

Gardner School Committee

City Council Chambers, 95 Pleasant Street, Gardner, Massachusetts

Regular Meeting – May 8, 2023

Members present: Mayor Michael Nicholson, Chairperson
Jennifer Pelavin, Vice Chairperson
Rachel Cormier, Secretary
John LaFreniere, Finance Officer
Anne Hurst
Shannon Leighton
Robert Swartz

School Personnel Present: Dr. Mark Pellegrino, Superintendent
Terri Hillman, Recording Secretary
Dr. Catherine Goguen, Chief Academic Officer
Mark Hawke, Director of Finance and Operations
Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel
Lori Simpson, Ed.D., ELL Coordinator

Call to Order

Mayor Michael Nicholson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. The meeting opened with a roll call and the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was broadcast live on Channel 8 (Gardner Educational Television Station).

Open Time for the General Public

No one from the General Public was present.

Recognitions by the Superintendent

Dr. Pellegrino welcomed the GHS Cheerleading Team. The team won the National Competition in Florida. He commented that they are the “winningest team in GHS history”.

Ms. Jill Markley, GHS Varsity Cheer Coach, introduced five of the cheerleaders who were present. Two members of the team could not be present this evening. She thanked the School Committee for inviting the girls tonight and spoke of their hard work not only in cheering but in classroom work and other aspects of their lives. In addition to first place, they also received the Judges’ Choice Award.

PUBLIC HEARING – FY2024 SCHOOL BUDGET

Mayor Nicholson, Chairperson, opened the Public Hearing on the proposed FY2024 School Budget in accordance with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38N at 6:35 p.m.

Dr. Pellegrino presented the FY 2024 Level Services Budget for the Gardner Public Schools.

- The Changing Demographics of Gardner students shows that 70% are students with High Needs.
- There is a significant increase in Out of District Costs for students with a need for Special Education and this has impacted the budget significantly. All efforts are made to keep these students in Gardner and to meet their needs.
- The expense of students leaving the District by School Choice has decreased. Gardner continues to make sure all students' needs are being met. There has been a slight increase in funds from incoming School Choice students.
- The Student Opportunity Act meetings held identified student populations that have the largest gaps as compared to all students. Strategies to close the gaps and funding have been provided.
- Preparation for the FY 2024 Budget began with Principals and Directors and continued with meetings up to the Superintendent and Business Manager. Through the process, the best budget to support all the Gardner students was developed.
- A balanced budget was presented and for the first time ever there is no deficit. There is a zero gap.
- Budget restorations, additions and reductions were focused on students with Special Needs which are the most vulnerable population. The needs of all students are being met in this budget.
- Salary and expense items were presented.
- Net School Spending (NSS) was explained and the costs that do not apply.

After the presentation, Mayor Nicholson asked three times if anyone from the general public had any questions on the FY 2024 Level Services Budget. There was no one from the general public present at the meeting.

Mrs. Pelavin moved that the Public Hearing on the FY 2024 Level Services Budget be closed.

Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere. [OBJ]

Vote – Unanimous.

Mayor Nicholson declared the Public Hearing closed at 7:01 pm.

FY 2024 SCHOOL BUDGET

Mrs. Leighton moved that the Gardner School Committee vote to approve the FY 2024 School Budget as presented in the amount of \$31,316,678.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Roll Call Vote - Mrs. Cormier, yes; Mrs. Hurst, yes; Mr. LaFreniere, yes;

Mrs. Leighton, yes; Mrs. Pelavin, yes; Mr. Swartz, yes and Mayor Nicholson, yes.

Count – 7 in favor.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of April 10, 2023
- Approval of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:
 - Warrant #23-39 dated 03/30/23 in the amount of \$188,414.61
 - Warrant #23-40 dated 04/06/23 in the amount of \$661,138.39
 - Warrant #23-42 dated 04/20/23 in the amount of \$490,616.82
 - Warrant #23-43 dated 04/27/23 in the amount of \$391,275.31
 - Warrant #23-44 dated 05/04/23 in the amount of \$266,647.44

Seconded by Mr. Swartz. [OBJ]

Vote – so voted.

Mayor Nicholson, Chairperson, abstained from voting.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities Subcommittee

Mr. Swartz, Chairperson of the Facilities Subcommittee, reported that the Subcommittee met on April 13, 2023. The meeting took place in Elm Street School and the minutes of the meeting were presented.

Proposed of the use of the school space was viewed.

- The first floor is home of GALT.
- Boys and Girls Club meet in the cafeteria space.
- Space will be provided for the District Lead Nurse and for Student Services.
- The second floor is the designated location for Central Office.

The Subcommittee voted to recommend to the full Committee that old athletic mats at GHS be declared surplus as recommended by Mr. Hawke, Business Manager. (See Item #3517.)

Finance Subcommittee

Mr. LaFreniere, Chairperson of the Finance Subcommittee, reported that the Subcommittee met on May 2, 2023. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The Subcommittee reviewed the Expense Report. The negatives sublines were reviewed and will be adjusted at year end.

Mr. Hawke reported that the Watkins Field concession/restroom work is almost complete. The Varsity Softball and Baseball field dugouts are being installed.

Discussion about declaring HMS along with the land around the Big Chair, Stone Field and the playground behind ESS took place. A map depicting all this land will be presented to the Facilities/Finance Subcommittees in June.

Student Advisory Board

Amber Cameron, Student Representative, was not present this evening.

NEW BUSINESS

Item #3516 – Second Reading of Policies

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

- BGD School Committee Review of Procedures
- CFA School Building Administrative Coverage
- CHCA Approval of Handbooks and Directives
- DJE Procurement Requirements

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Vote – So voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Item #3517 – Surplus of Mats at GHS

Mr. LaFreniere moved that the Gardner Public School Committee vote to declare certain old high jump and pole vault mats at GHS as surplus as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.

Seconded by Mrs. Pelavin.

Vote – So voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Item #3518 – Appointment to Keystone & CAPS Collaborative

Mrs. Pelavin moved that the Gardner Public School Committee vote to approve the appointment of Dr. Mark Pellegrino, Superintendent, to represent the Gardner School District on the Keystone Educational Board of Directors.

Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.

Vote – So voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Mrs. Pelavin moved that the Gardner Public School Committee vote to approve the appointment of Dr. Mark Pellegrino, Superintendent, to represent the Gardner School District on the CAPS Collaborative Board of Directors.

Seconded by Mrs. Leighton. ^[OBJ]

Vote – So voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Item #3519 – Kindergarten Registration Update 2023-2024

Dr. Pellegrino said that three full days and one evening registration dates for Kindergarten were held. As of today, May 8, 2023, 143 children have been registered.

Item #3520 – ELL Coordinator

Lori Simpson, Ed.D. ELL Coordinator, presented an update on the English Language Learners. The Ell Department is trying to get parents to participate in ELPAC. An end of the year celebration is being planned and a family event in August.

- ACCESS Assessments for 2023 will be released on May 12 and teachers will mail the updated score reports to parents/guardians.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) program evaluation and services site visit took place in April. A report has not been received but the department is beginning to address the anticipated findings.
- Professional development will be provided to all interested GPS teachers in August. It will focus on strategies that can be used to support Ell students in all classrooms.

Item #3521 – Curriculum Coordinator Update

The Chief Academic Officer's report was included in the members' packets. Dr. Goguen was present this evening.

Item #3522 - Grants Administrator Update

The Grants Administrator's report was included in the members' packets. Ms. Courteny Dunn, Grants, Communications & Compliance Manager, was not present this evening.

Item #3523 – Special Education Update

Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, presented the monthly department update via a PowerPoint. A copy of the slides was included in members' packets. A Tiered Focus Monitoring (TFM) Review was conducted in April 2023 by the DESE. Ms. West explained the process. This review occurs every three years. The focus areas were student identification, IEP development, programming and support services, and equal opportunity. Gardner is now a Tier 1.

An exit Debrief/Feedback was held with the Superintendent and Director. DESE gave an overall general funding but still needs to be discussed with DESE Department Supervisors. No pattern of non-compliance in any area was noted.

Item #3524– SEPAC Report

SEPAC hosted a presentation through the Federation for Children with Special Needs on "Bullying: What Parents Need to Know". There were 26 attendees comprised of parents, educators, and community members.

Item #3525 – MSBA – New School Building

Dr. Pellegrino said that everything is going well at GES. The ribbon cutting is scheduled for June and a time capsule will be filled at the ceremony.

COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Pellegrino said this is Teacher Appreciation Week and he thanked them for their hard work. He was thrilled to have the cheerleaders at tonight's meeting. He thanked Lori Simpson for a great presentation.

FINAL COMMENTS

Mrs. Leighton thanked the school educators and is impressed with the communications from teachers. The GES PTO has a lot of activities planned and they have a lot of great ideas.

Mrs. Hurst congratulated the cheerleaders on their win and award. Tonight's presentations were spot on and interesting. She thanked all the teachers.

Mrs. Pelavin congratulated the cheerleaders and thanked all the teachers. There are many events coming up in the schools – concerts, proms, etc. - and she hopes people will attend.

Mr. Swartz thanked all educators in the district for their work.

Mr. LaFreniere congratulated the cheerleaders and thanked the teachers. Tonight's presentations were great.

Mrs. Cormier thanked Ms. Simpson and Ms. West for tonight's presentations. She spoke about the upcoming Theme Basket Extravaganza.

Mayor Nicholson said that FY 2024 School Budget will be submitted to the City Council for review and action. He gave a Shout Out to all the students who will be graduating

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. LaFreniere moved to adjourn.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Vote – so voted.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

**Rachel Cormier
Secretary**