



# LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## *REGULAR MEETING MINUTES*

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| <b>Date:</b>     | January 5, 2022   |
| <b>Time:</b>     | 6:30PM  |
| <b>Location:</b> | City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA 01852 |

### 1. SALUTE TO FLAG

### 2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:37 p.m., all members were present, namely: Ms. Delrossi, Mr. Descoteaux, Ms. Doherty, Mr. Lay, Ms. Martin, Ms. Thompson and Mayor Chau.

### 3. MINUTES

3.1. Approval of the Minutes of the Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, December 15, 2020

**Ms. Martin made a motion to accept and place on file the minutes from the Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, December 15, 2021; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 years APPROVED**

Ms. Doherty took a point of personal privilege and asked that retiring Health Teacher, Mr. Heitzman be invited to a Policy Subcommittee to discuss his concerns. She also expressed concerns with the Leblanc School in particular around staffing and stated that she has received concerns from staff at the school as well. She requested the Superintendent provide a report at the next School Committee meeting about staffing at the Leblanc School.

Mr. Descoteaux stated that he shares Ms. Doherty's concerns.

### 4. PERMISSION TO ENTER

4.1. Permission to Enter: January 5, 2022

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to approve the Permission to Enter; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 years APPROVED**



## 5. MEMORIALS

5.1. Philip Dancause, Retired Lowell High School Teacher.

5.2. Barbara Glasheen, Retired Washington School Teacher.

## 6. MOTIONS

6.1. [By Jackie Doherty]: Request the Superintendent provide the committee with a report on why the 2020-2021 End of Year Financial Report due to DESE on Oct. 1 required multiple extensions and a warning letter from the Associate Commissioner, as well as steps taken to ensure timely submission going forward.

**Ms. Doherty made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED**

6.2. [By Jackie Doherty]: Motion to Reconsider of the Approval of the Updated Language to the Previously Approved Contract Amendment for Chief Operating Officer James Hall as Authorized under the School Committee's Adopted Rules Procedures.

Mike Dillon registered and spoke on this motion.

Ms. Doherty requested that the Committee table the motion and that the City Solicitor provide a response with any concerns regarding the amendment at the next regularly scheduled School Committee meeting. She asked that it be available to the Committee before the next meeting and also asked the Mayor to invite the Solicitor to attend the meeting.

Mayor Chau stated that he will invite the City Solicitor to the next meeting.

**Ms. Doherty made a motion to table this motion; seconded by Ms. Martin. 3 yeas, 4 nays (Ms. Delrossi, Mr. Descoteaux, Mr. Lay, Ms. Thompson) FAILS**

**Ms. Doherty made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Martin. Ms. Doherty withdrew the motion.**

## 7. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

### 7.1. COVID-19 Update

Superintendent Boyd informed the Committee that on Monday January 3<sup>rd</sup>, a letter was sent to families that said the district has a staff absence rate of 10% and that the absence rate is being driven by required COVID-19 health and safety protocols. He stated that staffing levels throughout the district, across positions and across service areas are now reaching a critical threshold where it is questionable on a daily basis whether the district will be able to operate one (1) or more schools in a safe and effective manner.



He stated that the district contacted the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (3) and asked for three (3) different scenario type waivers in an effort to find a solution and all were denied. The Superintendent also thanked the UTL and LSAA for all their help.

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer provided the Committee with a report that gave them a COVID-19 Data monitoring update that included Lowell Public Schools COVID positive cases, Pool Testing Participation and Testing Services (symptomatic testing, “test and stay” and routine COVID Pooled testing). He stated that there were 153 total positive cases in Lowell Public Schools between December 16th and December 22<sup>nd</sup> and of those cases, twelve (12) were staff members and 141 were students. He stated that pool testing this week showed 40% of the pools required follow-ups to identify who had tested positive and of the 40%, he stated that there were 310 positive tests. He stated that due to the staffing issues central office has been dispatched into schools to help with staffing shortages.

**Ms. Doherty made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 and 7.2 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 yeas APPROVED**

**7.2. Response to Motion 10. COO of 10/20/21 By Andy Descoteaux Regarding Food Quality**

Aramark gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee that addressed the quality of the food provided to the students. Aramark addressed the follow issues:

- Staffing Shortages
- Expanding Students’ Culinary Options
- Supply Chain Challenges
- LPS Food and Nutrition Advisory Committee
- Enhancing the Student Dining Experience
- Culinary Focus Trainings

Aramark also provided a sampling of their food to the Committee for them to enjoy.

Committee members expressed concern around calls they’ve received telling them that the food has mold, isn’t enjoyable, etc. It was suggested that Aramark provide a report quarterly updating the Committee on any issues.

**Ms. Doherty made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 and 7.2 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 yeas APPROVED**

**7.3. Response to Motion 8. COO of 09/15/21 By Jackie Doherty Regarding Transportation**

Mr. Descoteaux, Transportation Director provided a report to the Committee that informed the Committee that the Transportation Department continues to experience daily challenges with transporting students to and from school. The report stated that the biggest challenge the district is facing is a reduction in the amount of bus drivers employed by the district’s two largest contracted



providers as well as driver absences due to COVID-19 and other illnesses. Also, school bus route arrival/dismissal times has also become a major concern with the ongoing street/bridge construction projects that are ongoing in the city.

**Ms. Doherty made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 and 7.2 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 yeas APPROVED**

#### 7.4. Home Education

Superintendent Boyd recommended that the following parents/guardians be allowed to home educate their child:

Elizabeth Gonzalez  
Suheil Rivera  
Laura Blankenship

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 yeas APPROVED**

### 8. NEW BUSINESS

**8.1.** Authorization the Expenditure of Funds to Replace the Boilers at both the Butler School and the Reilly School in a Total Amount of up to \$105,000.00

Superintendent Boyd informed the Committee that this report is being withdrawn. He stated that he was informed prior to the meeting by the City Manager, that the city will be covering the cost of the expenditure.

Ms. Thompson asked about having joint facility subcommittee meetings with the City regarding future matters. Mayor Chau stated that he will have the Council invite the School Committee to a facility subcommittee to discuss facility issues.

#### **8.2.** Approval of LHS Performing Arts Wellness Program

Ms. Desmond, Chief Academic Officer provided a report to the Committee that informed them that as part of Lowell High School's (LHS) Secondary Redesign work, staff have been revisiting graduation requirements to improve alignment to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) Frameworks and MassCore Graduation completion rates. The report stated that through this work, the Fine Arts and Science Department Chairs have worked to revise performing arts course descriptions to align with graduation requirements. Additionally, the DESE has recently revised the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Framework, placing greater emphasis on health as a form of personal wellness. It is requested that the School Committee approve Dance, Band and Show Choir as PE-equivalent classes that fulfill the Health A and Health B requirements. This change will also provide opportunities for increased Fine Arts course enrollments and program retention while decreasing class sizes in oversubscribed Health classes.



Several Committee members supported this, but had concerns around sex education not being included. They stated that they would approve this, but would like to be sure that sex education is included or will be included in the future.

**Ms. Thompson made a motion to approve the LHS Performing Art Wellness Program; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 yeas APPROVED**

#### **9. PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL**

**9.1.** The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate Fifteen [15] Sick Leave Days to Patricia Teague Daley School Paraprofessional.

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to approve items 9.1 and 9.2 together; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 yeas APPROVED**

**9.2.** The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate Fifteen [15] Sick Leave Days to Solage Yao McAuliffe School Paraprofessional.

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to approve items 9.1 and 9.2 together; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 yeas APPROVED**



**10. ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms. Doherty made a motion to adjourn at 8:31 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 yeas APPROVED**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Joel D. Boyd, Ed.D., Superintendent and  
Secretary to the Lowell School Committee**

**JDB/mes**