



# LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## *REGULAR MEETING MINUTES*

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**Date:** April 15, 2020  
**Time:** 6:30PM  
**Location:** Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://zoom.us/j/98660741877?pwd=NzdyV0gzZVVwU2hrQ3BFR2RwWkdOZz09>  
Meeting ID: 986 6074 1877  
Password: 8Ap69K

### 1. SALUTE TO FLAG

### 2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:41 p.m., all members were present, namely: Ms. Doherty, Mr. Hoey, Mayor Leahy, Ms. Martin, Ms. Clark, Mr. Descoteaux and Mr. Dillon.

### 3. SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

3.1. This Meeting Is Being Held Remotely In Accordance With The Governor Of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions Of The Open Meeting Law G.L. C. 30A, Section 20.

**Mayor Leahy read to the public that this meeting was being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L.C. 30A, Section 20.**

#### 3.2. Public Hearing Inter-District School Choice Program

The Public Hearing on Inter-District School Choice Program was held and no one spoke in favor or in opposition of the Inter-District School Choice Program at Lowell High School.

### 4. MINUTES

#### 4.1. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of March 27, 2020

**Ms. Martin made a motion to approve and place on file the minutes from the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of March 27, 2020, Regularly Scheduled Lowell School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, April 1, 2020 and the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of Monday, April 6, 2020; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 7 yeas APPROVED**



4.2. Approval of the Minutes of the Regularly Scheduled Lowell School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, April 1, 2020

**Ms. Martin made a motion to approve and place on file the minutes from the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of March 27, 2020, Regularly Scheduled Lowell School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, April 1, 2020 and the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of Monday, April 6, 2020; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 7 yeas APPROVED**

4.3. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of Monday, April 6, 2020

**Ms. Martin made a motion to approve and place on file the minutes from the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of March 27, 2020, Regularly Scheduled Lowell School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, April 1, 2020 and the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee of Monday, April 6, 2020; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 7 yeas APPROVED**

## 5. MOTIONS

5.1. [By Mayor John Leahy]: Requesting that the administration provide the committee with an update on internet services, the status on Chromebooks distribution and the potential purchase of additional electronic devices.

**Mayor Leahy made a motion to approve; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 7 yeas APPROVED**

5.2. [By Mayor John Leahy]: Request that the Superintendent provide the committee with a report showing that the administration is working on a plan B for the FY21 Budget.

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

5.3. [By Connie Martin]: Requesting that the Administration report on the roll out and implementation of the District-wide Remote Learning Policy. The report should include the recommended benchmarks and outcome measures that the district will be using to track both short and long term effectiveness of the existing plan.

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

5.4. [By Jackie Doherty]: Request the Superintendent provide the committee with a report that examines the factors that may have contributed to tripling the number of student dropouts over the last few years including staff reductions, discontinued actions, or program changes

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



**5.5. [By Jackie Doherty]:** Request the Superintendent develop a plan that enables custodial staff to safely clean and maintain school buildings and grounds during the shutdown, including the potential to complete projects often overlooked due to time constraints, such as inventory control and grounds work.

Dr. Hall stated that the night shift was stopped. The district is making an effort to balance the situation with the health and safety of our staff as well as getting work done.

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

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to forward the report to Mr. Underwood, Facilities Director to receive his recommendation regarding the following motion: "Request the Superintendent develop a plan that enables custodial staff to safely clean and maintain school buildings and grounds during the shutdown, including the potential to complete projects often overlooked due to time constraints, such as inventory control and grounds work"; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 7 yeas APPROVED**

**5.6. [By Michael Dillon Jr.]:** Request that the administration explore closing LPS through the end of the current school year and continuing to operate in a distance-learning environment.

**Mr. Dillon made a motion to approve; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 6 yeas, 1 nay (Ms. Martin) APPROVED**

**5.7. [By Michael Dillon Jr.]:** Request the Superintendent ask the Athletic Director to provide a report identifying any recommendations to be considered for athletics during the current budget process.

**Mr. Dillon made a motion to approve; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 7 yeas APPROVED**

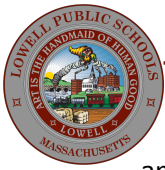
**5.8. [By Michael Dillon Jr.]:** Request the Administration provide a report on the position of Athletic Director at Lowell HS including a job description, outline of responsibilities, number of teams/ programs, number of staff, and any other relevant information available.

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

## **6. SUBCOMMITTEES**

**6.1. Finance Subcommittee:** Report and Approval of the Meeting of Wednesday, April 8, 2020 [Connie Martin, Chairperson]

Chairperson Martin informed the Committee that the district is working with the projected funding amount from the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) year one (1) roll out, but now with the impact of the Coronavirus the economic conditions are unclear. She stated that the Massachusetts budget that is provided to the cities and towns will be late due to the volatile environment that we are in. She stated that the district will have a balance of \$1,606,000, however \$200,000 needs to be deducted from that amount due to being short \$200,000 in the sick leave buy back account. She also stated that the



amounts are based on assumptions and could change instantly and drastically. She stated that moving forward the district has an opportunity with this possible projected revenue to pre-purchase supplies which will alleviate delays of needed supplies on the first day of school, spend less grant money this year which will allow the district to spend more of the available local budget balance now and allow us to carry grant money forward into the next fiscal year, and to charge more to the local budget balance which results in charging less to the revolving account which then would give the district higher “rainy day” funds. Chairperson Martin concluded by stating that due to the city expressing concerns about the impact of the Coronavirus on our funding, they have drafted the following brief back up plan:

- Maintain Status Quo which would cost \$6.5 million (\$5.4 million in step increases plus \$1.1 health insurance increase)
- Maintain Status Quo plus the increases to schools - \$8.5 million
- Review and consider all voidable contracts for cancellation
- Consider hiring freeze for vacant positions
- Last and most unlikely: Reduction in Force

**Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the report as a report of progress; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 7 years APPROVED**

## **7. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

### **7.1. COVID-19 Response Update**

Ms. Phillips, Chief Engagement & Equity Officer provided an update to the Committee regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response. The update included the following information:

- Communication tools (messages by email, phone, social media and the website sent out to the entire student population and in multiple languages)
- Breakfast and Lunch still being provided for students
- Toiletries, Activity Bags and Food Boxes are also being distributed
- Home Learning that includes an at home learning section on our website, home learning packets have been made available at the lunch sites, resources to address mental and social emotional needs have been uploaded on the website)
- School Site Councils and School Based Budgeting Process
- Central Office and Family Resource Center
- Registration and the Knowledge Bowl finals have been delayed
- Emergency Shelter Opened at the Stoklosa Middle School
- Special Education Update
- MCAS testing requirement is waived for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year
- Lowell Public Schools Website includes links to social emotional learning (SEL) activities and resources
- Graduation for Lowell High School was originally scheduled for June 3<sup>rd</sup>, but June 24<sup>th</sup> has been identified as a contingency date



**Ms. Doherty made a motion to get a report from the administration that outlines the structures in place to support the mental health needs of our students. The report should include the roles of the Student Support Specialists and Social Workers, as well as address the delivery and oversight of mental health supports across the district; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED**

Mr. Dillon requested that the Committee be kept up to date regarding the shelter at the Stoklosa School.

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.3.2 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Dillon. 7 yeas APPROVED**

### **7.2. Lowell High School Head of School Hiring Update**

Dr. Guillory, Chief Schools Officer provided an update to the Committee regarding the hiring of the Lowell High School Head of School. The update included the following information:

- Posting the Head of School position (April 15, 2020)
- Receive applications, rolling review of application for minimum qualifications
- Community Engagement Forums (TBA – prior to first interview)
- Establish Screening Committee
- Interview Qualified Applicants (May 18<sup>th</sup> – May 22<sup>nd</sup>)
- Recommend three (3) candidates to Superintendent
- Community meets the finalists forums - May 27<sup>th</sup> – May 29<sup>th</sup>
- Superintendent makes final selection of candidate by June 2020
- Community Engagement Awareness - Communication Tools
- Search Process – Recommended Blended Approach – Internal Staff and External Consultants (on an as need basis)

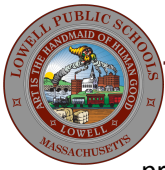
Mayor Leahy stated that the process should be slowed down a couple of weeks to make sure we do it correctly. Ms. Doherty asked that the posting and job description be forwarded to the Committee. Ms. Martin stated that we should move forward with the timeline with the understanding that we can make changes to it if necessary.

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.3.2 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Dillon. 7 yeas APPROVED**

### **7.3. Report on Motions**

Superintendent Boyd provided the Committee with an updated report on the status of outstanding motions and asked the Committee if they had any concerns or questions.

Mr. Hoey again reiterated that the administration can take the amount of time they need to provide the information back to the Committee regarding motion: **7.2. [By Bob Hoey]:** That the superintendent



produce a report by April 1, 2020 meet with the following information charting out spend expenditures by year for the last 15 years (or as far as back as possible):

- Number of total special education budget; | Percentage of kids receiving special location services;
- Amount of money spent on out of district services; | Percentages of children utilizing out of district services;
- Number of employees working in Special Education (please also provide their job descriptions);
- Total of number of employees within the district per year

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.3.2 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Dillon. 7 yeas APPROVED**

**7.3.1. Response to Motion 5.CAO Of 02/19/20 By Hillary Clark: Makerspaces In Lowell Public Schools Request The Superintendent Provide A Status Update On The Use Of The Makerspace's At Lowell High School And The Bartlett Community Partnership School.**

Ms. Desmond, Chief Academic Officer provided a report to the Committee that informed them that the district STEM resource teacher position at the Bartlett School was eliminated from the FY20 budget. This position helped the Bartlett School staff get the Makerspace up and running over the past three (3) years. The Bartlett school was unable to manage the Makerspace without the District STEM Resource position this year and materials and equipment are still housed in the space. The report also stated that the Makerspace at Lowell High Freshman Academy opened five (5) years ago and from the start there we many challenges that limited student access, and ultimately resulted in the space being phase out.

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.3.2 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Dillon. 7 yeas APPROVED**

**7.3.2. Response to Motion 5. COO Of 03/27/20 By Bob Hoey: Superintendent To Review With Solicitor The School Committee's Authority To Vote On Paying Transportation Providers And Other Venders When Services Could Not Be Performed Because Of COVID-19 Closure Of Schools.**

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer provided a report to the Committee that informed them that the district has received legal guidance on whether the Governor's emergency orders to municipalities granted any flexibility to the School Committee to make payments when services were not rendered due to the COVID-19 closure of school. It states that the School Committee's authority continues to be limited by the Lowell Code of Ordinances, Sec 28-7; supporting case law; and the Contracts themselves. The City Auditor's approval is also needed for any payment and such must be made "in accordance with the terms of the contract". (Lowell Code of Ordinances, 28-7).

**Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.3.2 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Dillon. 7 yeas APPROVED**



## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

### **8.1. Vote of Inter-District School Choice**

Mr. Phillips, Chief Equity and Engagement Officer provided a report to the Committee that recommends that the Lowell Public Schools do not consider participation in the inter-district school choice program for grades 9 – 12 for the 2020-2021 school year. The recommendation is based on discussions with Lowell Public School Attorneys and Administrators, as well as updated guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in regards to School Choice; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 7 yeas APPROVED

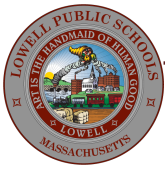
**Ms. Martin made a motion to not participate in the Inter-District School Choice Program for the 2020 - 2021 school year; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 6 yeas, 1 nay (Mr. Hoey) APPROVED**

### **8.2. Grading and Promotion Policies During Covid-19 Public Health Crisis**

Superintendent Boyd provided a report to the Committee that informed them that on March 26, 2020 the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued recommendations to all public school districts regarding how student work should be assessed during the course of the current public health crisis. He stated that the transition to remote learning instruction has required an abrupt, multifaceted and unprecedented shift in how we operationalize the delivery of academic content to our students. He stated that our traditional system of grading student work on a 0-100 scale is simply impossible to implement in ways that are either equitable or practicable given the circumstances under which that work is being disseminated by educators and completed by students. Consistent with Commissioner Riley's March 26th recommendation, we are seeking the Committee's authorization via the suspension of School Committee Policies IKE and IKE-R (and the associated provisions of the Student and Parent Handbooks) to immediately transition our grading regimen to a Grading Policies – April 13, 2020 Page 2 credit/no credit assessment system. Importantly, and again consistent with DESE's guidance, the district will continue to emphasize the importance of providing meaningful and substantive feedback on all school work to students and families. He stated that the conversion of our grading system to a credit/no credit system will allow the district to provide educational services in a manner consistent with our principles of equity to which we have legal and moral obligations, and it will create a need to accommodate a variety of other challenges related to grade promotion, GPA calculation at Lowell High School, summer school eligibility, and student activity participation. It will also affect various student recognition programs contemplated by existing School Committee Policies and Handbook provisions governing LPS academics, including determinations of LHS valedictorian and salutatorian, honor roll inclusion, and eligibility for both the National Honor Society and certain scholarships.

**Ms. Martin made a motion that pursuant to Policy BGF of the Lowell School Committee, to suspend all Lowell School Committee Policies and relevant provisions of the Lowell Public Schools Parent & Student Handbooks, including, but not limited to School Committee Policies IKE and IKE-R, authorizing the Superintendent to direct all Lowell Public Schools teachers to assess student work completed via remote learning instruction via a credit/no credit system and to make other accommodations as necessary with regard to student grading, promotion and recognition for the duration of the ongoing public health emergency, consistent with the recommendation of the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 7 yeas APPROVED**





### **8.3. Approval of Revised 2019-2020 School Calendar Due to Health Emergency**

Shelby Boisvert, LSAA President registered to speak and addressed the Committee.

Superintendent Boyd stated that the district will be receiving guidance from Department of Elementary of Secondary Education regarding this matter and will report back to the Committee.

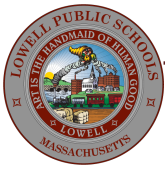
**Ms. Doherty made a motion to cancel April Vacation (April 21st – April 24th), and to have these four (4) days count as work days; seconded by Ms. Clark. 7 yeas APPROVED**

### **9. PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL**

#### **9.1. UTL Donated Sick Days for Julie Bannerman**

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





**10. ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms. Clark made a motion to adjourn at 9:09 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**