



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date:	March 15, 2023
Time:	6:30PM
Location:	City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA 01852

Members of the public may view the meeting via LTC and those wishing to speak regarding a specific agenda item shall register to speak in advance of the meeting by sending an email to the Superintendent indicating the agenda item, a phone number and email address so we can provide a zoom link to access the meeting. Email address is mpalazzo@lowell.k12.ma.us. If no access to email you may contact us at 978-674-4324. All requests must be submitted before 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

1. SALUTE TO FLAG

2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:36 p.m., members present were, namely: Mr. Lay, Ms. Martin, Ms. Thompson, Mayor Chau, Ms. Chhoun, Ms. Delrossi and Ms. Doherty.

3. MINUTES

3.1. Approval of the Minutes of the Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting that was held on Wednesday, March 1, 2023; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 years APPROVED

4. PERMISSION TO ENTER

4.1. Permission to Enter: March 15, 2023

Ms. Doherty made a motion to approve the Permission to Enter: seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 years APPROVED

5. MEMORIALS

5.1. **Marie Geary**, Mother of City Clerk, Michael Geary and Aunt of Associate Justice to the Lowell District Court, Stephen B. Geary.



5.2. Frances Murphy, A Retired Bartlett School Paraprofessional.

5.3. Leo Poy Kong Lew and Eleanor Thu-Har Mathews, Uncle and Aunt of Mark Lew, Student Data Administrator at Lowell High

6. MOTIONS

6.1. [By Jackie Doherty]: Request the Superintendent provide the Committee with a report on the number of tutors hired at each school and how they are being utilized.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to bundle and approve items #6.1, #6.3 and #6.5; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 years APPROVED

6.2. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request Superintendent to implement cyberbullying policy for students to begin to understand the impacts of what cyberbullying entails, and have students and parents engage with school communities for ongoing education to be implemented outside of internet policy, and signed as a separate document/contract by both students and parents.

Ms. Delrossi made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 years APPROVED

6.3. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request the Superintendent to report on how academic data such as key performance indicators are guiding how tutors are allocated to students in need of math and reading interventions through schools in the district.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to bundle and approve items #6.1, #6.3 and #6.5; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 years APPROVED

6.4. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request the Superintendent to report on whether or not the new high school complex will have fresh air intake.

Ms. Delrossi made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 years APPROVED

6.5. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request the Superintendent to report on the allocation of ESSR funds in relation to the status of tutors throughout the district and what the trajectory over the next fiscal year looks for tutor employment.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to bundle and approve items #6.1, #6.3 and #6.5; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 years APPROVED

6.6. [By Stacey Thompson]: Motion to have the Superintendent provide a comprehensive report on measures that have been taken to implement energy efficient, environmentally sound/conscious apparatus, devices and materials for our new school projects to include the high school, as well as, all the schools slated for needed upgrades or updates.

Ms. Wambui registered and spoke in favor of this motion.



Ms. Doherty made a friendly amendment with no objection from the maker of the motion to include solar panels.

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

6.7. [By Stacey Thompson]: Motion to receive a full up-to-date listing of HR trainings each Human Resources department team member has attended from 2020 to present as well as dates of those pre-planned. The list/report to be presented by role and function inclusive from clerk to HR Director.

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

6.8. [By Stacey Thompson]: Motion to have the district host access nights and/or fairs for scholarships and other beneficial programs, to increase knowledge and awareness for students, families and the community.

Ms. Thompson made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Chhoun. 7 yeas APPROVED

6.9. [By Stacey Thompson]: Motion for Superintendent to provide clear processes or mechanism of communication from administration to permanent staff members and all staff contributors, regarding updates, policy changes, and general information sharing to ensure the timely and equitable access to information throughout the district.

Ms. Thompson made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 yeas APPROVED

6.10. [By Dominik Hok Lay]: Request the Superintendent add a line item for any "delayed" bills in the FY24 budget.

Ms. Martin stated that Ms. Turner is presently working with the Solicitor and Auditor trying to resolve these issues and recommended investigating this with the Auditor.

Mr. Lay made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

7. SUBCOMMITTEES

7.1. Finance Subcommittee: Report and approval of the Meeting of Monday, March 6, 2023 [Dominik Lay, Chairperson]

Mr. Lay, Chairperson of the Finance Subcommittee informed the Committee that there are delayed bills from last fiscal year totally approximately \$298,000. He stated that conflicts between laws around transporting homeless students have been an issue as well as numerous delays from the law department as they try and protect the city from violating these laws. He stated that the school department must also abide by the law and provide transportation to homeless and special needs students so that results with the school having timing issues. He stated that the administration has been working with the Auditor and City Solicitor to try and resolve these issues. He then stated that there was a five (5) week delay getting the numbers from the state and the district has received the estimated Student Opportunity Act funding and it is approximately \$27 million dollars. He also talked about the foundation budget comparison.



Ms. Doherty took a point of personal privilege and stated that she was unable to attend the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and had responded when polled and informed them that two (2) members of the subcommittee were going to be judges at the knowledge bowl and would be unable to attend. She stated that she received a call from Ms. Turner who told her they could start the meeting and if she wanted they would stop it and wait until 7:15 p.m. when she could arrive. Ms. Doherty stated that she didn't want to make her colleagues wait and told them not to wait. She stated that when she arrived at the knowledge bowl the other member of the subcommittee that she thought was also a judge was no longer attending the knowledge bowl and the that Superintendent was taking her place. Ms. Doherty stated that this is highly irregular and felt disrespected.

Ms. Delrossi responded that she didn't end up covering the knowledge bowl because she had a professional development at work and then had to go home and provide dinner for her son and that's the reason she couldn't attend the knowledge bowl.

Mayor Chau asked that moving forward all Chairpersons make sure that all members can attend.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the report as a report of progress; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 yeas APPROVED

8. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

8.1. FY24 Budget Update

Ms. Turner, Chief Operating Officer informed the Committee that the Governor's budget recommendations were released which shows an 9.8% increase. She stated that based on the foundation summary Chapter 70 will increase from \$200,970,019 to \$228,693,65, which is an \$27,723,636 increase. She stated that the administration is recommending that the fair student funding pool be increased by \$10,000,000 to account for the increased enrollment and additional spending flexibility needed at the school level. The update provided a draft budget with increases for FY24, along with a line by line designation of whether the line item is included in the fair student funding pool or part of the locked central office resources.

Ms. Doherty stated that the dropout rate has increased and if we are planning on providing more supports and asked when the Committee would be receiving the report on dropouts.

Superintendent Boyd stated that the Committee will be receiving a report at the April 5th meeting. He stated that the data is last year's data.

Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.2 through 8.5 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 yeas APPROVED



8.2. Update On Differentiated Autonomy & Support

Ms. Martin made a motion to refer the Update On Differentiated Autonomy & Support to the Performance & Management Subcommittee for further discussion; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 years APPROVED

Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.2 through 8.5 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 years APPROVED

8.3. Monthly Incident Report

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer provided a report to the Committee that stated that during the month of February 2023, sixty-four (64) incidents were reported using the online reporting system. The report stated that forty-six (46) investigations were completed on these incidents, and eighteen (18) are in process. A synopsis of the investigation findings and administered consequences were included in the report. During the month of February 2023, the completed investigations took an average of one (1) school day to launch an investigation and an average of 1.6 school days to complete.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to provide an update to the Committee on Pre-K and K registration at the next School Committee meeting; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 years APPROVED

Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.2 through 8.5 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 years APPROVED

8.4. Monthly Enrollment Report

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer provided a report to the Committee that stated that as of March 9, 2023, there are 14,317 students enrolled with the Lowell Public Schools. Since March 2022, families completed the registration process online using the Aspen online registration portal (OLR). Families created an Aspen account, entered their child's information required for registration, and uploaded the required registration documents directly to their online registration. During the month of February, the Family Resource Center processed 436 student applications and 74% of parents submitted their registration to the portal in one (1) day or less.

Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.2 through 8.5 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 years APPROVED

8.5. Personnel Report

The Personnel Report officially informs the Committee of all retirements, resignations, promotions and new hires.

Ms. Chhoun made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 8.2 through 8.5 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 years APPROVED



8.6. Home Education

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

Julie Raulerson

Ms. Doherty made a motion to approve; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1. Discussion, Consideration and Selection of Outside Counsel to Conduct the Previously Approved Internal Complaints Investigation

The City Solicitor stated that eight (8) people have come forward and that their concerns were valid, but didn't rise to the level of falling under the whistleblower law. She stated that the law department is available to handle this and that they're hiring and have hired more attorneys. She stated that her recommendation is to not hire outside counsel. She stated that she didn't provide a report because she didn't believe the Committee wanted her to move forward.

Ms. Martin stated not receiving a written report is problematic and that the names could have been redacted. She stated that the materials should go to the secretary and then sent to the Committee.

Ms. Doherty stated that she has a sense that people aren't coming forward to the Solicitor's office because they're not comfortable and are concerned about confidentiality and experience. She stated that there has been a three (3) month delay and for the Solicitor to report to the Committee that she didn't believe she needed to follow up with the Committee is kind of counter intuitive. She stated that they need to be transparent and do due diligence.

Ms. Thompson stated that there are eight (8) valid complaints and that new attorneys who are going to starting means training and time. She asked if the new hires have municipal and investigative backgrounds. She stated that her concern is for the people who came forward and she is not comfortable telling these employees that we are not moving forward.

Ms. Delrossi stated that there were no whistleblower violations and asked the Solicitor if there were any unlawful actions.

The City Solicitor stated they border, but she doesn't believe they violated any laws.

Ms. Chhoun stated that she believed that the Committee would be receiving a written report and she stated that she found it alarming that there is no written report.

The City Solicitor stated that there is a report and she stated that she can send it to the Superintendent and he can give it to the Committee.

Mayor Chau asked if she was going to present the report in an Executive Session.



The City Solicitor responded yes, and that she had the impression that the Committee didn't want the law department to do any work.

Ms. Martin stated that there was a conversation and a vote and that the Solicitor was given four (4) weeks to come back to the Committee.

The City Solicitor stated that she and her colleague were under the impression that the Committee didn't want them to move forward.

Ms. Martin responded stating that the body had a vote to have the law department investigate.

Ms. Thompson asked the Solicitor what she thought March 15th was for. She stated that the Mayor asked for additional weeks to give you the time.

The City Solicitor again stated that she didn't believe that she had to come back to the body.

Ms. Doherty stated that she asked the Superintendent (because he is the secretary to the Committee) and the Solicitor if they had materials for the meeting on Friday morning when the packet was going to be published.

Superintendent Boyd stated that he had Ms. Palazzo contact the law department on Friday morning regarding materials.

Mayor Chau stated that this has been ongoing and there has been a lot of discussions and frustrations. He stated that the Committee needs to be mindful that the Solicitor stated that eight (8) employees have come forward and no laws have been broken and no violations. He stated that he was disappointed that they didn't receive a written report and he requests a written report as soon as possible from the Solicitor.

Ms. Thompson stated that the Solicitor left the meeting early, didn't follow up and then stated that she didn't think the Committee wanted a report and now you want to wait to give her additional time.

The City Solicitor stated that she could provide a report by Friday.

Mayor Chau made a motion to request a written report from the Solicitor's office within the next two (2) weeks; seconded by Mr. Lay. 3 yeas, 4 nays (Ms. Martin, Ms. Thompson, Ms. Chhoun, Ms. Doherty) FAILS

For the record, this vote has to be by name.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to choose an Outside Counsel to conduct the Internal Complaints Investigation; seconded by Ms. Martin. 4 votes for (Brody, Hardon, Perkins & Kestein, LLP (BHPK), 2 nays, 1 present. Brody, Hardon, Perkins & Kestein, LLP was selected



Mr. Lay, **nay**, Ms. Martin, **Brody, Hardon, Perkins & Kestain, LLP**; Ms. Thompson, **Brody, Hardon, Perkins & Kestain, LLP**; Mayor Chau, **present**; Ms. Chhoun, **Foley & Hoag** and then changed her vote to **Brody, Hardon, Perkins & Kestain, LLP**, Ms. Delrossi, **nay**, Ms. Doherty, **Brody, Hardon, Perkins & Kestain, LLP**; Mr. Four votes, **Brody, Hardon, Perkins & Kestain, LLP**, Two **nays**, One **present**; therefore, **Brody, Hardon, Perkins & Kestain, LLP** is voted to be the **Outside Counsel** to conduct the Internal Complaints Investigation

Ms. Martin made a motion to have a Human Resources & Human Relations Subcommittee and to have the Committee members polled and for the Superintendent to reach out to **BHPK** to schedule that meeting; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas **APPROVED**

9.2. 2023-2024 School Calendar

Ms. Doherty made a motion to approve the 2023-2024 School Calendar; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 yeas **APPROVED**

9.3. Payment for FY21/22 Expenditures in Accordance with MGL Chapter 44 Section 64

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the payment for FY21/22 Expenditures in Accordance with MGL Chapter 44 Section 64; seconded by Ms. Thomson. 7 yeas **APPROVED**

9.4. Budget Transfer

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the budget transfer of \$214,573.97; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas **APPROVED**

9.5. Approval to Accept and Expend Allocated FY23 Awards

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer requested the Committee approve and accept the Refugee School Impact Grant from the Office of Refugees and Immigrants.

Ms. Thompson made a motion to approve, accept and expend the allocated FY23 awards; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 5 yeas, 2 absent (Mayor Chau, Ms. Chhoun) **APPROVED**

9.6. Vote to Accept a Donation of \$577.00 from the Greater of Lowell Community Foundation

The Greater Lowell Community Foundation wishes to donate \$577 to support the Kathryn Stoklosa Knowledge Bowl.

Mr. Lay made a motion to accept the donation from the Greater Lowell Community Foundation of \$577; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 5 yeas, 2 absent (Mayor Chau, Ms. Chhoun) **APPROVED**



9.7. Approval of a Research Proposal for Health Educators, City Prevention Specialists, and UML Education Researchers

Health educators, city prevention specialists, and UML education researchers want to conduct research to improve the quality of health education delivered to students. The goal of this research project is to understand middle school students' perspectives on health because collecting information on the specific health needs of middle school students in each population may increase support and adequate tools for health educators to develop comprehensive curriculum materials. The study will utilize student focus groups to collect data from middle school students to further understand middle school students' health needs and generate their findings.

Ms. Martin made a motion to bundle and approve item #9.7 through #9.9; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 5 yeas, 2 absent (Mayor Chau, Ms. Chhoun) APPROVED APPROVED

9.8. Approval of Doctoral Research Proposal for Amy Woodsmith

Amy Woodsmith is enrolled in a doctoral program at The University of the Cumberland. A requirement of the program is to complete a research study. Ms. Woodsmith's qualitative study aims to determine if specific leadership behaviors increase the teacher retention rate during a crisis. The main objective of this study is to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in teacher retention between leadership styles. In particular, this study will analyze the difference between transformational, transactional, and Laissez-faire leadership.

Ms. Martin made a motion to bundle and approve item #9.7 through #9.9; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 5 yeas, 2 absent (Mayor Chau, Ms. Chhoun) APPROVED APPROVED

9.9. Approval of Doctoral Research Proposal for Susan Brassard

Susan Brassard is enrolled in a doctoral program at The University of Massachusetts, Lowell in the Leadership in Schooling program. A requirement of the program is to complete a dissertation in practice study. This study's main objective is to deepen understanding of students with disabilities and their abilities to participate fully in school programs that give them an equal opportunity to excel in post-secondary paths. Through Ms. Brassard's Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles, she will focus on increasing cross-departmental collaboration using the tools of appreciative inquiry to identify the current exemplars of school success for students with disabilities while reducing the ableism mindset.

Ms. Martin made a motion to bundle and approve item #9.7 through #9.9; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 5 yeas, 2 absent (Mayor Chau, Ms. Chhoun) APPROVED APPROVED

10. CONVENTION/CONFERENCE REQUESTS

10.1. Out of State & Overnight Travel Request: For LHS Students and Chaperones to Attend Portrait of Graduate Convention in Shelton, CT.

Ms. Delrossi made a motion to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED



10.2. Out of State & Overnight Travel Request: For National Leadership Conference for LHS Business Professional of America

Ms. Delrossi made a motion to bundle and approve the convention/conference requests; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

11. PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

11.1. The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate Sixteen [16] Sick Leave Days to Bernard Bettencourt, Dr. Janice Adie School Paraprofessional.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to bundle and approve the professional personnel; seconded by Ms. Chhoun. 7 yeas APPROVED

11.2. The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate Three [3] Sick Leave Days to Heather Desimone, Bailey School Paraprofessional.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to bundle and approve the professional personnel; seconded by Ms. Chhoun. 7 yeas APPROVED

11.3. The Members of the United Teachers of Lowell Hereby Donate Twenty-Two [22] Sick Leave Days to Lissa Lagasse, Sullivan School Teacher.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to bundle and approve the professional personnel; seconded by Ms. Chhoun. 7 yeas APPROVED

12. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Doherty made a motion to adjourn at 9:10 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

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

JDB/mes