

Sudbury Public Schools (SPS)
School Committee Meeting Minutes
October 18, 2017, 6:00 PM
Fairbanks Community Center

Members Present:

Christine Hogan, Chair
Richard Tinsley, Vice Chair
Margaret Helon
Lisa Kouchakdjian
Lucie St. George

Also Present:

Don Sawyer, Director of Business and Finance
Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent of Schools
Kimberly Swain, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Audrey Swennes, SEA Representative

Call to Order

Chair Christine Hogan opened the session at 6:00 P.M.

1. FY19 Budget Planning

- Don Sawyer continued his review of the FY19 budget, and noted that tonight's discussion will focus on full time employees - information and salaries.
- Concerns with the forecast showing a 0% inflation increase in the forecast were raised, citing it may cause a false sense of security.
- Mr. Sawyer showed slides with historical data regarding the number of full time employees and broke down those staffing positions to include more detail.
- Mr. Sawyer noted that updating the Chart of Accounts would be a major endeavor, but should be done.
- The Committee agreed that although this budget review process has given a good idea of where things are, they would like more feedback and more information from administration and teachers to help determine where to invest, and where to save money.
- Superintendent Anne Wilson noted that when the Town Budget projection is received from the Town Manager we will know what the increase to the School budget will be and this will help the Committee.
- Mr. Sawyer noted that there are three open items: Facility/Maintenance, Out of District Tuition, and Transportation.
- Transportation is going to require an additional five buses to be added in FY19 to maintain the current service level.
- Richard Tinsley noted the Transportation budget should be a dedicated agenda item for the Committee to discuss why this budget item was off.

2. District Reports

a. SEA Report - Audrey Swennes

- Shared the community team building they have seen with K-8 students so far this year and said that students are engaging in activities to find commonalities with other students. Many students are writing poems to share a bit about themselves and their cultures.
- Middle School students are also working together on activities such as Friday Garage where they troubleshoot and work together to find solutions, adding that the student community feels strong.
- All staff will now be wearing “Students First” buttons, this is their mantra, and students will see the buttons and will know they come first.

b. Assistant Superintendent's Report - Assistant Superintendent Kim Swain

- MCAS results were released today. Families will receive results in late October or early November. A more in-depth look at the results will take place once the administration has a chance to review the data. Christine Hogan noted that she attended an MCAS legislative briefing at the State House where the new MCAS testing program was discussed. It was stated the new exam will be a more rigorous test with a tiered scoring method and therefore not comparable to previous years’ scores.
- Ms. Swain updated the Committee on the Learning for Teaching workshop. Kim Swain thanked the curriculum team and the 30+ educators who shared their expertise.

c. Superintendent's Report - Superintendent Anne Wilson

- Dr. Wilson thanked Town Meeting for approving Article 12 for Playground Modernization, a multi-year project to modernize all four elementary playgrounds; the funds approved at Town Meeting will be allocated to Haynes school and that planning will begin immediately. Dr. Wilson recommended a working group for the second phase, where she would like to include a School Committee Member. The working group would work with Jim and Don to review draft plans and solicit additional information to submit at the May Town Meeting. Christine Hogan said the Committee will put this on their next agenda.
- Sharon McDonald has announced her retirement at the end of this school year, she is happy to have had her as part of this administrative team, adding that she will be missed.
- Cleargov.com is up and running, this will allow us to compare any data from other school districts and should be helpful to the community.

3. School Committee Reports (Liaison/Subcommittee Reports)

Maggie Helon

- Discussed the SEPAC meeting she attended which was very informative.
- Noted the value of having Barbara Cataldo personally running the educational workshop for ESPAS (Educational Support Professionals Association), which included training the ESPAS on various challenges of student behavior.
- Noted that Curtis CPO has launched their only fundraiser, their Direct Appeal, and would like to see a higher percentage of families contributing.

Richard Tinsley

- Explained that while no funds have been approved for nor is there currently anything going on regarding relocation of the administrative offices, he would like this put on a future agenda to keep some momentum going on the discussion.
- Regarding communication with the Lincoln Public Schools Committee about SPSC's vote October 6 relying on LPS' positive affirmation to move forward with district organization options for the Town of Sudbury, there was discussion about what was communicated to LPS compared to what the vote of the Committee was. Mr. Tinsley shared he discussed the process he saw necessary while Christine Hogan stated that was not the vote of the Committee.

4. Odyssey 2019 Follow-Up

Dr. Wilson thanked students, staff and families who shared their thoughts on the new Odyssey program as well as the Odyssey Steering Committee for their work over the years in making Odyssey a very special trip, adding that all factors were considered. The majority of parents responding through email and Let's Talk supported keeping the program in place as is; while several spoke of inaccessibility and medical/safety concerns. Dr. Wilson discussed the cost, which is prohibitive to some. Dr. Wilson noted that the program is not voluntary and no longer aligns with our standards and therefore SPS will be moving forward with a revised Odyssey Program reflecting current curriculum standards without the overnight component. Dr. Wilson noted that we have partnered with Sudbury Park and Recreation to create a voluntary overnight camping experience for students.

Kayla McNamara, Director of Park and Recreation expressed her excitement to partner with SPS and make it a great experience for the students. Julie Harrington will be the contact person for parents who want to volunteer and be involved. Superintendent Wilson noted the overnight will not take place during school time.

Kim Swain discussed the revised Program which will engage 4th graders with a strong commitment to the LEAP program in a four-part learning sequence, and to reconvene the Odyssey working group. Lucie St. George is glad that they found a way to have a camping experience, it won't be the same but is a wonderful alternative.

Maggie Helon noted she is disappointed but understands the implications, she hopes that it has a basis of learning with team building, and will be educational and inspiring to the community. It needs to be done well and she would like to see a stronger presentation from Park and Recreation at an upcoming School Committee meeting.

Lisa Kouchakdjian would like to see the breakdown and have the information available so parents can see the cost and, as liaison to Park and Recreation, offered to bring questions and recommendations to the Park and Recreation Commission meeting.

Richard Tinsley noted there is much work to be done, this was a major effort and will free up resources within, and in the future this should be looked back upon.

Christine Hogan thanked all the staff for their efforts and noted she is glad to see there will be parent involvement going forward; she wishes there could have been parent involvement from the beginning so they could have been part of the decision-making process. She added she believes if parents and families had been included throughout the process she believes the outcome, whether the same or different, would have been received more positively.

5. Open Forum Protocol

Christine Hogan explained that she and Dr. Wilson met and spoke about Open Forum. In an effort to shorten the length of the meetings, removing the second Open Forum was discussed.

Lucie St. George made a motion that we conduct one open forum at the beginning of the meeting for 15 minutes and try that and see how it goes. Maggie Helon seconded the motion.

Vote: 4-1. Motion carries. (Lisa Kouchakdjian opposed)

6. Open Forum

Kathleen Bell, 348 Old Lancaster Road, said she appreciates the devotion and time the Committee and the administration have given towards the budget, it is great for the community; she also noted that a couple teachers in the school system gave early notice of retirement which is helpful for budget planning.

Sarah Liberman, 17 Hopestill Brown Road, asked about the change to the agenda and also noted she is disappointed with the decision regarding the Odyssey Program, particularly the elimination of the overnight component.

7. Legal Counsel

The Committee had previously agreed that each Member would come back with their two recommendations for labor counsel; Richard Tinsley's choices were Morgan Brown and Stoneman Chandler. Lisa Kouchakdjian said her first choice is Stoneman Chandler, second choice Morgan Brown. Maggie Helon chose Morgan Brown. Lucie St. George chose Morgan Brown and Stoneman Chandler. Christine Hogan said her number one choice was Deutsch Williams and stated in her work with them she has been impressed with their thorough and cautious guidance to the district. The Committee discussed all the attorneys Mr. Sawyer noted that Stoneman Chandler Miller came in a little stronger than Morgan Brown and Joy as far as their collective bargaining, but could work with either one. Kim Pratt agreed that those are her top two, adding that Stoneman, Chandler Miller did go above because of their extensive experience in special education law.

Lisa Kouchakdjian made a motion to we retain Stoneman Chandler as labor counsel. Lucie St. George seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

8. Playgrounds Update

Christine Hogan asked Mr. Sawyer to update the Committee on the progress regarding the Safety Report for the school playground equipment. Mr. Sawyer noted that some of the major components have been repaired on some of the equipment and they are formulating a plan. They do not want to put too much money into equipment that is going to be replaced, and some of the parts may be difficult to order due to the age of the equipment. There has also been additional repair calls for issues not specified in the Report. Christine Hogan nominated Maggie Helon to be the liaison for the Playground project for the Committee. Lucie St. George seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

9. Policy

a. Facility Use (First Reading)

Lisa Kouchakdjian read the first reading of the proposed Facility Use Policy.

The Committee will vote on November 6th, at which time it will go into effect.

10. Calendar Survey

The Committee discussed the survey. Richard Tinsley will make the edits to the survey that were agreed upon by the Committee; he will then send to Dr. Wilson.

11. Open Forum (Second Opportunity)

None.

12. Members' Forum

Lucie St. George

- Appreciates Christine Hogan making the Agenda more manageable and noted the difficulty of fitting everything in, therefore, she would like the Committee to take time at an upcoming meeting to list priorities as there will be many topics coming up and we should plan accordingly.

Maggie Helon

- Would like the Committee to work from a calendar template to be able to insert topics. Ms. Hogan noted the Committee received such a template with the known items at the beginning of the year.

Lisa Kouchakdjian

- Noted that there will be a SEPAC presentation on November 8th at Curtis Middle School Library, the speaker will be Dr. Karen Levine who will speak on anxiety and strategies to navigate in our world today. Lucie St. George added it was a packed room at Dr. Levine's last presentation. There will be another event in February with Amy Grange, no confirmed date yet.
- Congratulated Sharon MacDonald on her retirement.
- Noted the Odyssey Program change was a tough decision for Anne and her Committee, it was difficult for some staff too; she hopes as a Committee we can be forward thinking and know they will put forth a wonderful program.

Christine Hogan

- Noted the Tri-District Forum will be held Monday at 7:00 P.M.; Dr. William Smith will be the Moderator, it will be a wonderful evening.
- Attended the FinCom meeting last Tuesday.
- Attended the MCAS event at the State House as discussed earlier.
- Volunteered with family at the Spooktacular, and thanked the tremendous volunteers and Officer Hutchinson for their hard work and the PTO for putting it together and stated it appears to have been a financial success.

13. Minutes - Regular Session Minutes

9/18/17 Minutes

Lisa Kouchakdjian made a motion to approve the September 18, 2017 meeting minutes with the edit as discussed. Lucie St. George seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

10/2/2017 Minutes

Lisa Kouchakdjian made a motion to approve the October 2, 2017 meeting minutes as edited, Lucie St. George seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

14. Future Agenda Item Discussion

- Relocation of Administrative Office Space.
- School Year Calendar / Survey
- Transportation Issues
- Lisa Kouchakdjian would like to have additional time to discuss the legislative forum, and to determine a date.
- Special Education Council.

15. Executive Session

Christine Hogan made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss strategies with respect to negotiations with union and non-union personnel as to do so in open session may be detrimental to the negotiating position of the Committee and to review and approve Executive Session minutes, to not return to Open Session.

Vote: 5-0. Motion carries.

16. Adjournment

The Committee adjourned the regular session meeting at 10:05 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Laura Clifford