



Date Approved/Released

6/2/2022

Date Approved/Hold

School Committee Chair:

*[Signature]*

### **School Committee Meeting**

April 7, 2022 - 7:00 pm

Town Hall - 2nd Floor Auditorium

#### **Attendance:**

School Committee: Larry Murphy, Chair; Karen Kast-McBride, Vice-Chair; Greg Vine; Dr. Ryan Forsythe; Mike Barbaro; Thad King, Superintendent; Robert Mullin, Director of Finance and Operations

#### **1. Call to order**

L. Murphy reads audio-visual disclosure.

#### **2. Pledge of Allegiance**

#### **3. Public Comment: None**

#### **4. Student Representative Report:**

Student Representative presents information on the MHS talent show, which will be held Friday, April 29 at 6pm and is hosted by the MHS class of 2023.

#### **5. Consent Agenda:**

L. Murphy presents Consent Agenda. G. Vine moves to approve Consent Agenda. During discussion, R. Forsythe expresses concern that the minutes for the meeting on March 24 do not adequately reflect a discussion that was had with the Finance Committee. T. King suggests that the other minutes be voted on, and he will check with Liz on the recording of that meeting. G. Vine moves to approve the Consent Agenda as presented except for the minutes of March 24. Seconded by M. Barbaro. Vote is unanimous.

#### **6. Superintendent's Report:**

T. King presents COVID update. There are no positive cases to report at this time; however, the district is watching closely as there has been a reported rise in positive cases in the discharge waters in the area.

Mr. King requests that the budget update be moved to the second meeting of the month to give newly hired Finance Director, Robert Mullin, an opportunity to familiarize himself with the budget and give a more comprehensive report. Mr. King states that as the district has been closing out grants from as far back as FY18, a few of those older grants were not

completely spent down, and therefore, those funds need to be returned to the state. For the FY19 TAG grant, approximately \$32,000 needs to be returned. R. Forsythe asks if there are any repercussions from the prolonged nature in which it was found. T. King states that there have been no issues and the district has continued to receive the grant every year.

T. King introduces Athletic Director, Jenna Whitaker, who presents the athletic user fees for the upcoming year. Mrs. Whitaker hopes to keep the fees as they are now without increasing them. This past fall, the boosters received a grant from the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, which allowed the district to reduce user fees significantly. That did use up the grant, however. For this reason, user fees were charged for the winter and spring. The fees are planned as follows:

- For an athlete playing their first sport: \$160
- Second and third sport: \$120
- Free and reduced lunch athletes or an additional family member: \$120 for first sport and \$80 for second and third
- Football: \$190
- For coops such as ice hockey: \$400
- Swimming: \$200 with a family max of \$500

L. Murphy asks how much the grant was. Mrs. Whitaker replies that the grant was for \$20,000, and it allowed the district to reduce user fees by 20%. L. Murphy asks how much is usually collected, and T. King responds that last year, \$17,000 was collected due to COVID, but traditionally, \$40 to \$60,000 is collected.

L. Murphy states that he would entertain a motion to eliminate user fees. M. Barbaro moves that the Committee reduce user fees to zero next year based on the ability of the district to come up with supplemental funds to compensate that program. G. Vine seconds. During discussion, L. Murphy states that fees are charged for other school activities, such as Student Council. Stephanie Rondeau, activities advisor at MHS, approaches and states that there are dues for the other activities, which helps to pay for conferences and transportation and hotel fees if it requires an overnight stay. Fundraising is done for those trips.

K. Kast-McBride states that theater also does have costs associated with the program. L. Murphy states that they are speaking only of athletics fees at the moment, but they can discuss other programs as well. G. Vine asks where the funds would come from if they dropped the user fees. T. King responds that the athletics program has been running out of the general budget, so all fees collected go into the athletic revolving account that had been accruing, so no money needed to be moved in anywhere as those fees just offset the operating costs so the costs can be absorbed. G. Vine asks where future monies might come from. T. King responds that Murdock Trust might be an excellent place to pull funds from as it is intended for student enrichment. M. Barbaro expresses his support for the idea. R. Forsythe states he is in support of reducing costs for families and using grant funds. He asks for a comprehensive list of student fees, to include things like National Honor Society. K. Kast-McBride states that the vote be held off so that the Committee can make this a package deal to include the arts, not just athletics, pending a comprehensive list prepared by Mrs. Rondeau. L. Murphy states that they will not hold off on voting. G. Vine agrees there is no reason to delay the vote. L. Murphy asks for roll call vote. Vote is unanimous.

M. Barbao asks that a future agenda item be to discuss the rest of the fees that the school charges. R. Mullin asks that he be involved in the discussion as he is not in the office next week.

#### **7. New Business:**

L. Murphy introduces MHS Assistant Principal, Doug Sochovka, to present the Program of Studies. Mr. Sochovka states that a couple of additions have been made, as well as some name changes to some of the programs. For the English Department, the only changes made were the books to be read. Discussion is had regarding honors classes and college prep. T. King states that the topic is not related to the program of studies.

Mr. Sochovka continues, describing the updates to the Leadership and Citizenship Program, as well as changes in the Music Department with the addition of several classes. Also, the Science Department and the Visual Arts Department and World Languages will have additional options for students to choose from.

L. Murphy asks for motion. G. Vine moves to approve the Murdock High School Program of Studies. Seconded by M. Barbaro. Vote is unanimous.

G. Vine presents his idea on presenting voter registration cards to the graduation seniors along with their diplomas. L. Murphy disagrees with the idea. Mrs. Rondeau states that the high school did have a voter registration drive before COVID, and it is a topic that is frequently discussed within the Student Government.

M. Barbaro moves to put the Executive Session which is currently under New Business on the agenda and move it to the end of the meeting. Seconded by G. Vine. Vote is unanimous.

#### **8. Old Business:**

G. Vine moves to table the topic of School Committee Meeting Frequency and move to a future agenda item. Seconded by K. Kast-McBride. G. Vine - Y; R. Forsythe - Y; K. Kast-McBride - Y; M. Barbaro - N; L. Murphy - Y. Motion passes.

#### **9. Future Agenda Items:**

Future agenda items are as follows:

- Murdock Trust Breakdown
- ESSER III Breakdown
- Data Presentations
- School Choice Seats
- School Fees Other Than Athletics

#### **10. Closing Comments:**

M. Barbaro discusses the importance of waiving school fees for students and how it is a step forward socially and economically. He also believes that voter registration is important so that children learn that voting is their birthright.

R. Forsythe thanks the Student Representative.

K. Kast-McBride echoes the thanks and encourages everyone to come to the tournament of plays. She encourages everyone to get their voter registration card before the town elections and make sure they vote. She also thanks all the students, parents and staff for all the work they do every day to make the district better.

L. Murphy thanks everyone on the Committee for their passion and the time and energy they give.

**11. Executive Session:**

G. Vine moves to enter Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel and to adjourn from Executive Session. Seconded by K. Kast-McBride. Vote is unanimous. Meeting is adjourned after Executive Session.

Respectfully Submitted: *Liz Latoria*  
Liz Latoria, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents Attached: None