BRAINTREE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Lisa Fiske Heger, Chairperson
Dr. Rachel Horak, Vice Chairperson
Kathleen Tuffy, Recording Secretary
Joseph Fogarty
Matthew Lynch
Justin Rollo
Erin V. Joyce, Mayor

School Committee Meeting
Colbert Administration Building
Monday, February 5, 2024
Open Session Minutes

School Committee Present:	Mr. Joseph Fogarty/Ms. Lisa Fiske Heger/Dr. Rachel Horak/ Mr. Matthew Lynch/Mr. Justin Rollo/Ms. Kathleen Tuffy/Mayor Erin V. Joyce
Administration Participants:	Mr. James Lee, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Nora Vernazza, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Ms. Sara Kauffman, Director of Finance and Operations
Student School Representatives:	Samantha Longobardi/Madison Keddy/Isabella Hogan Absent: Anika Teckchandani
Recorder:	Mary Ann Cuddahy

I. Call to Order

Ms. Fiske-Heger called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

II. Public Comment

None

III. Routine Matters

A. Consideration of Approval of Minutes: Open Session, January 22, 2024

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Dr. Horak and seconded by Ms. Tuffy to approve the open session minutes from January 22, 2024. Vote Passed 7:0.

B. Communications and Commendations

1. Recognition of the winter senior athletes will take place the week of February 5, 2024.
2. Mr. Lee & Mayor Joyce recognized the Lunar Festival held at Braintree High School over the weekend. Both commented on the event's success and recognized those involved in organizing the event.

C. Gifts to Schools

1. Bay State Textiles; gifts to schools totaling $362.70
2. South Middle School; gifts to schools totaling $10,150.00
3. Nelson K Chin Memorial Fund; gifts to schools totaling $6,000.00
4. Braintree High School, National Art Honor Society; gifts to schools totaling $175.00
5. Braintree High School, Wrestling Program donations; gifts to schools totaling $885.00

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Dr. Horak and seconded by Ms. Tuffy to accept the gifts to schools. Vote passed 7:0.

Braintree Public Schools does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, marital status, veteran status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other legally protected group

IV. From Superintendent and Staff

A. Administrative Updates

1. 2024-2025 Kindergarten Registration Update. Mr. Lee shared that as of February 5th, a total of 312 families have registered for kindergarten for the 2024-2025 school year (294 full-day and 18 half-day).

2. EEC (Early Education Center) Update. Mr. Lee shared that the work on the Early Education Center is underway and on time. He also shared that accounting for growth in the programs, the Colbert office will not be moving to the Early Education Center. Mr. Lee stated that a Ross kindergarten section will remain at Ross due to a special education inclusion program that runs at the school and will remain at the school. In addition, Ross is a walking school and this would help with transportation. He also shared that they are looking at options for a new location for the Launch Program. Discussions and questions included:
    - If more than one section would stay at Ross as Ross currently has 30 students registered for full-day kindergarten and if one class stayed at Ross and one went to the EEC, how would that determination be made. For both questions, they are still working to make those determinations.
    - If the Central Office were to move and Launch moved into Colbert, do we have a sense of what we would lose in terms of revenue. Mr. Lee responded that 74 Pond Street is occupied by several entities of which Launch is one. From a town standpoint, he stated that he does not know what the revenue would look like. Mr. Lee provided some background on Launch for the new members.
    - Is there space at Braintree High School for administration that would allow Launch to move to Colbert? Response was that there are a couple locations that administration would fit into and the high school is one. However, discussions are ongoing as to what would be best suited for the space at BHS. Hollis also has space that administration could occupy and/or be considered for Launch.

VI. From the School Committee

A. Student Representatives Report

1. Isabella Hogan: Isabella shared that BHS juniors were recently introduced to the Naviance program for college purposes. She also discussed a recent survey that went to students from GEM (Gender Equality Movement) regarding the need for menstrual products in the girl's bathrooms. GEM is striving to make leadership aware of this survey and for consideration of putting these products in the girl's bathrooms.
2. Madison Keddy: Madison shared that Naviance is a great tool to look at colleges and shared information on how it can be beneficial to students. Madison also added that the American Cancer Society Club sold T-shirts to be worn for World Cancer Day (Monday, February 5th).
3. Samantha Longobardi: Samantha followed-up on Isabella's comments about menstrual products at the high school and the need for them in the girl's bathrooms. She also commented on the bathrooms at the high school regarding students smoking and vaping, students congregating in the bathrooms, that stalls don't lock and there are no trash cans. She shared that there are a limited number of bathrooms available for the boys currently because students are vandalizing them. Students miss class times trying to find an open bathroom.

Ms. Tuffy added that Ms. Pierce, Co-Advisor of the Girls Empowerment Club, will be at the February 27th Policy Subcommittee meeting to address menstrual products in the girl's bathrooms. Ms. Tuffy extended an invitation to the student representatives to attend the Policy meeting.

Mr. Fogarty asked for clarification on Naviance and if it is a paid subscription that the district provides. Further details and benefits of Naviance were provided and noted that the district does subscribe to it.

B. **Policy & Education Subcommittee Updates**

1. Process to Rename the Old South Middle School Using BPS Policy FF as a Guide

Ms. Tuffy shared that the Policy & Education Subcommittee met on January 30th and unanimously voted to move the topic of renaming the old South Middle School to the full committee. She referenced Policy FF as a guide and shared that submission of a name for a school building or space may be made by any resident or by the Superintendent, in writing, and should be made to the School Committee Chair. If a name is being initiated at the local school level, the Principal must take reasonable steps to include the School Council and PTO in the nomination of the name before submission to the School Committee. Also, consideration to name a facility for an individual will be given no sooner than 5 years from the end of their service to the community. In the case of a deceased individual, a full 5 year waiting period will be required from the time of death. Nominations of an individual's name need to be made in writing to the Chair of the School Committee. They must include the contributions to society and to the Braintree Public Schools in particular that the individual has made. Ms. Tuffy stated that the Committee will need to determine a date when all submissions will be due, have a public hearing for public input, and then the Committee will deliberate and vote on the name.

Mr. Lee stated that the schools would send out a Parent Square message to families asking for recommendations and would provide information as to how to make a nomination. Mayor Joyce confirmed that the Town could do the same. Ms. Tuffy added that historically the names of schools have been based on the location of the school, historical figures in the town or named in honor of someone who has made a significant contribution to the schools. Also, an offer of a financial contribution to the School District may accompany the naming request, but the School Committee is not obligated to accept or reject a name based upon financial considerations alone. Philanthropic contributions in support of the School District are encouraged by the School Committee. The School Committee may acknowledge generous donors by designating appropriate spaces within the School District's facilities consistent with the level of financial commitment.

Ms. Heger stated that nominations would open immediately and close on March 4, 2024 which would provide for a 30-day deadline. The School Committee will meet next on March 11th and will hold a Public Hearing on that date to listen to all nominations. The Committee will determine next steps and will vote on the name by the end of March.

2. Updates to MASC Technology Policies (First Reading)

Ms. Tuffy presented the MASC Technology policies to the full committee as a first reading.

a. BHE: Use of Electronic Messaging by School Committee Members
b. EHAA: District Security Relating to Technology
c. EHB: Data and Records Retention
d. GBEE: Personnel Use of Technology
e. IJND: Access to Digital Resources
f. IJNCD: Acceptable Use of Digital Resources
g. JICJ: Student Use of Technology in School
h. KDC: Community Use of Digital Resources
i. KDCB: District Website and Social Media

Ms. Tuffy added that while reviewing Policy KDCB, the subcommittee members discussed whether they should delete or add an administrator to the Braintree School Committee Facebook page as it is currently an inactive public Facebook group with 1036 members, with the last post being 4.15.2021 by former School Committee member Jen Dolan. Follow-up discussion included:

Mr. Fogarty inquired regarding Policy GBEE: Personnel Use of Technology, whether it would be better to have two staff members mandated on any electronic communication, and if teachers text students. Mr. Lee responded no to text and that staff members are instructed only to use email which the district keeps records of for seven years. In terms of social media, the district instructs staff not to use this platform but to stick to email for the staff's own protection. Most software is vetted internally by the Technology Department. Mr. Lee stated that he would not object to making it policy as the district directs staff not to use platforms other than email when communicating with students and staff. Mr. Lee added that with Parent Square and/or Google Classroom, the schools retain a history of all messages that go in and out from staff.

Further discussion regarding the School Committee Facebook page included that the district is in the process of tracking down the former owner of the page and that Mr. Lee's recommendation would be to take it down. He added that it would then become a discussion as to whether a new Facebook page is created. Ms. Tuffy expressed her agreement with Mr. Lee that taking the old Facebook down is a good idea. She referenced other forms of notifications that the district uses to communicate with people. Ms. Tuffy added that all, except two policies, are new to MASC, as well as Braintree. These policies reflect the changes in social media and technology.

Next Policy meeting is February 27, 2024 @ 6:30 pm at Colbert.

C. Finance & Operations Subcommittee Updates

Ms. Fiske Heger stated that they met on January 30, 2024 and will meet again on February 27, 2024 at 5:30 pm. At the January 30th meeting, the subcommittee discussed the potential for a supplemental FY24 budget to cover contractual obligations for Special Education costs, and the possibility of adding RAFD which is a security system. Students would have a card that they scan getting on and off our buses and discussion centered on the benefits and the potential cost of such a program. The subcommittee also discussed the EEC update, Braintree High School SOI as well as a very high overview of the FY25 budget in comparison to the FY24 budget.

1. Consideration of Authorizing the Superintendent of Schools to Submit a Statement of Interest to the MSBA for Braintree High School

Mr. Lee presented the proposed BHS Statement of Interest. He shared the process of submitting the SOI and the need for the School Committee's approval to move it forward to the Ways and Means Committee and the Town Council in March. Deadline for submission to the MSBA is April 12, 2024. Mr. Lee opened it up for discussion.

Mr. Rollo inquired if the Committee could submit two SOI's in one year. Mr. Lee stated two core projects could be submitted in one year but that they would have to identify which one would be the priority. Mr. Rollo asked if there had been any discussion on submitting an SOI for an elementary center for the town along with the high school SOI to which Mr. Lee responded no. He stated that would be a bigger, more in-depth conversation as to why that may or may not be advantageous to the district/town. He stressed that the high school needs to be a priority. Mr. Lee provided background on the process of getting invited into the MSBA for the renovation/addition of East Middle School, the building of a new South Middle School and the work behind the funding of both projects. Mr. Rollo concluded that he inquired due to the recent subcommittee meeting and the term "operational efficiency" and added that we would gain so much more and would realize savings if the district had one elementary school. Mr. Lee followed-up that a key part of the conversation will have to be the funding of any projects the district may get invited into. Mr. Fogarty asked if there are restrictions on changing the use of the elementary schools if work has been done to the schools through an MSBA project; would the MSBA weigh in regarding the money they have already spent? Mr. Lee responded that the MSBA would definitely weigh in on any buildings that they helped fund any work that was done.

Dr. Horak referenced page 34 of the binder, which refers to a Master Facilities Plan for the SOI. She noted that there is no reference to a Town Master Plan, but there is one referenced from 2014 (Habeeb & Associates) and asked if the Town Master Plan is not incorporated. Mr. Lee responded that the Master Plan, to his knowledge, does not include the school building projects. The School Department has been doing this separately via the MSBA. He stated that the Habeeb study has not been updated since 2014. Through the Habeeb study, the Town was invited into the East Middle School project for a renovation. Because of the constraints in the elementary school, the district went back to the MSBA to request that they go into a larger plan to renovate and build an addition to East and build a new South Middle School with a new configuration of grades 5-8. Therefore, we are still working off the Habeeb Plan. Dr. Horak concluded that it would be advantageous for the Town to update the Master Plan with the school district included.

Ms. Fiske Heger read the following:

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 5, 2024, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of Braintree, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated January 18, 2024 for the Braintree High School located at 128 Town Street, Braintree, Massachusetts, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future: Priority #5: Replacement, renovation or modernization of the school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility; Priority #7: Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with the state and approved local requirements; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Braintree or the Braintree School Department to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Dr. Horak and seconded by Ms. Tuffy to approve moving the Statement of Interest forward to the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Vote passed 7:0.

2. FY25 Budget Update

Mr. Lee stated that the draft budget is in the early stages. As the School Department works closely with the Mayor's office, these numbers will be refined. Original FY 25 budget draft budget is a $10M or 13% increase over FY24 budget.

Main increase drivers include:

- Contractual increases - ($6.5M)
- Special Education - transportation, services, new positions ($1.2M)
- Long term substitutes - historically underfunded line and this is based on recent year spending trends, fully funding this line in FY25 ($700K)
- Transportation expenses are increasing - fuel and bus expenses due to aging fleet ($750K)
- Athletics - increased fees for transportation, facility rentals, officials ($350K)
- Various increases to supply and other lines as necessary to keep pace with inflation

Mr. Lee acknowledged the large starting number and emphasized that there is a lot of work that needs to be done. He shared a map outlining where the students are located across the district, as well as current classroom section sizes at the elementary schools and noted what can be seen are operational inefficiencies. He stressed that we need to be cognizant regarding what the options could be if what the schools need in their budget cannot be supported. The Central Office leadership will continue to work closely with the Mayor's office to refine the numbers.

Mr. Fogarty asked what the $1.2 million for new positions in special education are for and what is the driver for these new positions and if Special Education Coordinators manage the IEP meetings. Mr. Lee responded that they are teaching and paraeducator positions and that IEPs are the driver and within an IEP are services that must be provided. Providing services in-district, although there is a cost, typically is more cost effective rather than sending a student to an outside placement. There are special education coordinators at the high school and middle school levels.

Mr. Fogarty asked about the numbers of students and consolidating elementary school classes to realize efficiencies, are there other ways to do that other than combining elementary schools? Mr. Lee stated that what he is presenting really relates to the possibility of redistricting. Mr. Fogarty asked if there are patterns that they follow or would this be something that needs to be addressed yearly. Mr. Lee added that redistricting is good for approximately 10 years and that the last redistricting goes back approximately 20 years in Braintree.

Dr. Horak stated that $10 million is a lot of money and that current Braintree projections that she has seen is that the town does not have enough funds for maintenance of effort costs. She noted contractual obligations and that in fiscal year 24, the Mayor used $4.3 million in free cash to continue Maintenance of Effort. She asked what cuts we would have to make in order to balance the budget to cover the $10 million. Mr. Lee responded that he did not have a specific answer at this time but that they would look at what would have the least impact on student education and experience and still maintain our obligations. He concluded that without a target number from the Town, we cannot give a definitive answer at this time. Dr. Horak expressed her concerns.

Ms. Tuffy asked if free cash had been certified yet, and Mayor Joyce responded that it had been certified at approximately $11.9 million.

Mr. Fogarty asked if redistricting took place, teacher positions would be cut, and asked if the teachers would be moved to other positions within the district. Mr. Lee stated that 84% of the budget is people. They will look at fees and what can be done, but if the circumstances dictate, it is a reduction in staff that gets you closer to the number you have to meet, then we would have to cut positions. Once the district has the target budget figure, work will be done to get to that number with the minimum impact on students. Mr. Rollo asked how class sizes are determined. Ms. Tuffy added that it is her understanding that maximum class size is contractual, and Mr. Lee responded that the contract provides guidance, but it is not mandatory.

Ms. Fiske Heger announced that the March 4th meeting would not be held. The next meeting will be on March 11th. Ms. Fiske Heger added that there is a meeting scheduled for March 18th and a tentative meeting for March 25th, which all members should plan to meet on.

VII. Executive Session

Executive Session: Consideration to enter into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21 (a)(1), to discuss complaints brought against a school administrator, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the legal position of the School Committee, as declared by the Chair. Ms. Fiske Heger stated that we would not be returning to open session.

Voted unanimously: Upon a motion by Mr. Fogarty and seconded by Mr. Rollo to enter into Executive Session. Vote passed 7:0

Roll Call: Mr. Fogarty/Dr. Horak/Ms. Fiske Heger/Mr. Lynch
Mr. Rollo/Ms. Tuffy/Mayor Joyce

Voted Unanimously: Upon a motion by Dr. Horak and seconded by Ms. Tuffy to adjourn the meeting. Vote passed 7:0.

Roll Call: Mr. Fogarty/Ms. Fiske Heger/Dr. Horak/Mr. Lynch
Mr. Rollo/Ms. Tuffy/Mayor Joyce

Time Adjourned: 7:36 p.m.

Documents Provided to School Committee:

- Agenda
- Minutes – January 22, 2024 (including Student Achievement Data)
- Gifts to Schools
- Policy FF & MASC Technology Policies
- BHS SOI

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved by School Committee 3.11.2024

Kathleen Tuffy
Recording Secretary
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