

MASCONOMET REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

February 16, 2022

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

MEMBERS ABSENT T. Teleen, Boxford and T. Cooper, Vice Chair, Middleton

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 16, 2022 to Order at 7:00pm, in the high school library.

B. Adjourn into Executive Session for the purpose of strategy relative to collective bargaining with the Masconomet Teachers Association, Paraprofessional Association, MPFT Association, Professional Administrators Association, and Support Staff 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 return to open session after the conclusion of the Executive Session.

Approved by Rollcall Vote:

Z. Bhuj-yes	K. Prentakis-yes	M. Ogden-yes
C. Miller- yes	D. Casamassima - yes	W. Hodges-yes
P. Bernhart-yes	J. McLean-yes	J. Ciampa-yes

C. **Return to Open Session.**

D. **Remarks from the Chair** – Z. Bhuj reminded everyone that there is a jazz concert happening in the auditorium, a chorus concert last night and field trips are happening. These are only a few of the positive things happening. She reviewed the beginning of the last meeting which showed lots of pain and frustration. She reviewed the Superintendent's guidelines for decision making regarding masks in the school. The Superintendent has requested an exemption from the Boxford Board of Health based on our vaccine rate and the decline of the surge. The Board of Health vote will determine our next steps.

E. **Comments from the Public** – None

F. **Student Advisory Board** - Olivia Richard informed the SC that the can drive is ongoing. The students would like homeroom to return when masks become optional because it would be helpful for those students who arrive late to school and allow morning update to happen daily.

- G. **Vision 2025 Visual Art–Globe Scholastic Art Award Recognition – S. Mannheim** – Stacy Mannheim informed the SC that Masco had 68 award winners at the Globe Scholastic Art Awards. She reviewed the guidelines for submission and the history of The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. She showcased 7 examples of artwork to the SC. The MS students received 20 awards, the most in the state with 5 Gold Key, 8 Silver Key and 7 Honorable Mentions. Ursina Amsler received the 2022 Art Education Association Middle Level Art Educator award. The HS students received 48 awards including 14 Gold Key, 12 Silver Key and 22 Honorable Mentions. The benefits of an Art Education include self-expression, critical thinking, creativity, flexibility, initiative, decision making, accountability, confidence and showing problems can have more than one solution.
- H. **Middle School Principal Report** – P. McManus reviewed the Middle School Improvement Plan. Goal 1: Global Community, Team Building, Diversity and Inclusion. Students are connecting learning to their membership in the global community. Goal 2: SEL, Citizenship, Diversity and Inclusion. Acknowledge the impacts on the MS students by the pandemic with SEL and learning “we are living and working through this together”. Goal 3: Curriculum and Instruction. Accelerated learning by improving study skills, math skills in the area of English Language Arts. He thanked Sarah Smith and Megan Hildebrand for helping develop these objectives and areas to focus on.
Middle School Update: There is an overall positive atmosphere and climate in the building. The COVID case count is down. MCAS are scheduled for late March. 6th and 7th grade transitions are upcoming and work has begun to prepare those students transitioning. PITT Committee continues to plan community activities and the Gotcha Tickets continue to be a huge success.
- I. **FY23 Budget Deliberation** – J. Sands reviewed the overall budget and increased expenses, including retirement contribution, transportation, insurance and unemployment. Retirement expenses are as follows: 3.7% increase in Essex Retirement Board, 3.6% increase in 403B Employer Match, and 4.8% decrease in Employer Paid Medicare Tax. All other major expenses were reviewed. We are in the final year of a 3-year contract for transportation with NRT. Transportation expenses are as follows: 3.97% increase for daily bus service, and 5.8% increase for late buses 2 days per week. K. Prentakis asked if the shortage of bus drives will impact the new contract by increasing the cost. The answer is yes, it will. Property and Liability insurance expenses: 30.7% increase for P&L insurance due to major claims in the past few years, lightning strike and flooding, which means we will remain with the same provider at a \$26,394 increase. There is a 2.55 increase for workers’ comp insurance. Unemployment costs were reviewed: 78.7% overall decrease with FY22 budget assuming nine claims totaling \$112,500 and FY23 budget assuming two claims totaling \$24,000.
School Committee Office Operating Budget was reviewed. FY22 Budget was \$92,686 and includes salaries, legal counsel, consultants, conferences, seminars and supplies. FY23 Budget is \$93,223. The consultants paid also include the SRO payments which are based on \$230 per day for 194 days. K. Prentakis stated with no Municipal Agreement, payments should be made for the SRO. J. Sands informed the SC that it was agreed to execute an IMA, which was drafted and sent 2 years ago to the 3 towns. In the absence of an IMA, the 3 towns have supported the SRO, which is essential. C. Miller added that with the new Town Administrator in Boxford, Jeff should reach out to him. The SC asked that the SRO be moved out of the SC Budget and placed in a more appropriate place in the budget.
The following was presented in response to the request of the SC.
1. The Pandemic and its impact on District Operations will continue for the foreseeable future.

2. Identify additional resources needed to support District Operations during the Pandemic.
3. Identify additional resources needed to “free-up” members of the Executive Leadership Team.
Short term resources needed to support operations during only the pandemic include short term positions which were reviewed and funding to be re-allocated from ESSERIII funds. The total would be \$714,000 which is more than half of ESSR III funds. Discussion followed regarding what is necessary from the short term vs. what was part of the original ESSER list.
Longer term resources are needed to support ongoing operations both during and after the pandemic to “free-up” members of the ELT to work on non-pandemic related projects to include the strategic and capital plan. The positions needed are a long-term commitment as they would be hired permanently and paid through the General Fund. Most of the work related to the pandemic currently being done needs to be done by the Superintendent. It would take time to get the new hires up to speed in order to have them work independently. The positions were reviewed and the work they would perform. M. Ogden asked if there were any tasks that could be delegated that would help the leadership team. M. Harvey responded that the leadership team is working on a 2-week crisis cycle and will need to be retrained once this is over to go back to operating as in pre-pandemic times. J. Sands added that adding 1 MPFT and 1 IT Tech back would be very helpful.
Requests not included in the recommended budget were reviewed.
New administrative and support positions were reviewed.
Extraordinary one-time costs were reviewed
M. Ogden asked to see a budget with the MPFT, IT Tech and nursing staff positions added back into the budget for the March 2nd meeting.

- J. **Superintendent’s Report** – M. Harvey advised the SC that COVID cases are down, and 0 cases have been reported in the past 2 weeks. The at home testing program has begun. M. Harvey reviewed how the at home testing program works and it will continue through April vacation. 26% of students opted into the program. Anyone is able to opt in at any time. A request was sent to the Boxford Board of Health for an exemption to the mask mandate as of March 14th. Upon official notice from the Board of Health, we would become mask optional. DESE released an update that as of February 28th all masks are optional subject to local mask requirements. M. Harvey reviewed the conditions of which a mask would be required in school.
- K. **Approve Annual Report** – Z. Bhuju informed the SC that Boxford and Topsfield have asked for annual reports prior to Town Meeting. She thanked all the volunteer committees and groups that helped throughout the year. A motion was made to approve the Annual Report by M. Ogden, seconded by K. Prentakis, and unanimously approved

MOTION: Approve Annual Report
VOTE: 9-0, Motion Passed

L. Vote to accept Tentative Agreement with Masconomet Teachers Association for new Collective Bargaining Agreement for the period August 5, 2021-August 14, 2024.

Z. Bhuju thanked the Union and everyone who worked on this contract for all their hard work, and she reviewed the SC priorities for this contract.
A motion was made to approve the Tentative Agreement with Masconomet Teachers Association for the Collective Bargaining Agreement for the period August 5, 2021-August 14, 2024, by M. Ogden, seconded by J. McLean, and unanimously approved

MOTION: Approve Tentative Agreement with Masconomet Teachers Association
VOTE: 9-0, Motion Passed

M. Vote to accept Tentative Agreement with Masconomet Paraprofessionals Union for new Collective Bargaining Agreement for the period July 1, 2021-June 30, 2024.

A motion was made to approve the Tentative Agreement with Masconomet Paraprofessionals Union for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement for the period July 1, 2021 -June 30, 2024 by C. Miller, seconded by W. Hodges, and unanimously approved

MOTION: Approve Tentative Agreement with Masconomet Paraprofessionals Union
VOTE: 9-0, Motion Passed

N. Vote to Propose Amendments to the Masconomet Regional Agreement for 2022 Annual Town Meetings

M. Ogden reviewed the six amendments to the District Agreement and the amendments be to be put forward for Town Meeting. All of the amendments were reviewed by the Dept. of Ed and approved. A motion was made to approve the Amendments to the Masconomet Regional Agreement for the 2022 Annual Town Meetings by D. Casamassima, seconded by Z. Bhujju, and unanimously approved

MOTION: Approve Amendments to the Masconomet Regional Agreement
VOTE: 9-0, Motion passed

O. Subcommittee Reports

1. Community Relations – P. Bernhart informed the SC that there were parents that called into the last meeting with ideas on how to come together as a community. W. Hodges advised that the Senior Concert will take place March 29th. The next meeting is March 9th.
2. Budget – K. Prentakis informed the SC that six representatives from the three towns Finance Committees met with the subcommittee at the last meeting. M. Harvey presented the recommended budget. It was asked why the elimination of a MS team was not revisited in this budget and why the use of excess SBA funds are not being used for a reimbursable project.
3. Policy – M. Ogden informed the SC that she met with the Topsfield Finance Committee and they asked if the SC would be open to taking the excess SBA funds and set up a stabilization account for \$494,000, which are the funds coming back to the District. Discussion followed regarding the use of the SBA funds and wording of a Warrant Article.
4. Anti-Racism – W. Hodges informed the SC that the next meeting is scheduled for February 28th at 6:00pm.
5. Negotiations – Nothing new.
6. Liaisons Update – Covered under prior discussions.
7. SEPAC – Nothing new.

P. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of February 2, 2022 Meeting Minutes
2. Warrants of \$2,042,815.91 (5) signed since February 2, 2022.
3. Accept DECA Overnight Field Trips

A motion was made to approve the consent agenda by W. Hodges, seconded by C. Miller, and unanimously approved

MOTION: Approve Consent Agenda

VOTE: 9-0, Motion Passed

Z. Bhujju made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:35pm.

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 25 – Visual Arts Presentation
3. MS Principal Report
4. FY23 Budget Deliberation
5. Superintendent Update
6. Annual Report
7. Tentative Agreement with the MTA
8. Tentative Agreement with the Paraprofessionals Union
9. Amendments to the Regional Agreement
10. Consent Agenda