

GARDNER SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – March 8, 2021
Zoom Meeting (due to COVID-19 pandemic)

Members present on Zoom: Jennifer Pelavin, Vice Chairperson; Rachel Cormier, Secretary; James Abare, Anne Hurst, John LaFreniere, and Robert Swartz

Member absent: Mayor Michael Nicholson, Chairperson

School Personnel present on Zoom: Dr. Mark J. Pellegrino, Superintendent
Ms. Brenda Smith, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Catherine Goguen, Chief Academic Officer
Ms. Courtney Dunn, Grants, Communications & Compliance Mgr.
Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel
Ms. April Yu, Business Manager
Mrs. Rebecca McCaffrey, Gardner School Nurse Leader

Call to Order

Mrs. Pelavin, Vice Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The meeting opened with a roll call. The meeting was broadcast live on Channel 8, Gardner Gardner Educational Television station, Gardner YouTube, and recorded by Terri Hillman, Recording Secretary.

Mrs. Pelavin announced that this public meeting is being conducted “virtually” pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L.c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Gardner School Committee is being conducted via remote participation. All votes taken at this meeting will be by roll call.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. LaFreniere moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented:

- **Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of February 8, 2021 as recommended by the School Committee Chairperson.**
- **Approval of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:**
 - **Warrant #21-32 dated 02/04/21 in the amount of \$74,632.94**
 - **Warrant #21-33 dated 02/11/21 in the amount of \$135,084.84**
 - **Warrant #21-34 dated 02/18/21 in the amount of \$210,431.91**
 - **Warrant #21-35 dated 02/25/21 in the amount of \$349,633.22**
 - **Warrant #21-36 dated 03/04/21 in the amount of \$267,671.72**

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; and Swartz, yes.

Count – 5 yes.

Mrs. Pelavin abstained from voting.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

COVID-19 Ad Hoc Subcommittee

Mrs. Cormier said that the Covid-19 Ad Hoc Subcommittee met on March 4, 2019. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The new weekly dashboard developed by Mrs. McCaffrey, Nurse Leader, along with the graphs/charts that are usually presented were reviewed and discussed. The new dashboard is an easier way to disseminate information so that it is accessible to the entire community. The pool testing that has begun for both staff and students was discussed and it will be another layer of mitigation of risk.

Mrs. McCaffrey has secured vaccinations for all GPS staff members and it is planned to administer them on March 19 and April 16, 2021. Dr. Pellegrino recommended that the two Professional Development days that need to be accounted for be used for the vaccinations and it was voted to recommend this change to the full Committee for approval. (See Item #3257.)

Discussion took place about the new announcement by DESE Commissioner Riley regarding a return to full in-person learning. Dr. Pellegrino said that the district has already begun plans to get more students back into the buildings.

Facilities Subcommittee

Mr. Swartz, Chairperson, said that the Facilities Subcommittee met on February 23, 2021. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

Mr. Anderson, Facilities Director, and Ms. Yu, Business Administrator, gave an update on Moura's Cleaning Services. The Subcommittee expressed concerns regarding weekend staffing at GHS and GMS. Mr. Anderson will speak to Moura's regarding weekend staffing for the high school. A meeting with Moura's to discuss staffing levels when more students return to in-school learning will also be scheduled.

Mr. Anderson presented pictures of the new sign at the access entrance to the High School and Middle School. The GHS Class of 2019 paid for the signs. He also presented a picture of the new dump truck.

School Dude software has been purchased to track facility maintenance projects. Mr. Anderson presented a facilities project list.

Finance Subcommittee

Mr. LaFreniere, Chairperson, said that the Subcommittee met on March 1, 2021. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The Subcommittee reviewed the Finance packet for February 2021. Ms. Yu will follow up with requests for information on E-rate reimbursement for FY 21, a financial analysis on snow removal, and the deficit on circuit breaker.

Ms. Yu gave an update on Transportation and Food Services. There are constant changes on Transportation and she has been working closely with NRT to resolve all the issues. The Food Services staff are working hard to boost participation in the breakfast and lunch programs and will continue the High School food pick up and van delivery services.

The Subcommittee accepted the request of Mr. Earl Martin, Waterford Street School Principal, not to increase the Pre-K tuition for FY22. A recommendation will be sent to the full Committee for a tuition rate of \$220/month for a full day, and \$110/month for a half day. (See Item #3263.)

Dr. Pellegrino and Ms. Yu presented the FY22 level services budget and it will be presented to the full Committee at the March meeting. There is a budget gap and the ESSER 2 Federal Grant will be used to close the gap.

Policy Subcommittee

Mrs. Hurst, Chairperson, said the the Policy Subcommittee met on February 25, 2021. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

Policies were approved for a first reading and are listed on the Agenda – Item #3251 – First Reading of Policies.

Policy CEBB – Superintendent's Evaluation Timeline – was reviewed and it was determined that no changes were required. It will be updated as “Reviewed February 2021”.

Three policies were approved for removal and are listed under Item #3253.

NEW BUSINESS

Item #3251 – First Reading of Policies

Mrs. Hurst presented the following policies for a first reading as approved by the Policy Subcommittee:

- GBEB – Staff Conduct
- JJD Athletic Policy

Item #3252 - Second Reading of Policies

Mrs. Cormier moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the following policies for a second reading as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:

Subcommittee:

- BDEE Athletic Council
- BDE Subcommittees of the School Committee
- BEDB Agenda
- BE School Committee Meetings
- CM School District Annual Report
- EBCD Emergency Closings
- JICFB Bullying
- JL Student Welfare
- JLCA-E Position Description – School Physician

Seconded by Mr. Abare.

Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; and Swartz, yes. Count – 5 yes.

Mrs. Pelavin abstained from voting.

Item #3253 – Removal of Policies

Mrs. Cormier moved that the District School Committee vote to remove the following policies from the Policy Manual as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:

Subcommittee:

- BEA – Regular Meetings
- BEB – Special Meetings

(language from each of the above policies was incorporated into Policy BE – School Committee Meetings)

- CEBC – Superintendent's Summative Evaluation Form (no longer applicable to the statutory requirements for Superintendent evaluations)

Seconded by Mr. Abare,

Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; and Swartz, yes. Count – 5 yes.

Mrs. Pelavin abstained from voting.

Item #3254– COVID Tracking Update

The charts prepared by Mrs. Rebecca McCaffrey, Gardner School Nurse Leader, showing the Gardner Public Schools Staff Data, Gardner Public Schools Student Data, Gardner Community Data, and Massachusetts State Data as of 2/25/2021 were presented. Information on pool testing was also presented.

Item #3255 – Vaccine Update

Dr. Pellegrino thanked Heywood Hospital for setting up the vaccination clinics and he thanked all the Gardner School Staff and the School Nurses for volunteering at the clinics. Staff have put in over 264 volunteer hours and Mrs. McCaffrey, School Nurse Leader, has worked with Heywood and Community Health Center organizing the vaccinations.

Item #3256 – Update on Hybrid vs Remote Attendance

Dr. Pellegrino presented a chart updating attendance by classes of full remote (1012 students) and hybrid learning (1220 students) as of February 26, 2021.

Item #3257 – School Calendar Changes

Mrs. Hurst moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the following changes to the 2020-2021 School Calendar:

Friday, March 19, 2021 - All-Day Professional Development Day

Friday April 16, 2021 - All-Day Professional Development Day

These days will be used for teachers to receive the Covid-19 vaccinations.

Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere.

Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; and Swartz, yes.

Count – 6 yes.

Mrs. Pelavin voted yes.

Item #3258 – Gardner High School Program of Studies 2021-2022

Mr. Swartz moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the Gardner High School Program of Studies 2021-2022, as presented.

Seconded by Mr. Abare.

Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; and Swartz, yes.

Count – 5 yes.

Mrs. Pelavin abstained from voting.

Item #3259 – Addressing Learning Lag

Dr. Pellegrino gave an update on testing and tracking students to ascertain where they are in learning since they have been on a different schedule due to Covid. As they return to the classrooms full time, staff “will meet the children where they are”. To date, reading scores are very good.

Item #3260 – 2021-2022 Level Service Budget

Dr. Pellegrino presented information on the Level Service Budget for 2021-2022. He explained about changing demographics in the district and that students need more support each year. There are increased services and therefore increased costs. There are two goals 1) keep high-flying students in the district; and 2) keep struggling students in the district.

At this time, there is a budget gap of \$1.6 million. Funds from the ESSER 2 Grant will be used to partially fund this gap. Additional positions which are needed for the school system were explained, as well as Budget restorations, additions, and reductions.

Item #3261 – Keystone Educational Collaborative

Mr. Swartz moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the Agreement of Keystone Educational Collaborative as revised July 2021 to include Narragansett Regional School District in the agreement.

Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.

Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; and Swartz, yes.

Count – 5 yes.

Mrs. Pelavin abstained from voting.

Item #3262 – DESE Regulation Change Regarding Model of Instruction

Dr. Pellegrino reported on the plans to comply with DESE Commissioner Riley's ruling to have elementary students return to school for classroom learning five days a week by April 5, 2021. Students will need at least five hours of in-person instruction per day through the end of the school year. Parents can still opt to keep their children in a fully remote learning model but there will be no hybrid model. He will make an official announcement on March 15 as to the start date for in-person instruction for students.

Item #3263 – Pre-School Tuition Rates

Mr. LaFreniere moved that the District School Committee vote to approve Pre-K Tuition rates as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee, as follows:

- **\$220 per month for full day**
- **\$110 per month for half day**

Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; and Swartz, yes.

Count – 6 yes.

Mrs. Pelavin voted yes.

Item #3264 - Curriculum Coordinator's Update

The Curriculum Coordinator's Update was included in the member's packet. Dr. Goguen was present on Zoom to answer questions.

Item #3265 – Special Education Update

The Special Education Update was included in the member's packet. Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel, was present on Zoom to answer questions.

Item #3266 – Grants Administrator's Update

The Grants, Communications & Compliance Update was included in the member's packet. Ms. Courtney Dunn, Grants, Communications & Compliance Manager, was present on Zoom to answer questions.

Item #3267– MSBA – New Building Project

Dr. Pellegrino recently visited the site for the new school building. Progress is being made on the site work.

COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Pellegrino said that there will be a Racial Justice Program on Thursday at 6:30 pm.

FINAL COMMENTS

Mr. Abare thanked Dr. Pellegrino for the update on the Covid vaccinations.

Mr. LaFreniere noted that it was a productive and good meeting tonight.

Mr. Swartz is happy that teachers and staff will be receiving their vaccinations. He thanked Mrs. McCaffrey, all the School Nurses, and Staff for all their work helping with vaccination clinics.

Mrs. Cormier said everyone is a little more optimistic about the cure of the virus but we still have to do all we can to keep safe.

Mrs. Hurst said it is still really important to practice protocols - wearing masks, keeping social distance, hand washing, etc.

Mrs. Pelavin is looking forward to getting students back into school for in-person learning. She thanked all the Staff for their extra work.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. LaFreniere moved to adjourn.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

All members in favor - roll call not required for adjournment.

Mrs. Pelavin abstained from voting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.