



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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2023 JUN -5 AM 7:39

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

School Committee

Date: 2023-05-08

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: School - Memorial High

Location: School Library

Address: 62 Oakland Road

Session: Open Session

Purpose: Open Session

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Shawn Brandt, Carla Nazzaro, Sarah McLaughlin (Remote), Charles Robinson, and Tom Wise.

Members - Not Present:

Erin Gaffen

Others Present:

Superintendent Dr. Tom Milaschewski, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services Dr. Jennifer Stys, Director of Special Education Allison Wright & Student Jayda Hayes

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Olivia Lejeune on behalf of the chairperson.

Topics of Discussion:

- A. **Call to Order** – Mr. Brandt called the meeting to order at 7pm and reviewed the agenda for the evening.
- B. **Public Comment**- Alicia Gallagher of 36 Augustus Court spoke on behalf of the St. Vincent De Paul Society of St. Agnes church bringing awareness of the work they do providing food to Reading families through their summer program. This is a free program offered to families in Reading who are at risk of hunger during difficult financial times.

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes (04-06-2023)
2. Reading Parents Supporting Theatre donation
3. Friends of Reading High School Baseball donation
4. Surplus Property

Ms. Nazzaro motioned to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Mr. Robinson, vote passed 5-0.

Reports

1. Student – Jayda Hayes reported students are moving through the fourth quarter of the school year and we are seeing a dynamic time as the seniors prepare for graduation. This is the second week of AP exams and there is some added stress, but there is a lot of momentum moving towards the end of the school year. Seniors are

reflecting on their time in the district and the many people who have impacted their lives.

2. Assistant Superintendent of Student Services – Dr. Stys reported on the following:
 - a. There was a rescheduling of the Lynn Lyons presentation – more information to come.
 - b. SEPAC will be offering a movie showing of the Anxious Nation on May 16th which is a Lynn Lyons movie. All are welcome and more information can be found on the website.
 - c. Unified Basketball is a new Basketball Team in Reading this year. Their final home game is this Thursday at 4pm at RMHS.
 - d. We are celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week, Nurse Appreciation Week and Food Service Appreciation Day. The Central Office thanks each individual for the work they do.

3. Assistant Superintendent of Learning & Teaching – No report

4. Director of Finance and Operations – No Report

5. Superintendent – Dr. Milaschewski reported on the following:
 - a. As noted, it is Teacher Appreciation Week. We have amazing educators across our district impacting the lives of our students and we thank them. As a way to thank our teachers, the Central Office leadership team is stepping in to cover as many classes, recess and lunch duties as possible.
 - b. Reading Education Foundation (REF) is in attendance tonight. Staff tributes can be made to REF that help recognize and celebrate our teachers.
 - c. Information will go out this week about the Distinguished Teacher Award. We have expanded the category to have non-RTA members awarded this year as well such as secretaries, food service, custodians, paraprofessionals etc.
 - d. We have some personnel updates that have been discussed in previous meetings we would like to update you on:
 - i. Jessica Swindell has been appointed as the Joshua Eaton Assistant Principal
 - ii. Parker Middle School has completed their Assistant Principal search naming Dr. Story.
 - iii. The R.I.S.E Director search is ongoing and we thank Dr. King for stepping into the interim role this year. We have two finalists and hope to have more information to share next week.
 - iv. The Director of Finance & Operations search is underway and we have four candidates coming in this week to meet with the screening committee.
 - v. We did not find the right fit in our interview process for the K-8 STEM Coordinator position. We are reposting the position as a K-8

Math and Science curriculum coordinator to see if we attract new candidates.

- e. We are in the process of writing a multi-year district strategic plan and anticipate presenting to the School Committee in June.
- f. Thank you to the School Committee and town leaders who stepped in on April 26th for school visits.

6. Liaison/Sub-Committee

- a. Mr. Robinson – Update from Recreation Committee: The main topic of the last meeting was the discussion of a warrant article for Birch Meadow which passed at Town Meeting. SWEC met to discuss open meeting law violations – the scope of the committee is being expanded.
- b. Ms. Gaffen – No reports
- c. Mr. Wise – The special education reserve fund was passed by Town Meeting. The policy subcommittee will be taking that up shortly. Bylaw 4.2 was agreed to be changed by Town Meeting as well so the policy committee will make that change. Other policy related items: at the last meeting, the committee reviewed and approved six policies. School Committee will review at the next meeting. The Legal Counsel Subcommittee created an invitation letter to 14 legal law firms for the student services legal counsel position receiving seven responses back. The team will be interviewing six of the seven firms.
- d. Ms. Nazzaro – The Killam Building Committee met and received six bids. They have one week to review and set up a subcommittee to conduct interviews.
- e. Ms. McLaughlin – No report
- f. Mr. Brandt – The School Committee recommended budget was approved at Town Meeting.

E. New Business

1. Reading Education Foundation (REF) Grant Update

REF board members presented a check for \$42,478 first giving a short overview of REF and how this money is raised.

2. Special Education & Student Services Update

Dr. Stys and Ms. Wright presented an update on Student Services. The information in the presentation is rooted in the strategic plan around sense of belonging. The presentation is included in the School Committee packet. Some highlights from the presentation include:

- a. The district committed to gathering data and used the Panorama Data System to survey grades 3-5 at the elementary level and 6-12 at the middle and high school level.
- b. Student services has identified next steps to positively impact the student experience which include: fostering positive relationships, increasing access to opportunities, providing professional learning, and examining policies and practices.

- c. The Tiered Focused Monitoring (TFM) report has been approved by the state with no findings.
- d. Student services provided a timeline of upcoming special education program reviews. They also provided a history of recommendations from past reviews.
- e. Finally, student services has launched a new logo that is rooted in the belief "All Means All, Every Learner, Every Day".
- f. Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) Board member Ms. Maria Morgan joined the meeting to acknowledge the hard work SEPAC and the student services team puts in everyday and also to stress the importance of family engagement for the students.

G. Executive Session

Ms. Nazzaro moved to enter into Executive session in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel (Superintendent) and to discuss strategies with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares (and this is for all bargaining units) we will be returning from executive session in approximately 45 minutes. Mr. Brandt so declared it would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position, seconded by Mr. Wise, vote passed 5-0.

Mr. Brandt called regular session back to order at 9:57 pm

C. Personnel

1. Superintendent Successor Contract Update & Potential Vote

The School Committee has reached an agreement with Dr. Milaschewski on a Superintendent Successor Contract which will take effect on July 1, 2023. Some key components include: a contract term of six (6) years, base salary will increase to \$214,000 starting July 1, 2023 and based on performance there will be an annual increase of no less than 2.5%, a clause is being modified about a travel expense allowing a \$4,000 car allowance and finally, a longevity payment of \$15,000 will be issued if the six year contract is completed.

Ms. Nazzaro moved to ratify and approve an amended successor contract with Dr. Milaschewski, seconded by Mr. Wise, vote passed 5-0.

Dr. Milaschewski thanked the School Committee and expressed his enthusiasm to continue working with the Reading Public Schools District.

D. Old Business

1. Review and Approve Updated SY23-24 Calendar (A)

There were minor updates issued to the 2023-2024 school year calendar. The dates for elementary and high school back to school nights have been swapped in September and

the May open house night was moved to Thursday of the same week. The calendar is posted on the district website.

Ms. Nazzaro moved to approve the updated SY 23-24 calendar, seconded by Mr. Wise, vote passed 5-0.

E. New Business

1. School Choice – Review Available Seats and Potential Vote to Opt Out (A)

Dr. Milaschewski pointed out there were nine (9) students participating in school choice this year leading to an additional \$42,500 in funding for FY24. We see this program as a good strategy to recruit and retain staff members across the district. The packet outlines the number of seats available per grade. We do not anticipate filling every seat.

There is appreciation about the thoughtfulness around not squeezing class sizes and setting expectations. A question was raised about collecting data as to why a student is interested in coming to Reading for school. Families are called when accepted into the program and we can ask this as a follow up question.

The committee would like to have a discussion in the future about a marketing approach and whether it would be beneficial or not.

The committee will not opt out of school choice for SY23-24 therefore a public meeting is not needed to discuss the topic.

2. Review and Vote to Submit Letter of Support in Favor of Earmarks (A)

There were four earmarks submitted on behalf of the district outlined in the packet. Mr. Brandt drafted a note to send on behalf of the committee to representatives on Beacon Hill. School Committee members discussed how priorities were determined. We looked at one time funded items and what is on the radar of the district. Please note, we were notified at the same time as the community about the music keyboards funding, but there was no additional communication to discuss the ranking of items submitted. School Committee members discussed adjusting the letter to prioritize items and ask for reconsideration in the reconciliation budget. There are other grants and funding opportunities for a few of the items listed in the letter, but Keys to Literacy would be the item to advocate for in the next round as we are not sure where funding could come from.

Ms. Nazzaro moved to submit a letter to our state delegation asking for further review of our Keys to Literacy request of \$40,000. Seconded by Mr. Robison, vote passed 5-0.

Ms. Nazzaro made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Wise, vote passed 5-0.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iy30lti9bPs>
Meeting Adjourned 10:23pm.