

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

ORGANIZATIONAL/BUSINESS SESSION

OF

JANUARY 9, 2023

SUBMITTED FOR THE APPROVAL OF:

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

AND

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

“AN OPEN MEETING ADVANTAGE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF METHUEN”

RECORDED BY:

MARTHA SIROIS, PUBLIC RECORDER

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES  
METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
ORGANIZATIONAL/BUSINESS SESSION  
JANUARY 9, 2023

This Organizational/Business Session of the Methuen School Committee was held at Methuen High School, Media Center, and was posted for 6:30PM

CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Mayor Perry called this Organizational/Business Session to order at 6:30PM, with a quorum of Members in attendance, and listed below.

ROLL CALL

Rachael Banks (P)  
Ryan DiZoglio (P)  
Laurie Keegan (P)  
Susan Nicholson (P)  
Jana Zanni Pesce, Secretary (P)  
Louann Santos, Vice Chairperson (P)  
Mayor Neil Perry, Chairperson (P)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Rachael Banks (P)  
Ryan DiZoglio (P)  
Laurie Keegan (P)  
Susan Nicholson (P)  
Jana Zanni Pesce, Secretary (P)  
Louann Santos, Vice Chairperson (P)  
Mayor Neil Perry, Chairperson (P)

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Brandi L. Kwong, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools  
Ronald Noble Jr, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Grants  
Ian Gosselin, Business Administrator  
Christopher Reeve, Supervising Principal, Timony Grammar School  
Cam Martin, CVTE Marketing Teacher, MHS

Robert Frati, Director of School Nutrition Services  
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

**Acceptance of the Agenda**

MOTION: Member DiZoglio moved to accept the agenda for January 9, 2023  
Member Banks seconded the Motion

Discussion:

**Amend Agenda**

MOTION: Member Keegan moved to amend the Agenda for January 9, 2023 to  
include 4.a bullet #3-MHS SPED Buses

Member DiZoglio seconded the Motion

Discussion:None

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

MOTION: Member DiZoglio moved to approve the agenda as amended  
Member Nicholson seconded the Motion

Discussion:None

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

1. **Flag Salute**-Christopher Reeve, Supervising Principal at Timony Grammar school,  
introduced Emily Belair to lead the School Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS - VICE CHAIRMAN**

**MOTION:** Member Banks moved to nominate Member Santos as Vice Chairperson  
Member DiZoglio seconded the nomination

**DISCUSSION:** None

**ROLL CALL**

Rachael Banks (Yes)

Ryan DiZoglio (Yes)

Laurie Keegan (Yes)

Susan Nicholson (Yes)

Jana Zanni Pesce, Secretary (Yes)

Louann Santos, Vice Chairperson (Yes)

Mayor Neil Perry, Chairperson (Yes)

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS - SECRETARY OF THE COMMITTEE**

**MOTION:** Member Santos moved to nominate Member Jana Zanni Pesce as Secretary of the Committee

Member DiZoglio seconded the nomination

**DISCUSSION:** None

**ROLL CALL**

Rachael Banks (Yes)

Ryan DiZoglio (Yes)

Laurie Keegan (Yes)

Susan Nicholson (Yes)

Jana Zanni Pesce, Secretary (Yes)

Louann Santos, Vice Chairperson (Yes)

Mayor Neil Perry, Chairperson (Yes)

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

**APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE**

**MOTION:** Member Santos moved to nominate Superintendent Brandi Kwong as Secretary to the Committee

Member DiZoglio seconded the nomination

**DISCUSSION:** None

**ROLL CALL**

Rachael Banks (Yes)

Ryan DiZoglio (Yes)

Laurie Keegan (Yes)

Susan Nicholson (Yes)

Jana Zanni Pesce, Secretary (Yes)

Louann Santos, Vice Chairperson (Yes)

Mayor Neil Perry, Chairperson (Yes)

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

**2. Participation by Others**

- a. SOAR Award-Cam Martin, CVTE Marketing Teacher, MHS, introduced Zach Moon as the Physical Education, Health, FCS and Wellness SOAR Award winner

- b. Student Representative-Salma Boulal-Not Present
- c. Student Advisory Committee-Not Present
- d. Public Participation:  
Karen Thibault, 354 Howe Street, Methuen, MA  
Theresa Fitzpatrick 303 Archstone Avenue, Tewksbury, MA

### 3. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Member Santos motioned to approve the minutes of September 26, 2022.

Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:None

**VOTE:** 5-0-2 APPROVED (Member Banks and Member Nichoson  
voted Present)

MOTION: Member DiZoglio motioned to approve the minutes of October 11, 2022.

Member Santos seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:None

**VOTE:** 6-0-1 APPROVED (Member Banks voted present)

MOTION: Member Keegan motioned to approve the minutes of October 24, 2022.

Member Santos seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:None

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

MOTION: Member Santos motioned to amend the agenda to read approve the minutes of  
November 14, 2022

Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:None

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

MOTION: Member DiZoglio motioned to approve the minutes of November 14, 2022.

Member Banks seconded the motion

DISCUSSION:None

**VOTE:** 6-0-1 APPROVED (Member Santos voted Present)

#### 4. Staff Reports

##### a. Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Updates

- Bob Frati-Lunch Program-Discussion-Requested by School Committee Member Santos

Member Santos-She gave feedback from students she has spoken with. The students said the staff in the lunch program at each school are amazing. The vegetables are fresh. They feel they are not getting enough food. They are getting bored with the pizza and it is not cooked correctly.

Mr. Frati-He is updating the equipment in the schools. They do not have actual pizza ovens. They are serving the USDA requirements for each lunch. There is also an entree served every day so they can get that instead of pizza. He also explained the meal components and portions for a reimbursable meal.

Member Keegan-The high school students are not getting enough food. The portions are small, 3 chicken nuggets and 6 french fries. They are also not allowed to get a second lunch.

Mr. Frati-He will research this. The days he works at the high school he has not seen 3 nuggets and 6 french fries. It is a regular portion. The first meal is free. The students need to pay for a second meal.

- 9 Branch Street-Update

Superintendent Kwong gave her update on 9 Branch Street.

- MHS SPED buses-Update

Superintendent Kwong-They posted for positions at MHS for bus monitors to wait outside the school to take students off the early buses. No one has applied

Mayor Perry-The numbers show there is a significant improvement from October through December.

Superintendent Kwong-She agrees it is better but it will never be perfect.

Member Keegan-She is still concerned with students sitting on a bus for ten minutes. She feels that if the program assistants are not applying for the job then they need to ask the teachers to apply for it.

Member Santos-She feels that the situation has improved since October.

Superintendent Kwong-She will post the job again for program assistants and teachers.

Mayor Perry-It is a difficult environment to hire employees. He doesn't want this to become an unsolvable problem that they can not fix.

Superintendent Kwong-Should she continue to track the buses.

The Committee agreed for her to continue having staff track the SPED buses.

- ##### b. Residency Update
- ##### c. Staff Report Update

Member Keegan-She is concerned about the Marsh Grammar School numbers. Superintendent Kwong-The Marsh had the most program assistant openings when school started. They continue to have the most openings. They have had some movement with resignations.

## **5. Old Business and Other Pending Matters-None**

## **6. New Business**

### **a. Unit C Ratification of Side Letter-Approval**

MOTION: Member DiZoglio motioned to approve Unit C Ratification Side Letter.

Member Keegan seconded the motion

### **DISCUSSION:**

Member DiZoglio-The salary of program assistants is not just a City of Methuen matter, it is a Statewide matter. Program assistants do not benefit from the benefits offered.

With the City health insurance premiums going up they can no longer afford the health insurance and a lot of them are now on MA Health. Fifty percent of the program assistants can not get Union protection. They can not afford the Union dues.

Member Pesce-She saw the sideletter as a positive that showed their appreciation and their value of program assistants. She asked if this should be tabled so the Committee can have a future discussion in the appropriate setting.

Mayor Perry-He has enormous respect for the bargaining process. He asked if this was bargained with the Union.

Superintendent Kwong-Yes

Mayor Perry-Was it agreed to by the Union?

Superintendent Kwong-Yes, and Ratified.

Mayor Perry-They need to be careful. They are stepping a stride over the collective bargaining process. There are legal ramifications.

Member Pesce-We talk a lot about good faith and they try to be ethical and abide by that. She understands that sometimes good intentions don't benefit but she is extremely disheartened that something that was meant to be a positive stride in the right direction has such a negative impact on morale. She does not think that was the intention of anyone.

Superintendent Kwong-They did negotiate in good faith and do have an agreement. It went out to the Union for a vote and it passed. She would not have put it on the agenda if she had not been told by the Union officers that it passed. This is a side letter that is added for the duration of the contract. This doesn't mean that there can't be additional sideletters added and go through the negotiation process if there are other things that both parties want to present. For process sake to complete the process and then continue to

bring people to the table understanding that they are in a full contract cycle until June 2024. The sideletters act differently than opening up a contract for negotiations.

Member Keegan-She agrees with Dr. Kwong. They have a sideletter that has been ratified. She feels it will hurt morale more if they table this and take the money on the table away.

Member Nicholson-She feels this should not be tabled where it has already been agreed upon. She agrees that they should be voting on this tonight and then work with the Superintendent and Union member to see if there are additional side letters that can be agreed upon.

Member Santos-We are voting on what was agreed upon. Low wages for public school employees is a nationwide issue.

Member Pesce-She agrees with not tabling this.

### **ROLL CALL**

Rachael Banks (Yes)

Ryan DiZoglio (Yes)

Laurie Keegan (Yes)

Susan Nicholson (Yes)

Jana Zanni Pesce, Secretary (Yes)

Louann Santos, Vice Chairperson (Yes)

Mayor Neil Perry, Chairperson (Yes)

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

### **7. Finance and Operations**

#### **a. Expenditure Report-Monthly**

Mayor Perry-He sees a shift in encumbrances. Is that based on planned hires or actual hires? Do you encumber for planned hires?

Mr. Gosselin-Yes, for vacancies.

#### **b. Revolving Funds Report-Monthly**

#### **c. Grants Report-Monthly**

#### **d. Student Activity Accounts-Monthly**

- Student Activity Accounts Re-Authorization-Approval

MOTION: Member DiZoglio motioned to approve the Student Activity Accounts Re-Authorization

Member Santos seconded the motion

### **DISCUSSION:**

Member Keegan-It was her understanding that Mr. Gosselin was going to re-label these accounts.



Mr. Gosselin-The account names are changed in this re-authorization. If this is approved he will send the list to the account monitors to update the account titles so they will be consistent.

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

- e. Food Services Report-None
- f. Contract Awards-None

#### **8. Notification of Appointments and Other Personnel Matters**

- a. IT Interim Technology Position-Approval

MOTION: Member Santos motioned to approve the IT Interim Technology Position  
Member DiZoglio seconded the motion

#### **DISCUSSION:**

Superintendent Kwong-Mr. Lussier's last day is Friday. Chris Lane will be moving into that position on an interim basis until June. She is asking for an interim Technology position to help out while Mr. Lane is filling in at the Central Building. None of this is permanent.

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

#### **9. Business from the Committee**

- a. Residency Sub-Committee Update-None
- b. Other Business from the Committee

Member Keegan-Earlier in the year Superintendent Kwong brought something to the Committee about credit denial and changing the days from five to ten. She has heard that students at MHS are feeling pressure to come into school sick because of credit denial. She would like to circle back on that and get some more information and see if it is becoming a problem.

Superintendent Kwong-She will look into this.

Mayor Perry-He asked Superintendent Kwong to update the Committee on the Tenney roof.

Superintendent Kwong-There was catastrophic damage to the roof at Tenney. It impacted grades 3 & 4. The rubber membrane on the roof detached from the building and folded back. It caused significant damage which they are working on with the CAFO and insurance to repair. She can not thank the roofers and the school staff enough for all the work they did that day. The roofers did a temporary fix. There was classroom disruption for a week but they are back in their classrooms. Four classrooms were completely ruined and had to be completely redone. No students were in the building and were

rerouted as soon as they came into school. The Tenney roof was on the Capital Improvement Plan for summer 2024. They will be speaking to the Mayor and the CAFO. This can not wait until summer 2024. Its roof repairs will have to move up to this summer 2023. The second phase of the CGS roof replacement will be done this summer. They are also having a full chiller replacement at the Marsh this summer. There was also some roof damage at 9 Branch St. There were also temporary repairs done there as well. Mayor Perry-Where are they with the Where's My Bus app?  
Mr. Gosselin-It is up and running.  
Superintendent Kwong-Parents are using it and it has cut down the calls from parents that are waiting for their child's bus.

#### **10. Adjournment**

MOTION: Member DiZoglio moved to adjourn this Organizational/Business Session of January 9, 2023 @ 8:14PM

Member Santos seconded the Motion

**VOTE:** 7-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,  
Martha Sirois, Public Recorder  
Methuen Public Schools