Chairman Russo called this meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. in the School Committee Room, Administration Offices, 123 Cambridge Street, Burlington, Massachusetts. Present: Mr. Stephen Nelson (7:30 p.m. arrival), Mrs. Christine Monaco, Mr. Thomas F. Murphy, Jr. and Ms. Martha Simon. Superintendent Eric Conti, Asst. Superintendent Patrick Larkin, Business Manager Nichole Coscia and Director of Operations Bob Cunha also present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve minutes of 6/26/18; motion carried 4-0-0.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

INFORMATION/REPORT

Subcommittee Reports

Ways & Means

None.

Members Sue Harrigan and Diane Creedon in attendance.

NEW BUSINESS

MSMS Spectrum Club - Approval
MSMS ASP Expansion - Approval
Middle School Cross Country Team Approval

By consensus, these items were taken out of order. New Principal Cari Perchace was in attendance to ask that the School Committee approve three requests. She explained she’d met with After School Director Donna Sullivan who’d like to expand after school child care for mostly 6th grade students at MSMS, tuition would pay for staffing, and the program would run in the cafeteria from 2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Athletic Director Shaun Hart is requesting approval to create a cross country team at the middle school. Ms. Perchace is also requesting approval for a second year of the extracurricular Spectrum Club for middle school students; this past school year 7 meetings were held with students and two advisors. The School Committee welcomed Principal Perchace and thanked her for jumping in to her new duties so quickly. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Ms. Simon to approve a Spectrum Club and associated stipend for the middle school; motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mr. Nelson to approve the expansion of the After School Program at the middle school; motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve a cross country team at the middle school; motion carried 4-0-1; Mr. Nelson abstained.

COMMUNICATION

September Town Meeting
Warrant Article - Approval

Dr. Conti explained that to close out the FY18 budget, a shortfall of approximately $1.7 million has been identified. Ms. Coscia sent a memo to the School Committee identifying the majority of excess in budgeted appropriations: tutors $290,000, stipends $200,000, substitutes $220,000, maintenance contracted services $400,000 and Special Education Transportation $594,000. In FY16 special education was overspent by $170,000 and in FY17 it was overspent by $321,000; both deficits were covered by the school operating budget but they were accommodated account shortfalls. He further commented that five union contracts weren’t settled before the budget guideline was set. The Superintendent explained that in order to meet the warrant article deadline of August 10 for September town meeting, the School Committee will need to approve a warrant article requesting funding tonight.

A very lengthy discussion followed: why it is happening, spike in special education services, 30 maternity/paternity leaves this year, it’s a multi-year issue coming to a head at the end of FY18, possible ways to fund the shortfall, suggestion that an education stabilization fund be considered, mechanism to request funds from town meeting, and how to make sure it doesn’t happen again. Some concerns expressed by the School Committee: this has never happened in the past, firm procedures need to be in place to make sure it doesn’t happen again, requested an updated monthly budget/efficacy report, a higher yearly budget guideline may be needed, and all expressed concern and surprise with the upsetting news of the shortfall.

Business Manager Nichole Coscia commented that in FY19: the budget for substitute teachers has been increased, the tutor budget has been decreased, and budgeted amounts for stipends are based on union contracts as well as historical data. Ms. Coscia further reported that the purchase order process will now be electronic; requisitions will be done through Munis which will avoid receiving bills we have no knowledge of. Chairman Russo requested that the Committee be provided with monthly financial updates from Mr. Cunha/Ms. Coscia. Ways & Means subcommittee members Sue Harrigan and Diane Creedon expressed: extreme concern, it will be challenging to figure out the shortfall, it’s very important that the school department review monthly budget reports and actual spending with the School Committee,
and it’s important that staff members are aware of their specific budget allocations.

The School Committee suggested that two subcommittee meetings will need to be scheduled prior to September town meeting.

Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve a placeholder warrant article as follows: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, or otherwise provide the sum of TBD, for the purpose of issuing payment of bills incurred in excess of appropriations; or to act in any other manner in relation thereto; motion carried 5-0-0. Dr. Conti will set up a meeting to discuss this with town officials as soon as possible.

**INSTRUCTION/TECHNOLOGY**

Simon Youth Foundation

Dr. Conti reviewed with the Committee contributions from the Simon Youth Foundation towards the Evening Academy program which included: $16,000 in scholarships, $3,257 enhancement grant, and 6 graduates of the program in May. The Committee commented: the teachers provide wonderful services to students with difficulties, Simon Foundation provides support and funding, and they requested Dr. Conti to send a thank you letter to the Simon Youth Foundation on the Committee’s behalf.

BHS Advanced Placement Participation

Mr. Larkin distributed and reviewed Advanced Placement\(^1\) student demographics and scores for BHS students. The number of students taking the exams has steadily increased: 130 students took 222 tests in 2009 to 239 students took 458 tests in 2018. He further explained that in 2018 79% of these students scored a 3 or better, which will count as 3 credits at the college level. In response to Ms. Simon, Mr. Larkin will check with BHS Guidance to ascertain if they have a formal program to encourage students to enroll in AP classes.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Child Abuse Prevention Training Access

The Superintendent informed the Committee that we are finalizing details for the School Committee to obtain access for the Committee to preview the Child Abuse Prevention Training that will be available to staff beginning in August.

School Resource Officer MOU – Update

Dr. Conti reported to the Committee that the Assistant Attorney General’s office has informed him that they’d like all Massachusetts school districts to use the standardized template Memorandum of Understanding, which the Committee has approved. Chief Kent and Dr. Conti will meet to finalize details in the MOU and a final copy of the MOU will be sent to the Committee.

The Superintendent informed the Committee that Governor Baker will be coming to Burlington in August to announce a new state-wide school security program.

**NEW BUSINESS**

BSAA Contract – Approval

Dr. Conti reviewed this new 2017-20 Memorandum of Understanding with the BSAA, which included a COLA of 1-1/2% each year, an increase in longevity, stipend, annuity increase and work hours. Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve the Burlington School Administrators’ Association contract for 2017-20; motion carried 5-0-0.

Revision of Allergy Policy - First Reading

Nurse Leader Barbara Conley has submitted a requested revision to the allergy policy to add latex allergies and include yearly information that is provided to parents. As this is a first reading the School Committee will take this under advisement and vote on it at the August 21 meeting.

Revision of School Attendance Age Policy – First Reading

The Superintendent stated that the Committee is being requested to require that students need to have attained the age of five by August 31 to be eligible to attend kindergarten with no exceptions, which will provide clarification to parents and reflect surrounding school districts policies. He reviewed additions and deletions to areas of the policy and noted that there is no rush to approve the policy; the Committee can schedule further discussion if they so choose. Mrs. Monaco commented that it’s an emotional situation for parents, especially for parents of students born on 9/11 having to wait an additional year to be eligible to attend kindergarten; it’s not as simple as a black and white policy. She suggested that the wording for exception #1 be revised to: (This provision respects a grade level reciprocity for students moving into the district from other public schools or other qualified private schools within the United States only.) The Committee will further discuss this at upcoming school committee meetings.

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\(^1\) AP Summary – Student Demographics 2018
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

Chairman Russo announced that the Committee had a need for executive session under exemption 3; to conduct collective bargaining/grievance meeting. The School Committee will only return to public session for the purpose of adjournment. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mr. Murphy at 8:55 p.m. to enter executive session to discuss contract negotiations and approve minutes. Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy at 10:50 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Gilbert
Recording Secretary

Date submitted: 8/21/18
Date approved: 8/21/18