

DANVERS SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
August 23, 2021

School Committee Members Present:

Eric Crane, Chair
Arthur Skarmeeas, Secretary
Alice Campbell
Robin Doherty
Jeffrey Kay

VOTED: Local Mask Mandate Policy - Mr. Skarmeeas moved to table the vote waiting for upcoming direction from the DESE Commissioner. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: MASC Anti-Racism Resolution- Mr. Kay moved to adopt the MASC Anti-Racism Resolution. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. The vote carried with a 4 to 1 vote.

VOTED: The Superintendent recommended the approval/adoption of the proposed 2021-2022 Pre-K-12 Student/Parent Handbooks for a second reading. Mr. Skarmeeas moved to approve. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: 2021-2022 Pre- K-12 School Improvement Plans - The Superintendent recommended the approval of the proposed 2021-2022 K-12 School Improvement Plans for a first reading. Mr. Skarmeeas moved to approve. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Annual vote of Student Activity Accounts -The Superintendent recommended the approval of the 2021-22 list of accounts and maximum balances - Mr. Skarmeeas moved to approve. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Consent Calendar- Mr. Skarmeeas motioned to approve the Consent Calendar items as presented. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Minutes – (The Secretary) moved to approve and release the minutes from the June 25, 2021 regular meeting as well as to approve and release the 2020-2021 school year Executive Session minutes. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VOTED: Adjournment – Mr. Skarmeeas moved to adjourn the regular meeting at 10:20 p.m. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Regular Meeting Call to Order

Mr. Crane called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance and the Danvers Public Schools Mission statement was recited. Mr. Crane inquired whether the meeting was being recorded by audience members and announced that the meeting was

being broadcast on DCAT. Mr. Crane explained the order of business with regards to the COVID Workshop and Public Comment section and asked audience members that would like to speak to sign their name on the sign in sheet provided.

II. ITEMS OF INTEREST

- A.** Dr. Dana wished all the scholarship recipients success in the future and noted thank you notes were attached for the Committee's viewing.
- B.** Mr. Crane acknowledged the passing of two former DPS teachers.
- C.** Mr. Crane noted there would be follow-up discussions regarding funding of and assessment of costs for the Essex Technical High School.

III. COVID Workshop

A. School Opening - Updates - COVID

Mr. Taverna gave an overview of the COVID statistics from the week of June 18th through August 20, 2021. He confirmed the number of cases, along with their age brackets and the vaccination rates. Recommendations from governing bodies and Town directives along with added guidance from the MA Department of Public Health and DESE Commissioner, who is asking to be granted the power to mandate masks, are being followed. It was said that if that power is granted, Danvers would implement the mandate for all students, preK-12. Testing of symptomatic students/staff, looking at a test out program for close contact and no quarantining or testing for vaccinated students/staff of close contact will be implemented as well as a voluntary collection of vaccination cards. Proximity to distance for students while working safely in pods and while on the bus was mentioned.

The Town's Director of Public Health, Ade Solarin said cases are rising and the CDC considers Essex County to be a high area of risk. He said the Delta variant is very contagious and the State is allowing Town government to make the decision on a mask mandate at this point, noting the mandate would give time for those not vaccinated to do so. The Committee asked Mr. Solarin questions.

Representatives from the school's unions spoke with Kathleen Murphy from the DTA saying teachers polled were not unified on the mask mandate, while Cathy Johnson from the aides union said 60% of the aides would choose the mandate. Kathleen Spinale of the administrative assistants union appreciated being a part of the conversation and said the administrative assistants would be willing to do whatever is necessary.

The meeting was then opened to public comment.

Mr. Skarmear moved to table the vote on the mask mandate. Mrs. Campbell seconded the motion. Discussion took place on the reasons to table and the need to digest all the information given. Polling the parents and staff was brought forth. It was felt that having time to develop a plan and be transparent was a need. The Committee asked to poll the Community, have the school's medical expert attend the next meeting, have a plan for after October 1 and get further data on hospitalizations and breakthrough cases available for the next meeting. As voted

IV. INFORMATION FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

- A. Introduction of New Administrators - Dr. Dana asked Mr. Federico and Mr. Norton to introduce their new assistant principals, Kerry LeBlanc and Danielle LaRocque. They spoke on both Kerry and Danielle's experience and accolades. Ms. LaRocque thanked the Committee for the opportunity.
- B. Strategic Plan - Summer Programs / Opening of Schools - Mrs. Wermers spoke on the summer tutoring programs that ran for 6 weeks over the summer. She described the 1 week math acceleration academy attended by thirty one students and touched base on the reading and middle school tutoring sessions. Dr. Dana gave an overview of the 2021-2022 goals and priorities of creating a welcoming community for ALL, providing ongoing professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion, recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive workforce, conducting ongoing equity audits of policies, procedures and programs, including the history of racial oppression and works by authors of color and communicating about issues of racism and hate. A slide presentation on the 3 pillars of student engagement of Diversity, Equity and inclusion, Coherent, Curriculum, Instruction and assessment and Safe and Supportive Learning was presented as well as Portrait of a Graduate. Questions and comments followed.
- C. Facilities Update - Mr. Taverna was happy to announce the opening of Smith Elementary School for the 2021-22 school year. He said students' visits were scheduled for August 30th and the Community was welcome to visit on September 25th with the ribbon cutting. He mentioned the upcoming annual safety meeting and thanked the DPW for all their hard work over the summer to get the schools up and running for the opening.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. MASC Anti-Racism Resolution - Mr. Crane and Mr. Skarmeas spoke with the Community and teachers who stated they look at the resolution as a statement of things going on at this time. It was decided to make no changes to the resolution. Mrs. Campbell felt the resolution needs to be more inclusive. As voted
- B. The Superintendent recommended the approval/adoption of the proposed 2021-2022 Pre-K-12 Student/Parent Handbooks for a second reading. - As voted

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. 2021-2022 Pre- K-12 School Improvement Plans - The Superintendent recommended the approval of the proposed 2021-2022 K-12 School Improvement Plans for a 1st reading. The administration answered questions regarding positions, hiring and goals. As voted
- B. Annual vote of Student Activity Accounts -The Superintendent recommended the approval of the 2021-22 list of accounts and maximum balances. Mrs. Campbell asked for clarification regarding different avenues of funding. As voted

VII. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- A. Consent Agenda - motion to approve fundraising requests, June 14 and June 25, 2021 minutes, to approve and release the SY2020-2021 executive session minutes, homeschool requests, fundraising requests, budget report/donations and personnel memo. As voted
- B. Communications – NEC - Dr. Dana shared that September 8, 2021 would be the first NEC meeting.
- C. Legislation – Mr. Crane said there was nothing to share at this time.
- D. Subcommittee/Liaison Update - Mr. Skarmas gave an update on the members governing the subcommittees noting that Curriculum and Assessment would go to Mrs. Campbell and Dr. Doherty

DEEP – Mr. Skarmas noted the first meeting to be on September 15, 2021

DanversCARES – Mr. Kay shared that DanversCARES is without a Director for the time being but went on to share the importance of the programs DanversCARES provides.

SEPAC - Dr. Dana shared that Mrs. O’Neil is speaking with the co-chairs for this year’s plans..

Policy - Mr. Skarmas reported no subcommittee meetings took place

DHRIC - Mr. Crane said DHRIC is in the planning stages for programs for the upcoming year.

The next meeting will be held on September 13, 2021 at 6:00 p.m in the multipurpose room at HRMS to accommodate the COVID workshop.

Respectfully submitted,
Arthur Skarmas, Secretary
Danvers School Committee