



Date ~~Approved/Released~~: 10-4-18

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School Committee Chair: Gregory A. Dini

### SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, June 21, 2018

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor - Town Hall Auditorium

#### 1. Call to order: 6:00 pm/ Pledge of Allegiance

Present: Larry Murphy, Danielle LaPointe, Dawn Fronte, Felicia Nurmsen, Greg Vine  
Steve Haddad, Superintendent, Richard Ikonen, Business Manager

#### 2. Audio/Video Disclosure – Barrie Martins, Recording Secretary

#### 3. Citizen Questions and/or Comments: None

#### 4. Student Representative Report – None

#### 5. Student/Staff Recognition:

Students of the Month: Murdock High School – May: Maria Polcari, 11<sup>th</sup> grade. June – Jack Polcari, 9<sup>th</sup> grade. L. Murphy thanked Ralph Olson for serving as Murdock High School Interim Principal for the 2017-2018 school year, commending his ‘calmness in the eye of the storm’. S. Haddad presented him with a tee shirt and a plaque. Mr. Olsen thanked them for inviting him back a second time and praised the staff and students. Murdock Academy – Austin Burke; Murdock Middle School – Jessica Higbee, 8<sup>th</sup> grade; Toy Town Elementary – Emily Croteau, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade; Memorial – Julie Lafrennie, 1<sup>st</sup> grade; Pre-School – Aurelia Chagnon.

Blue Devil Cool Recognition: Elaine Jandris, employee since 1995. S. Haddad read a statement prepared by Ms. Mizhir and Mrs. Haddad that reviewed her history in the district, including cooking for the Boosters Club, volunteering in Mrs. Mizhirs’ 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom and working in the Afterschool Program. It was also stated she has always gone above and beyond for the children of the WPS. L. Murphy thanked her for all she has done for the students and community.

G. Vine moved to move Agenda Item 9 d out of order, seconded by D. LaPointe. Approved 5-0-0.

L. Murphy said a heartfelt goodbye to Danielle LaPointe for all her hard work, including her work as Chairperson and that he appreciated all she has done for the students and staff in the district.

9. Superintendent Business/Business Office Report:

- d. Introduction of new School Committee Member Roann Demanche noted her daughters finished their very successful sophomore year at Murdock High School. She is a licensed special education teacher with 20 years of experience, including 15 years in the Lowell School District. She feels this is a natural progression in her development and that she can be supportive to the community and the students and families moving forward. L. Murphy welcomed and thanked her. G. Vine sincerely thanked Ms. Demanche for stepping forward to serve the community.

5. Teaching and Learning Highlights:

This agenda item will be brought back in the fall of the 2018-2019 school year.

7. New Business:

a. Annual School Committee Reorganization

Chairperson: D. Fronte nominated G. Vine for Chairperson, seconded by D. LaPointe. F. Nurmsen nominated L. Murphy, seconded by D. LaPointe.

Vote: G. Vine – G. Vine; D. LaPointe – G. Vine; L. Murphy – G. Vine; D. Fronte – G. Vine; F. Nurmsen – L. Murphy. Greg Vine was voted as School Committee Chairperson; he assumed the chair. G. Vine thanked L. Murphy for his year serving as Chairperson. He noted this policy was enacted in 2012 to allow turnover of these positions every year.

Vice Chairperson: D. LaPointe nominated L. Murphy, seconded by D. Fronte. L. Murphy nominated D. Fronte, seconded by F. Nurmsen.

Vote: L. Murphy – D. Fronte; D. LaPointe – D. Fronte; F. Nurmsen – D. Fronte; D. Fronte – L. Murphy; G. Vine – D. Fronte. D. Fronte was voted as School Committee Vice Chairperson.

- b. WTA Contract: L. Murphy was the lead on the negotiations; he stated both sides worked very hard to reach a 1-year contract/agreement with a .5% raise. The union has ratified the contract and will enter negotiations next year for a 2-year contract. In addition to some miscellaneous, minor language changes, there are some other issues the union and negotiating sub-committee were not able to agree on; they will be discussed in the fall. L. Murphy moved to accept the WTA contract negotiated with the Winchendon School Committee for the 2018-2019 school year, seconded by F. Nurmsen. Roll call vote: L. Murphy – Aye; D. LaPointe – Nay; D. Fronte – Aye; F. Nurmsen – Nay; G. Vine – Nay. The vote for ratification fails 2-3-0. The district will move ahead under the terms of the old contract and make adjustments that will be retroactive to the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year.



- c. WTA Membership Announcement – Christina Ricard, WTA President, read a statement, voted on and approved by the union, that presented the qualifications that the WTA feel are essential in a Superintendent who can successfully lead the district forward. Key points included accountability, engagement with District committees, actively seeks the input of the staff and relies on their expertise, effective and efficient use of the staff, stringent hiring practices, effective utilization of resources including the financial and budgetary details of the initiatives being enacted in the district, a strong public presence able to communicate with accuracy and transparency and the need to fight to attain the needs of our changing population.
- d. Tri-Board Meeting Scheduled August 23, 2018 – It is the School Committee's turn to host the Tri-board meeting. F. Nurmsen will need to call in to the meeting. D. Fronte moved to accept the Tri- Board schedule for August 23, 2018, seconded by F. Nurmsen. Approved 5-0-0. The School Committee will meet at 6:00 pm. The Tri-Board meeting begins at 6:30 pm.

8. Consent Agenda:

- a. Field Trips: None
- b. Minutes – Regular Meeting Minutes: June 7, 2018

D. LaPointe moved to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by D. Fronte. Approved 5-0-0.

9. Superintendent/Business Office Report:

- a. Organization of Interim Superintendent Search Committee – There are 19 candidates; the school committee needs to vote in a representative to lead the Search Committee. F. Nurmsen questioned the necessity of the search committee process for an interim position; S. Haddad will provide the written policy. G. Vine explained the makeup and purpose of the committee. John Robichaud, the parent of 2 school choice-in students, stated there was no notice to parents regarding the search committee process. G. Vine suggested starting the process again; F. Nurmsen noted the process was done twice and the delay will cause the district to lose many of the candidates. L. Murphy stated the notice will be put on website and put out to parents on the Blast. Letters of interest should be addressed to the Superintendent. The committee will be made up of two teachers, two community members, two parents, two students and the school committee. Upon request, F. Nurmsen moved to bring Citizens Questions and Comments back, seconded by D. LaPointe. Approved 5-0-0. D. LaPointe nominated F. Nurmsen to be on the Search Committee, seconded by L. Murphy. She refused the nomination. After volunteering, D. Fronte nominated D. Fronte, seconded by D. LaPointe. Approved 5-0-0.

3. Citizen Questions and/or Comments:

Chad Dufour read a statement written by Renee Eldridge asking for an update from district legal counsel regarding the breach of confidentiality of her email account and other privacy and contractual concerns between the WPS and Summit. He noted the parent group has not been

formally addressed about their concerns. He asked to be taken seriously and given an actual response to the research from the lawyers. He submitted a letter of interest regarding the interim superintendent search committee. He noted his son did very well on the Summit Learning Program, but he hated the school year. Mr. Dufour asked why the successful program at the Academy wasn't considered. His daughter will not go to the Murdock Middle School when the time comes if the program is still in place. He is disappointed in the vote for the WTA contract. He noted the school committee was invited to their meetings by email.

F. Nurmsen urged him to address the school committee 'instead of waiting for this item to come to your meetings.' Amy Dufour voiced great concern about the elimination of the Adjustment Counselor at Toy Town Elementary, adding the position is needed in the times we are in today. L. Murphy explained the hiring/firing of staff is not the school committees' job, adding "we can advocate for you if you do not have satisfaction from the building principal or the Superintendent regarding your concern'. He explained future decisions will be made according to the data. Amy Dufour also expressed concern regarding the students taking two MCAS tests in one day, noting no other district does that. She suggested the staff look at bad scores from that angle and try a different administration of the tests. D. LaPointe noted the school committee does not choose curriculum but oversees the success or failure of the administration who has that training. L. Murphy recommended an ad hoc committee be formed to specifically to look at their concerns and any data that can be generated on Summit. It could include 1-2 members of the school committee and report to the committee at the beginning of the school year. G. Vine noted they still need legal feedback. F. Nurmsen voiced great concern that information requested was not received thus keeping the committee from moving forward. The committee will meet on July 19<sup>th</sup>; this matter will be on the agenda. S. Haddad reported that he is still waiting for clarification from legal counsel regarding the privacy issue, including the option for parents to opt out of their child using the internet or electronic devices. F. Nurmsen stated the initial response was not enough; the committee needs additional information on their interpretation. L. Murphy moved to appoint an ad hoc committee made up of 2 school committee members and membership from the Middle School Parent Group to work together to investigate information that is not presently available including, but not limited to, any data that would show whether Summit has improved student achievement or not, seconded by D. LaPointe. F. Nurmsen demanded a definitive date when the information will be received from legal counsel and who will be responsible. L. Murphy recommended two members of the parent group and two teachers and one school committee member.

Approved 4-1-0. D. LaPointe moved to appoint F. Nurmsen to be the school committee representative, seconded by L. Murphy. Approved 5-0-0. After discussion, it was decided that S. Haddad and G. Vine will have a conference call with legal counsel on June 22, 2018, to get clarification. The Administration Retreat agenda on June 22 and July 2, 2018 will include the Summit Learning Platform, and the District Communication Plan.

Andy Spivey, parent of a Middle School student, informed the school committee that on behalf of the Families for Empowering Education parent group, a complaint was filed with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education stating that Murdock Middle School Principal Jessica Vezina entered into a contract with the Summit Personalized Learning Program on April 20, 2017, without the Winchendon School Committee's prior approval, in



violation of 603 CMR 23.02, Section A Section B. The Summit Learning Program Participation Agreement was included. The complaint was filed because the parent group did not receive a response from their April 11, 2018 request for public documents. The complaint requests the District cease the Summit Learning Platform immediately. The complaint also stipulates that Jessica Vezina will complete specific training courses and that the school committee hold public hearings to determine if a new agreement with Summit Learning will be signed. It was noted that the agreement was signed 4 months before the program commenced. Discussion included the legal definition of a partnership agreement versus a contract, with the authority lying with the school committee. L. Murphy asked the Chairperson to stop any argument or discussion at this point, stating the issue will be investigated by the recently appointed ad-hoc committee.

- b. Communication Plan - S. Haddad asked for feedback from the committee. Under Objectives, D. LaPointe asked that 'external audiences' be considered tools. Under Strategies, 'timely notification' is the most important; district wide calendars must always be kept up to date.
- a. Organization of Interim Superintendent Search Committee - The Interim Superintendent position will be posted for five days.
- c. Custodial Contract Negotiations Update – The first meeting is on June 26<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.
- e. Update of New Staff Positions Hired:

Assistant Principal – Murdock High School – Charles Keane (7/7/18)

- i. Dean of Students – Toy Town Elementary -Joanne Forsythe
  - ii. Grade 5 Teacher – Toy Town Elementary-Richard Bowen
  - iii. Grade 6 Teacher – Murdock Middle School-Rebecca Tardiff
- d. There will be a meet and greet and then public introduction at the August 7<sup>th</sup> school committee meeting. All positions recently filled are funded in the budget. F. Nurmsen questioned the decision that Toy Town Elementary had greater need than Murdock Middle School. S. Haddad noted the administration team provided their budget needs and that the issues at MMS were not on the radar when looking at the budgets. F. Nurmsen stressed that middle school is a critical point in education and the serious challenges requires full-time help starting this school year and an actual plan how to assist J. Vezina.
  - f. Superintendent Evaluation: L. Murphy did not have all of the data he needed to compile the report. L. Murphy moved to table 9.f until the July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, seconded by D. Fronte. Approved 5-0-0.

10. Sub Committee Report – D. Fronte reviewed policies that need to be updated immediately.

- a. Policies under review/revision
  - i. File: IJ - Instructional Materials - Language changes to include gender identity and sexual orientation. A legal reference needs to be added in the notes.
  - ii. File: JICFB – Bullying Prevention – The entire policy needs to be updated in the handbooks and on the website.

- iii. File: JICH - Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use by Students Prohibited – The entire policy needs to be updated to include vaping, e-cigarettes, marijuana and steroids.
- iv. File: KE – Public Complaints – One paragraph and a legal reference needs to be added.
- v. File: KBE – Relationships with Parents/Booster Organization - Add ‘Booster’ throughout the policy.

### 11. Old Business:

- a. School Committee Retreat – The retreat is scheduled for Thursday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, from 4:00-8:00 pm at The Winchendon School Conference room.

### 12. Future Agenda Items:

- a. End of Year Report
- b. Policies - July 19, 2018
  - i. File: IJ - Instructional Materials
  - ii. File: JICFB – Bullying Prevention
  - iii. File: JICH - Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use by Students Prohibited
  - iv. File: KE – Public Complaints
  - v. File: KBE – Relations with Parents/Booster Organization
- c. July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### 13. Committee Member Comments:

L. Murphy thanked D. LaPointe for her service and thanked the committee for their help while he was the Chairperson. He wished G. Vine well and a successful year. He thanked the parents and teachers who came tonight, and hopes the district can move things in the right direction in the future.

D. LaPointe apologized to the parents for the apparent lack of effort on behalf the committee, noting what can't be seen are the behind the scenes actions taken by those involved. She thanked the committee for letting her serve for three years; she hoped to get more done but 'life gets in the way'.

F. Nurmsen thanked D. LaPointe for her service, noting she appreciated working with her and accomplishing what they did. She thanked G. Vine for serving as chairperson. She stated that she is passionate about all of the district's students and it is up to her to advocate for them. She voiced concerns regarding the high number of students required to attend summer school because they did not finish their work on the Summit Platform; this tells her the learning program is failing the students. She stated 'the students and parents deserve better from our senior leadership team' and the dedicated administrators deserve what they need to be successful. She believes R. Ikonen does not have the resources he needs and that J. Vezina is 'backed into a

corner now because she did not have enough resources.’ She stressed this problem needs to be addressed. She would advocate for suspending the Summit Learning Platform until it can be determined why so many students could not or did not complete the platform. She added ‘We failed our students and need a plan moving forward.’

D. Fronte welcomed Roann Demanche, noting the search committee has work to do; the committee will have news and business to discuss in July.

G. Vine thanked the committee for the opportunity to be Chairman and pledged things will be less bumpy than tonight. He thanked D. LaPointe for her service, noting that despite differences of opinion they worked well and respectfully together. He thanked F. Nurmsen for her passion. He commended TTE for the ‘Bring a Loved One to Lunch Day’ and the Variety/Talent Show, and Memorial for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade show. He also thanked the parents for coming tonight and making the committee more aware of their concerns.

14. Executive Session. None

15. Adjournment: 8:40 pm. L. Murphy moved to adjourn. Second by D. LaPointe.  
Approved 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted: Barrie E. Martins, School Committee Recording Secretary

### **List of Documents and Exhibits used:**

- Policies
  - File: IJ - Instructional Materials
  - File: JICFB – Bullying Prevention
  - File: JICH - Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use by Students Prohibited
  - File: KE – Public Complaints
  - File: KBE – Relations with Parents/Booster Organization
- Communication Plan
- WTA President statement