

Superintendent Eric Conti called this meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. in the School Committee room, Administrative Offices, 123 Cambridge Street, Burlington, MA. Present: Mrs. Christine Monaco, Mr. Carl Foss, Ms. Martha Simon, Mr. Thomas F. Murphy, Jr. and Mrs. Katherine Bond. Superintendent Eric Conti, Assistant Superintendent Patrick Larkin (7:25 p.m. arrival), Business Manager Nichole Coscia, and Director of Operations Bob Cunha also present.

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Conti read the following statement: Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the School Committee is being conducted via remote public participation. He further explained that if someone would like to be recognized to raise their hand virtually.

**School Committee
Reorganization &
Subcommittee Assignments**

Dr. Conti called for nominations for a new School Committee Chairman. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mrs. Monaco to nominate Tom Murphy as Chairman; motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mr. Foss to nominate Katherine Bond as Vice Chairman; motion carried 5-0-0.

Chairman Murphy commended Mrs. Monaco for doing a great job as Chairman for the past year with all the uncertainty, and learning how to conduct meetings remotely. Ms. Simon also complimented Mrs. Monaco commenting she appreciated her work and acknowledging how difficult a year it has been.

The School Committee discussed the 20 subcommittee assignments in tonight's meeting packet for the upcoming year. After a brief discussion, the Committee decided to omit three subcommittees at this time: B-Line Advisory, Master Plan Steering Committee, and Equity Committee. They also chose to revise the name of the Chapter 766 Parent Advisory Committee to Special Education Parent Advisory Committee Liaison. Ms. Simon requested that at a future meeting, the Committee review the definition and responsibilities for subcommittee members and liaisons.

1. Recreation Commission (T. Murphy)
2. Two members to serve on the Academic Review Board (M. Simon, T. Murphy)
3. Two members to serve on the Sick Leave Bank Committee of the Burlington Educators Association. It has been the practice that the Superintendent and one member of the School Committee serve on this committee, but this is at the discretion of the members (Superintendent, C. Monaco)
4. One member to serve on the Sick Leave Bank Committee of the Burlington School Administrators Association (M. Simon)
5. Legislative contact person to the Mass. Association of School Committees (C. Foss, K. Bond)
6. Special Education Parent Advisory Committee Liaison (C. Monaco, K. Bond)
7. Subcommittee to the Board of Selectmen (C. Monaco, T. Murphy)
8. Subcommittee to the Ways & Means (C. Monaco, T. Murphy)
9. Subcommittee to the Board of Health (C. Foss, M. Simon)
10. Subcommittee to the Recreation Committee (K. Bond, T. Murphy)
11. Subcommittee to the Planning Board (C. Foss, T. Murphy)
12. Subcommittee for Wellness (M. Simon, C. Monaco, alternate, E. Conti)
13. Subcommittee for Transportation (K. Bond, C. Monaco, E. Conti)
14. Audit Subcommittee (T. Murphy)
15. PTO Representatives:
 - Fox Hill (K. Bond, C. Monaco alt.)
 - Memorial (C. Foss, M. Simon alt.)
 - Pine Glen (T. Murphy, C. Monaco alt.)
 - Francis Wyman (C. Monaco, T. Murphy alt.)
 - MSMS (M. Simon, K. Bond alt.)
 - BHS (C. Foss, C. Monaco alt.)
 - BECC (C. Monaco)

- 16. Burlington Youth & Family Services (M. Simon)
- 17. Disability Access Commission (M. Simon, C. Monaco)

Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mrs. Bond to approve subcommittees as previously read and discussed. Motion carried 5-0-0.

The following formal appointments were also made:

- 1. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Ms. Simon to approve the School Committee designee to the LABBB Collaborative as Superintendent Conti. Motion carried 5-0-0.
- 2. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Ms. Simon to approve Central Office Sexual Harassment/Complaint Management Facilitators Joanne Faust and Assistant Superintendent Larkin. Motion carried 5-0-0.
- 3. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mrs. Bond to approve Coordinators for Nondiscrimination Compliance (including Civil Rights and Title IX) Joanne Faust and Assistant Superintendent Larkin. Motion carried 5-0-0.
- 4. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mr. Foss to approve as School Committee secretary Sharon Gilbert. Motion carried 5-0-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mrs. Bond to approve minutes of 3/23/21. Motion carried 5-0-0.

APPROVAL OF WARRANT Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mrs. Bond to approve the warrant. Motion carried 5-0-0.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION None.

INFORMATION/REPORTS Student Representative Mr. Larkin arrived. Sara Shaikh explained the tenets of Ramadan, which for Muslims began today. The senior class is trying to plan an event around pandemic guidelines and an uptick in covid cases. A survey was sent to seniors to gather ideas for an event. Senior internships will begin May 3, the same day that BHS is scheduled to return to full-time in person learning. This will mean that seniors in cohorts A and B will not see each other if they are enrolled in the internship program. The junior class held a fundraiser at True North last week.

Dr. Conti thanked Sara for her efforts along with the group of students who requested that the school district hire someone with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion two years ago; we weren't able to follow through at that time. This community position was funded by town meeting last fall. Mr. Larkin commented that the search for this position was fully inclusive.

Sara introduced Mr. Ray Porch as the new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion beginning in July. She explained the interview process, commenting that Mr. Porch stood out due to his experience and charisma. Mr. Porch commented that he looks forward to working and collaborating with students, staff, parents, and the community. He thanked everyone who was part of the hiring process, Superintendent Conti and Mr. Larkin. The School Committee introduced themselves individually and welcomed Mr. Porch. Parent Martha Duffield stated that she'd enjoyed meeting him during the interview process, has two bi-racial children, and is pleased that they'll have someone they feel comfortable talking to. As President of BAR, Ms. Duffield commented that the organization looks forward to supporting him.

Subcommittee Reports Ms. Simon recently attended a board meeting for Youth and Family Services, reviewed the discussion of that meeting as well as upcoming events. Youth and Family Services have hosted four webinars which were recorded and they will be available on their website soon.

Dr. Conti announced the Wellness Committee meeting scheduled for Thursday at 2:00 has been cancelled.

Roger Riggs stated that there will be a school subcommittee meeting tomorrow at 6 p.m. and a review of the FY22 school budget by the full Ways & Means committee at 7 p.m.

Ways & Means

Roger Riggs, Jaya Voruganti, Steve Morin and Rob Neufeld in attendance.

Coronavirus Update From The Superintendent Elementary & Secondary Schedules Update

The Superintendent stated that this is the beginning of week 2 for the full day return of elementary students. Parents indicated that their kids were tired but happy. He thanked principals and teachers for their tremendous efforts to make this happen.

Dr. Conti noted that at the middle school, student homerooms have been assigned, with some students having new homerooms in order to balance classes. When middle school students return to full in person learning on April 26 there will be new bus routes.

At the high school, due to Covid levels a full return date is anticipated for May 3. This week there are 130 students absent due to being close contacts of infected students.

The Superintendent explained that redesigned bus routes for the middle and high school are completed and students will be able to take the bus five days a week. Regulations for spacing distances on the bus have been removed, students must wear a mask, and bus windows will be open. In school buildings the minimum spacing is 3' for students, there may be more cases of covid due to elimination of spacing on buses, and they have not seen any covid clusters in schools. At the elementary level, a meeting was held with administrators; under normal conditions, three students are assigned to a seat but as contact tracing would be impossible and a lot more students would need to quarantine, the Superintendent is keeping the current elementary bus assignments for the time being. Mr. Larkin thanked Susan Lumenello, the Board of Health, and school nurses for their support this year. In response to Mrs. Monaco, Mr. Cunha replied that there aren't any bus changes yet, they are in phase 4 of planning and are not finalized at this time. Dr. Conti stated that at the high school and middle school there are 18 buses, at Pine Glen there are 5, at Francis Wyman 9, at Fox Hill 7, and at Memorial 6. He further explained that there is the potential if full day kindergarten continues, we could possibly add a 19th bus at no cost. Mr. Cunha explained that at the elementary level currently there is one student per seat for a total of about 30 on each bus. He anticipates a letter will go out to parents at the end of this week regarding new bus routes. Dr. Conti expressed his concern that there were 25 positive covid cases at BHS last week, the pandemic is not over, and recommended that families and students practice precautions. He also noted that the school will do our best to recognize student accomplishments as best we can safely.

Monthly Financial Review

Ms. Coscia reviewed the four pages of monthly financials included in the Committee's meeting packet. Revolving accounts for school lunches has a deficit of -\$247,066 and Sprouts has a deficit of -\$20,056. The operating and accommodated account balances remain similar to last month. The Superintendent explained that the Afterschool program hours are the same however, the school department is picking up expenses for the first half of their day as they are managing lunch, recess, and specials at the elementary level. The second half of their day is paid by parents with student tuition. In response to Ms. Simon, Ms. Coscia will check on elementary summer support staff, line 33, page 2 which last month showed a deficit of -\$89,000 and this month has a deficit of -\$124,458. The Superintendent stated there is a balance of \$142,000 in the operating budget for the remainder of the school year. In response to Mr. Riggs, Ms. Coscia replied that there will be some funds coming from the town for the lunch account deficit, which have been received but she is waiting until the end of the school year to close out the deficit.

School Building/Facilities Fox Hill Statement of Interest

Dr. Conti stated that Burlington Schools and town officials have been invited to the MSBA Board meeting tomorrow morning regarding the Fox Hill School statement of interest; which is a positive step forward. If the vote is positive for the Fox Hill project, it will be the start of a structured 7 year process with scripted steps and a project kick off on June 1. There will be opportunities for the community to participate in the process, which would be an advisory role to the School Committee who will make the final decisions. If the Fox Hill Process moves forward, the School Committee will need to discuss: size of a new Fox Hill, keeping 4 or downsizing to 3 elementary schools, and enrollment projections to be provided by the MSBA. Dr. Conti reiterated that there have been no decisions made on the Fox Hill project at this point. In late spring, a statement of interest will be submitted for BHS, if the Fox Hill project is approved.

In response to Ms. Simon, Mr. Cunha replied that there has been nothing new to report on the BHS feasibility study.

COMMUNICATION
Capital Warrant Articles

Dr. Conti noted that the town has assigned a \$1.5 million threshold for schools in capital warrant articles; they have indicated that requests should prioritize health and safety needs. The following articles are on the town warrant: BHS Turf Field & Track Resurfacing \$725,000, ECM Insulation & Weather Stripping BHS & MSMS \$187,000, Francis Wyman Intercom Replacement \$272,400, Sanitary Product Dispensers Systemwide \$55,000, Establish District Reserve fund – no cost, and Community Custodial \$47,464.45. Steve Morin explained the Ways & Means Committee will review warrant articles at their April 28 and May 5 meetings. The Committee decided to take no action on approval of capital warrant articles until the April 27 meeting.

Ms. Coscia explained that the request to establish a District Reserve Fund is to have town meeting approve a school liability fund; upon retirement, school district employees have to be paid out earned time. Jim Powers of Powers & Sullivan has recommended that it's best practice to set up this fund so that it doesn't jeopardize the school operating budget. Dr. Conti stated he'd spoken with Attorney Klein and Ms. Coscia on how to fund this account and one mechanism would be that if there are remaining operating budget funds at the end of the fiscal year, the School Committee could vote to fund that account. The School Committee will be provided specific required language for the warrant articles at the next meeting.

2021-22 Teachers' School
Calendar – First Reading

Dr. Conti related that the BEA was consulted on the proposed 2021-22 teachers' calendar, Labor Day is late this year and professional development days have been spread out during the school year. Students in grades 1 – 12 will start on Monday, 8/30 and preK and kindergarten will begin on Thursday, 9/9. He reviewed holidays and the anticipated last day of school, June 16. The Superintendent explained that observation of the holiday Juneteenth in June 2022 still needs to be confirmed. Screening for kindergarten students will be held on August 30 – September 9.

Ms. Simon asked that it be considered that professional development days be moved from either January or March to October; its shown to be more effective if those days are spread out through the school year. In response to Mrs. Monaco, BECC Director Deborah Clark explained that the preK students start a week later than other elementary grades to allow for catch up on kindergarten screening, early intervention screenings, materials prep, student/parent open house and tours. She explained she believes that similar work occurs at the kindergarten level during that same week.

As this is a first reading, the School Committee will take this under advisement and vote on the school calendar at the April 27 meeting.

FY22 Draft Budget –
Curriculum, Nurses, Special
Education, Accommodated,
BECC

Ms. Coscia reviewed the following FY22 budgets:

- Curriculum a 0.01% increase of \$30
- Health Services an increase of \$13,660 to reinstate vision screening cut last year
- Special Education is level funded

Special Education Director Mary Houde stated that her priority need for next year would be a psychologist at the middle school and secondly an additional special education teacher at Pine Glen. Dr. Conti and the School Committee thanked Special Ed Director Mary Houde for her service and wished her well in retirement. Nurse Leader Barbara Conley thanked: Susan Lumenello and the Board of Health, the school nurses, Mr. Larkin, and the School Committee for their support.

Dr. Conti stated that currently there are two unsettled union contracts that will affect next year's operating budget. Ways & Means member Roger Riggs recommended that the School Committee submit a budget that meets the guideline of 3.5%.

Ms. Coscia stated that the FY22 Accommodated budget projects a decrease of -2.2% a reduction of -\$281,683. The reductions are due to students who have aged out of programs or who have moved out of town. Preschool Director Deborah Clark explained she is not requesting additional staff for next year, tuition was reduced this year due to the hybrid model

but there will be a slight tuition increase next year. The preschool budget was up \$58,358 for a 2.1% increase.

FY22 School Budget Public Hearing & Approval

Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Ms. Simon to open the public hearing on the FY22 school budget; motion carried 5-0-0. Ms. Simon thanked Dr. Conti and Ms. Coscia for their hard work this year that included a lot of additional requirements as well as new regulations on federal grant funding. SEPAC Board member Beth Colburn thanked the school department and also as a parent reminded everyone that school budget money is spent on small humans and to keep that in mind when making decisions. Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Ms. Simon to close the public hearing. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Ms. Simon to approve a FY22 school salary account budget of \$49,629,632. Motion carried 4-0-1; Chairman Murphy abstained.

Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Ms. Simon to approve a FY22 school non-salary account budget of \$7,507,479. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Mrs. Bond to approve a FY22 school total operating budget of \$57,137,111. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Moved by Mrs. Monaco and seconded by Ms. Simon to approve a FY22 special education accommodated budget of \$12,333,456. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Dr. Conti distributed two charts showing Elementary Student Enrollments¹ for next year as well as current enrollment totals. He directed attention to increased enrollment, particularly at the kindergarten level with 241 current kindergarten students and 261 kindergartners enrolled for the fall. The school district is also aware that 28 students are currently enrolled in private kindergarten and 33 students in grades K-4 are being homeschooled. He expressed concern for class size and number of students for the fall in kindergarten. Fox Hill may have kindergarten classes with over 20 students each; Fox Hill also has classroom/space challenges. He further noted that student enrollment drives staffing needs. Dr. Conti will continue to monitor student enrollment and provide updates to the School Committee.

ADJOURN

Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mrs. Monaco to adjourn at 9:25 p.m. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Gilbert
Recording Secretary

Date submitted: 4/27/21
Date approved: 4/27/21

¹ Elementary Student Enrollments