

RECORD OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BROOKLINE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ON **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2023** AT 6:00 PM IN THE WALSH SCHOOL COMMITTEE ROOM, 5<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, TOWN HALL. STATUTORY NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS FILED WITH THE TOWN CLERK.

*School Committee Members Present:* David Pearlman (Chair), Andy Liu (Vice Chair), Helen Charlupski, Steven Ehrenberg, Suzanne Federspiel, Valerie Frias, Natalia Linos and Mariah Nobrega. *Staff present:* Linus Guillory, Jodi Fortuna, Susan Givens, Liza O'Connell, and Tricia Laham. *Others present:* Laura Cleves, Student Representative; Richard Murphy, Precinct 16 Town Meeting Member; and Aba Taylor, Brookline Community Foundation Executive Director

Mr. Pearlman called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

## 1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

### **ACTION 23-79**

On a motion of Ms. Charlupski, and seconded by Ms. Federspiel, the School Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (by roll call) with 8 in favor (Mr. Pearlman, Mr. Liu, Ms. Charlupski, Dr. Ehrenberg, Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Frias, Dr. Linos and Ms. Nobrega), 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions, to approve the following consent agenda items:

- i. Past Records: July 10, 2023 School Committee Workshop
- ii. Past Records: August 3, 2023 School Committee Meeting
- iii. Past Records: August 14, 2023 School Committee Meeting
- iv. Student Trip: Lawrence School 7<sup>th</sup> Grade, Farm School, Athol, MA, November 2023 (Attachment A)

## 2. STUDENT REPORT

Laura Cleves presented the Student Report. She noted that the first day of school for BHS students was September 5, with 9<sup>th</sup> graders starting at 8:00am and 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders starting at 10:00am. She reported that temperatures in many BHS classrooms during the first few days of school were quite hot, which impacted student comfort and learning. Ms. Cleves discussed two new student policies at BHS: Tardiness and Personal Electronic Devices (PEDs). The Tardy Policy will result in detention after a student has four tardies, and the PED policy prohibits the use of personal electronic devices in classrooms without teacher permission. Members asked Dr. Guillory to gather more information about both policies, to ensure that students are not unnecessarily penalized for tardies which may be beyond their control and to ensure that students who require electronic devices for their learning are permitted to use them in class. Finally, Ms. Cleves highlighted the BHS Club Fair, at which over 60 student-run clubs were represented.

## 3. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Guillory opened his report by sharing the highlights of remarks he delivered to staff at school-based meetings on Opening Days (August 30 and 31).

*Welcome to the 23-24 Year: Students are our Why!*

*Our theme for the year blossoms out of the theme adopted during my first two years as superintendent:*

*Students are our why:*

- ensuring a high quality education,*
- fostering a culture of care,*
- removing barriers,*
- and grounding all decisions in equity.*

*As we embark on the exciting journey of a new school year, we are filled with a sense of purpose and anticipation. This year holds a special significance as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the historic March on Washington, a monumental event that ignited the flames of change and illuminated the path toward justice and equality. Just as those visionary leaders of the past rallied for a better tomorrow, we too stand united in our pursuit of a brighter future for each and every one of our students. The echoes of the march reverberate through time, reminding us of the power of unity, courage, and unwavering determination. As we reflect on this historic milestone, let us reaffirm our commitment to fostering a learning environment that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our classrooms are not just spaces of education; they are sanctuaries of empowerment, where dreams take flight, passions find purpose, voices are amplified and excellence is sought. In this pursuit of excellence, we understand that a high-quality education is not just about the physical space of classrooms. It's what happens inside those classrooms...the magic that educators create that empowers students to think critically, to question boldly, and to create fearlessly. Our classrooms extend beyond physical spaces for learning; they are hubs of innovation, where curiosity is nurtured, and possibilities are limitless. As we know from history, education has the power to dismantle barriers and pave the way for progress. We must ensure that our system, this great District, works for each and every student, each and every day, while also ensuring that this is an environment where our practitioners are able to grow and thrive.*

*Students are our "why" – they are the heartbeat of our educational community. With each step we take, we build upon the legacy of those who came before, propelling us toward a future where every individual is recognized for their unique strengths and perspectives. Just as the marchers of 60 years ago united under a common goal, we too are united in our dedication to nurturing student growth, sparking students' curiosity, and guiding them on their paths to becoming compassionate global citizens. In the spirit of the march's vision, let's embrace this year with open hearts and open minds. Let's strive for excellence not only in academics but also in empathy. Let's celebrate our differences while finding common ground. Let's remember that every challenge is an opportunity to learn, to adapt, and to emerge stronger.*

*This year, let us be guided by the lessons of the past and the aspirations of the future. Let us embrace the diversity that enriches our classrooms and hallways, for it is through diverse perspectives that we truly learn, grow, and evolve. Let us be fearless in the face of challenges, for it is through adversity that we develop the resilience that defines great minds. As we stand at the crossroads of history and possibility, let us dare to dream, let us dare to learn, and let us dare to make a difference for each and every individual we encounter. Together, let's march forward with vision, courage, and a steadfast belief in the power of education to shape a world where equality and justice prevail.*

*Here's to a remarkable school year ahead – one that honors our past, embraces our present, and paves the way for an even brighter future. Let's march on, hand in hand, towards excellence in education and equity for all.*

Dr. Guillory continued his report (Attachment B), introducing the district's newest educational leaders, including: *Astrid Allen* (Dean of Students at BHS, Grades 9 and 11), *Dr. Anna Bauer-McTigue* (Director of Special Education for Baker, Lawrence and Ruffin Ridley Schools), *Vanessa Bilello* (Principal of Lawrence School), *Robin Fabiano* (Director of Special Education at BHS), *Dr. Jodi Fortuna* (Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning), *Claire Galloway-Jones* (Senior Director of Educational Equity), *Emma Gardiner* (Vice Principal at Ruffin Ridley School), *Dr. Susan Givens* (Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance), *Dr. Jen Martin* (Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator at BHS), *Rebecca McCabe* (Director of Special Education for Heath, Lincoln and Runkle Schools), *Marianne O'Grady* (Vice Principal at Ruffin Ridley School), *Saeed Ola* (Interim Principal of Baker School), *Chad Pelton* (Vice Principal at Runkle School), *Tham Tran* (Director of Strategy and Performance), *Candice Whitmore* (Interim Principal of Ruffin Ridley School) and *Summer Williams* (Dean of Students at BHS, Grades 10 and 12). The new staff addressed the Committee to share a bit about their prior professional experience and they expressed their enthusiasm for the work ahead.

Ms. Laham provided a Student Health Services Update, including a reminder of the updated health protocols – developed in close consultation with the Brookline Department of Public Health – that were shared with families in the annual back-to-school letter. Ms. O'Connell announced that the Office of Student Services will be hosting a meeting for parents and caregivers on September 27 to share the results of the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) that was administered to PSB students in May. The YRBS survey, administered to students in grades 6-12, measures emotional health and well-being, nutrition and physical activity, technology use, use of nicotine, alcohol and other drug use, behaviors related to sexual activity and healthy decision-making, behaviors related to intentional injury, and behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries. Ms. O'Connell provided an update on the summer 2023 Extended School Year program. ESY is designed to ensure that, over the summer, students with IEPs continue to make progress toward meeting their educational goals. The ESY program for BEEP students (ages 3-5) served 37 students; the K-8 ESY program served 212 students; and the ESY program for students from grade 9 to age 22 served 35 students. Members asked about the coordination of transportation for ESY students who participated in an offsite afternoon program (*any transportation requests were handled individually by Ms. O'Connell and accommodated whenever possible*), whether the ESY program is fulfilling the minimum number of days required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (*Ms. Nobrega and Ms. O'Connell will discuss this further*), and what is the process for family notification of eligibility for the ESY program (*this is part of the conversation with parents and caregivers in the IEP meetings*).

Members asked for a report of short-term steps that the Superintendent took to address classroom temperatures during the first week of school, and also what long-term steps are planned to address the issue moving forward. Dr. Guillory reported that he and Dr. Givens have begun planning for the re-use of heat pumps (for example, from the Old Driscoll School that can be repurposed for other school buildings/classrooms that need the most relief). Ms. Charlupski, Chair of the Capital Improvements Subcommittee, noted that this issue was discussed at yesterday's subcommittee meeting. Mr. Simmons, Director of Public Buildings for the Town of Brookline, was in attendance at the subcommittee meeting. He reported that each year, as part of the mini-CIP process, he requests funds to install heat pumps/split systems in our school buildings to provide air conditioning. Some schools don't currently have the electrical capacity to

add new heat pumps or air conditioning units, so funding to update electrical systems is also part of the annual mini-CIP request. Dr. Guillory stated that each school has a heat emergency plan; those plans provide alternative, cooled spaces in each building that classes can use for at least some portions of the school day. Noting that we are likely to have hot classrooms again in June 2024, Dr. Ehrenberg asked that this issue be docketed for a future School Committee meeting to allow the Superintendent an opportunity to share more detailed remediation plans.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Laura Perras, PSB parent, asked for an update on the Elementary World Language program, specifically progress made on new hires, the projected timeline to fully restore the program to all grades, and steps being taken to address EWL teacher concerns. Justin Brown, President of the Brookline Educators Union, spoke in support of the successful school year opening, and praised the hard work by PSB educators that made it possible. He also reiterated the difficult teaching conditions during the first week of school as a result of the heat wave and pledged the support of the BEU to work to resolve this issue.

**5. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF CURRENT ISSUES**

**a. Providing Safe Bike Routes to Schools by Connecting South Brookline to Brookline High School and Beyond**

Richard Murphy, Precinct 16 Town Meeting Member, led the presentation on behalf of the Brookline 4 Ever Group (Attachment C). Currently, students in South Brookline have four options to get to the high school: the PSB bus (which, on the morning run, leaves early to avoid congestion, resulting in students arriving at BHS at 7:40am for an 8:20am school day start); public transportation (the MBTA Route 51 bus to the green line, transfer at Reservoir to Brookline Hills; the bus runs sporadically, so this mode of transportation can take up to one hour); the family car (driven by parents to the BHS campus, exacerbating traffic congestion); and bicycling. Bicycling can be faster (approximately 22-minute trip) and provides students with full flexibility in terms of arrival and departure times. Mr. Murphy described the current roadways and bike routes from South Brookline to the high school, and reported that one of the priority goals of the Brookline 4 Ever Group and the Town's Bicycle Advisory Committee is to establish protected bicycle lanes that will reduce congestion, provide safer streets, and give students a safe and flexible mode of transportation to school. Joining Mr. Murphy for the presentation were BHS students Maya Huling and Audrey Chang; they described their experiences bicycling to BHS from South Brookline. Mr. Murphy and other members of the Bicycle Advisory Committee will be presenting their report to the Safe Routes to School Committee, the Town Transportation Board, and the DPW Engineering Department to advocate for a more robust bike lane infrastructure. Mr. Murphy asked for PSB and School Committee support by encouraging staff and students to bike to school, joining the advocacy for improved bike lane infrastructure, and assisting with communications to the PSB community about the importance of this issue. Members thanked Mr. Murphy for his informative presentation and expressed their interest in supporting this important work.

**b. Presentation of the Brookline Community Foundation's "Understanding Brookline: Economic Inequality in Brookline" Report**

Aba Taylor, Executive Director of the Brookline Community Foundation (BCF), joined the meeting to provide an overview of the BCF's work and to present the findings of the BCF's study

of income inequality in Brookline (Attachment D). The BCF was founded in 1905 as the Brookline Friendly Society; in 1999 the Brookline Friendly Society renamed itself the Brookline Community Fund, and in 2005 it was renamed the Brookline Community Foundation. The areas of focus for BCF's work are philanthropic leadership, partnering with the community, investing in Brookline, and research and insights. Ms. Taylor highlighted the work of BCF Youth Fund Grants that are made to ensure equal access to opportunities for all youth in Brookline. Since 1999, the Brookline Youth Fund has awarded over \$1 million in grants to 47 different local organizations. BCF investments in educational programming since 2018 total over \$1.3 million through 90 grants to 35 local partners, including the PSB, the Brookline Teen Center, and the Brookline Asian American Family Network. The BCF also manages a Scholarship Fund for Brookline High School, raising over \$1.4 million since 2016 to award to BHS students. Ms. Taylor described some of the research that is part of the 2023 Economic Inequality in Brookline report, including the finding that 25% of Brookline residents struggle to make ends meet. Brookline's population is growing and becoming more diverse (30% of Brookline's residents identify as Black, Asian, Latinx, or multiracial; and 33% of residents above the age of 5 speak a language other than English at home). At least 41% of Brookline's households earn incomes below the living wage in Norfolk County, and 10.68% of adults over the age of 65 and 11.28% of women live in poverty. While poverty rates are falling, significant economic needs persist and the rising cost of essentials make it harder to build financial security. The BCF will soon be launching a reliable, accurate, community database to readily and easily share information with stakeholders across town. This open database will include 50 indicators covering health, economics, education, resources, and equity, and will "put the power of real-time community data in everyone's hands". Members thanked Ms. Taylor for this illuminating presentation, as well as for the vital contributions that the BCF makes to the residents of Brookline.

## **6. SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACTIONS**

### **a. Discussion and Possible Vote on FY 2024 Substitute Teacher and Substitute Nurse Pay Rates**

Dr. Givens presented a memo about substitute teacher and substitute nurse pay rates (Attachment E), including a proposal to increase the per diem rate for both. Dr. Givens noted that the district is finding it difficult to fill substitute openings. In order to remain competitive, and fill our substitute openings with the best possible candidates, a higher per diem rate is proposed. Staff recommend that the per diem rate for substitute teachers be raised from \$112 to \$135, and the per diem rate for nurses be raised from \$175 to \$200, effective September 1, 2023. Dr. Givens assured members that the school budget will be able to absorb the increased costs associated with these new per diem rates.

### **ACTION 23-80**

On a motion of Mr. Pearlman, and seconded by Dr. Liu, the School Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, by roll call, with 7 in favor (Mr. Pearlman, Dr. Liu, Ms. Charlupski, Dr. Ehrenberg, Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Frias, and Dr. Linos), 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions, to increase the per diem rate for substitute teachers to \$135 and increase the per diem rate for substitute nurses to \$200, retroactive to September 1, 2023.

**b. Discussion and Possible Vote on Capital Improvements Subcommittee's Recommended Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Request**

Ms. Charlupski and Dr. Givens presented the proposed PSB Capital Improvements Program request (Attachment F). The Capital Improvements Subcommittee met on September 12, 2023. Working collaboratively with the Town Public Buildings Division, the subcommittee and staff have prepared and recommend this CIP request for consideration and approval by the full School Committee. The CIP request is due to the Town Administrator's office on September 15. The line-by-line description of the request is as follows:

*Classroom Capacity (leases):* requesting \$640,332 in FY25 (a reduction of \$1,386,650 from FY24 due to the termination of the 2 Clark Road lease). The leases BEEP@Putterham (Temple Emeth) and BEEP@Beacon (Temple Ohabei) remain.

*Failing Furniture and Fixtures Replacement:* in FY25 we are requesting \$200,000, of which \$125,000 is for replacement of tables in the BHS cafeteria.

*IEP Accommodations – School Modifications:* the FY25 request is \$50,000; this is a new request for improvements that fall outside of the scope of Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations.

*Deferred Maintenance (also referred to as the mini-CIP):* request of \$2,120,675 in FY25 for building repairs that can't be completed in the annual maintenance of schools due to budget limitations. In FY25, the mini-CIP work will focus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors of Lincoln School, updates to Baldwin (to accommodate staff moving out of 2 Clark Road), electrical upgrades to Heath School (needed for future HVAC improvements), repairs to the Runkle auditorium, and flooring/stair work at Lawrence and Baker.

*Long-Term Capital Plan:* The last independent long-term capital plan for the PSB was completed in February 2009. FY25 request amount is \$250,000.

The Committee also discussed the DPW's CIP requests for improvements to school playgrounds, or to town playgrounds adjacent to our school buildings, and reviewed the Building Department's CIP request that covers repairs and improvements in our school buildings. Future year PSB CIP requests include a feasibility study for a possible expansion of the Lawrence Cafeteria, and a feasibility study for Baker School (renovation/construction/possible expansion). The Committee was particularly interested in CIP funding that will enable as many classrooms as possible to be air conditioned as quickly as possible.

**ACTION 23-81**

On a motion of Ms. Charlupski, and seconded by Ms. Federspiel, the School Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, by roll call, with 7 in favor (Mr. Pearlman, Dr. Liu, Ms. Charlupski, Dr. Ehrenberg, Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Frias, and Dr. Linos), 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions, to approve the Public Schools of Brookline FY25 Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) request in the amount of \$3,261,007.

Ms. Charlupski and Dr. Givens acknowledged the tremendous work of Ms. Nobrega in the preparation of this CIP request. On a related note, the School Committee has invited Charlie Simmons, Director of Public Buildings, to the October 12 meeting to share highlights of some of the fantastic mini-CIP funded work completed over the summer in our schools. Finally, staff will work with Mr. Simmons to create a summary of PSB classrooms that need air conditioning and a proposed timeline to make those improvements.

**c. Discussion and Possible Vote on District Mission, Vision and Goals**

Mr. Pearlman noted that Dr. Ehrenberg was the primary drafter of this impressive document, so he asked Dr. Ehrenberg to lead the discussion. Dr. Ehrenberg reminded members that this document was first reviewed and discussed at the summer workshop. Since that time, a small subgroup has continued to make edits and refine the language. Goal 6, *Ethic of Wellness*, is new, so he asked members to review it this evening and offer feedback. Following the discussion, the Committee moved to approve the document.

**ACTION 23-82**

On a motion of Dr. Ehrenberg, and seconded by Dr. Liu, the School Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, by roll call, with 7 in favor (Mr. Pearlman, Dr. Liu, Ms. Charlupski, Dr. Ehrenberg, Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Frias, and Dr. Linos), 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions, to adopt the revised District Mission, Vision and Goals, as outlined in the attached document (Attachment G).

Members thanked Dr. Ehrenberg for shepherding this document through to completion. The Committee looks forward to seeing the Mission, Vision and Goals reflected in the implementation of the District Strategic Plan.

**7. SUBCOMMITTEE AND LIAISON REPORTS**

**a. Capital Improvements**

**i. Discussion and Possible Vote to Issue Support Letter for DPW's Davis Path Footbridge Replacement Project Grant Application**

Ms. Charlupski reported that Bill Smith, DPW Project Manager and Architect, attended the subcommittee's meeting yesterday. He provided an overview of the proposed Davis Path Footbridge replacement that is planned to span the MBTA train tracks from Boylston Street (near the Old Lincoln School, adjacent to Boylston Playground) to White Place (near Emerson Playground). DPW asked for a letter of support from the School Committee to accompany their grant application. The subcommittee voted unanimously to recommend that the School Committee issue such a letter of support.

**ACTION 23-83**

On a motion of Ms. Charlupski, and seconded by Ms. Federspiel, the School Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, by roll call, with 7 in favor (Mr. Pearlman, Dr. Liu, Ms. Charlupski, Dr. Ehrenberg, Ms. Federspiel, Ms. Frias, and Dr. Linos), 0 opposed, and 0 abstentions, to issue a letter of support for the Town of Brookline's Davis Path Footbridge Replacement Project to accompany their application for a U.S. Department of Transportation "Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Construction Grant". (Attachment H)

Ms. Charlupski reported that at last night's Building Commission meeting there was a discussion of the Pierce School Project. The Commission is moving toward issuing an early bid package for the demolition of the existing school. This will allow the architect to complete the drawings with a more complete understanding of the actual site conditions. A second bid package will then cover the building of the new school. Because of a delay in the preparation of the contract documents, the timeline for moving students out of the existing building has been moved

back to summer 2024. This means that students and staff will not have to move out during the school year, a change strongly supported by the school leadership. The project timeline still calls for the new building to be ready for occupancy in September 2027, though that date might change. A meeting of the Pierce School Building Committee is scheduled for September 19, and Ms. Charlupski and Dr. Liu will report any new information at the next School Committee meeting.

**b. Curriculum**

Ms. Federspiel announced that the Curriculum Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, September 19 at a new time: 3:00pm to 4:30pm.

**c. Additional Liaisons and Updates**

Dr. Ehrenberg announced that the first meeting of the Climate and Sustainability Task Force was held on August 29. The Task Force is made up of over 20 members who have been assigned to four work groups (Education and Engagement; Energy, Buildings and Outdoor Spaces; Food Services and Waste; Transportation). He will be following up with the Task Force soon to guide them in the next steps. He also recently met with the representatives of the Zero Emissions Advisory Board and Climate Action Brookline to bring them up-to-speed on the Task Force creation and goals.

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Pearlman announced that Ms. Nancy Rhei Gorer resigned from the School Committee, effective on August 31, 2023. The Committee expressed their gratitude to Ms. Gorer for her service to the school district. The Committee will be convening a joint meeting with the Select Board to select a new member who will serve until the end of Ms. Gorer's term (May 2024). An announcement with details for interested applicants, who must be registered voters in Brookline, will be forthcoming.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:10pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Betsy Fitzpatrick, Executive Assistant  
Brookline School Committee