



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

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| Date: | January 19, 2022 |
| 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 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 3:00 PM on the Day of Meeting.

1. SALUTE TO FLAG

2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:41 p.m., all members were present, namely: Ms. Doherty, Mr. Lay, Ms. Martin, Ms. Thompson, Mayor Chau, Ms. Delrossi and Mr. Descoteaux.

3. MINUTES

3.1. Approval of the Minutes of the Inauguration Exercises of Monday, January 3, 2022

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the Inauguration Exercises of Monday, January 3, 2022 and the Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, January 5, 2022; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 7 yeas APPROVED

3.2. Approval of the Minutes of the Regularly Scheduled Lowell School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, January 5, 2022

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the Inauguration Exercises of Monday, January 3, 2022 and the Regularly Scheduled School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, January 5, 2022; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 7 yeas APPROVED

4. PERMISSION TO ENTER

4.1. Permission to Enter: January 19, 2022

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the Permission to Enter; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 yeas APPROVED



5. MEMORIALS

5.1. Evanthia Dukakis, A Retired Daley School Teacher.

6. MOTIONS

Mayor Chau made a motion to suspend the rules to present a citation; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

Mayor Chau recognized Alice McLaughlin on her retirement from the Bailey School. Mayor Chau read the citation on the floor and thanked her for her dedicated years of service to the students. Mayor Chau will also be presenting this citation to Mrs. McLaughlin in person.

6.1. [By Connie Martin]: Requesting that the Administration develop a transparent reporting system that will allow parents and students to report concerns with school meal offerings directly to our vendor and provide a feedback tracking system so the School Committee can monitor responses to concerns.

Ms. Thompson requested that pictures be allowed to included when parents/students report concerns.

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

6.2. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request superintendent provides the school committee with a detailed list of all expenditures related to school building maintenance and repairs for fiscal year 2022.

Mayor Chau will look into having a joint Facilities Subcommittee with the City Council.

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

6.3. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request Superintendent provides the school committee with current cafeteria staffing levels at the Stem Academy.

Mr. Descoteaux suggested looking into the possibility of the using the Robinson School cafeteria to help provide food in conjunction with the STEM Academy so they won't be so overloaded.

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

6.4. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request the Superintendent to apply the unfinished business portion to the agenda of the 1st and 3rd Wednesday school committee meetings. This was voted into the school committee rules on inauguration day. Rules can be found on the January 3rd meeting agenda 4.3 adoption of rules.

Ms. Delrossi stated that the Superintendent reached out to her to let her know that there generally isn't unfinished business.

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



6.5. [By Stacey Thompson]: Request that the Superintendent provide the committee with a report of ongoing records detailing the frequency of HVAC unit filter changes in each of the school buildings. This request will be ongoing as a measure to keep awareness and transparency of air quality efforts for both students and staff.

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

6.6. [By Andy Descoteaux and Dominik H. Lay]: Ask the Supt. to furnish the SC with the number of Chromebooks that are currently in the LPS; separating ones that are broken or unusable and are those being used by our students. Also, what technology equipment does our LPS staff have available today and how much is in need of repair or unable to be repaired? Do we currently have adequate staffing to ensure our technology needs are being met, system wide?

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

6.7. [By Jackie Doherty]: Request the Superintendent provide the committee with a plan to increase compensation to retired LPS teachers working in the school's part time or as tutors, so they receive the same rate as the current teachers' contract.

Susan Silk and Donna Walsh registered and spoke on this agenda item.

Mayor Chau asked the Superintendent how many retired teachers are being utilized.

Superintendent Boyd stated that he will provide the number to the Committee.

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

6.8. [By Jackie Doherty]: Request the Superintendent collaborate with MASC and MASS to provide the committee with suggested actions that will amplify the concerns of LPS and districts across the state for flexibility re staffing shortages during the ongoing pandemic, such as extending availability of retirees, waivers for remote learning, or other measures that make sense for students, families, and staff.

Mr. Descoteaux requested that a letter be drafted from the Superintendent and sent to the powers that be from the School Committee to see if they'll sign on. He stated that this issue needs to be addressed and that we are at a crisis level.

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

7. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Ms. Doherty made a motion to suspend the rules to take agenda item 10.1 out of order; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED



7.1. COVID-19 Update

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). Dr. Hall also addressed staffing shortages. He stated that the district has a pool of 60-65 people regularly substitute teaching resulting in a substitute fill rate of about 30% on a daily basis. He stated that in the Fall, the Committee approved pay increases for substitute teachers and also approved some hourly pay for mentoring substitutes. Presently, the district has trained and in-processed fifty-six (56) new substitutes with twelve (12) more pending from the last workshop, however, absences are ranging from 160-220 teachers/paraprofessionals that are out each school day over the last two (2) months given COVID-19 challenges. The district continues to deliberate early each morning to weigh the deployment of central office personnel to schools with relatively high absence rates and this has put a strain on personnel in completing regular duties, but has been helpful to schools. He stated that previously the Committee had approved positions for additional Positive Behavior Resource Teachers, paraprofessionals and social workers for use of some of the ESSER grant monies. Additionally, a grant allowed for dozens of paraprofessionals to be hired to support IEPs and despite postings for all these positions, we have only in-processed five (5) paraprofessionals, eight (8) Positive Behavior Resource Teachers, and eight (8) Social Workers. He stated that due to some social workers were only willing to commit to part-time hours and given the lack of available candidates for these approved SW positions, the administration is requesting that principals be permitted to fill these positions with applicants who qualify for an adjustment counselor license to maximize services being delivered to students. He stated that given the current challenges in the employment market, in these instances, selected candidates will be in-processed as Guidance Counselors.

Ms. Martin made a motion to allow administration to hire Adjustment Counselors and Guidance Counselors as replacements for Social Worker positions that are currently vacant and are not being able to be filled; seconded by Ms. Thompson. APPROVED

Ms. Thompson made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.4 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.2. FY22 Budget Update

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer provided an FY22 Budget update to the Committee. The agenda included the following:

- What is our current FY22 general fund forecast?
- What priorities can be addressed immediately in FY22?
- What is the current status of our revolving accounts?
- What current FY22 issues remain that need to be addressed? (e.g. MGL 44 s64)
- What are our next steps as we plan for FY23?



Ms. Turner stated that projecting year end balances during such a tumultuous time is difficult and that due to staff shortages and supply chain obstacles, the district will see a projected significant savings. However, due to an environment of high demand with low supply, the district is also seeing costs skyrocket and our forecasts for the current year and projections for next fiscal year will require continuous analysis and updating.

The following is a projection of ESSER Funds. She stated that available surpluses within the local budget has enabled greater flexibility with the ESSER funds. The original ESSER plan/budget estimated \$30,671,330 would be spent year one (1), and now the estimated amount is approximately \$9,711,438. She stated below some reasons to be aware of:

- Several recommended positions were placed in suspense by the SC during the FY22 budget process with the directive to ensure thorough planning throughout FY22
- The SC approved the delaying of spending the ESSER funds for the facilities pending a joint meeting with the City Council. Thus, this budgeted amount has been moved to FY23.
- Several positions remain within the recruitment phase. The cost for these positions will not be incurred until the positions are filled.

Ms. Turner then addressed water provided to students due to COVID. She stated that in August 2020 the district was told by City Hall/State that we could not use the water fountains in school, but the district must make portable water available and accessible without restriction to children at no charge in the place(s) where lunches are served during the meal service. She stated that based on Section 5.2 of the Aramark contract, Aramark started to provide the bottled water to the schools weekly during FY20/21. Since school did not reopen to all students until April 2021, the amount for water was minimal until the last three (3) months. She stated that the district was invoiced by Aramark in July of 2021 and Aramark reported that we could not charge the water to the revolving account. Presently, Ms. Turner is continuing to research this with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to confirm Aramark's report. Ms. Turner is also working with City Hall to resolve the billing issue this has caused in the current fiscal year. She stated that a purchase order was opened in Aug 2021 for the FY21/22 year, but it was incorrectly used and the purchase order had been opened against the revolving account and a check was cut. Since Aramark notified the district that this was not allowed, the check was deposited back into the same fund. Presently, the September through December bills do not have a purchase order to charge against resulting in these being bills needing City Council approval. The update also included a projected timeline for finance subcommittees and budget hearings.

Ms. Doherty asked how much is the water bill and why did we go through Aramark.

Ms. Turner stated \$119,000 plus the months of September, October and November. She stated the district relied on the contract with Aramark.

Ms. Doherty stated that she believes this speaks of a lack of fiscal oversight and would like to receive more information on this issue from the Auditor/City.

Ms. Thompson made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.4 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED



7.3. Extended Learning Time Mid-Year Report

The Extended Learning Time Mid-Year report was presented to the Committee. The report included the following:

- 1.Types of Programming and Funding Sources
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Current Enrollment in Programs
- 4. Afternoon in the Arts Update
- 5. Transportation
- 6. Community Partners
- 7. Next Steps and Summer School Planning

Ms. Thompson made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.4 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.4. Enrollment Report

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement officer provided a memo to the Committee in reference to the January 14, 2022 enrollment report. The report stated that as of Friday, January 14, 2022 there are 14,155 students attending Lowell Public Schools. The January 14th enrollment report includes other categories of enrollment that the district is responsible for monitoring, placing and/or supporting such as home schooled students, out of district student placements, community pre-K student program placements, and students referred for special education program evaluation, as well as students in the Family Resource Center category awaiting school assignment. When combining all of these categories together, the total enrollment on the January enrollment report adds up to 15,111. The report also informed the Committee that the district continues to anticipate an increase in student enrollment due to the resettlement of Afghan evacuees to Massachusetts, of which approximately 200 individuals are still expected to be resettled in the greater Lowell area and Massachusetts. To date, forty-three (43) evacuee students have initiated registration and/or been assigned to a school and this includes students enrolled in collaboration with the International Institute of New England as well as students enrolled by evacuee families who independently initiated school registration.

Ms. Thompson made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.4 as reports of progress; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.5. Home Education

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

Rochelle Holland
Kathleen Emerson

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



8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1. Establishment of Subcommittees

Mayor Chau provided the Committee with their Subcommittee assignments.

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to approve the Establishment of Subcommittees; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 7 yeas APPROVED

8.2. Budget Transfer

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to approve the budget transfer of \$1,367,588.36; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

8.3. Consideration of Updated Job Description and Permission to Post: District Safety Coordinator

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer stated that the district has received only a few applications for the position of District Safety Specialist. Previously, the position was a coordinator-level position, but was reduced for the 2021/2022 school year due to the elimination of grant funding. He stated that due to the importance of the position in sustaining in-person learning, it is strongly recommended that the position be restored to the equivalent of "Coordinator" and reposted. The position to Coordinator level is also supported by the need for recruiting a highly skilled and reliable leader, as well as due to the requirements of reporting, monitoring, expanded work hours, scheduling, and working closely with principals.

Ms. Martin made a motion to post and approve the update job description of District Safety Coordinator; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 yeas APPROVED

8.4. Consideration of Supplemental Payment of \$125 Per Day for Unaffiliated Personnel Who Serve as Substitute Teachers During Periods of Required COVID-Related Emergency Classroom Coverage

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer stated that the administration is recommending that the Committee authorize \$125/day in additional compensation for unaffiliated personnel who serve as substitute teachers during times of substitute shortages and have it be retroactively applied from January 3, 2022 and continued to June 30, 2022. He stated that this additional compensation is provided to account for the extended evening hours that are required to catch up on work to meet the obligations of their standard duties while also providing classroom coverage during the contractual work day. This rate also accounts for the last-time nature of these duties and the change in hours that it may require of the employee.

Ms. Doherty asked how this is fair to other employees.

Superintendent Boyd stated that contracts are covering that for other employees.

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to approve a supplemental payment of \$125 per day for Unaffiliated Personnel who serve as Substitute Teachers during periods of required COVID-related emergency classroom coverage; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 7 yeas APPROVED



8.5. Consideration of Providing an Additional 5 Days of Sick Leave to All Personnel Who Test Positive for COVID-19 or are Required to Quarantine as Per DESE Guidelines due to Close Contact Status, Retroactive to July 1, 2021

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer stated that school employees are presently entitled to temporary emergency paid sick leave for up to \$850 (including pay and benefits). He stated that for most employees, this would equate to approximately two (2) extra sick days depending upon their compensation level and whether or not they receive health insurance. The report included that this is a \$75-million-dollar state program which expires in April or whenever the funds are depleted (see Enclosure). He stated that last school year, MOAs allowed for paid leave for employees who had to quarantine and given the requirements for quarantining and other challenges that COVID-19 has put on employees. The administration requests authority from the Committee to approve up to five (5) total sick days for employees who submit the enclosed application and who would otherwise qualify under the conditions of this program. All employees will receive five (5) days which can be granted upon receiving the attached application along with a PCR test. The district will only be able to seek reimbursement for up to \$850 per employee for these five (5) days; however, this should provide a fairer approach to dealing with this issue. The recommendation is to also have this be retroactive to July 1, 2021 and run until June 30, 2022.

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to approve an additional five (5) days of sick leave to all personnel who test positive for COVID-19 or are required to quarantine as per DESE guidelines due to close contact status and have it be retroactive to July 1, 2021; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

8.6. Approval of American International College Research Proposal: Ginger Coleman

Liam Skinner, Chief Schools Officer requested approval for Ginger Coleman, Principal of Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, who is enrolled in a doctoral program at American International College's Educational Leadership and Supervision program. A requirement of the program is to complete a dissertation-in-practice research study. Ms. Coleman's objective of her research is to conduct a research study on the deeper understanding of the current perceptions from the general education teachers' perspective of the adequacy of professional development (PD) on their preparations to teach the science of reading (SoR) through their undergraduate/graduate coursework, ongoing professional development and/or classroom experiences to address and teach the five (5) components of literacy development in order to improve student outcomes and reading proficiency through effective literacy instruction. Ms. Coleman proposes to invite twelve (12) to fifteen (15) public school certified general education elementary teachers in (Lowell) a large urban district Massachusetts will be recruited to participate in this research study.

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the American International College Research Proposal: Ginger Coleman; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED



9. CONVENTION/CONFERENCE REQUESTS

9.1. In State and Overnight Travel Request: LHS Athletic Director David Lezenski to Attend the 46th Annual Massachusetts Secondary Schools Athletic Directors (MSSAD) Conference on March 29, 2022 Through April 1, 2022 at the Cape Cod Resort and Conference Center in Hyannis, Massachusetts. There is No Cost to the District.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to bundle and approve items 9.1 and 9.2; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 yeas APPROVED

9.2. International Travel Request: Lowell High School Staff Member, Susan Brassard and Two Additional Chaperones (Cassandra Johnson and Brianna Heughins), Along with Approximately Eighteen [18] LHS Students, Are Requesting to Travel to Rome and Sorrento, Italy During the School Vacation the Week of February 20, 2023 to February 24, 2023. The Total Cost of \$3,220 Will Be Paid by Each Student Traveling the Need of Adding The Cost For Substitute Teachers May Arise Depending On Total Students Enrolled by February 17, 2023. Contingent on COVID-19 Restrictions.

Ms. Thompson requested that it be noted that the letter states ER Tours and it should read ES Tours.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to bundle and approve items 9.1 and 9.2; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 yeas APPROVED

10. COMMUNICATIONS

10.1. Communication from the Office of Teaching and Learning Regarding Staffing Levels at the Leblanc Therapeutic Day School

Sharon Bisantz registered and spoke on this agenda item.

Ms. Desmond, Chief Academic Officer provided a communication regarding staffing levels at the Leblanc Therapeutic Day School. The communication included a grid that was completed by Dr. Francisco Vicente, Director of Special Education, outlining a five (5) year breakdown of staffing levels at the LeBlanc Therapeutic Day School which shows no change.

Ms. Doherty asked the Mayor to pursue getting an SRO at the school.

Ms. Doherty requested that the Leblanc return to having a full-time BCBA to get staffing levels back to where they previously were.

Superintendent Boyd stated that he can have a report prepared for the next meeting on her concerns and he stated that moving people could impact student's IEPs.

Ms. Doherty made a motion that the Leblanc return to having a full-time BCBA to get staffing levels back to where they previously were; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux.



Ms. Thompson amended the motion to have a Curriculum Subcommittee meeting to discuss the Leblanc returning to having a full-time BCBA to get staffing levels back to where they previously were; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 6 yeas, 1 nay (Mr. Lay) APPROVED

11. PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

11.1. The Members of the United Teachers off Lowell Hereby Donate two [2] Sick Leave Days to Patricia Teague Daley School Paraprofessional.

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

12. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Delrossi made a motion to adjourn at 8:57 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 7 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

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

JDB/mes