

DANVERS SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
December 13, 2021

School Committee Members Present:

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

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

VOTED: Minutes – (The Secretary) moved to approve and release the minutes from the November 8, 2021 regular meeting. Mr. Kay seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Regular Meeting Call to Order

Mr. Crane called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance and the Danvers Public Schools Mission statement were recited. Mr. Crane inquired whether the meeting was being recorded by audience members, with an affirmative from Mark Zuberic, and announced that the meeting was being broadcast on DCAT.

II. ITEMS OF INTEREST

- A. Dr. Dana read a statement regarding the current issues facing the school and community stating all claims are taken very seriously. She explained the process of the previous investigation and actions taken thereafter. She said that even in these trying times the well being of the students remains to be her focus. Mrs. Campbell said she appreciates Dr. Dana's statement and encouraged her to keep communications open.
- B. Mr. Todd Butterworth spoke on concerns that the previously discussed book "Stamped (for kids)" has been paused. He summarized his emails sent to the School Committee and the administration. Mr. Crane apologized for the lack of response and said there would be detail given tonight on what to expect in the future regarding anti-racism/anti-discrimination work being done. The Committee continued conversation with Mr. Butterworth regarding his concerns.
- C. Audience member, Mark Smith shared information on the COVID vaccine that he researched on the internet. He then handed Dr. Dana print-outs.
- D. Audience member, Mark Zuberic gave his viewpoint on communication, the vaccine, the wearing of masks and Essex Tech enrollment.
- E. Audience member, Sandy Francini spoke on her feeling that parents should have the choice to

have their children wear masks or not wear masks.

III. INFORMATION FROM THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

New Student Representative Reese MacDonald was introduced and a brief summary of her educational career was given. Reese then shared updates on the anti-discrimination club, drama fest and PRISM.

IV. COVID STATISTICS AND NEXT STEPS

Mr. Taverna summarized the COVID mitigation strategies and thanked parents for keeping students home when they are not feeling well. He presented the past 5 weeks of statistics noting a rise in cases and told the Committee that the vaccination chart now includes ages 12 and older so this would show a lower vaccination rate as the participants have increased. Monitoring will continue.

V. INFORMATION FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

- A. Strategic Plan - Dr. Dana and Mrs. Wermers gave a presentation on the Strategic Plan - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Pillar. The District's priorities of creating an environment where all feel welcome, continued professional development, recruiting a diverse workforce, conducting ongoing equity audits, communicating about difficult issues and including a diverse curriculum from authors of color were shared. It was mentioned that the policy subcommittee would meet in January regarding this ongoing work. Mrs. Wermers spoke on the journey that is taking place showing data collection, work being done so all learners have a place, professional learning with BPS and infusing work by Zaretta Hammond. Work on relationship building, SEL and Equity is being done as well as attending training to become anti-racist educators. The next steps were summarized as continued work with all employees, working with the community and continued and open communication. Dr. Dana produced a "DPS Stakeholder Work for Anti-Bias and Anti - Racist Education" spreadsheet. She read the details regarding resources that would be utilized and actions to be taken to assist in the District's work which all centers around the students. It was announced that the Human Rights and Inclusion Committee would be meeting Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall. Funding for programs and professional development was discussed, which the School Committee supported. Mr. Federico and Mr. St. Pierre answered questions while student representative Reese MacDonald gave her opinion on the culture at DHS saying she feels the work being done is showing within the culture. Questions and discussion took place.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Equity and Curriculum Subcommittee - Dr. Dana took the opportunity to give an overview of the subcommittees and said they are creating the workshop model with school committee members and inviting parents to participate. She said that what the District has learned through the pandemic is that it is very structured in creating a schedule for the school year but that has had to be adjusted and flexibility is important. The work with anti-racist/anti-bias is similar in that it is viewed as a pandemic. The District monitors where they are in their work and would like the community with them as they move forward with anti racist/anti- bias work . Dr. Dana highlighted the subcommittees meetings noting their plan to work in all grade levels, creating a safe and supportive learning environment. Educators are reading the book "Start Here, Start Now". Community Learning Together will be a group of school committee members, administrators, community members with a goal of understanding the big idea of

anti-racism/anti-bias work and why it needs to start with our youngest learners. After brainstorming, the group will meet again in January. The Committee agreed and supported the opportunity to be part of this group. Discussion took place on the purpose of the workshop and the Collective WHY.

- B. Community Engagement** - Dr. Dana shared a slide and said that looking at the past month and the pandemic it was realized that community engagement and communication was something that needed to be worked on. She said this has a cost and wanted to share that with the Committee. Work has begun with consultant Karen Gross from Gloucester, who is a national consultant in the field of trauma and sports. It was noted that the Town would be hiring a Director of Diversity and Inclusion. She reminded all that this is a journey. Taking time to work with communication/community building consultants will be prioritized. Surveys for families and staff along with follow-up interviews will take place. This cost will cause funding in the budget to be switched within items and Dr. Dana asked for the Committee's support for that. The Committee agreed and supported this presentation expressing this is exactly what the community has been looking for.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A.** There was no unfinished business this meeting.
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VII. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- A. Consent Agenda** - motion to approve fundraising requests, homeschool requests, fundraising requests, November 2021 Budget Report/donations and personnel memo. As voted
- B. Minutes** - (The Secretary) moves to approve and release the minutes from the November 15, 2021 regular meeting. As voted
- C. Communications**

NEC - Dr. Dana presented the 2020-2021 annual report saying the Board of Directors approved the report. Looking at the enrollment Danvers is the 4th at the NEC.

Legislation – Discussion in terms of the impact of Essex Tech enrollment to the Town's budget. Mr. Crane will keep the Committee advised to any changes. He asked Mr. Federico to speak on his communication package to families regarding all the high school has to offer students. He also said Sally Kerans and Joan Lovely will attend January's meeting.

Subcommittee/Liaison Update - Subcommittee/Liaison chart remains on the agenda as a point of reference.

Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee -

Policy - Dr. Dana said work on policies will begin in January.

DEEP – Mr. Skarmeas said DEEP is going well and they will be meeting Wednesday, December 15, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. at Brookline Bank.

DanversCARES – Dr. Doherty said they discussed the campaign “Every Day Matters”, working to find the cause of children not attending school. The clothing and food drive are still active. They received a community grant and it will be used to see what the community needs.

SEPAC - Dr. Dana said there was no update.

DHRIC - Mr. Crane said last months meeting was about allowing people to open up about how they are feeling. The next meeting will take place this Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. at the Police Department.

The next meeting will be held on January 10, 2022 at 7:00 p.m in the Francis Mills Center, room E105 at DHS..

Respectfully submitted,
Arthur Skarmas, Secretary
Danvers School Committee