

**WATERTOWN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WATERTOWN, MA**

**RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
149 MAIN STREET**

**MONDAY
OCTOBER 23, 2017
7:00 P.M.**

MINUTES

I. Roll Call

Mr. John Portz, School Committee Chairman, called to order the October 23, 2017 meeting of the School Committee. Present were School Committee members Mr. Mark Sideris, Dr. Guido Guidotti, Mr. Eileen Hsu-Balzer, Ms. Kendra Foley, and Ms. Elizabeth Yusem. Also present were Superintendent Dr. Deanne Galdston, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Dr. Theresa McGuinness, Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations Ms. Mary DeLai, Director of Student Services Ms. Kathleen Desmarais, and Director of Human Resources Mr. Craig Hardimon. Various members of the public were also in attendance.

II. High School Student Advisors

Miss Lauren Petrillo and Miss Emily Koufos, student advisors to the School Committee, reported on recent goings-on at Watertown High School. They reported on the high school's fundraiser for breast cancer research, the annual talent show, the homecoming dance, the school play *You Can't Take It With You*, and fall sports playoffs.

Miss Petrillo and Miss Koufos said they had sent out a school-wide survey regarding the potential change of school start times beginning in the fall of 2018. Results of the survey indicated about half of responding students were familiar with health and wellness issues related to lack of adequate sleep. Most responding students indicated they were aware the District was considering a change in school start times at the middle and high schools. 71.6% of students responded that they thought it would be beneficial to be able to sleep later but 81.7% of students were concerned about after-school activities extending later into the day.

III. Chairman's Report

Mr. Portz reported on the recent review of the District's school buildings with regards to trace amounts of asbestos found in school facilities, specifically within the skim-coat plaster on the walls of Watertown High School, through a recent inspection of the buildings. Mr. Portz and Superintendent Galdston said that the issues discovered would be remediated on a priority basis in compliance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Removal Act (AHERA), with a final report in approximately one week. Dr. Galdston said a public School Committee meeting regarding the schools' AHERA reports and remediation plans would be held as soon as the reports are completed.

A School Committee member noted that neighboring towns, including Belmont, have recently faced similar facilities issues within their older school buildings. She said she appreciated the Superintendent said she would be forthcoming to the public about any new information as it becomes available.

A School Committee member clarified that the school buildings were evaluated every three years in compliance with AHERA.

IV. Public Forum – Session I

No member of the public spoke.

V. Presentation and Discussion

A. Co-Teaching Model

Ms. Kathleen Desmarais reported on the status on the District's implementation of a co-teaching model with particular regards to special education teachers teaming with classroom teachers for instruction of core content. She said that in 2015-2016, two separate third-party reports recommended shifts in resource allocation to promote inclusive practices such as co-teaching; co-teaching had

support and expand the practice. In 2016-2017, the budget creation process allowed the District to plan for implementation of the third-party reviews' recommendations. Ms. Desmarais said that Superintendent Galdston had shared her clear vision of inclusion at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. As a part of the District's opening days professional development for secondary school staff, Ms. Kathy Porcaro made a presentation on *Teaching and Reaching All Learners*. The same presentation was said to be planned for delivery to elementary staff in April 2018.

Ms. Desmarais said that job-embedded coaching is already underway at Watertown High School as of fall 2017, with implementation scheduled for Watertown Middle School beginning in winter 2018. She said that Ms. Porcaro had visited WHS and reported that her observations indicated that existing co-teaching teams are functioning at the highest level. She said that student engagement was evident and that teachers were providing rigorous instruction. Ms. Desmarais said that, in planning for FY19, the District would need to determine consistency in instruction, continuation of existing co-teaching pairs, set co-planning time, parent/guardian-teacher nights, and details of report cards. She said that ongoing professional development and staff support would be supplied by the District.

Ms. Christine Seashore, special education math teacher at WHS, said that she and Ms. Karen Trenholm have very successfully existed as co-teachers for three years. Ms. Seashore said that she and Ms. Trenholm are able to collaborate to provide their students with different teaching methods and they are able to better identify students' learning issues with two sets of eyes. Ms. Trenholm said she thought it would be beneficial for teachers to know months in advance if they would be co-teaching the following school year. She said that she hoped the District would be able to determine a way to pair teachers who would be particularly compatible as co-teachers.

At Hosmer Elementary School, Ms. Kara DeBaie and Ms. Marissa Nickl serve as third grade co-teachers, while Ms. Sarah Domermuth and Ms. Jill Fantasia are co-teachers in the fifth grade. The four teachers reported they are very happy with the successes of their co-teaching practices. They said their biggest challenge was finding adequate co-teaching planning time.

Mr. Portz thanked Ms. Desmarais and the co-teachers for their report.

A School Committee member suggested co-teaching mentoring would be helpful to new co-teachers.

A School Committee member said co-teaching appears to be particularly successful for tier-2 students who may need some extra attention in order to excel academically.

A School Committee member noted the social-emotional benefits of co-teaching on students. He offered his support of the program.

A School Committee member asked if there is a role for instructional assistants (IAs) in co-taught classrooms. Ms. Desmarais said there is always a role for IAs in special education.

A School Committee member said she has two children who have both benefitted greatly from the co-teaching model.

B. High School Mascot Options

Ms. Kendra Foley, Chair of the Mascot Screening Committee, presented four options for a mascot of Watertown High School, as determined by the Mascot Screening Committee. Mascot options included a Raider on a horse, a helmet, a shield, and a Raider with a shield. She said the committee wanted to find a mascot inclusive of the Watertown committee. Ms. Foley said the four mascot options had just been posted on the WPS website where community feedback would be collected before a November 2017 vote to accept a final mascot.

VI. Action Items – Discussion and Vote

A. Proposed Change in School Start Times

The Chairman said the issue of changing school start times to better work within students' biological clocks had been under discussion for about two years.

Dr. Galdston said that decades of research consistently point to later school start times being highly beneficial for adolescents. In Watertown, various task forces, community forums, faculty forums, and an online survey had existed in order to gather feedback regarding later school start times for middle and high school students.

A member of the public, a mother of two Watertown students, said she agrees the middle and high schools should begin later, but asked that the schools open earlier for those students who may need to still leave their homes early in the morning. She supported the elementary schools opening at 8:15 AM.

A member of the public said that a number of school districts that have already implemented last school start times have reported beneficial effects for their students.

A School Committee member said it is clear that data consistently shows that later school start times benefit students. She said the District should be mindful of the ripple-effect this change may have on individual families. She noted her support of an 8:30 AM start time at the middle and high schools.

A School Committee member said she appreciated the length of time and the amount of investigation around the issue of school start times. She noted her support of an 8:30 AM start time at the middle and high schools.

A School Committee member said that he is concerned not all of the details regarding later start times have been discussed, such as a possible increase of bus costs. He also noted concern for the effect of later release times on students' after-school jobs.

A School Committee member committed her support to an 8:30 AM start time at the middle and high schools, but said concerns like potentially worsened staff commutes, students' possibly increased bus costs, and athletics field sharing should not be ignored.

A School Committee member said that too little sleep for adolescents correlates with increases risks of substance abuse, ADHD, depression, motor vehicle accidents, and decreased academic performance. He stated his support of an 8:30 AM start time at the middle and high schools.

The Chairman said later school start times for adolescents are almost universally accepted as beneficial for students' academic performance and general health. He said there are subsequent changes with cost implications that will have to be made, but the adjustments can be made as the District moves forward.

A motion was made to change the middle and high school start times to 8:30 AM and the elementary school start times to 8:15 AM, effective in the fall of 2018.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

The Superintendent thanked the School Committee for making this change nine months in advance of the next school year, giving families time to plan for the adjustment.

B. Approval of Minutes:

1. October 2, 2017 School Committee Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the above-listed meeting.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. April 3, 2017 School Committee Meeting

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the above-listed meeting.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

C. Approval of Gifts:

1. Google Inc. via FIRST

A motion was made to accept a gift of \$3,000.00 from Google Inc. via FIRST for the WHS Robotics Team.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. H&R Block

A motion was made to accept a gift of \$320.00 from H&R Block for the Watertown SEPAC.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

3. Ms. Helen Clinton

A motion was made to approve a gift of \$40.00 from Ms. Helen Clinton for the Watertown Family Network.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Mary-Benham B. Nygren

A motion was made to accept a gift of \$40.03 from Ms. Mary-Benham B. Nygren for the WHS Robotics Team.

The motion was seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Reports

A. WPS Projects and Activities:

1. Building for the Future

Ms. Elizabeth Yusem, Chair of the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee, reported Daedalus Projects, Inc. had been chosen as the owner's project manager within the District on the elementary schools buildings project. The next step, she said, was to choose a designer for the project. Dr. Galdston said she is excited to move forward with this exciting, large project.

Ms. Yusem said the high school was still under consideration by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for state funding towards repair, renovation, and/or construction.

A School Committee member asked if the MSBA would be notified of the high school's AHERA report; both the Chairman and the Superintendent said the MSBA would absolutely be made aware.

2. High School and Middle School Class Size Report

Dr. Galdston presented a [report](#) on secondary class sizes.

3. District MCAS Reporting Timeline

Dr. Galdston presented information from a [memorandum](#) on the District's MCAS reporting timeline.

A School Committee member noted how difficult it is to understand the MCAS with so many continual changes to the test at the state level.

B. Monthly Updates:

1. FY18 Budget

Ms. DeLai reported on the [status](#) of the FY18 budget. She said the District is presently projecting remaining expenses of \$2,760,166.00 through the end of the fiscal year which would result in a favorable year-end balance of \$630,507.00 or 1.4% of the FY18 adopted budget.

2. Warrants

Mr. Portz presented a [report](#) of warrants recently released for payment.

VIII. Public Forum – Session II

A member of the public thanked the School Committee to committing to later school start times at the secondary schools. She suggested the District conduct a study and create a report on the IEP process.

IX. Reports

A. Chairman's

Mr. Portz said the District would be signing a contract with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASS) in order to look at the policy manual.

B.

C. Superintendent's

Dr. Galdston thanked the people who have worked with the District, including the maintenance and custodial staff, in regards to the asbestos issue at WHS. She similarly thanked Ms. DeLai and Ms. Lori Kabel, Director of Facilities, for their help and long hours in working to remediate the issue.

She also thanked the Wellness Committee and the School Start Times Implementation Committee for their thoroughness and detail that helped the School Committee to make the decision to change school start times. She thanked Ms. Desmarais and the co-teachers for giving their time to report on co-teaching. She thanked Ms. McGuinness for her work on curriculum in the District. She thanked the community for their support.

X. Next Meeting

The next School Committee meeting was said to be scheduled for November 13, 2017.

XI. New Business

A member of the School Committee asked to refer to the Policy Subcommittee the issue of students bringing external guests to District social events like school dances.

XII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 PM.

Meeting Documents:

[Memo: FY17 Quarterly Budget Status](#)

[Mascot Concept Finalists](#)

[Secondary Class Size Report](#)

[Enrollment Report](#)

[Co-Teaching Report](#)

[Memo: MCAS Reporting Schedule](#)

[Warrants](#)

Minutes submitted by Christie Fisher, Administrative Assistant to the Central Office