

**GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES: Wednesday, June 10, 2020
Greenfield MA**

Note: This meeting was held fully remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, §20.

Present: Katie Caron (KC); Susan Eckstrom (SE); Jordana Harper (JH); Susan Hollins (SH) (not present); Glenn Johnson (GJ); Amy Proietti (AP); Jean Wall (JW); Roxann Wedegartner (RW)

Absent: none

I. Call to Order

With a quorum present (KC, SE, GJ, AP, JW, RW), Chair Proietti opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

II. Approval of Draft Minutes:

KC moved to approve minutes of May 13, 2020. GJ 2nd. Roll call vote: Yes – KC, SE, GJ, AP, JW; Abstain – RW. Motion passed 5-0-1.

SE moved to approve minutes of May 26, 2020. GJ 2nd. Roll call vote: Yes – KC, SE, GJ, AP, JW; Abstain – RW. Motion passed 5-0-1.

III. Public Comment

Kia Burton-King (parent), Erin Donnelly-Drake (parent) and Amy Dwight (parent) spoke in support of Jami Witherell as excellent Newton teacher, expressed concerns that she has been laid off in recent RIF.

Eric Stone (Newton teacher) and Rachel Cummings (teacher) spoke about effects of layoffs, including losing tech-savvy teachers when need is greatest.

IV. Reports

A. Chair

- DESE's guidance on COVID-19 response are "too little too late." No funding for extraordinary expenses in all districts. Lacking timely guidance from state, GPS must start planning local solutions for summer and fall.
- Acknowledged Superintendent's "impossible job" and her care with required details to implement RIF.
- 3,000 people, including GPS staff, students, community leaders, joined Greenfield's March for Solidarity last Saturday. A lot of support, a lot of work to do on systemic racism, need for structural change.

B. Superintendent (JH)

- Recognized community hero Dean Cycon of Dean's Beans for two donations of \$5,000 each to support GPS food service program.
- Also recognized work and dedication of food service staff.
- Extraordinary challenges with this year's budget. Reductions to meet Mayor's budget and anticipated 20% decrease of state funding led to RIFs: 20 Unit A positions (teachers), 23 Unit C positions (IAs/behaviorists), "among our best and brightest." Goal to reinstate all positions. Budget is reduced, but students' needs, need for more teachers, costs of instruction are increasing. Encouraged advocacy for increased state/federal funding.

- Restorative circle work is part of Greenfield school culture, supporting social justice & role of public schools in addressing change.

C. Health & Safety Subcommittee (KC)

- Met with Eliza Calkin, Director of Food & Nutrition Services; served 80,000 meals; helping families to access pandemic assistance. Food program will continue in summer, with some changes in locations.
- What should schools look like in fall? Lacking guidance from state. Additional costs = \$1million for average district. Need to move ahead with planning.
- Requesting Supt. and Chief of Police to review MOU for School Resource Officer. Funding for position has been split between school & city budgets but no funding this year from city.
- Support for social justice community forum, with School Committee to listen, learn.

D. Budget & Finance Subcommittee (SE)

- Dealing with uncertainties of funding, how to reinstate RIFs.
- Working with TMS, business management service.
- School Cte has not yet voted on revised budget (reductions to meet Mayor's budget).
- Subcommittee may need to continue budget revisions if further reductions in state support.

V. New Business

A. Principal Appointment – Discovery School at Four Corners

Supt. Harper introduced and praised Caissie Putnam as new principal of Discovery School at Four Corners, pending contract acceptance. Has been serving as interim principal. Committee has received many emails from Four Corners staff supporting her. Putnam will lead Four Corner's renewals of innovation school status and school improvement plan in coming year.

Susan Hollins joined the meeting at approx. 7:30 pm

B. School Resource Officer (SRO) Update

Supt. Harper has discussed SRO position with Health & Safety Subcommittee, at city/school meeting & with Chief of Police. SRO funding historically split 50-50 between city and school, but new city budget does not include funding. MOU between GPS and police dept. emphasizes training, de-escalation, relationship building. As former SRO, Chief understands community-building role. State law requires school districts to appoint SRO. Given budget challenges, JH prioritizes classroom supports for students over funding SRO.

KC moved to zero out funding for the School Resource Officer line item and direct the Superintendent to continue conversations with the Chief of Police on how we meet the legal requirements of the unfilled position. RW 2nd.

Discussion:

Why is School Cte. not voting on all budget changes?

Re-examine state law requiring SRO.

Original preference for SRO to work in elementary schools to get to know families, not only limited to high school; to provide additional support person for students, especially those in dangerous home situations.

Appreciate SRO's community-building, acknowledge police presence may have opposite effect on some students.

Motion withdrawn.

JW moved to authorize Superintendent to have ongoing discussions with Chief Hague on how to comply with Massachusetts law regarding SRO in the schools. GJ 2nd.

Roll call vote: Yes – KC, SE, SH, GJ, AP, JW, RW. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Anti-Racism Resolution

AP emphasized school's role as force for good & acceptance, supporting social justice. Not enough to simply pass a resolution. School district to become a more just institution.

GJ moved to authorize two School Committee members to research and write an anti-racism resolution for adoption by the School Committee at a later date. SH 2nd.

Discussion:

Beyond research, need to listen deeply to community.

Change theory emphasizes enculturation. Do library materials, social studies/civics materials reflect diversity, provide diverse role models?

School Cte's role to provide vision, not specific prescriptions. Consider next steps after resolution.

Chair will appoint 2 members.

Roll call vote: Yes – KC, SE, SH, GJ, AP, JW, RW. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Other Business

None

VII. Executive Session - MGL c 30A, §21, (2) & (3): (2) To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; (3) To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

GJ moved to enter Executive Session. RW 2nd. Roll call: Yes – KC, SE, SH, GJ, AP, JW. RW. Motion passed unanimously.

JW moved to close public session. GJ 2nd. Roll call: Yes – KC, SE, SH, GJ, AP, JW. RW. Motion passed unanimously.

Roxann Wedegartner left the meeting.

Entered Executive Session at 8:18 p.m.

VII. Adjournment

SH moved to adjourn. SE 2nd. Roll call: Yes – KC, SE, SH, GJ, AP, JW, RW. Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Farber
Recording Secretary

Meeting Documents

1. Agenda June 10, 2020
2. Draft Minutes: May 13 & May 26, 2020
3. Superintendent's Report:
 - a. School newsletters
 - b. Social media posts

- c. Budget reports (June 8, 2020)
 - d. "What will it cost to reopen schools?" (from ASBOI / AASA)
 - e. "Report: No way to reopen schools safely without federal bailout," U.S. News, June 8, 2020
 - f. "Guidance on Summer 2020 Special Education Services," memo from Russell Johnston, DESE, June 7, 2020
 - g. "Initial Summer School Re-Opening Guidance," memo from Jeffrey Riley, DESE, June 4, 2020
 - h. "Guidance on Required Safety Supplies for Re-Opening Schools, memo from Jeffrey Riley, DESE, June 5, 2020
4. Caissie Putnam: Letter of interest, C.V. (candidate for Discovery School principal)