

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

District Office Conference Room

2 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA

6:00 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Melissa Teixeira Prince, Vice Chairperson
Laura Wiessen, Secretary
Kathy Clancy
Joel Favazza (6:47 p.m.)
Samantha Verga Watson
Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Gregg Bach, Asst. Superintendent
Gary Frisch, Director of Finance
and Operations
Grant Harris, IT Director
Brenden Henry, IT Systems Operation
Manager

Recorded by 1623 Studios

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

(At this time, the agenda was taken out of order.)

VIII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

- A. Superintendent Search** – The committee reviewed the draft Superintendent Search Brochure provided by Dorothy Presser, and Chairman Pope noted that the blank squares are for pictures. The committee discussed the pictures to be used in the brochure, and Kathy Clancy stated that she would like to include a picture of middle or high school students. Chairman Pope stated that the finalized brochure has to go to Ms. Presser first thing in the morning. It was the consensus of the committee to use the pictures of kids working at a table, a teacher standing in front of her classroom, and two girls reading.

With respect to salary, Ms. Teixeira Prince noted that Ms. Presser suggested a range of \$180,000 to \$195,000. After discussion of Dr. Safier’s salary and salaries in other districts, it was the consensus of the committee to include a salary range of \$170,000 to \$195,000 in the brochure.

There was a discussion of the positions of the screening committee members. Mayor Theken stated that she would like the DPW Director to be involved in the interviews, as well as the fire chief and police chief, since they will be working closely with the new superintendent. Ms. Teixeira Prince suggested that those individuals submit questions to be asked of the applicants, and Kathy Clancy stated that the final candidates will do a “site visit” and meet with different stakeholders in the city.

(Mayor Theken left the meeting at 6:25 p.m. to participate in a conference call.)

After discussion, on a motion by Ms. Teixeira Prince, seconded by Ms. Watson, it was unanimously

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed to advertise the superintendent position at a salary range of \$170,000 to \$195,000.

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira Prince, seconded by Ms. Watson, it was unanimously

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed that we use the three pictures identified above in the superintendent search brochure, as well as two other potential pictures.

After discussion, on a motion by Ms. Teixeira Prince, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed to use the skills listed in “The Position” section of the draft superintendent search brochure as the selection criteria for the new superintendent.

The committee reviewed the “Community Profile” section of the draft brochure and made some punctuation and grammatical corrections, as well as other revisions. Ms. Teixeira Prince made note of the corrections and revisions and indicated that she would send them to Ms. Presser later tonight.

After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Wiessen, it was unanimously

VOTED: 5 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the superintendent search brochure as modified.

(A recess was taken from 6:45 to 7:00 p.m.)

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – Cynthia Carney of 34 Fernald Street, a teacher at Veterans, discussed the letter that was sent to parents and guardians regarding COVID-19, which stated that the facilities department would be sanitizing educational spaces and following all recommended guidelines to ensure the safety of students and staff. She pointed out that on February 24th, the Mass. Department of Public Health (DPH) put out some specific guidelines for public schools which stated that hard surfaces should be cleaned, that frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected, and that alcohol wipes should be used to clean keyboards. She stated that this cleaning is not being done unless the teachers do it and they do not have alcohol wipes. She also noted that the floor of her classroom is not mopped on a daily or weekly basis, which is typical for the district.

Ms. Carney acknowledged that the facilities department works very hard but indicated that the school custodial staff was cut exponentially many years ago and was never reinstated. She stated that there are not enough custodians cleaning the schools properly, which may be why some of the schools are in the condition that they are in now. She requested clarification of what is being done to clean and sanitize as recommended by the DPH guidelines.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON –Chairman Pope requested that people in the audience be respectful and remain quiet during the meeting. He stated that the committee is trying its best to do the right thing for students in Gloucester, and if they cannot hear what is being said during the meeting or are interrupted by people in the audience, that is detrimental to the committee’s mission. He requested that if audience members need to have a conversation that they leave the room. Chairman Pope also stated that if committee members need to have a conversation with another member they should leave the room, noting that it is a violation of Open Meeting Law for them to have side conversations. Finally, he asked committee members to wait to be recognized before speaking.

V. RECOGNITIONS – Ms. Wiessen recognized Principal Jodi Gennodie and the Beeman staff for an amazing Parent University Night last night, which was well-attended and very informative.

VI. GHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL – Emily introduced herself and updated the committee on the following GHS events: blood drive on Friday, Sophomore Event at the Gloucester House, Junior Event in May, Senior Banquet on May 1st, senior sweatshirts, and juniors’ game show fundraiser tomorrow night.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Personnel Subcommittee and Executive Session of January 2, 2020
2. School Committee of January 8, 2020
3. Personnel Subcommittee and Executive Session of January 9, 2020

B. Approval of Warrants

C. Approval of Transfers

D. Referrals

E. Out-of-State Field Trip Requests

1. GHS JROTC to Norwich University in Vermont on Friday, March 27, 2020
2. GHS to New York, New York from Sunday, April 19 to Wednesday, April 22, 2020

F. Acceptance of Donations/Gifts

1. \$2,300.00 from Bank Gloucester to GHS Athletics for the 2019 Annual Bank Gloucester Boys Basketball Tournament
2. \$3,000.00 from Cape Ann Savings Bank to GHS Athletics for the 2019 Annual Cape Ann Savings Bank Boys Hockey Tournament

Chairman Pope removed Items E.1 and E.2, which will be discussed later this evening.

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira Prince, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the Consent Agenda as noted.

VIII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT (Cont’d)

B. Gloucester Police Department “Handle With Care” – Officer Jeremiah Nicastro explained the “Handle with Care” program and showed a short video on how the program works. Ms. Watson expressed the importance of training teachers on how to deal with the symptoms and behaviors that children who have been exposed to trauma may exhibit and asked about notifying a child’s therapist that he/she has been involved in a traumatic event. Ms. Teixeira Prince reported that she works with Lieutenant Nicastro daily on community issues and stated that this program is long overdue. Lt. Nicastro indicated that he will send a packet of information on the program to each principal. Finally, he stated that the grand opening of the Community Impact Unit of the police department will be held on March 16 at 10:00 a.m. at the unit’s satellite office in Brown’s Mall.

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira Prince, seconded by Ms. Wiessen, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to accept the “Handle with Care” program as presented by the Gloucester Police Department.

(Mayor Theken rejoined the meeting at 7:35 p.m.)

C. GHS Student Activity Account for E-Sports Club – IT Operations Manager Brenden Henry requested that a student activity account be created for the GHS E-Sports Club to collect fees for the fall season. He described the game that will be played (“Rocket League”) and the computer equipment that will be used to run the game (no financial cost to the district) and indicated that Principal Cook and Gregg Bach are in support of the club. Mr. Henry also discussed the extent of e-sports in the country.

After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Watson, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to approve a Student Activity Account for the GHS E-Sports Club.

- H. Superintendent's Report** – Dr. Safier reviewed the guidelines for the district response to COVID-19 and noted that Health Director Karin Carroll was not able to come to the meeting tonight. However, he indicated that he will share with the committee the presentation she made to the City Council.

Dr. Safier distributed a list of school field trips, events and sports scheduled to take place over the next few months and noted that there are no international trips planned for this year. He recommended that all out of town and out of state field trips through May 1st be cancelled. There was a discussion about advising students against going on trips versus cancelling the trips and whether students would be banned from school for two weeks after they return to protect other students and staff.

Ms. Teixeira Prince pointed out that the governor has declared a State of Emergency and advised people to stay in their hometown and noted that the committee should be consistent with that. Dr. Safier read the governor's advisory and indicated he is making decisions in conjunction with the health department.

After discussion, on a motion by Ms. Teixeira Prince, seconded by Ms. Wiessen, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to cancel the approval of all out-of-state school trips through May 2, 2020.

The committee discussed the scheduled out-of-town field trips, and Chairman Pope noted that they do not require the committee's approval.

After discussion, on a motion by Chairman Pope, seconded by Ms. Teixeira Prince, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to instruct the superintendent, in conjunction with the Board of Health, to review all school field trips scheduled through May 2, 2020 and cancel any as he deems necessary.

The committee reviewed the upcoming school events, and Dr. Safier reiterated that he is making and will make decisions in conjunction with the Board of Health.

Mr. Favazza expressed concern about the financial impact on families of preparing for upcoming events like the Mad Hot Ball and recommended providing as much advance notice of cancellation as possible. Mayor Theken advised the committee on city events that are being cancelled due to the State of Emergency.

With respect to upcoming School Committee meetings, Chairman Pope reported that Kyrouz Auditorium is available for all future meetings except the public hearing on April 1 and the regular meeting on April 15. He suggested moving all other meetings to Kyrouz Auditorium, which would allow the committee and audience members to

“social distance” and give people the opportunity to watch the meetings live at home on CATV.

The committee discussed the district’s authority with respect to families that travel out of the country on April vacation. It was noted that this would be up to the Board of Health, and Dr. Safier indicated that he will send out an email asking families not to travel abroad for April vacation. Mayor Theken stated that the Board of Health reported that the district cannot stop people from traveling on vacation and cannot tell anyone to self-quarantine when they return unless they leave the country. She also reported that DESE is recommending that all out-of-state school trips be cancelled.

There was a discussion about student access to computers if schools are closed, and Dr. Safier indicated that Comcast will offer internet access for \$10 per month.

On a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Teixeira Prince, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to accept the Superintendent’s Report.

- D. Formation of Ad Hoc Communications Subcommittee** – Ms. Wiessen reported that she and Ms. Watson discussed the need for a communications subcommittee. She reviewed the list of proposed deliverables, including creation of a School Committee Facebook page.

After discussion, on a motion by Chairman Pope, seconded by Ms. Teixeira Prince, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to authorize an Ad Hoc Communications Subcommittee as proposed with the deliverables stated (see attached), consisting of three School Committee members and two administrators.

Chairman Pope appointed Laura Wiessen, Samantha Watson, Melissa Teixeira Prince, Gregg Bach and Grant Harris as members of the Ad Hoc Communications Subcommittee.

- E. Northshore Education Consortium Amended Articles of Agreement** – Dr. Safier reviewed the amendments to the Articles of Agreement, which he stated have been approved by the Department of Education.

After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Watson, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the Northshore Education Consortium Amended Articles of Agreement.

X. ACTION

A. Selection Criteria for Superintendent Search Brochure – See VIII.A.

B. Approval of Proposed FY21 Budget for Public Hearing – Mr. Frisch presented a slide show on the February 26th budget presentation, which included all positions in Options A and B, and the three positions recommended by the Building & Finance Subcommittee to be added to the budget from Option C. He reported that he reduced the estimated health insurance cost from 9.5% to 5.6% based on information received by the PEC. Mayor Theken and Ms. Teixeira Prince expressed concern with making that reduction now, noting that open enrollment does not end until May 8th and people may change their plan. Kathy Clancy expressed the importance of getting updates from the committee’s PEC representatives.

Mr. Frisch reviewed the three positions added to the draft budget from Option C, namely an elementary adjustment counselor (\$80,000), an O’Maley elective teacher (\$72,000), and an additional elementary math coach (\$72,000). He reported that the proposed budget increase over last year’s approved budget is \$1,653,819 or 3.83%. Mr. Favazza noted that the percentage increase is artificially inflated by the inclusion of health insurance in the school budget and indicated that that should not prevent the committee from including things in the budget that the district needs.

After discussion, on a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Mr. Favazza, it was

VOTED: 6 in favor, 1 present (Mayor Theken) to approve an FY21 budget in the amount of \$44,792,716.00 to be published for the public hearing scheduled for April 1, 2019.

Chairman Pope noted that budget books will be available for review at the Main Office, the Sawyer Free Library and City Hall.

The committee reviewed the Notice of Public Hearing to be published in the newspaper and Kathy Clancy pointed out that the location needs to be changed before publication. Since Kyrouz Auditorium is not available on April 1st, she suggested holding it in the O’Maley library. Chairman Pope stated that he will check to see if it is available.

Chairman Pope reported that the Building & Finance Subcommittee will be meeting on March 18th and will review the FY21 budget presentation for the public hearing.

VIII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT (Cont’d)

G. School Committee Annual Calendar – Chairman Pope distributed the draft calendar. This matter was tabled.

F. Presentation of the Draft 2020-2021 District Improvement Plan – Tabled.

IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Building & Finance Subcommittee Meeting of March 4, 2020 – No report.

X. ACTION (Cont'd)

C. Salary Increase for Contracted Employees – No discussion; no action taken.

D. Approval of 2020-2021 School Calendar – Chairman Pope noted that school will be starting before Labor Day next year.

Mr. Favazza made a motion, seconded by Kathy Clancy, to approve the 2020-2021 school calendar as presented. After discussion, he made the following motion:

After discussion, on a motion by Mr. Favazza, seconded by Ms. Wiessen, it was

VOTED: 6 in favor, 1 present (Mayor Theken) to amend the 2020-2021 school calendar to make September 4, 2020 a full day of school.

Mr. Favazza made a motion, seconded by Ms. Wiessen, to amend the 2020-2021 school calendar to make December 23, 2020 a half day of school. After discussion of time on learning, the motion was withdrawn.

Ms. Teixeira Prince made a motion, seconded by Mr. Favazza, to amend the 2020-2021 school calendar to make December 23, 2020 a full day of school. After discussion, the motion was withdrawn.

On a motion by Chairman Pope, seconded by Ms. Teixeira Prince, it was

VOTED: 5 in favor, 1 abstained (Kathy Clancy), 1 present (Mayor Theken) to amend the 2020-2021 school calendar to make December 23, 2020 a half day of school if doing so meets the required hours for the year. If not, December 23, 2020 will be a full day of school.

After discussion, on a motion by Mr. Favazza, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was

VOTED: 6 in favor, 1 present (Mayor Theken) to approve the 2020-2021 school calendar as amended.

E. Approval of Student Activity Account for GHS E-Sports Club – See VIII.C.

F. Acceptance of DESE Grants

1. On a motion by Ms. Teixeira Prince, seconded by Kathy Clancy, it was

VOTED: 6 in favor, 1 present (Mayor Theken) to accept an increase in the Title II grant in the amount of \$857.00.

2. On a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Watson, it was

VOTED: 6 in favor, 1 present (Mayor Theken) to accept an increase in the Title I grant in the amount of \$903.00.

3. On a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Ms. Watson, it was

VOTED: 6 in favor, 1 present (Mayor Theken) to accept an increase in the Special Education 240 grant in the amount of \$3,546.00.

XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

A. MSBA Project Update – Chairman Pope reported that the School Building Committee (SBC) is meeting tomorrow at Veterans’ and there will be a presentation on the interior design, as well as a further discussion about the exterior design and HVAC system and an update on the CMR process. He noted that the renderings of the exterior of the building that were published in the *Gloucester Daily Times* was only intended to serve as an idea of what the floor plan would look like from the exterior of the building. Finally, Chairman Pope reported that the City Council will receive a presentation from the designer and traffic engineer on March 24, 2020.

Mr. Favazza again stated that he would like the School Committee to have a conversation in the near future about instructing the SBC of its expectations on cost and design. Chairman Pope stated that the educational plan drives the design and the square footage drives the price, noting that some things can be done to bring the cost down now, such as cheaper flooring, but it may cost more down the road. He agreed that the School Committee should have such a discussion.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by Ms. Wiessen, seconded by Ms. Watson, it was unanimously

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the School Committee meeting of March 11, 2020 at 10:14 p.m.

All reference documents and reports are filed in the Superintendent’s office.

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*

Ad Hoc Communications Subcommittee Proposed Deliverables:

1. Creation of School Committee Facebook page with clear policies on posting and an auto response asking people to email SC with issues.
2. Training in Google Suite for SC members -- and after training:
 - a. Creation of calendar for entire SC reference, understood and utilized
 - b. Create joint drive for SC with needed documents
3. Locate communications/PR professional willing to volunteer to help create a general communications plan for disseminating information in a timely, accurate and engaging way.