

Public Schools of Brookline
LEGISLATOR UPDATE AND LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2022

There have been a great deal of changes in the PSB since we met last January. We hired a new Superintendent, Dr. Linus Guillory, in July. There are new senior staff, including Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Lesley Ryan Miller (former principal at Pierce elementary school), and Sam Rippin, Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance. With our new staff and all students back in school full time, we are excited about the 2021/2022 school year.

We are successfully managing COVID; our numbers of cases have been quite low (despite an uptick after Thanksgiving.) This success is due to the collaboration of:

- PSB's outstanding staff;
- An expert panel (epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists, public health experts etc.) who have guided us through the pandemic, and have served as regional and national leaders in school-based guidance; and
- Students and their caregivers.

Successful management has also been supported by our strong vaccination rates for our age-eligible students (~90%) as well as staff. We have agreements with all of our unions that everyone working in PSB be vaccinated. We are addressing academic and mental health impacts of the pandemic through social-emotional curriculum, newly hired social workers, and working with students to address any academic deficits caused by remote learning.

Using ESSER federal funding, we ran a four week project-based "universal summer program" for any Brookline elementary student who wanted to attend, free of charge. There was strong participation and we are hoping to run similar programming again this summer. This program was in addition to other summer programs that PSB runs every summer.

Brookline continues to be busy with school building projects:

- The BHS addition and renovation are nearing completion. When complete, we will have a new STEM wing in the Main Building, a partial renovation of the Tappan Gym, a new MBTA station and a new 9th grade building. These projects will serve the High School population well for a long time.
- The Driscoll School began construction last summer and is progressing well. We were successful in getting Town Meeting to fund geothermal HVAC along with photovoltaics for this project to bring the school close to net zero. The scheduled occupancy of the building is Fall 2023.
- The Pierce School project has finished feasibility and selected a Preferred Schematic Design. We are now awaiting MSBA Board approval to continue to the Design Development stage. We are also planning on this building being as close to net zero as possible taking into consideration that we are reusing the Pierce historic building.

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- 1. Fund Chapter 70 using 2019 enrollment:** We appreciate the level funding of Chapter 70 for FY22 (\$15,212,527) and are hopeful that Chapter 70 funding for FY23 continues to be level funded or increased. Reduced enrollment is a statewide problem. Our enrollment has increased slightly from last year, but is still down by nearly 1000 students. Given the uncertainty of our enrollment forecast, particularly if/when international students will return, we will need support from the legislature to ensure our total Chapter 70 funding is maintained through a “hold harmless” provision that uses our October 2019 enrollment.
- 2. Further fund Special Education:** We appreciate the 25% funding for Special Ed transportation which for Brookline was \$300,000. We hope next year will be increased to 50% as laid out in the Student Opportunity Act. In addition, we continue to lobby for full funding of Special Education costs, along with maximum Circuit Breaker reimbursement and insurance participation for medically necessary treatment in School (e.g., 1-on-1 nurses).
- 3. Universal Pre-K funding:** The Build Back Better bill in Congress has funding for universal pre-K being distributed through Health and Human Services and would then go to DEEC in Massachusetts. Our concern is that because of this, public schools may not be included in the funding, and we would request advocacy to ensure that they are.
- 4. Fair Share Amendment:** We would like to ensure that public education receives a significant portion of these funds.
- 5. Electric Bus grants or subsidies:** We would like your support to identify funding for a pilot for Brookline. There apparently was a State pilot for 3 communities in 2018.
- 6. MCAS Moratorium:** We are grateful for the advocacy that led to minimized MCAS for the previous school year (2020-2021) and once again support the legislation put forward for a moratorium on MCAS testing.
- 7. Enabling Virtual Meetings:** Legislation to make permanent the March 12, 2020 Open Meeting Law Executive Order allowing remote meetings for the purposes of establishing a quorum and for voting is important for boards and commissions to operate. Remote participation has allowed for the public to be more involved in the work of the School Committee and allowed for greater flexibility of scheduling and attendance for members – these are all important benefits that will accrue even as the pandemic ends. This legislative initiative is also supported by the Brookline Commission for Women, and more broadly by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (see letter to Senate President Karen E. Spilka and House Speaker Robert DeLeo dated June 30, 2020.)
- 8. Continued offsetting of COVID-related Expenses:** Funding for COVID-related expenses, while reduced, continues to be an ongoing expense. Items such as surveillance testing, summer remedial programs and PPE are just a few of the extraordinary costs we are experiencing. ESSER funds are helpful to offset this but if expenses continue past any Federal relief, we will need support from the legislature.
- 9. Menstrual Products Bill (H2354//S1445):** We support this legislation and have already begun to make these products freely available in bathrooms in our schools.

10. Continuing Needs: We thank you for your increased support for METCO, Steps to Success, and the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health. We appreciate it and hope that additional funding for these critical community programs will increase in the FY23 Budget.



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN



COMMISSIONERS

June 30, 2020

Nina Kimball
Chair

RE: OPEN MEETING LAW REQUEST

Senate President Karen E. Spilka

House Speaker Robert DeLeo

Denella Clark
Vice-Chair

On behalf of The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW), we are writing to request a legislative change to the Open Meeting Law (OML) to make permanent some provisions of the Governor's March 12, 2020 OML Executive Order. The Executive Order allows a quorum to be reached via remote participation and does not require the Chair (or his/her designee) to be physically present to vote. We are asking for that to continue.

Rebecca Bact
Secretary

As a statewide commission, we have nineteen (19) volunteer commissioners from across the Commonwealth who have always struggled to travel on average 2-3 hours to attend a meeting of the MCSW, which had required a physical quorum to vote on important issues. In addition, the travel is mostly at night after working a full day. Although phone participation was welcome, remote participants did not count towards a quorum.

Sara Schnorr
Treasurer

During this pandemic we have successfully held virtual hearings and conducted valuable research using social media (i.e., the Impact of COVID-19 and Related Policy on Massachusetts Women and Girls Report, April, 2020). Participation in the virtual meetings and hearings far exceeded our expectations.

Penny Blaisdell

We are committed to including all voices in our work. We believe this order has increased, broadened and diversified public participation and it has motivated us to extend our reach even further. We would like to share this feedback from the 90 days of operations under the executive order:

Ruth Bramson

Favorable outcomes of remote meetings

- Attendance has improved, and we have consistently achieved a quorum
- Scheduling flexibility has increased due to the ease of joining a meeting remotely
- Productivity has increased. We have conducted a number of additional meetings and hearings, legislative briefings, Advocacy Day and 18 hearings for girls
- Remote participation saves time and reduces commuting cost (i.e. gas, parking garage fees), traffic and stress
- Our reach and the diversity of our participants has increased because many people find it more convenient to participate remotely

Jean Fox

Issues We Consider

- Access to technology - For those who do not have access to a computer and/or internet, we will continue to offer landline/phone access and pursue other options
- Participants' comfort level with technology and platforms - we will continue to provide instruction and accommodations to ease the use of technology
- Making sure that participants have the opportunity to speak and ask questions
- Ensuring that there is adequate administrative support to manage public participation and record keeping
- Capturing chatroom comments and including them in the
- Expanding outreach utilizing various platforms and collaborating with organizations to connect with their constituencies

Marianne Fleckner

Liz Friedman

Allison Goldberg

Audrey Hall

Patricia Hohl

Leslie-Ann McGee

Maria Puppolo

Marlene Sallo

Wendy Silver

Phyllis Smith

Shaitia Spruell

Mary-dith Tuit

Although this Executive Order was issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we request permanent adoption of the OML change that allows a quorum to be met via remote participation and does not require the Chair to be physically present. It has proven to be a very effective tool helping the MCSW to maximize and increase productivity and participation using technology. It reduces travel expenses and traffic, increase productivity, and helps those with time constraints, accessibility challenges and health concerns participate more readily.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

Sincerely,

Nina Kimball
MCSW Chair

Denella Clark
MCSW Vice-Chair