

**DANVERS SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING**

February 28, 2017

Francis Mills Communication Center, E115, Danvers High School

School Committee Members Present: David Thomson, Chair
 Jeffrey Kay, Secretary
 Arthur Skarmeas
 Eric Crane
 Mary Beth Verry

VOTED: Public Hearing on the Proposed DPS 17-18 Budget – Mr. Crane moved to open the public hearing on the proposed DPS 17-18 budget. Mr. Skarmeas seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Crane moved to adjourn the public hearing for the Proposed DPS 2017-2018 budget. Mr. Kane seconded. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Holten Richmond Middle School Program of Studies – The Superintendent recommended the adoption of the Holten Richmond Middle School Program of Studies. Mr. Skarmeas moved to approve. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous

VOTED: Student Activity Account Policy – The Superintendent recommended the approval of the Student Activity Account Policy. Mr. Skarmeas moved to approve. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Out of State/Overnight Field Trip Request - The Superintendent recommended the approval of the field trip requests for DHS students to Travel to Switzerland, Italy & France, April 11th - 21st, 2018, DHS students to travel to England, Ireland and Wales, February 17th - 24th, 2018 and DHS Ski Club to Bretton Wood March 4, 2017. Mr. Skarmeas moved to approve. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Fundraising requests – The Superintendent recommended the approval of fundraising events for DHS Baseball, DHS Girls Lacrosse and the Great Oak School. Mr. Skarmeas moved to approve. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Minutes – Mr. Kay moved to accept and release the minutes from the January 9, 2017 regular meeting. Mr. Skarmeas seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Adjournment – Mr. Kay moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:20 p.m. Mr. Crane seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Thomson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance and DPS Mission statement were recited. Mr. Thomson inquired whether the meeting was being recorded by audience members and announced that the meeting was being broadcast on DCAT and recorded

by Reena Karasin of the Danvers Herald.

II. ITEMS OF INTEREST TO SUPERINTENDENT, SCHOOL COMMITTEE, COMMUNITY

Mr. Thomson acknowledged that he had received an anonymous letter but was unable to respond due to the anonymity of said letter.

III. INTRODUCTION AND INFORMATION FROM THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Daisy Powers presented news and events from the seven schools.

IV. INFORMATION FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

A. Danvers Pride Presentation – The Smith School did a presentation on Lucy Calkin’s Writer’s Workshop with emphasis on Elaboration and Craft. Smith School teachers Laurie Lawler, Mike Massaro, Cindy Grady, Ellen Walsh, Betsy Marino, Christine Enegeess-Ward and Caitlyn Marshall were thanked by principal Tracy Mara for working collaboratively to bring this presentation to fruition. Cindy Grady shared that the students are working on conveying information to their readers in a very interesting way, focusing on Elaboration and Craft. Students begin with a simple picture and add information that lead to facts then to definition and explanation. The writer then progresses to using comparisons and figurative language. In the area of Craft, their pictures may include drawings with words which become content words then captions. A video was presented with students ranging from kindergarten to third grade sharing integration of the arts which will help to enhance their development of Elaboration and Craft. Kindergarteners worked on “How to Books”. The focus was on steps, “if we do this, what do we do next?” and drawing pictures to illustrate the steps. Grade one’s focus was on “The Power of Illustration”. In this session students were read a paragraph and then asked to illustrate what was in the paragraph. The readers would be able to tell the context of the paragraph by looking at the picture. Art teacher Mike Massaro shared that young learners often express their ideas through pictures long before they can write. Drawing and writing go hand and hand. First graders John McEnaney and Viola Fazio shared their “teaching books” with the committee. Students write “teaching books” on subjects that they feel they are experts on and include facts that teach their readers. They learn how to write introductions, subtopics within a paragraph and conclusions.

Mr. Thomson and Mr. Skarmeas both congratulated the teachers and students on a job well done, while Mrs. Verry expressed that she was very impressed with the students stories and thanked the teachers for all their hard work. Dr. Dana thanked the students for presenting.

B. FY17 Technology Update - Mr. Liberman presented Technology in the Classroom. The idea is to provide each student with the tools that will help them become successful and reach their learning potential.

Presenters were Erin King from Educational Technology Solutions who works within the District doing assistive technology assessments and student observations, Courtney Murphy and Anna Corbett both of Holten Richmond Middle School. Ms. King began the presentation sharing there are many different types of learners and the range of disabilities. To support these difference there are tools in our technology such as text

to speech, word predictors, and screen readers. Text to speech tools allow students to write and then have what they have written read back to them by the computer. This enables the student to hear if they have used the correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. Word predictors give the students a choice of words that begin with the letters they are writing. Screen readers simplify the text. The District has use of iPads with touch screen access which are helpful for students with motor skills limitations and find it difficult to maneuver a mouse. This technology supports the teachers as well. Ms. Murphy stated that the text to speech made for more independent learners allowing students to edit their own writing and perform at the level of their peers.

The simplify tool can take a website with a lot of content and simplifies the text bringing to a level for easier understanding and gain the most information. Ms. Corbett feels the reading component to this app is very impactful. This assists students that are not at a level of learning that matches the content of the subject. She feels these tools promote autonomy and independence. These tools are opening avenues for learning that may have been blocked to them in the past. Mr. Kay said he likes this program a lot and is always concerned about class size and asked if the teachers have seen technology help to alleviate some of the stress on the teachers. Mr. Liberman said that these programs enable the teacher to set up learning stations and this does assist the teacher. Mr. Kay also asked what the role was for a curriculum director to support this. Mr. Liberman answered stating each school has paraprofessionals who work with the teachers. Dr. Dana shared this is a collaborative effort. Teachers and administrators work together to find the best applications and how they work best in the classroom. Mr. Kay also asked about the age of Chromebooks and was advised by Mr. Liberman and Mr. Taverna that they are on a 3 year lease to own basis and then get recycled and repurposed. The district will entering into an additional 3 year lease to own program when the first one is complete. Mr. Taverna is hoping to get into a cycle so all students at all levels will be able to access technology that is not antiquated. Mr. Kay then stated that he is very interested in how these programs assist in the classroom. Mr. Crane asked if the teachers were here before the technology was provided. Ms. King stated she was and has noticed that this program benefits all students rather than just a student with needs. Both teachers feel that this program opens a whole new world to the students. Students now have more confidence and mastering the program has been easy. Learning the program has been a collaborative effort between the teachers. Mr. Thomson thanked the teachers. Dr. Dana stated Danvers Pride is really the highlights of the meetings. This is when you can really see what is happening in the classrooms.

- C. Mid Year Accomplishments - Dr. Dana provided the review of the mid year accomplishments going over the format and thanked the district for all the accomplishments that are in the report. She stated that she has tried to move as a District to show the committee the whole picture. She also introduced interim principal Eric Anderson of Highlands School. Dr. Dana touched on the use of Chromebooks as a tool and the accessibility to learning this afforded all students. She said the district standard based units at the elementary school, critical thinking at the middle school and NEASC visit at the high school were the highlights of the mid year accomplishments. Mr. Crane commented it looks like there's an organized plan moving forward and gives kudos to everyone for making this happen. He said this was a great presentation and feels you can see the progress of the District. Ms. Verry

agreed with Mr. Crane's comments. Mr. Thomson felt having the report in the current format made it much easier to understand and was more consistent.

- D. Grants Update - Mrs. Ambrozavitch gave the committee an update on the school grants stating that out of the Districts 1.7 million dollars in grants all but \$170,000. were entitlement grants. These are grants such as Title IIA for professional development, Title I for math and literacy, Special Education grants for staffing and mental health training while the remainder was from DanversCares. Mr. Thomson asked how this funded compared to prior years. Mrs. Ambrozavitch explained that the Title I grant fluctuated from approximately \$300,000 to \$150,000. Funding has dried up for the District. Cities with the highest need get most of the entitlement grants now.
- E. Facilities Update - Mr. Taverna gave an update on Smith School/MSBA project stating despite the weather the walk through has been completed. The proposals for the operation project manager are due in early March gearing up for the MSBA board meeting in May. The interview process will be completed by working off the MSBA timeline. They will then proceed into negotiations with the company that has the highest rating. Mr. Skarmeeas asked if there would be anything on Town Meeting regarding this process. Mr. Taverna answered not this spring, that the allocations for this portion of the project was on last spring's Town Meeting agenda. This will lead us into next spring or possibly a special Town Meeting next fall.

V. PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE DPS 2017-2018 BUDGET -

Mr. Crane made a motion to open the public hearing for discussion on the 2017-2018 school budget. Mr. Skarmeeas seconded. Dr. Dana and Mr. Taverna presented the proposed 2017-2018 DPS budget. Dr. Dana provided an outline of the budget process sharing budget meeting dates of March 4th for Board of Selectmen, April 12th for FINCOM and May 15th for Town Meeting. She noted the collaboration between the District and the Town. Mr. Taverna spoke about the specifics to the budget included contractual obligations, staffing needs, retirement savings, Special Education, transportation, equipment and other non-salary obligations. He announced that the proposed budget total of \$39,921,552 was a 3.34% increase over FY17, an increase which has remained consistent with prior years. Mr. Taverna also commented that the Kindergarten enrollment has increased from 268 students in FY17 to a predicted 324 in FY18. Mr. Skarmeeas had questions regarding the class size and enrollment projects over the next 10 years. Mr. Taverna addressed his and other board members concerns by stating there is a plan in place should the need for more space arise. Mr. Taverna also answered Mr. Crane's question on busing explaining the contracts are for a 3 year period with no fuel increase and that management reserve contains provisions for contract obligations for both union and non-union employees. The committee agreed that the proposed budget is fiscally responsible and commended the administration for job well done. Mr. Crane moved to adjourn the Public Hearing for the Proposed DPS 2017-2018 budget. Mr. Kane seconded. The vote was unanimous.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Holten Richmond Middle School Program of Studies – The Superintendent

recommended the adoption of Holten Richmond School Program of Studies. Mr. Crane moved to approve. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. As voted.

B. Student Activity Account Policy – The Superintendent recommended the approval of the Student Activity Account Policy. Mr. Skarmeas moved to approve. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. As Voted

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Out of State/Late Night Field Trips** - The Superintendent recommends the approval of the field trip requests for DHS students to Travel to Switzerland, Italy & France, April 11th - 21st, 2018, DHS students to travel to England, Ireland and Wales, February 17th - 24th, 2018 and DHS Ski Club to Bretton Wood March 4, 2017. As Voted.
- B. Fundraising requests** – The Superintendent recommended the approval of fundraising events for DHS Baseball, DHS Girls Lacrosse and the Great Oak School. As Voted.

VIII. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- A. Communications** – Dr. Dana shared the NEC website noting the minutes and budget subcommittee information are available on it.
- B. Legislation** – Mr. Crane stated he spoke with Mr. Speliotis regarding the number of transitional students in Danvers coming down. While State revenue is lagging, the economy is good. There is a small increase in the FY18 budget for Chapter 70 and unrestricted aide. Homeless reimbursement is likely to stay at 70%. Mr. Crane stated that Danvers is fiscally secure in these uncertain times.
- C. Subcommittee/Liaison Update**
DEEP – Mrs. Verry announced the next DEEP meeting will be held at the First Ipswich Bank on High St on March 8th. HRMS held a spelling bee with 41 students competing.
DanversCARES – Mr. Kay shared DanversCARES’ focus for this month is on positive parenting strategies, knowing where your children are and who they are with. Mr. Kay thanked Danvers Herald for the supportive article on DanversCARES.
SEPAC – Mr. Savage told the committee that SEPAC will hold a resource fair on March 1st at 6:30 in the HRMS multi-purpose room. The fair will have over 25 vendors.

VIII. MINUTES – As voted

IX. BUDGET

Mr. Taverna presented the January 2017 budget report stating we are on budget. He also recognized the donations made by Mr. Ted Jordan and Northshore Bank.

VII. PERSONNEL

Announcement of Resignations, Leaves of Absence and Appointments – Mrs. Ambrozavitch presented her memo dated February 2017 and asked the committee to contact her with questions.

The next regular meeting will be held on Monday, March 13, 2017 at 7 p.m. in the Francis Mills Communication Center at Danvers High School.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Kay, Secretary
Danvers School Committee