they can be disposed of appropriately.

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Mr. Devin and seconded by Ms. Psaros to declare the English and Science Department Materials as Surplus. Vote passed: 7:0

D. Consideration of Revised 2022-2023 SY Calendar

Mr. Lee provided an update to the 2022/2023 school calendar. He explained they were seeking to move May 16th professional development day to May 31st due to MCAS testing.

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Mr. Devin and seconded by Ms. Tuffy to approve the revised 2022-2023 school year calendar. Vote passed: 7:0

V. From the School Committee

A. Student Representatives Updates

1. William Rafti

William shared that they were excited to start the school year off normally for a first time in a while. Going well, classes back to normal; sports have started and clubs will be starting in the coming weeks.

William also asked about the dress code violation and being removed from class, he asked if those absences from classes are excused or not. Mr. Lee stated that he would suggest that they be excused and would speak with Dr. Scully

B. Consideration of Second Reading and/or Approval

1. 2022-2023 School Committee Meeting Dates



Ms. Fiske Heger shared the proposed schedule of School Committee meetings as a second reading. Ms. Fiske Heger read all dates and noted that they are all listed at Colbert but noted that some meetings will be held at the schools. She also noted that these dates are subject to change and added that there were some tentative dates on the calendar, if necessary.

C. Policy & Education Subcommittee Update

1. Ms. Tuffy shared that the subcommittee met last on September 8th. The subcommittee discussed the proposed changes to the high school handbook. They discussed the logistics of moving some of the meetings to the schools. As well, they discussed communications between the schools, department heads and the school committee. They discussed visiting the schools and holding school committee meetings outside of Colbert. They also noted that because of changes in technology which are generally good things, the School Committee is not getting the same information as previously. Mr. Lee will have the schools include the school committee on the newsletters and/or make the committee aware of special events.

The other discussion was the endorsement of the Fair Share Amendment. It is the Fair Share Amendment that will be on the November 8th ballot for a constitutional amendment that they can tax a portion of a person's annual income over \$1 million (4%). State legislature has already approved this. Ms. Cobb-Lemire added that the money would be constitutionally earmarked for public education, colleges, transportation and roads and bridges. This amendment is expected to generate \$2 billion in the Commonwealth and would make it more equitable. Ms. Cobb-Lemire stated that many school committees have already endorsed Question 1.

Ms. Tuffy summarized that they are asking the School Committee to review the draft resolution that they prepared and at the next School Committee meeting that they take a vote whether or not to endorse the amendment. MASS and MASC have both endorsed the amendment.

a. Policy JFABD: Homeless Student: Enrollment Rights and Services

This draft policy was from MASC which follows the federal law regarding homeless students. It defines homelessness, allows students who become homeless to stay in their school of origin, as well as provides transportation. By adding this MASC policy to the BPS policies, it formalizes what the district already adheres to.

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY: Upon a motion by Ms. Cobb-Lemire and seconded by Ms. Psaros to adopt Policy JFABD: Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services. Vote passed: 7:0

b. Dress Code Policy

(Taken out of order at 7:05 pm.)

Mr. Lee stated that the Dress Code Policy was before the Committee as a second reading for the high school and middle school levels. Ms. Tuffy discussed the reasons for proposed changes to the dress code policy for both the middle schools and high school.

Ms. Fiske Heger asked if the following statement could remain in the revised dress code policy so that students and parents know what the consequences are if a student does not abide: *"If a student is wearing an item of clothing not permitted by the handbook guidelines, parents/guardians will be contacted to bring a change of clothing to school for the student or the school will provide clothing if needed. The student will not be able to resume his/her regular schedule until his/her clothing is modified."* It was decided that this statement would follow the first sentence in the policy.

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Ms. Tuffy and seconded by Mr. Devin to adopt the revised Dress Code Policy. Vote passed: 7:0





c. Consideration of Review: Update to Athletic Department Handbook

Ms. Tuffy shared that the Policy & Education Subcommittee had voted to forward the language to update the Athletic Department Handbook and presented it as a first reading.

Adjourn

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Mr. Devin and seconded by Ms. Psaros to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call Vote: Ms. Cobb-Lemire/Ms. Psaros/Mr. Devin/Mr. Lynch
Ms. Tuffy/Mayor Kokoros/Ms. Fiske Heger

Time Adjourned: 7:34 p.m.

Documents Provided to School Committee:

- Agenda
- Minutes: Open Session July 18, 2022
- Listing of New Student School Committee Representatives
- MASC Bulletin (July, 2022)
- Gifts to Schools
- Trip Approval Requests
- Nurse Appointment Resumes; Sharon Heraty and Stephanie Carr
- Proposed 22-23 SY Handbook Changes (All levels)
- English Department & Science Department Listing of Surplus Materials
- Revised 2022-2023 SY Calendar
- Proposed 2022-2023 School Committee Meeting Dates
- Policy JFABD: Homeless Student: Enrollment Rights and Services
- Revisions to Dress Code Policy
- Proposed Language for Athletic Department Handbook

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved by School Committee 10/3/2022

Karla Psaros
Recording Secretary

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