

GARDNER SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting – May 10, 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
Ms. Beth Tata, Guidance Counselor, Elm Street School

Call to Order

Mayor Nicholson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7 pm. The meeting opened with a roll call. The meeting was broadcast live on Channel 8, (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

Dr. Pellegrino recognized the following:

- Ms. Beth Tata, Ms. Corey Tawczynski, and all the members of the Elm Street School 4th Grade Student Council. Ms. Tata listed the many things accomplished by the students during the year and cited their leadership role.
- All the students who qualified in the MCAS tests and fulfilled the requirements to receive the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship award.

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 April 12, 2021 as recommended by the School Committee Chairperson.**
- **Approval of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:**
 - **Warrant #21-41 dated 04/08/21 in the amount of \$363,107.39**

- **Warrant #21-42 dated 04/15/21 in the amount of \$1,433,665.24**
- **Warrant #21-43 dated 04/22/21 in the amount of \$1,051,456.64**
- **Warrant #21-44 dated 04/29/21 in the amount of \$120,489.80**

Seconded by Mr. Abare.

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 April 27, 2021. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

No maintenance issues with Moura's Cleaning Service have been reported, however, claims of workers leaving early at the Middle and Elm Street School will be monitored.

A Statement of Interest for the Gardner Middle School Roof Project will be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

There are no readiness issues at Watkins Field. A six-foot grass aerator has been ordered to care for all the athletic fields.

Pictures of outside problems at the Middle and High School buildings were presented. Mr. Anderson will put them on the project list for repairs during the summer.

Finance Subcommittee

Mr. LaFreniere, Chairperson, said that the Finance Subcommittee met on May 3, 2021. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The Subcommittee members reviewed and discussed the Finance packet for the month of April. Dr. Goguen, Interim Business Administrator, responded to inquiries made by the Subcommittee as follows:

- Some legal expenses are expected through the end of the year for union negotiations and other pending cases. There should be a surplus in this line item.
- The final invoices for snow removal are being paid. The surplus of approximately \$30,000 will be transferred to complete various repairs and maintenance projects.
- There will be a savings for both Regular and Special Education Transportation.
- Electricity credits from National Grid will be applied to other electric bills that have a deficit.

Dr. Goguen requested the following:

- Renewal of the Whitsons Food Services contract be sent to the full School Committee for discussion and a vote.
- Student/staff meal prices be sent to the full School Committee for discussion to consider an increase.

Dr. Pellegrino presented the School Committee recommended budget to the City Council on May 3, 2021 via Zoom.

Policy Subcommittee

Mrs. Hurst, Chairperson, said that the Policy Subcommittee met on April 15, 2021. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The following policies were reviewed and determined that no changes were required. They will be updated as “Reviewed April 2021”:

- Policy EFD Meal Charge Policy
- Policy GBEBD Online Fundraising & Solicitations – Crowdfunding
- Policy ILD Student Submission to Educational Surveys & Research
- Policy JICFA-E Hazing
- Policy JKAA Physical Restraint Policy and Procedures
- Policy JKD Student Suspension/Expulsion
- Policy JKD-R Student Suspension/Expulsion Procedures

Three policies were approved for a first reading and they are listed on the May School Committee agenda under Item #3279.

Mrs. Hurst said that all School Committee policies have been reviewed and are up to date. She thanked Mrs. Cormier and Mrs. Pelavin for their dedication and hard work in accomplishing this project.

NEW BUSINESS

Item #3279 – First Reading of Policies

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

- CBI Evaluation of the Superintendent
- JFBB School Choice
- JIC Student Discipline

Item #3280– COVID Data Dashboard Updates

Dr. Pellegrino presented the COVID-19 Weekly Data Dashboard for the State, the Gardner Community and the Gardner Public Schools. Testing of students and staff – 435 tested – only one person tested positive.

Item #32781– Vaccine Update

Mayor Nicholson said that the vaccination clinics are continuing and this week there are over 1,000 appointments. Governor Baker has announced that vaccination can begin for youths 12 to 15 years of age and the City is ready.

Item #3282 – Return to In-Person Learning K-8/9-12

The transition has gone well and all protocols are being followed.

Item #3283 – Kindergarten Registration

Dr. Pellegrino reported that to date there are sixty-seven students registered for Kindergarten for the 2021-2022 school year. Staff is trying to get students registered early so that plans for opening can be made.

Item #3284 – Summer School

Dr. Pellegrino reported that plans are being made for summer school and are being extended to collaborate with several regional schools. This will enable all schools to have enough courses to help students and to have enough needed teachers.

Item #3285 – MCAS

Dr. Pellegrino said that this was the first day of MCAS testing at Elm Street School and Gardner High School. Some students did the test by remote and the results will be examined when scores are received.

Item #3286 – Food Service Contract Extension

Mr. LaFreniere moved that the District School Committee vote to accept the recommendation of the Finance Subcommittee to extend the Whitsons Food Services Contract for one year – 2021-2022 school year.

Seconded by Mr. Abare.

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 #3287 – Student/Staff Meal Pricing (Tabled)

Mr. Swartz moved that the District School Committee vote to table action on the Student/Staff Meal Pricing until the June School Committee meeting as recommended by

Dr. Goguen.

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 #3288 - FY2022 Budget

Mr. Swartz moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the budget for the 2021-2022 school year as presented in the amount \$35,700,791.00.

Seconded by Mrs. Hurst.

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 #3289 – Curriculum Coordinator's Update

The Curriculum Coordinator's Update was included in the members' packets.

Dr. Goguen, Chief Academic Officer and Interim Business Manager, was present on Zoom to answer questions.

Item #3290 – Special Education Update

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

Item #3291 – Grants Administrator's Update

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

Item #3292– MSBA – New Building Project

Mrs. Pelavin said that the School Building Committee has toured the site of the new school building and a tour for the School Committee members will be arranged in the future.

COMMUNICATIONS

Dr. Pellegrino congratulated the GALT students who have won a John and Abigail Adams scholarship and read their names.

FINAL COMMENTS

Mr. Swartz commented that there is nothing but good things to look forward to in the Gardner School System.

Mrs. Hurst congratulated all the students who received the John and Abigail Adams scholarship award - 34 - and there will be more when the GALT students are included.

Mr. Abare gave a shout out to all the student athletes.

Mr. LaFreniere thanked the teachers and congratulated the students who received the scholarship award.

Mrs. Cormier celebrated all the students - Student Council members at ESS, GHS MCAS award winners, and the GHS Class of 2021 on their upcoming graduation.

Mrs. Pelavin spoke about Teachers Appreciation Week and thanked the Gardner teachers and staff for all they do every day for the students. She congratulated the students who have received the John and Abigail Adams scholarship.

Mayor Nicholson said the Covid vaccination will be extended to the 12 to 15 year old population. Farmers to Families food boxes are now being distributed weekly through the Gardner CAC. The Gardner Senior Class is planning some activities to celebrate their upcoming graduation. He thanked all teachers.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Pelavin moved to adjourn.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

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

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Terri Hillman, Recording Secretary

Rachel A. Cormier, Secretary