

SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE
TOWN OF FOXBOROUGH

Regular Meeting

Date: January 26, 2021

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Virtual

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Rob Canfield, Ms. Tina Belanger, Ms. Michelle Raymond; Mr. Brent Ruter and Mr. Richard Pearson arrived later in the meeting

SCHOOL STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Amy Berdos, Mr. William Yukna, Dr. Alison Mello

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE: Ms. Chiara Pacini

Mr. Canfield opened the meeting. All attendees participated remotely.

Open Public Comment

Three community inbox submissions were received since the last meeting from Ms. Barbara Pacini of 11 Alden Street, Ms. Jennifer Keen of 17 Windsor Drive, and Ms. Carrie Weston of 7 Judge Brown Lane. These submissions addressed COVID pooled testing.

Approval of Minutes

Belanger moved; Raymond seconded

Approve the regular meeting minutes of January 12, 2021, as amended

Vote: Raymond aye; Belanger aye; Canfield aye (3-0-0)

COVID-19 Pooled Testing

Dr. Berdos introduced the topic of COVID-19 pooled testing, a voluntary COVID-19 mitigation strategy proposed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). DESE is planning to start a 6-week early launch of pooled testing, initially at no cost to districts. COVID-19 testing would be provided on a weekly basis at each school to volunteer students and staff at random. Results would come back as a group; no samples would be identified at this point. If a result came back positive, additional testing would be done as well as contact tracing. DESE proposes to fund the program for six weeks; thereafter costs would be assumed by the district. Dr. Berdos has met with local health officials to discuss the implications and complexities of such testing, and what if any benefits it would bring to Foxborough.

FPS Nurse Leader Jennifer Rosenberg and FFD Deputy Chief Tom Kenvin joined the meeting to further describe the science behind pooled testing, discuss the pros and cons, and determine if it would benefit the FPS community. Both Ms. Rosenberg and Deputy Chief Kenvin agreed that the current prevalence rate in Foxborough schools is low, with no indication of transmission of the virus occurring at school. If FPS participated, after the first six weeks the district would incur significant costs around supplies and staffing. Further, only data from volunteers would be available as not all employees or students would want to comply. Nurse Rosenberg and Deputy

Chief Kenvin felt with such a lack of transmission rates in our schools coupled with the decline in hospital admissions, pooled testing would not provide a great benefit to Foxborough.

Ms. Rosenberg felt that we are already responsive with masking, hand washing and social distancing to mitigate the virus.

Dr. Berdos stated that the Foxborough Fire Department has partnered with FPS and is able to provide testing as needed.

Both Dr. Berdos and Mr. Yukna discussed funding provided by the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act and grant funding, as they relate to COVID expenses incurred by the district. It was further noted that we do not have the capacity to use existing staff to manage this program.

Questions and discussion with the Committee followed, and the pros and cons of participating were weighed. After discussion it was agreed that the benefit of going forward with pooled testing is limited and potentially costly.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Berdos provided an update on the following:

- Laptop distribution for grades K and 1 is complete, and students have been working on special technology lessons. First graders will be able to bring their laptops home tomorrow.
- The device protection plan is still available for families at a prorated cost of \$25.00 per device for the remainder of the school year. Participation is encouraged;
- Amendment to Student Learning Time Regulations – Dr. Berdos announced that our requested waiver at the elementary level was granted and there will be no change to the elementary schedule; the additional time required at the secondary level has been added, was communicated to parents, and started last week.
- Starting tomorrow Burrell students will be dropped off at the new entrance. An announcement was sent out to families with new drop-off procedures.
- Along with Mr. Yukna, an update was provided on the Burrell renovation. Phase 2 is completed; the new Kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms are finished, and staff spent an entire weekend setting up rooms and getting organized. The space was ready to be used on Monday morning. Phase 3 is next and will take us into remaining classrooms and cafeteria later in the spring.
- Kindergarten registration for the 2021-2022 school year is underway.
- The following sports have been approved for the fall II sports season: football, volleyball, cheer and winter track. The season starts on February 22. Modifications will be made by the MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association). Wrestling will be moved to the spring.

Dr. Berdos, Mr. Yukna and the Committee acknowledged the time teachers and the custodial staff spent over a weekend to set up the new classrooms at the Burrell and expressed their appreciation to all of them.

Approval of 2021-2022 School Calendar

Dr. Berdos referenced the two draft versions of the 2021-2022 school calendar that were presented at the last School Committee meeting and reviewed the key differences. From a learning standpoint, the Foxborough Education Association and Administration have expressed a preference for the earlier start date before Labor Day. After a short discussion, the following vote was taken:

Ruter moved; Belanger seconded

Adopt the earlier start calendar (first day of school August 31, 2021) as preferred by the Foxborough Education Association and Administration for the 2021-2022 school year.

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Canfield aye; Belanger aye; Pearson aye (5-0-0)

FY '22 Budget Public Hearing and Vote of Recommendation

Dr. Berdos reiterated the proposed FY '22 budget reflects our priorities as it is built on the needs of students, provides the current level of services, and maintains reasonable class sizes. Mr. Yukna described the FY '22 budget as what would be considered a typical year, not a COVID/hybrid year.

The Committee agreed, commenting the budget provides the best possible education within fiscal conservatism, demonstrates fiscal responsibility, and is detailed, appropriate and responsible.

Two votes were taken:

Belanger moved; Ruter seconded

Move the School Committee vote forward to approve the FY '22 School Budget less Athletic budget expenses of \$239,400, for a total of \$38,376,614

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Canfield aye; Belanger aye; Pearson aye (5-0-0)

For the second vote on the Athletic budget expenses, Mr. Pearson recused himself due to his affiliation with the MIAA.

Belanger moved; Ruter seconded

Move the School Committee vote forward to approve the FY '22 Athletic expense budget in the amount of \$239,400

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Belanger aye; Canfield aye; (4-0-0)

Approval of FY '22 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Mr. Yukna described the FY '22 CIP as similar to past years. Four (4) buses are requested this year along with computer/software/printer upgrades and replacement, copiers, and Music Department equipment replacement for a total request of \$535,510. He then discussed the benefits of

Foxborough maintaining its own fleet of school buses and Transportation Department, and described the need of an instrument replacement program for the Music Department. The Committee expressed support of the CIP as presented.

Belanger moved; Raymond seconded

Move the School Committee vote forward to approve the FY '22 School Department Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in the amount of \$535,510 as follows: computer/software/printer upgrades and replacement \$100,000; four (4) 77-passenger school buses \$328,000; four (4) copiers \$40,000; and year one of a three-year proposal to replace Music Department instruments \$67,510.

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Canfield aye; Belanger aye; Pearson aye (5-0-0)

Vote on Technology Revolving Account Authorization

The need for a Technology Revolving Account has been discussed at prior School Committee meetings. Mr. Yukna has concluded the best way to proceed to set up such an account is to present an article for Town Meeting in May. He is requesting a School Committee vote to agree to and approve an article for the May Town Meeting warrant, with a cap of \$100,000. After discussion the following vote was taken.

Ruter moved; Canfield seconded

Approve an article for the Town Meeting warrant in May to establish a Technology Revolving Account with a cap of \$100,000

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Canfield aye; Belanger aye; Pearson aye (5-0-0)

Acceptance of Donation

Dr. Berdos presented one donation for the Committee's consideration:

Belanger moved; Raymond seconded

Accept the donation in the amount of \$500.00 from Roger and Cynthia Rumsey to support the middle school drama program, with gratitude

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Canfield aye; Belanger aye; Pearson aye (5-0-0)

Other Matters

Dr. Berdos remarked the School Nutrition Association will host a virtual awards ceremony at 7:00 p.m. where Ms. Jane Rice, Taylor School Cook/Manager, will receive the 2020 Northeast Regional Manager of the Year Award. The Committee extended their congratulations to Ms. Rice.

Dr. Berdos reminded students and families there will be no school on Friday, January 29, as it is a Professional Development day.

Dr. Mello reported on a very robust menu of teacher choices for Professional Development including equity, social/emotional learning, LGBTQ student support, self-care, and technology, in addition to strong content area offerings.

Ms. Belanger noted that the Foxborough Food Service nutrition page has information posted relating to a 15% increase in the Pandemic-EBT. This is additional money to go to families who need it.

Mr. Canfield continues to be grateful for all of the work done by our educators for families to make this as successful a school year as possible.

Ms. Raymond is glad to have made it halfway through the school year and the holidays without having to make major changes to our hybrid learning model.

Mr. Pearson commended FHS junior and music student Sophia Davis for sponsoring a virtual Jazz 4 Justice Master Class this Thursday from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. to raise money for sex trafficking prevention.

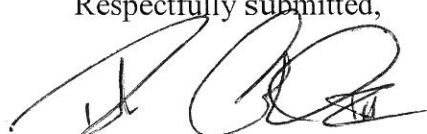
Ruter moved; Canfield seconded

Adjourn the meeting

Vote: Raymond aye; Ruter aye; Canfield aye; Belanger aye; Pearson aye (5-0-0)

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Rob Canfield
Clerk

Attachments:

Regular meeting minutes of January 12, 2021

DESE Memorandum – Pooled Testing in K-12 Schools

Ahern Drama Club Donation

Approved: February 23, 2021

