

MASCONOMET REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

February 2, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Z. Bhuj, Chair, Topsfield
K. Prentakis, Middleton
D. Casamassima, Middleton
P. Bernhart, Boxford
T. Teleen, Boxford
J. Ciampa, Middleton
T. Cooper, Vice Chair, Middleton
C. Miller, Boxford
W. Hodges, Topsfield
J. McLean, Boxford
M. Ogden, Topsfield

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: M. Harvey, Superintendent
J. Sands, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations
P. Bullard, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services

A. **Call to Order** – Z. Bhuj, Chair, called the Regular Meeting of the School Committee of February 2, 2022 to order at 7:01pm, at the High School library.

B. **Remarks from the Chair** – Z. Bhuj reminded everyone in attendance that masks are mandatory in the school building. She thanked the staff at Masco for making school “school”. After meeting with the Department Heads at the budget sub-committee meeting it was evident how important our students are to them.

C. **Comments from the Public** –

Kathleen Scarpato, Topsfield, asked the Superintendent to address the DESE waiver and request the waiver be sent to the Boxford Board of Public Health. She believes masks cause more damage to students than they benefit from. She would like Masco to be mask optional. Anthony DeCotis, Middleton informed the SC that there have been other schools around the country that have not had a mask mandate over the past 2 years. He accused the SC of showing their ideology by making the students wear masks not based on safety. Mya, a junior at Masco stated that most students don’t wear their mask properly and they are not worn at lunch. She stated the rules apply to the students and not the teachers. She would like Masco to be mask optional. Dr. Eugene stated she believes the students were mislead when they were told at 80% vaccination rate a waiver would be received from DESE and masks would not be required. This mislead parents and students into getting vaccinated. She masked that Masco make wearing a mask optional. Rene Liamporte, Middleton asked to make Masco mask optional and put it on a SC agenda for a vote. The kids have suffered the most and based on science and recent data its time for mask removal.

D. **Student Advisory Board** - Lindsey Byman informed the SC that the student body is adapting to the regulations and understands the safety measures required. The Mental Health Group is making a quiet space in the Library for students to come to when they are stressed and need a quiet space. A can drive is happening in February. Senior lock-in is being worked on and hope to include a bouncy house and mechanical bull. The students have not pushed back on the mask mandate as presented by parents tonight.

- E. **Vision 2025 Business and Computer Education Presentation** – Ben Hodges presented to the SC that there is a shifting of teaching to experiences for students. Students are connecting learning to the real world and real world problem solving. DECA is a course offering and there are about 150 kids enrolled. The students choose a category to present to the judges in competition. Credit for Life is a course offering to the junior class where the students choose a profession and salary and then learn how to live on a budget for that salary while paying expenses. The Microsoft Digigirlz Conference is where women in computer science meet and network. Banking Bowl is when the students go to the Federal Reserve in Boston and complete and present to judges. Congressional App Challenge allows students to create an app that doesn't exist. Financial Online Simulations present different financial situations. Edx Programming allows students to take college computer science courses. B. Hodges highlighted the staff in his department that go beyond just teaching. M. Ogden asked what percentage of students are taking business courses. Enrollment has increased. T. Cooper added that this now more than computer skills for a student. P. Bernheart praised Mr. Verry for being an exceptional teacher and communicator.
- F. **FY23 Budget Deliberation** – J. Sands thanked the facilities team for their work during the snow storm to be able to open school on time Monday. The Cherry Sheets have been received. There is a 2.3% increase in Operative Expenses and 2.99% increase in Operating Assessment. J. Sands reviewed the FY23 Assessment Overview and the FY23 Budget Assessment by town. Also reviewed was the percentage increase by town. State aid and local receipts were reviewed as revenue sources and Medicaid reimbursement reviewed as federal aid. E&D was reviewed. The state allows 5% of succeeding years budget to be maintained, however we use 4%. Anything above 4% is calculated as a revenue source. Revenue transfers were reviewed including athletics and co-curricular activities; non-resident tuition (international); food service; and non-resident tuition. Revolving accounts are not part of the operating budget. There is a 25% decrease in athletic and co-curricular fees. Discussion followed regarding the sustainability of the reduction in athletic and co-curricular fees. M. Harvey reviewed the FY23 enrollment projections for grades 7-12. There is an overall decrease of 48 students. P. Bullard reviewed tuition and transportation. In a 5 year overview there is a reduction in transportation costs; an increase in private tuition; a reduction in collaborative tuition and a slight increase in in-state tuition. Eight students were newly placed OOD in FY22. One student returned to Masco. Six students aged out during FY22. Three students graduated. Two OOD students moved. Three students began post-secondary education OOD in FY23. Six incoming 7th grade students are OOD in FY23 and the anticipated tuition cost is \$494,270. FY22-23 OOD placement charges were reviewed. P. McManus reviewed the Middle School Teams. Enrollment in elementary schools has increased significantly this year. These increases no longer support the elimination of a MS team. With the impact of the pandemic, learning loss is being addressed as well as SEL for students and staff. Programs continue uninterrupted and class size is being maintained with robust teaching and learning. HS/MS Drama teacher position was discussed. In FY22 it was 0.6FTE, three offers were made and the job remains unfulfilled. The MS reassigned one teacher to public speaking and cancelled acting and stagecraft. At the HS an outside afternoon drama director was hired and all drama classes were cancelled. The goal is to make this a 1.0 FTE. The MS will assign public speaking to this hire and reinstate acting and stagecraft programs. The HS is a comprehensive HS without a drama program. The MassCore DESE recommendations were reviewed. M. Carabatsos would like to make art a graduation requirement, and also move away from study halls. M. Carabatsos reviewed the MassCore Framework for MA HS program of studies. Masco is currently missing arts credits.

G. Superintendent's Report – M. Harvey advised the SC that two finalists for Assistant Superintendent of Student Services have been chosen. They will meet with staff during the school day on 2/7 and 2/10 and will join a Zoom community meeting that night. M. Harvey reviewed the hiring timeline and process moving forward. The two finalists are Brad Denton and Lynn Bennett. DESE and the Dept. of Public Health are recommending a new testing program beginning February 14th which is an at-home testing program. One rapid test kit will be provided every other week for staff and students who opt in. They would test at home on Sunday and report to school any positive results. The program will begin on 2/27 after vacation and the test and stay and close contacts programs will be discontinued. Only symptomatic testing will remain. The COVID case report was reviewed which only includes cases reported through the Department of Public Health. No at home tests are included so the numbers are underreported. Attendance is back to normal and positive cases were reviewed by month. Masco reached the 80% vaccination rate on 12/7 and received the mask waiver from DESE on 12/17, however the Town of Boxford maintains a face covering mandate. The next step would be to obtain a waiver from Boxford Board of Health. To receive a waiver from Boxford, there must be a plan to identify unvaccinated students and staff to ensure they wear a mask. The positive case numbers in January did not support requesting a waiver from Boxford. There was a meeting with the Associate Commissioner of DESE to notify the districts that DESE changed their requirement to highly recommending that unvaccinated students and staff wear masks, with the waiver masks are optional. The leadership team will ask the Boxford Board of Health to allow Masco to be mask optional under the DESE change. DESE extended the mask mandate to 2/28. Masco would implement the new mask optional if granted on March 14th. T. Teleen stated the emails received generally said that the SC did not care about the students or the community, which is not correct. She researched the schools that received the waiver from DESE and who has gone mask optional. W. Hodges asked if Boxford Board of Health can be more restrictive than DESE. P. Bernheart asked if there was any feedback from the schools that have gone mask optional. J. Ciampa added that the rules keep changing. We should be sure to communicate what action would mandate masks be worn again.

H. Subcommittee Reports

1. Community Relations – T. Teleen informed the SC that they are meeting next Wednesday at 5:30pm via zoom and will have an open forum meeting.
2. Budget – T. Cooper reminded the SC that the next meeting is 2/9 with the towns.
3. Anti-Racism – W. Hodges informed the SC that they met last Thursday and it discussed what has changed and having a discussion with the SC about progress and looking toward the future.
4. Policy – M. Ogden informed the SC that the next meeting is on 2/15 to go over the changes to the District Agreement to be presented to the towns. They are waiting for language from DESE.
5. Negotiations – T. Cooper informed the SC that language in the agreement is being sent back and forth.
6. Liaisons Update – K. Prentakis informed the SC that there is a citizens petition to add amendments to the District Agreement addressing a recall provision.
7. SEPAC – P. Bernheart informed the SC that they are focusing on support available to students.

I. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of January 5, 2022 and January 19, 2022 Meeting Minutes
2. Warrants of \$268,610.68 (12) signed since January 19, 2022.

3. Accept DECA Grant from MEF

A motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda by K. Prentakis, seconded by C. Miller, and unanimously approved.

MOTION: Approve Consent Agenda

VOTE: 11-0, Motion passed

Z. Bhuju made a Motion to adjourn into Executive Session for the purpose of strategy relative to collective bargaining with the Masconomet Teachers Association and Paraprofessional Association (Executive Session Purpose #3). The Chair has determined that holding this discussion in Open Session may have a detrimental impact on the District's Bargaining Position. The Committee will not return to open session after the conclusion of the Executive Session. The motion was approved by a roll call vote.

Rollcall Vote:

Z. Bhuju-yes

T. Cooper-yes

K. Prentakis-yes

C. Miller- yes

D. Casamassima - yes

W. Hodges-yes

P. Bernhart-yes

J. McLean-yes

J. Ciampa-yes

T. Teleen- yes

M. Ogden-yes

Z. Bhuju made a Motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:10pm.

Submitted By: _____
Lynn Viselli, Recording Secretary

Approved _____
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. Vision 2025 Business and Computer Education Presentation
3. Superintendent. Recommended Budget Presentation
4. Superintendent Update
5. Consent Agenda