

APPROVED

2-5-24

DENNIS-YARMOUTH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Minutes of a School Committee Meeting

Monday, January 22, 2024

A Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School Committee meeting was held on Monday, January 22, 2024, at the Dennis-Yarmouth Intermediate/Middle School in South Yarmouth, Massachusetts.

Members Present: Jeni Landers, Chairperson; Jennifer Rose, Vice Chairperson; Marilyn Bemis, Secretary; Tomas Tolentino, Treasurer; Student Representative Rose-Anna Joachim; Student Representative Isabella Power.

Members not Present: Phillip Morris; Joseph Tierney; Joe Glynn.

Others Present: Dr. Marc Smith, Superintendent of Schools; David Flynn, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations; Maria Lopes, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Instruction; Eileen Whalen, Recording Secretary to the School Committee; Kevin Depin, Principal, Ezra H. Baker Innovation School; Beth Hollister, Michelle Dunn, DYEA; Kevin Lennon, Chief, Yarmouth Police; Chris Flanagan, State Representative; Kip Diggs, State Representative; Annie Catalano and Danny Rodriguez, Yarmouth Substance Awareness Committee; Julianne Bonwit; Laura Maryn.

At 6:35 p.m., Jeni Landers, Chairperson, called the meeting to order.

Chair Landers asked for a vote from the Committee to change the order of the agenda, specifically, replacing the School Building Committee Report with comments from State Representatives Chris Flanagan and Kip Diggs. On a motion by Tomas Tolentino, seconded by Marilyn Bemis, and carried unanimously 4-0 it was

VOTED: To change the order of the agenda.

Reports and Discussions

Student Representatives Report – Rose-Anna Joachim and Isabella Power

Isabella reported on happenings at the high school, including the recent performance of Peter and the Wolf with Superintendent Smith as the Narrator. First semester ends on Friday; it is a half day for the high school. Rose-Anna reported that Poetry Out Loud was extremely well attended and a wonderful event. She also reported on the winter sports season.

Yarmouth Substance Awareness Committee Presentation

Annie Catalano and Danny Rodriguez

Ms. Catalano began the presentation; she is co-chair along with Danny Rodriguez. She explained their mission; they meet the second Wednesday of the month in a hybrid format. She gave a brief history; they work with a recovery support navigator to help people with substance issues. Danny Rodriguez is from the Duffy Center. He spoke of a social media presence being very important; also, they received remediation funds; peer relationship models are very important. They are involved with many community events such as Overdose Awareness Day in

August; Drop In Nights; the Mobile Unit. They also said that they are seeking a student voice for their committee.

Chair Landers thanked them for their presentation; she would like to know if there is a way to track the impact of the program. Most recently they joined health classes. Mr. Tolentino thanked them for their presentation; agrees with the need to get back into the schools. Ms. Landers asked the student representatives to think about suggesting a student to join the committee. Rose-Anna suggested that a psychology class might be a natural and comfortable setting for them to come to; particularly Mr. Hatch's class.

Superintendent Smith thanked them for their presentation citing D-Y's specific needs and challenges.

Tentative FY25 Budget

Superintendent Marc Smith

Assistant Superintendent David Flynn

Dr. Smith announced that because only four School Committee members are present for tonight's meeting, there will be no vote on the tentative budget. He then reviewed the budget presentation which was part of the School Committee packet including overall goals and factors influencing the FY25 budget.

Mr. Flynn continued the presentation; he reviewed the district spending of the ESSER funds; positions that were funded by ESSER, including salary and benefits, will now need a new funding source. He then reviewed the budget timeline. He said that the January 2024 enrollment was the highest in ten years. He said that 67% of our students identify as high needs. State aid availability will be updated on Wednesday.

Dr. Smith continued the presentation with the steps that have been taken so far including right sizing class sizes throughout the district; making recommendations about programs not providing results; looking for other offsets; level funding most non-contractual obligations; and making assumptions for state revenue. He then went over additions and reductions. We need to continue to meet the needs of our students. Chair Landers asked about the reduction in School Resource Officers from 4 to 2; Dr. Smith said that part of the challenge as a regional school district we carry all of the costs including benefits.

Mr. Flynn said the amount now budgeted equals a 7.68% increase. There are still many variables and assumptions.

Dr. Smith said that the Finance Subcommittee met recently. No one wants reductions; there has to be a middle ground. The towns would like increases to not exceed 2 ½%; although the school district is not required to do this.

Chair Landers said there should be no cuts for cuts sake; finding efficiencies, consolidating services, getting the right budget is what is important.

Ms. Bemis asked about salaries and ESSER funding; were these necessary so that we could be fully open during COVID?

Dr. Smith said that the premise is correct, additional staffing was needed during COVID.

He said that the best education for our students while being a good steward of the taxpayer's money is what is important. What will help is normalizing class sizes among the three elementary schools. Can we provide the same level of service.

Mr. Tolentino also attended the recent Finance Subcommittee meeting. We do not want to cut service; we need to put out the best budget we can. We will need everyone's support.

Ms. Rose said that we have the highest enrollment in ten years; how can we take away positions.

Ms. Bemis said the cost of living is greater than 2.5%; this is an arbitrarily deflated figure.

Chair Landers reminded the Committee that there will be no budget vote at this meeting.

Subcommittee, Representatives, Liaison Report

State Representative Chris Flanagan and State Representative Kip Diggs

Mr. Flanagan thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak and offer any support they may need; Mr. Diggs added that the students are our future and we must keep their best interests at heart.

School Committee Liaisons to the Boards of Selectmen

Yarmouth: No report.

Dennis: No report.

Superintendent's Report

Recognition of Donations and Acknowledgments

The superintendent acknowledged with thanks several donations to the Station Avenue Elementary School Community:

- Bill Holden of the Andrea Holden Fund for \$1500 in Stop & Shop gift cards;
- Cape Light Compact for sponsoring an entire SAE family this season;
- The SAE PTO for \$300 worth of Stop & Shop gift cards; \$150 in Old Navy gift cards; and \$150 in Target gift cards;
- The Yarmouth Police Department for sponsoring two students for lunch, fun at Ryan Family Amusements; and \$150 worth of shopping for each child at Kohl's;
- The Yarmouth Rotary for their annual holiday party for ten SAE and ten MES families including \$100 in gifts and a Stop & Shop gift card;
- The Yarmouth Food Pantry provided 15 holiday meals for both Thanksgiving and Christmas;
- SAE staff provided gift items for over 30 SAE "angels."
- SAE parents donated for SAE families in need;

- Cape Cod Ambassadors; Cape Cod Foster Care Closet and Katelyn's Closet have donated needed clothing;
- The Fill-a-Backpack Program has supplied backpacks and school supplies for 34 students.

Dr. Smith also wished to acknowledge Yarmouth Food Pantry's letter to Mr. Crowell thanking the staff and students at Station Avenue Elementary School for their generous donation of the proceeds of their food drive, the Power of One, to the Pantry.

The superintendent acknowledged with thanks several organizations who made donations such as gift cards, wrapped toys, meals, extra food bags, water bottles, student shopping experiences, and winter jackets to the Marguerite E. Small School Community during the holidays:

- The First Congregational Church of Yarmouth;
- The Rotary Party;
- Bright Lights;
- Cape Kids Meal;
- Andrea Holden Foundation;
- Shop with a Cop;
- Ernie Ray and the Mount Horeb Lodge;
- Bass River Civic Association and Anne Marie Carlson;
- Harwich Food Pantry and Ms. Duggan;
- Fill-a-Backpack;
- Katelyn's Closet.

Safety Team Update (connects to Superintendent Goal #4)

Superintendent Smith updated the Committee on the Safety Team. He said there is a new member on the team, Deputy Chief Tony Kent. He met the deputy chief when he was at the Baker School for an unplanned drill; it was very interesting seeing the drill unfold. Establishing an incident command structure is very important and not something that is being done right now at the school level. Safety team members are being tasked at each school to find out who needs basic level training.

Consent Agenda

On a motion by Tomas Tolentino, seconded by Jennifer Rose, and carried unanimously 4-0 it was

VOTED: To approve the following items as presented in the Consent Agenda:

Donations:

Move to accept several donations to the Station Avenue Elementary School community as per Mr. Crowell's January 5, 2024 memo.

Move to accept several donations to the Marguerite E. Small Elementary School community as per Ms. Carlson's January 18, 2024 memo.

Minutes

January 8, 2024

Bills and Requisitions

The warrants were signed by the Committee.

Calendars

The upcoming calendars were reviewed.

Public Comment

Chair Landers said that an additional school committee meeting will likely be necessary.

Julianne Bonwit is a Dennis resident and parent; she is very concerned about the proposed staff cuts. She asked if the proposed positions work directly with students. She feels there are enough administrators. She will support the schools.

Michelle Dunn said that in looking at the proposed cuts she does not see any at Central office. She also mentioned the additional staff positions that have been added at Central office including a Human Resources Director and a Director of Health Services. She is concerned about the fact that enrollment is at a ten year high.

Yarmouth Police Chief Kevin Lennon is concerned about the proposed elimination of two School Resource Officers. He said that one of the four officers, Alex Xiarhos, is not funded by the school district.

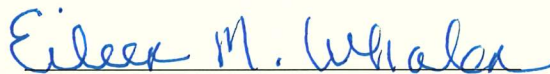
Laura Maryn does not want the School Resource Officers to be cut.

Adjournment

At 8:40 p.m., on a motion by Tomas Tolentino, seconded by Jennifer Rose, and carried unanimously 4-0; it was

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

Minutes recorded and prepared by,


Eileen M. Whalen, Assistant Secretary