

**GARDNER SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Regular Meeting – April 12, 2021**  
**Zoom Meeting (due to COVID-19 pandemic)**

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

School Personnel present on Zoom: Dr. Mark J. Pellegrino, Superintendent  
Ms. Brenda Smith, Administrative Assistant  
Dr. Catherine Goguen, Chief Academic Officer and Interim Business Administrator  
Ms. Courtney Dunn, Grants, Communications & Compliance Mgr.  
Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel

**Call to Order**

Mayor Nicholson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:03 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.

Mayor Nicholson 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.

**RECOGNITION**

Ms. Ann Marie Ouellet, a teacher at Elm Street School, presented a lesson plan to her third grade Reading Class “What will become of Elm Street School in 2022?” Five students were selected to read their responses to the Mayor and School Committee this evening. They were: Chelsea Egeland, Emma Pelavin, Alivia Kaiser, William Saner, and Christopher Domingues. They did an excellent job.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

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

- **Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of March 8, 2021 as recommended by the School Committee Chairperson.**
- **Approval of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:**
  - **Warrant #21-37 dated 03/11/21 in the amount of \$104,465.87**
  - **Warrant #21-38 dated 03/18/21 in the amount of \$261,200.17**
  - **Warrant #21-39 dated 03/25/21 in the amount of \$122,314.58**
  - **Warrant #21-40 dated 04/01/21 in the amount of \$46,066.18**

- **Acceptance of the following donations totaling \$9,438.10 as approved by the Finance Subcommittee:**
  - **Community Foundation of North Central MA**           **\$3,388.00**
  - **Community Foundation of North Central MA**           **\$3,419.00**
  - **Hope Lodge A.F. & A.M.**                                   **\$2,356.10**
  - **Anthony' Liquor Mart**                                   **\$25.00**
  - **Happy Trails Natural Foods**                           **\$25.00**
  - **Dow Shoe Store**   **\$25.00**
  - **The Velvet Goose**                                       **\$100.00**
  - **John's Sport Shop**                                       **\$100.00**

**Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere.**

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

**Count – 6 yes.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Facilities Subcommittee**

Mr. Swartz, Chairperson, said that the Facilities Subcommittee met on March 16, 2021. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

Mr. Anderson, Facilities Director, and his staff are working to prepare all schools for full opening on April 5, 2021. Desks and chairs have been provided in all the lower elementary classes as they needed to be switched from tables to individual desks and chairs.

Mr. Moura, Moura's Cleaning Service, has provided an update on their staff levels. The service has helped with cleaning of the small gym and cleaned all heating coils in all schools in preparation for schools opening full time.

Mr. Anderson presented an updated facilities projects list which was discussed by the Subcommittee members.

**Finance Subcommittee**

Mr. LaFreniere, Chairperson, said that the Finance Subcommittee met on March 29, 2021 and April 5, 2021. Minutes of the meetings were presented.

At the March 29<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Subcommittee reviewed and discussed FY 22 budgets presented by all the schools and departments. Many Principals and Directors were present to answer questions.

At the March 29<sup>th</sup> meeting the Subcommittee members reviewed and discussed the Finance packet for the month of March. Dr. Goguen, Interim Business Administrator, responded to inquiries previously made by the Subcommittee as follows:

- The E-rate reimbursement will be \$48,717.74 for the 2020-2021 school year. She will report at the May meeting if this will result in a surplus or deficit.
- A surplus of approximately \$30,000 is projected for snow removal.
- There will be a savings for Regular Education Transportation. She will present the estimated savings at the May meeting.
- The deficit on the circuit breaker reflected on the Special Education expense report is in error and will be corrected on the May expense report.

Dr. Goguen stated that an analysis of gas expenses projects a deficit in the budget line item. Recommendations for addressing this shortage will be presented at the May meeting.

The Subcommittee accepted donations and they are listed in Consent Agenda (B.f.).

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Item #3268 – Second Reading of Policies**

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

- **GBEB – Staff Conduct**
- **JJD - Athletic Policy**

**Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

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

**Count – 6 yes.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Item #3269– COVID Data Dashboard Updates**

Dr. Pellegrino presented the COVID-19 Weekly Dashboard as of April 12, 2021 for the State, the Gardner Community and the Gardner Public Schools. Five students have tested positive but no students or staff have tested positive after exposure.

**Item #3270 – Vaccine Update**

Dr. Pellegrino said that the vaccination clinics are doing a good job and that all school staff should be vaccinated by May 1, 2021. Mrs. McCaffrey, Nurse Leader, and all the school nurses are doing all they can to keep people safe. Mayor Nicholson thanked everyone who has helped in the City-wide vaccinations.

**Item #3271 – Return to In-Person Learning K-8/9-12**

Return to in-person learning began on April 5 for the elementary grades and the high school should resume on April 26, 2021. The transition has gone well and all protocols are being followed.

**Item #3272 – MCAS**

Dr. Pellegrino has received notice that the MCAS is still scheduled. Teachers and Staff are working out details.

**Item #3273 – Appointment of Director of Finance and Operations**

Mr. LaFreniere moved to confirm the appointment of Mark Hawke as Director of Finance and Operations for the Gardner Public Schools effective June 7, 2021.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; Pelavin, yes, and Swartz, yes. Count – 6 yes.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

**Item #3274 – Gardner Middle School Roof Statement of Interest**

Mr. Swartz moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the following Statement of Interest for roof repairs for the Gardner Middle School:

**VOTE**

To authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority a Statement of Interest dated May 14, 2021 for Gardner Middle School, located at 297 Catherine Street, Gardner, MA 01440, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(ies) for which Gardner Public Schools may be invited to apply to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future:

▪ **Priority Category:**

Priority #5 – Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility;

o **Descriptions of Deficiencies:**

**The Gardner Middle School opened in 1997. The roof is original to the building and has been maintained as leaks have occurred, however new leaks continue to occur at an increased pace, recently above the library and computer lab, and three assessments by different outside companies in the past three years have recommended repair or replacement;**

**The Gardner City Council hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this statement of interest, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant, or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority or commits the Gardner Public Schools to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.**

**Seconded by Mrs. Pelavin.**

**Roll Call Vote – Abare, yes; Cormier, yes; Hurst, yes; LaFreniere, yes; Pelavin, yes, and Swartz, yes. Count – 6 yes.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Item #3275 – Curriculum Coordinator Update**

The Curriculum Coordinator Update was included in the member's packet. Dr. Goguen, Chief Academic Officer and Interim Business Manager, was present on Zoom to answer questions.

**Item #3276 – 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 #3277 – 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 #3278– MSBA – New Building Project**

Dr. Pellegrino reported that it is exciting to see the progress being made on the site for the new school building.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Dr. Pellegrino appreciated the presentation by Ms. Ouellet and her students this evening and is thrilled to have Mark Hawke taking the position of Director of Finance and Operations.

**FINAL COMMENTS**

Mr. Abare gave a shout out to the GHS Football team for an exciting win and a successful season. He congratulated Mark Hawke.

Mrs. Pelavin thanked Ms. Ouellet for tonight's presentation and thanked all the staff for helping get the kids back to in-person learning five days per week.

Mr. Swartz said the presentation by the students this evening was fantastic and he would like to see other student presentations.

Mr. LaFreniere thanked the students - it was impressive.

Mrs. Cormier thanked the students who presented this evening - it was the highlight of her day. She hopes there will be more of this in the future. She welcomed Mark Hawke.

Mrs. Hurst thanked Ms. Ouellet - nice to see students getting involved in their community.

Mayor Nicholson thanked the third graders for their ideas on the future use of Elm Street School. He thanked everyone who helped get ready for the return to school – teachers, staff, Wayne Anderson and team and the students. He welcomed Mark Hawke to his new position.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Swartz moved to adjourn.**

**Seconded by Mrs. Pelavin.**

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

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

**Terri Hillman, Recording Secretary**

  
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**Rachel A. Cormier, Secretary**