

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

Gloucester High School Library

32 Leslie O. Johnson Road, Gloucester, MA

5:00 p.m.

Members Present

Jonathan Pope, Chairman
Kathy Clancy, Vice Chairperson
Tony Gross, Secretary
Melissa Teixeira Prince
Michelle Sweet
Joel Favazza
Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken (5:23 pm)

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Gregg Bach, Asst. Superintendent
Gary Frisch, Director of Finance
and Operations
Patty Wegmann, Special Education Director

Recorded by 1623 Studios

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Pope called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – **Erin Jewell** of 24 North Kilby Street read a statement asking the committee to recognize the value of GPS educators and give them competitive salaries.

Phoebe Potts of Maplewood Avenue stated that she would like the teachers to be part of the budgeting process and indicated that she would happily pay more taxes if she knew it was going to teachers' salaries.

Matthew Lewis, an O'Maley teacher, read a written statement in support of teachers and students (see attached).

Eric Leigh, a GHS teacher, read a statement in support of collaboration between teachers and the committee to advocate for more funding and prevent students from choicing out. He stated that teachers would like input on how the increase in Chapter 70 money will be used.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON – Chairman Pope stated that the School Committee appreciates teachers and advocates for funding. He indicated that he would like to meet with teachers in the future, if they are interested, and go through the budget process.

V. RECOGNITIONS – Mr. Favazza recognized the new members of the School Committee, Samantha Verga Watson and Laura Wiessen, as well as Ida Shaker for running for election. Ms. Sweet recognized Ms. Teixeira Prince for receiving the lifetime achievement award from

the Mass. Association of School Committees. Finally, Chairman Pope recognized the GHS Docksidiers and the Gleeful Eagles for performing at the Veterans Day ceremony.

- VI. GHS STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL** – Kate Bevins introduced herself and updated the committee on the following events at GHS: girls field hockey, senior semiformal, NHS and Student Council working at the polls, senior bake sale, fall play, Thanksgiving football game, pep rally, DECA sale of holiday wreaths, and freshmen keychain sales.

Finally, Kate reported that ELL students that she is mentoring are from warm climates and do not have warm coats. She requested that people donate winter coats, hats and mittens for these students, which can be dropped off at the high school.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes

1. School Committee of August 28, 2019
2. Personnel Subcommittee and Executive Session of September 3, 2019
3. Personnel Subcommittee and Executive Session of September 5, 2019
4. School Committee of October 9, 2019

B. Approval of Warrants

C. Approval of Transfers

D. Referrals

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

VOTED: 7 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the Consent Agenda as noted.

VIII. DELIBERATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL ISSUES/SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

- A. Special Education Update** – Ms. Wegmann reported on past and upcoming workshops by the EDCO Collaborative and noted that the reading coaches are putting together workshops for all staff.

Ms. Wegmann reported that the preschool hosted a family dinner on November 7th, which was sponsored by the Open Door. The families were provided with cookbooks and information regarding SNAP benefits, and there was a mobile food market.

Ms. Wegmann reported that GHS Transition Coordinator Nancy Goodman is putting together a transition fair for families with students on IEPs to be held on November 20th from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. in the GHS Library. There will be vendors who will provide information on transition services and conduct workshops on eligibility for Mass. Rehab and Social Security benefits.

Ms. Wegmann reported that Ida Shaker is now leading the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and that the first workshop sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs will be held in January. She discussed upcoming workshops in the spring.

Ms. Wegmann presented a slide show on Tiered Focused Monitoring, including an overview of the tiered approach, Group B universal standards, targeted standards, the three-step review process, onsite activities, LEA self-directed improvement, and the final report.

Finally, there was a brief discussion about training for bus monitors.

B. Superintendent’s Report – Dr. Safier updated the committee on the following matters:

1. New Chapter 74 Construction Craft Laborer Partnership Program
2. Turnaround Grant
3. Cape Ann Study for Education (CASE)
4. Safety Update
5. Support for Advanced Placement Exam Fees

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

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

(Mr. Gross left the meeting at 6:01 p.m.)

C. Superintendent’s Evaluation and Contract Renewal Process – Chairman Pope reported that Dr. Safier is retiring on June 30, 2020. He referred to the Personnel Subcommittee the matter of conducting a superintendent search and referred to the Building & Finance Subcommittee the matter of identifying funds to conduct the search. There was a discussion about the idea of hiring an interim superintendent, and Chairman Pope requested a report from the Personnel Subcommittee at the December 4th meeting on the pros and cons of a full search and a search to find an interim superintendent and a recommendation on how to proceed. Kathy Clancy suggested that Ms. Teixeira Prince reach out to MASC to get more information.

IX. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Personnel Subcommittee Meeting of October 30, 2019 – Ms. Teixeira Prince reported that the Personnel Subcommittee reviewed the job description of the Coordinator of Student Obligations at its meeting of October 30, 2019. She pointed out that the description of the position states that, “The individual may be required to attend court hearings on delinquent accounts” and expressed concern that he or she would be acting as an agent for the district in court. The description was revised to state that, “The individual may be required to accompany and assist at court hearings on delinquent accounts.”

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

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the job description of the Coordinator of Student Obligations stipend position, as revised.

- B. Building & Finance Subcommittee Meeting of October 30, 2019** – Kathy Clancy reported that the Building & Finance Subcommittee discussed CO and vape detectors, replacement of food service equipment, advertising on the donated food service vehicle, and walker safety at its meeting of October 30, 2019. Ms. Teixeira Prince requested that the subcommittee recommend a timeline for addressing the replacement of food service equipment. Chairman Pope indicated that Mr. Frisch will present a report at the next subcommittee meeting on accounts that may be used to replace the some of the equipment.

X. ACTION

A. Acceptance of GEF Grants

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

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to accept a grant from the Gloucester Education Foundation in the amount of \$7,500.00 for the O'Maley Aquaponics Internship Project.

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

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to accept a grant from the Gloucester Education Foundation in the amount of \$3,949.99 for the GHS Carpentry Department for a Helix planer cutter head.

B. Approval of Stipend for the Coordinator of Student Obligations

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

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to approve the Coordinator of Student Obligations stipend in the amount of \$4,600.00.

XI. DISCUSSION/OTHER COMMUNICATION/OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

- A. MSBA Project Update** – Chairman Pope reported that the Preferred Schematic Report was presented to the MSBA today and that the full board will vote on it on December 4, 2019. In response to a question from Mr. Favazza about flexibility to accommodate the possibility of housing grades other than K-5 in the future, Dr. Safier indicated that they have asked for extended spaces in addition to the four classrooms

per grade and noted that the library will have space for literacy and projects. Chairman Pope noted that classrooms will be able to be joined by opening a wall between them. Finally, Chairman Pope reported that there is a School Building Committee meeting tomorrow.

B. Preschool Location – Chairman Pope reported that the city is in negotiations to purchase the Blackburn building.

XII. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by Ms. Sweet, seconded by Ms. Teixeira Prince, it was unanimously

VOTED: 6 in favor, 0 opposed to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of November 13, 2019 at 6:34 p.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi
Recording Secretary*

Madam Mayor, Chairperson Pope, and all distinguished members in attendance.

Good evening and thank you for allowing me to speak.

My name is Matthew Lewis and for the past four years I have had the pleasure of working at O'Maley Innovation Middle School. Prior to that, I spent a year and a half at the Gloucester High School for my practicum. The biggest joy of my career has been my acceptance into the "Fisherman" community. That being said, I am worried about the trajectory of our school system.

I am worried about the increased pressure on students. I am worried that in my short time teaching, more and more students are coming to me with stress over tests. I am worried that our students are increasingly stressed over the safety and conditions of their building.

During our last ALICE drill, one student pointed out that "the school feels like it would collapse if something really bad were to happen." I am worried that with the rise of socio-economic diversity in our community, our schools are not equipped financially to address the needs of students. I am worried that our leadership sees us simply as "lemons" or rather faulty cars that can be returned after a trial period. I am worried that our community is continuing to fall victim to societal woes, while the people who work with these woes every day, the educators, are not trusted to make judgement calls for themselves in an attempt to address these woes.

While my worries seem overwhelming, my hope outweighs these clouds of despair. Our students are wonderful learners and innovators; the creativity they demonstrate in and out of the classroom is unparalleled. I am inspired while watching students face societal injustices and

decide that “enough is enough”. I am inspired by the work of countless “lemons” who tolerate the working conditions they face while often not even thanked or recognized.

I am thankful that several school committee members came into my classroom to assist my students. I am thankful for the relationships I have with my colleagues both current and former. As my mentor teacher from GHS once told me, “This community is built on helping one another; Gloucesters biggest success is its love for its community.”

Distinguished leaders of Gloucester schools, I implore you to please support our students and our educators. This can be done in two ways. First, as I am sure many of you are aware, the state legislature has passed the *Fund Our Future* bill. It will bring an estimated \$889,000 to Gloucester in Chapter 70 funding. While this money does not fully alleviate all the problems facing our district, it will certainly help to create safe and stable learning environments. I am thankful for the leadership of Eric Leigh in helping to get this legislature passed. With this additional funding coming to the district, I am hopeful that the people elected to represent the schools will ensure this money is not poached away from schools to other city matters.

Finally, support our teachers by respecting the time and effort they put in to making Gloucester a top notch community. As mentioned during negotiations last night, our schools have improved, but we do not feel the recognition. Our elementary schools improved, because of the hard work that was implemented by the teachers. Provide all teachers the resources they need and success will follow.

I would also like to remind you that at the bargaining table, we are not just bargaining for a raise; we are specifically bargaining for what the community has asked from our district. Recently, the MTA and the GTA have held joint forums with community stakeholders to address

the concerns facing our district. Might I remind you that these community stakeholders are the people who elected and re-elected you. Please honor the will of the voters and grant them the greatest possible schools our community deserves.

I want to reiterate my hopefulness and leave you with a quote from the great Cornel West; West writes “You can't lead the people if you don't love the people. You can't save the people if you don't serve the people.” School committee, serve your people. Support your educators and support your students.

Thank you.