

**BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
JUNE 30, 2021
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Brookline School Board was conducted on Wednesday, June 30, 2021, at 6:04 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy.

Kenneth Haag, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present: Erin Sarris, Vice Chairman
Karen Jew, Secretary
Alison Marsano

APPROVED
8/2/21

Members of the Board Absent: Rebecca Howie

Also in Attendance: Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

The acceptance of prior meeting minutes was inadvertently omitted from the agenda. A request was made to amend the agenda to include this item following the Public Hearing on the Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund.

There being no objection, the agenda was adjusted as requested.

NOMINATIONS/RESIGNATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE

At the May 26th meeting, the Board approved the nominations of Bridgette Combes and Jessica Coutu for 5th grade teacher positions at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy (CSDA). The Board also voted to authorize the Superintendent to hire, accept resignations, and terminate staff until the September meeting.

Due to increased enrollment in kindergarten, a teaching position was added, and has been filled by Janet Auger at a master's Step 9 and a salary of \$58,274.

Brandon Brown was hired to fill a grade 2 teaching position at a bachelor's Step 1, and a salary of \$39,516.

Stephanie Rogers was offered the position of preschool teacher. The position of preschool Case Manager was offered to Colby Alvarez (verbal acceptance) at a masters Step 6 and a salary of \$53,331.

Due to enrollment, an additional section has been added to grade 1. The teaching position will be filled by Valerie Gordon at a bachelors Step 7, and a salary of \$47,185.

Being sought is a 12-week long-term substitute for grade 2, Reading Specialist, and School Psychologist. The positions of Digital Learning Specialist and Tech Integrator will not be filled, which will support the cost of one of the additional classroom teachers. Funding for the other position can be covered by cost savings achieved through hiring and, if needed, the Contingency Fund. Also available is Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) Funding that can be used to reduce class size.

A request is made for grade 4; current enrollment numbers are just below class specifications. However, data strongly supports that there is a significant need in that grade level. An option would be to provide a number of

interventions across the board to a large number of students. That would require additional personnel. Another option is the proactive approach of adding a section, reducing class size, and meeting the needs through a personalized learning approach. That is the preference; one year position funded through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug informed the Board of the nomination of Melissa Davis for the position of grade 4 teacher at a masters, Step 14 and a salary of \$67,557.00. Patricia Bouley, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy, has stated she would be excited to have Ms. Davis on the team as she has a good deal of experience teaching in the classroom as a special education teacher as well as experience as a behavior analyst. She can support students, team members, and special education team members. Her references all state she excels in meeting the individual needs of students. Principal Bouley has indicated her belief Ms. Davis would be a strong team player and leader in this work.

**MOTION BY MEMBER HAAG TO ACCEPT THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT'S
NOMINATION OF MELISSA DAVIS FOR THE POSITION OF GRADE 4 TEACHER AT A
MASTERS STEP 14 AND A SALARY OF SIXTY SEVEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED FIFTY
SEVEN DOLLARS (\$67,557)
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MARSANO**

ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Haag noted this to be the third addition. Costs for one of the positions will be addressed through not filling the Technology Integrator position, another through REAP grant funding, and the third through ESSER grant funding. The changes are budget neutral. From the standpoint of intervention, the changes are advantageous.

Asked if the classroom would be loaded given the educational background of the individual filling the position, Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug remarked done prior to the summer break was a review of the practices of this year. A phenomenal job has been done in collaboration and teamwork to tackle all matters at the grade level and adding specialists. The thought was it should be a team member consulting with peers across a variety of issues; her own students, but also the entire grade level. The hope is that this position would no longer be needed as the class moves up to 5th grade. There are always openings and needs for the skillset Ms. Davis will bring to the district.

**MOTION CARRIED
4-0-0**

Vice Chair Sarris questioned if difficulties continue with identifying candidates for the position of School Psychologist. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the difficulty to be in identifying qualified individuals. The SAU has more than one opening. Last year an intern was hired. That position was moved across the district, as necessary. It represented a cost savings over contracted services. That is being looked at to determine if it is a possibility for next year.

Member Marsano commented on this being one of the areas that needs to be reevaluated, across the SAU, in terms of realistic breakdown of costs/salary. She believes it to be one of the reasons it is hard to attract qualified individuals.

Noted was that, in Brookline, this is not a recognized position within the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), which allows for more flexibility. In the Hollis and COOP School Districts the positions are within the CBA, which results in being bound by the salary table.

PUBLIC INPUT - None

PUBLIC HEARING

MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO RECESS UNTIL THE CONCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE MAINTENANCE EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

The Board recessed at 6:18 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 6:23 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brookline School Board May 26, 2021

The following amendment was offered:

Page 13, Line 34; delete “to determine”

MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

Facilities Committee June 16, 2021

MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO ACCEPT, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

PRINCIPALS’ REPORT

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug remarked the last day of school was surreal. She and Assistant Superintendent Thompson visited every building. Students were outdoors and were no longer required to wear masks. They were able to see smiles and faces and what appeared to be a typical end of a school year. Students were happy to be outdoors and with each other. They did not want to leave for the summer. She spoke of the last day activities that were able to take place outdoors.

Some parents received notifications of the Summer Learning Academy. Being offered are book clubs open to all.

Targeted support for kindergarten and 1st grade students will be pushed out in a week or so for both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. That will take place in August to get them ready to go for the fall. It is a combined effort with the Hollis School District.

Chairman Haag remarked the Administration, teachers, and all support staff should be so incredibly proud of the fact that the SAU made it through the entirety of the year and offered one of the few models of in-person learning. He spoke of the amount of hard work that has gone on, throughout the entirety of the year, to be able to do that, and expressed gratitude.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug spoke of her appreciation and appreciation for the cooperation of all the families.

DISCUSSION

- **Facilities Committee Update**

Chairman Haag stated the School and Town Services Committee meets every other Thursday. Being looked at are the impact to schools and emergency, and Town services. The overwhelming data is currently showing the need to take further action beyond the moratorium. The next step is determining what will be proposed to the Planning Board.

A look back (ten years) at NESDEC projections and comparison to end-of-year enrollment numbers was conducted to determine accuracy of the anticipated enrollment. Looking out 5 years, it was 97-99% accurate, in years 5-9 it was in the mid-80s percentage wise, and in year 10 it was spot on. The confidence interval is 99% for a few years out. When the NESDEC team was asked, they said about 1 percentage point every year out is a strong correlation. The takeaway is what is predicted for future enrollment dictates the need to do something differently. From a brick and mortar standpoint and Town services perspective the projections necessitate planning/action.

A growth ordinance was in place for many years, and was fully lifted in 2008-2009, which allowed for the expansion that has been seen since. Chairman Haag spoke of minimum lot size being the lowest in Hillsborough County and Hillsborough County the highest growth in the State. In addition to that is the well study that showed a water problem. Also to be considered is the number of new home starts permitted each year; impacts of additional infrastructure required due to new construction. There is always the option of looking to the Conservation Commission to conserve additional land (beyond that available at low-market value). What the right approach is has yet to be determined.

Member Jew questioned buildout. Chairman Haag noted there to be a buildout number that will be referenced/considered.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug spoke of some of the work being done by the Facilities Study Committee (at RMMS). Discussed were the needs of the building, which included 5 sections per grade level rather than the 4 and trying to add space elsewhere and then 2 preschool rooms. What is absolutely necessary is a new kitchen as the existing one, although grandfathered, is outdated. When doing work on the kitchen it will require upgrades to meet the capacity of the building.

Diagrams were provided with the agenda identifying not only upgrading the kitchen but relocating it so that there is a separate cafeteria. That would create flexibility with usable space in the gym, not limiting that during lunch time. Then you can bring in P.T., groups, etc.

Appendix A shows where the 5th kindergarten class and five 1st grade sections would be located for next year. That shows keeping the gym and cafeteria together (only option). Above the gym/café are 2 kindergarten classrooms, which are an addition, but as functional usable space for classrooms they are a bit awkward; must go through a hallway to get to one and walk through one to get to another. The architectural drawing provided shows that space as becoming the kitchen with the cafeteria behind it. That cafeteria is proposed to go where the ramp is up to the gym. That would add a great deal of functionality to the spaces. It would redesign the existing spaces in there and group grade levels. It also moves preschool to where 1st grade is currently and 3rd grade to that end of the building closest to the basketball court, which is currently preschool and special education.

Chairman Haag restated grade 3 shows a classroom addition at the top. There are two expansion points; 3 new classrooms there and the cafeteria. Asked if something different is being done with the front entrance, Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug remarked there was talk about doing something there, from a safety perspective. She is of the belief the Milford Street door would become the main entrance. The warm classrooms currently occupied by grade 2 would become the main office suite with the Principal, School counseling, special education secretary and admin. It appears it is an admin addition, but it would really become the main entrance. The library would move to the first floor and music would remain where it is. There would be the addition of a conference room and some flexible space there as well. What prevents the use of that space currently is the absence of a lift or elevator, which would have to be part of the proposal.

Asked about a shared kitchen model, Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated that discussion has not come to her; however, she believes it would be incredibly difficult given the distance between the two schools.

Member Marsano questioned if classroom size was being reduced to accommodate new classrooms. Noted was that the cafeteria depicted on the bottom left of the diagram (copy included with agenda) and the 3rd grade classrooms shown at the top of the diagram represent areas of additional building space. The cost for additions will be provided in September. Member Marsano spoke of continuing with additions to an old building that has outdated utilities, e.g., grandfathered lighting, no sprinkler, electrical panel located under a sink. She questioned the best long-term solution. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated that analysis would be done. It is more cost effective to update existing buildings. The options available will be considered and presented, e.g., build a new school or an additional school.

Member Marsano questioned if the long-term approach might be to add onto CSDA where the amount of land is greater. Chairman Haag commented on the thought of the school being grades 3-6 instead of 4-6. He noted these to be some of the questions that would be addressed through the \$30,000 facility study.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug remarked the \$30,000 study would cover the infrastructure. The portion of the study that has come at no cost (being discussed) covers the energy efficiency aspects. It is difficult to do one in the absence of the other especially when growth is being faced. Noted was that 81 students are registered for kindergarten, which is the largest enrollment seen. There are 82 in Hollis (typically 60). That is a combined largest kindergarten class size seen potentially ever in the district. We typically see students move in in grades 2 and 3, but the fact that we are seeing the young students move in tells us that they are going to stay with us.

Chairman Haag reiterated the NESDEC data shows an increase of 100 students over the next five years (excludes the workforce housing proposal).

For CSDA, the main aspects include classroom additions (5 rooms) as well as a reading room and O.T./P.T. space. A small hallway with storage on both sides would be included. The O.T. and P.T. rooms are currently slated to return to the portables for next year. Should there be a need to add additional classrooms and remove the portables, an additional 4 spaces could be added at the opposite end of the building.

The cafeteria is small for the number of students. A few considerations are the space that jets out; with the upgraded HVAC systems and energy efficiencies, that space could be reduced allowing the cafeteria to gain space. Also available to add space to the cafeteria are the custodial closet (would be relocated to the storage area), the staff room, and the small space shown, where students previously waited to enter the building. Although space for teachers has not yet been identified on the draft plan, there are other spaces that could accommodate that.

Chairman Haag noted the district can accommodate anticipated enrollment for the coming year. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated her belief the 4th grade would be added to the current computer lab (has not been used because of COVID). The computer tables would be taken out and it would appear as a typical classroom. The RMMS can handle enrollment next year. The belief is specialists would continue going to the classroom.

Chairman Haag commented the draft plans presented are likely a few years out. He questioned if the district is in the window where we will be able to support increased enrollment in the interim. He questioned the urgency with being able to accommodate increased enrollment, additional portables, amend class size policy, etc. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded CSDA is in better shape than RMMS. The RMMS would be a little more volatile as every year you are faced with different preschoolers with unknown needs. The space that would be needed for that varies. We might be able to utilize some of the preschool space. There are two classrooms. You want to plan for two classrooms, but often you can get away with 1 classroom. With CSDA, because we can do music in the classroom and art in the classroom, we can make it work if a section must be added. The greater concern is with RMMS and being able to meet the needs of everyone.

Asked if there is a real possibility that after the coming year there may be the need to purchase a portable. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug spoke of the cost involved. She will bring the question up in the budget discussions.

Vice Chairman Sarris suggested the projections provided in the Principal Reports include the NESDEC numbers. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated that to be how it is reported out in Hollis. That can be done moving forward.

- **FY21 Revenue and Expense Report**

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug noted cost savings across the board. The expense balance (as of 6-10-21) is \$437,842 and revenue \$87,092 for a total Unreserved Fund Balance of \$524,934.

- **Unreserved Fund Balance**

Projected, as of 6-10-21, is an FY21 Unassigned Fund Balance (UFB) of \$524,934. Reducing from that, allocations to the Maintenance Trust (\$75,000), Special Education Trust (\$25,000), Contingency (\$40,000), and Retained Fund Balance (\$129,519) results in a projected fund balance of \$255,415. Noted was that the vote on

the amount to be allocated to the Retained Fund Balance is not typically done until the end of the fiscal year and audit. The amount that could be retained is cited.

When discussed with the voters, the hope was the ability to return \$200,000 to the tax base. A portion of the \$255,415 remaining could be used to cover the \$30,000 cost of the facility study.

Vice Chairman Sarris stated the desire to take \$40,000 from the Retained Fund Balance so that, going forward, we will not have both a Contingency Fund and a Retained Fund Balance.

- Lawsuit Update

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the Brookline specific lawsuit was withdrawn. The SAU continues to await a ruling on the SAU41 wide lawsuit that was joined with another school district. Asked if there is an understanding of the current cost impact, she stated that information is being gathered.

DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the Administration's recommendation for the Maintenance Trust

FY22 Requested Items/Estimated Cost

RMMS	Classroom Flooring	\$22,723
	HVAC Controller Replacement	22,178
	Exterior Door Ramps	<u>8,000</u>
	Total	\$52,901

Current Balance:	\$69,966
To be added in FY22:	75,000
FY22 Expenditures:	<u>52,901</u>
Resulting Balance	\$92,065

MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO APPROVE EXPENDITURES FROM THE BROOKLINE MAINTENANCE EXPENDABLE TRUST, IN THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF FIFTY TWO THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED ONE DOLLARS (\$52,901), AS OUTLINED IN THE PUBLIC HEARING MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS

ON THE QUESTION

Member Marsano questioned the comment that one of the 6 classrooms identified to receive flooring was removed due to cost. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the intent had been to do 6 classrooms and that has been reduced to 5. Asked if it is a necessity, she responded there is the need to get the work done but it does not represent a safety hazard (can wait a year).

Member Marsano questioned going forward with the planned 6 classrooms. Chairman Haag remarked he is torn as the number cited is what has been discussed all along. He would rather avoid changing it now after having stated this would be the number.

Chairman Haag asked if there is the option of returning the \$22,178 for the HVAC and was told it would not be returning to the tax base, but the expendable trust. The funds can be encumbered and held until it is known whether the bond/lease proposal will move forward.

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

- To see what action, if any, the Board will take regarding the use of Unreserved Fund Balance

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO ENCUMBER AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$30,000) TO COVER THE COST OF THE RMMS/CSDA BUILDING EVALUATION BASED ON POTENTIAL ENROLLMENT INCREASES
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Haag stated his support for the motion. Member Jew commented we would not be very good stewards of these buildings were we not to take this action. Member Marsano stated agreement.

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO ADJOURN
SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

MOTION CARRIED

4-0-0

The June 30, 2021, meeting of the Brookline School Board was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Date _____

Signed _____