

Gardner School Committee

City Council Chambers, 95 Pleasant Street, Gardner, Massachusetts

Regular Meeting – September 11, 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 & Operations
Melissa Paine, College & Caree Readiness Program Coordinator
Lori Simpson, Ed.D., Director of Multilingual Learner Education

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. A Moment of Silence was held for the victims of 9/11.

The meeting was broadcast live on Channel 8 (Gardner Educational Television Station).

Open Time for the General Public

No one from the General Public requested to speak.

Recognitions by the Superintendent

Dr. Pellegrino recognized the following staff members who stepped up to teach Gardner High School Biology classes - Melissa Bennett, Sherry Gelinias, Becky McCaffrey, Tine Russak, Carlos Silva, and Arvid Tenney.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of June 12, 2023, as recommended by the Chair.
- Accept Grant Funds on Grant listing dated September 11, 2023, in the amount of \$2,377,335.00.
- Approval of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:
 - Warrant #23-49 dated 06/08/23 in the amount of \$259,595.75
 - Warrant #23-51 dated 06/22/23 in the amount of \$449,472.52
 - Warrant #23-52 dated 06/29/23 in the amount of \$396,443.07
 - Warrant #23-53 dated 06/30/23 in the amount of \$768,817.22
 - Warrant #23-54 dated 06/30/23 in the amount of \$76,416.60
 - Warrant #24-04 dated 07/27/24 in the amount of \$24,167.71
 - Warrant #24-06 dated 08/10/24 in the amount of \$670,956.61
 - Warrant #24-07 dated 08/17/24 in the amount of \$56,012.88
 - Warrant #24-08 dated 08/24/24 in the amount of \$242,853.61
 - Warrant #24-09 dated 08/31/24 in the amount of \$616,218.36

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

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 June 8, 2023. The meeting took place in Gardner Elementary School and the minutes of the meeting were presented.

- The new concession stand and restroom facility were being used during the GHS graduation.
- The Maintenance Department now has the necessary equipment to maintain the turf at Watkins Field.

The Subcommittee voted to recommend to the full Committee that the Helen Mae Sauter Building and surrounding property, including Stone Field and the playground area behind Elm Street School, be declared surplus as recommended by Mr. Hawke, Director of Finance and Operations.

Finance Subcommittee

Mr. LaFreniere, Chairperson of the Finance Subcommittee, reported that the Subcommittee met on June 8, 2023. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The Finance Subcommittee reviewed the Expense Report. Mr. Hawke noted that the process to close unused PO's and transfer funds within budgets to cover any negative balances has started. He presented the current status of all Revolving Funds, which are healthy and should end the year with positive balances.

The Subcommittee voted to accept the donation of two benches for the Gardner Elementary School from the Gardner High School Class of 1970.

Policy Subcommittee

Mrs. Hurst, Chairperson of the Policy Subcommittee, reported that the Subcommittee met on June 22, 2023. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The following policies were reviewed and determined that no changes were required and they will be updated as "Reviewed June 2023":

- EBCD Emergency Closings
- EBCFA Face Coverings
- ECABA Staff and Visitor Identification

Policies for a first reading were approved (see Item #3535), and policies for removal were approved (see Item 3536).

NEW BUSINESS

Item #3535 - First Reading of Policies

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

- KCD Public Gifts to the Schools
- DIE Audits
- EB Safety Program
- EBAB Pest Management
- EBB First Aid
- EBC Emergency Plans
- ECA Building and Grounds Security

Item #3536 – Removal of Policies

Mrs. Hurst moved that the Gardner Public School Committee vote to approve the removal of the following policies as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee. The MASC has found these policies to be redundant or unnecessary and should be removed from our Policy Manual

- DE **Private Funding**
- EA **Support Services Goals and Objectives**
- EBCE **School Closings and Cancellations**

Seconded by Mrs. Leighton.

Vote – So voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Item #3537 – School Calendar Update 2023-2024

Mr. LaFreniere moved that the Gardner Public School Committee vote to accept the Gardner Public School District 2023-2024 School Calendar (updated on September 11, 2023) as presented.

Seconded by Mrs. Leighton.

Vote – so voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Item #3538 – Donation of Two Benches to Gardner Elementary School

Mr. LaFreniere moved that the Gardner Public School Committee vote to accept the donation from the GHS Class of 1970 of two benches to Gardner Elementary School as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Vote – so voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Item #3539 – Donation of 100 Backpacks with School Supplies

Mr. LaFreniere moved that the Gardner Public School Committee vote to accept the donation of 100 backpacks with school supplies from Seaman Paper Co. With thanks.

Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.

Vote – so voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Item #3540 – MASC Delegate

Mrs. Pelavin moved to appoint Robert Swartz to represent the Gardner Public School Committee at the MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) at the November 2023 meeting.

Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.

Vote – so voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Item #3541 – Superintendent's Goals

Dr. Pellegrino presented the Superintendent Goals for FY24. He reviewed the plans for District Improvement, Student Learning, and Professional Practice.

Item #3542 – District Improvement Plan

Dr. Goguen presented the District Improvement Plan for 2021-2024. It is a three-year plan, and she presented the Objectives and the Outcomes expected by 2024. She also presented an Implementation Timeline which is ongoing. An update will be provided in June.

Item 3543 – College & Career Readiness Coordinator

Melissa Paine, College & Career Readiness Program Coordinator, provided information on the Early College Programs. Information on the Intro to Auto Technology and dual credit courses was also reported. A copy of her report was provided to the Committee members.

Item #3544 – Curriculum Coordinator Update The Chief Academic Officer's report was included in the members' packets. Dr. Goguen was present this evening.

Item #3545 – ELL Coordinator Update

The English Language Learners Update Report was included in the members' packets. Lori Simpson, Ed.D., Director of Multilingual Learner Education, was present this evening.

Item #3546 - Grants Administrator Update

The Grants & Communications Update Report was included in the members' packets. Mrs. Courtney Dunn, Grants & Communications Manager, was not present this evening.

Item #3547 – Special Education Update

The Special Education Update Report was included in the members' packets. Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, was not present this evening.

Item #3548– SEPAC Report

Mrs. Hurst said there was no SEPAC report this evening.

Item #3549 -MSBA – New School Building

Dr. Pellegrino reported that the building looks great. Still on time and on budget.

COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Pellegrino reported that the opening of school went very smoothly. He appreciates everyone's hard work to ensure this. Sports have started and the GHS Football had an impressive win over Quabbin – 30-0. He thanked Dr. Simpson for her help with the refugees who have recently been located in Gardner.

FINAL COMMENTS

Mrs. Leighton welcomed everyone back for another year. It is a positive start.

Mrs. Hurst welcomed everyone back. The reports and presentations this evening were inspiring. She said that September is Suicide Prevention Month and spoke on the subject.

Mrs. Pelavin welcomed everyone back. All supports are in place for the students.

Mr. Swartz commented on the many improvements in the school system. He appreciates all the reports from staff and administration.

Mr. LaFreniere welcomed everyone back and thanked everyone who helped to prepare for a smooth opening.

Mrs. Cormier said it is great to have everyone back. She attended some of the games and is looking forward to the City's 100th Celebration Parade.

Mayor Nicholson is looking forward to a great school year and welcomed everyone back. He is proud of how much Gardner provides for our students and the record number of things done. He spoke about the 100th Celebration Parade and the UMass and GHS bands performing after the parade.

Executive Session

Mr. LaFreniere moved to go into Executive Session under M.G.L., Chapter 30A, s21(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body. The School Committee will reconvene in open session only to adjourn.

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.

Count – 6 yes; 1 abstention. Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

The School Committee went into Executive Session at 7:40 PM.

The School Committee reconvened in Open Session at 7:48 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Pelavin moved to adjourn.

Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

Vote – so voted.

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 pm.

**Rachel Cormier
Secretary**

Terri Hillman, Recording Secretary