

CITY OF HOLYOKE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021
TIME: 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

School Committee Vice Chair Mildred Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and announced that pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 20, attendees are hereby informed that a video and audio recording is being made of the meeting and the meeting is being live-streamed and run live on the City's community TV channel.

Present: Mayor Murphy, Mildred Lefebvre, Devin Sheehan, Erin Brunelle, Rosalee Tensley Williams, Rebecca Birks, Irene Feliciano Sims, John G. Whelihan, William Collamore, Nyles Courchesne and Superintendent/Receiver Anthony Soto

STUDENT SHOWCASE

Amy Burke, Metcalf School Principal, introduced Fine Arts teacher, Axel Cruz. Mr. Cruz brought 4 students with him who have been working hard on a presentation for the Committee.

Axel Cruz told the committee that the students have been working on a "picture in time." The focus of this exercise is to grab an image from a historical image from any source and find it is and one of the persons in the source for which they'll write a monologue from the perspective of that person in that moment of time. Students have to research and write the monologue. The monologue had to be no more than 10 long and no less than five lines.

Anais described the image of MLK in Spanish for the committee. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are trapped in a inescapable web of reciprocity, tied in a single garment of destiny. What affects one directly affects all indirectly. We still have a choice today. Non violent coexistence or violent conelation coalition. We must move, we must move from indecision to action."

Alaina Vargas Sanchez described the image of MLK in Spanish. "One day we will all be free, will be able to drink from the same mountains and sit in the same seat. All people deserve to be free from segregation. We will fight to the end to be frew. One more person who believes is one more step toward helping us to be free. This will be a moment in history that will never be forgotten. Children in the future will not have to fight segregation, because our generation will liberate the nation.

Destiny described the image of MLK in Spanish. "Today I'm witnessing a moment in history with one of the most influential people all 4.5 million years of humanity as the Bible says. And, be honest with yourself, and Martin Luther King, as well as the living examples of the same. No matter what happens, he always stayed true to his cause and to integration. And guess what ended this shows, if you stay true to yourself you'll succeed today."

Carlos said, "Last summer I felt empowered and I felt angry. I feel very happy and I feel extravagant because we are going to get freedom. We can finally drink from the same source as everyone.

Committee members thanked the students for their thoughtful work and presentation. Ms. Lefebvre spoke to the students in Spanish, thanking them for coming to the meeting and for their hard work and presentation for the committee. She hoped they could return in the future.

PUBLIC COMMENT- NO PUBLIC COMMENT

COMMUNICATION AND REPORTS

Student Reports

Alan Gates, Dean Campus Principal, thanked the committee for participating in the successful Community cleanup event that was held May 8. In these days, and in these ways, time has become the currency with the most value.

Dean Camus Teacher, Mayra Rodriguez Cherniack, thanked committee members for their relentless support for Holyoke for all that they do for the students. Ms. Rodriguez Cherniack introduced Dean senior, Yasmine Rodriguez.

Yasmine Rodriguez told committee members that she is in the culinary shop. Dean is an amazing school and it truly has a lot of opportunities. She read a thank you note for all who helped on the Dean clean up day:

Dear Holyoke School Committee, my name is Jasmine Rodriguez and I'm a senior at Dean. On behalf of the class of 2021 and the Dean Ambassador Program, we would like to thank you for all your support this year. We especially would like to thank and recognize the efforts of the following school committee members for attending our main event as well as your overwhelming support and bringing back graduation to the main campus. Thank you. We have created certificates for each of you. I know that you have visited the campus but please come by as soon you can so we can to give you your certificate in person. We are in school for two more weeks on the Dean campus during the pandemic. We have many other ways to celebrate and recognize people for their hard work and accomplishments.

Committee members thanked Jasmine for coming and for her kind words. Committee members who attended and helped with the clean up did so because they believe in the students and that the students should have the very best effort they can give to them.

SUPERINTENDENT RECEIVER REPORTS

RETURN TO SCHOOL UPDATE

Anthony Soto: we started the school year with the majority of students engaged in remote learning. In October we had less than 6% of our students in person. Pre-K - 5, 2%, 6-8 1%, 9-12 17%. To date Pre-K - 5, 61.3%, 6-8 50.4%, 9-12 49%

An estimated 56% of students will be learning in person as of May 17th.

To begin the year, we prioritized returning students who had more significant needs and/or whose academic program (e.g. career vocational technical education) is most conducive to being in person.

Throughout the year, we have returned more students, beginning with the earlier grade levels first. We maintained an option for students to continue learning remotely at home and made efforts to provide a rich remote learning experience.

For grades 9-12 it is planned to be full in-person beginning May 17.

Anthony Soto: Overall enrollment is down about 129 students on and the majority of that is pre K and K.

One of the things that we did in developing our budget for next year and developing our staffing plans for next year is we ignored this year's pre K and K enrollment data and went with what we had last year because we know that that's more indicative of what we are going to get for students.

HIGH SCHOOL MATH CURRICULUM

Anthony Soto: We have made a change to the math course and we've added an additional course offering to our ninth grade. We used to have just algebra 1 one year progression and one thing that we're adding is an algebra one A and B, which is a two-year progression. This is driven by the equity commitment and that we ensure that students and families who need the most get the most

Our data on math achievement just hasn't been great in grades eight to 10 and it's been pretty stagnant over the last seven years.

56% of our students in the Eighth, Ninth and 10th grade require intervention and math according to our star data and then our eighth grade and cast scores, you can see that in 17 and 18. Only 8% of our students had met or exceeded expectations and then the following year 11% met or exceeded our expectations.

We've been talking about implementing our multi tiered system of supports to implement and making sure that students get what they need to be able to perform and be ready for college and careers.

Valerie Annear explained that work will be done across multiple grade levels. This is not a high school issue, this is a K to 12 issue. And are taking steps at every grade level. Our middle school curriculum has started to use the highest rated math curriculum available called illustrative math.

We are ensuring that the math department is working with our middle school principals to ensure that our middle schools are getting what they need, as they move up

Dr. Tara Brandt, Director of Mathematics, explained that many students really hate mathematics, thinking it's a mystery and not wanting to pursue careers in stem, which they really should, because those are such high opportunity fields.

Illustrative mathematics has been adopted at the middle school level, IM is the highest math program on the market. IM has been moved up the the high school this year. The Illustrative mathematics curriculum includes a complete support class. This is to ensure that students get a mastery of algebra one before they take the MCAS in 10th grade, which includes a majority of algebra 1.

SUMMER SCHOOL

Anthony Soto provided on the school committee an update on summer school planning. There is a plan for in person and remote options for families/students

The Summer School Program is 5 weeks and going to start July 6 and run through August 6.

The program will run at the lower elementary grades, which is rising first, second and third graders, at White.

McMahon will have the upper elementary which is going to be grades four and rising grades, four and five.

STEM middle school will house the Generation Teach program for middle school students.

The acceleration academy will take place August 9 through the 13th from 9:00am to 3:00pm for students in grades 1-3 at White, and for students in grades 4-5 McMahon.

Currently there are about 70 students enrolled, which is low. There will be outreach to families in order to enroll more students.

Mrs. Birks expressed concern, again, that transitions students only have the option of the Jericho Program in the summer and many of them require year-long educational programming. That needs to be addressed.

FY 22 BUDGET UPDATE

Mr. Soto said the was thankful that the district is able to benefit from significant amount of federal dollars. This is a year that we were not looking to cut like we have been in the past, because of these federal dollars and because of what our students and families have endured due to the pandemic.

The district's strategic priorities are grounded with a commitment to equity. Equity lives in every single one of our strategic priorities. The commitments we make around equity is that we ensure that students and families that need the most get the most. We incorporate the voices of those impacted, especially those who have not been heard historically. We promote access and inclusion for all students, families, and staff, especially those who are not being heard. We reflect and embrace the greater diversity of our students and families and we work to be an Anti racist and culturally responsive community.

The majority of our investments this upcoming budget year really live in the instructional leadership area.

It's time to start focusing on instructional leadership and our investment. The investments that we're making in the upcoming year focus on instruction.

The district is continuing to expand the dual language program. Survey data shows that families do value the dual language program and we want to continue to grow it.

Donahue School 7th graders will be shifted to STEM middle school.

The district is making an additional investment in the STEM program to strengthen the new middle school program.

Based on enrollment we're adding two additional district wide behavior specialists to provide needed supports.

The Barr foundation partnership is supporting our leaders with a three-year Relay Program training. Data teams are being created to help facilitate that work.

The district continues to invest in a co-teaching model at donahue with long range plans to look at the inclusion program at Donahue.

There will be art and music and every schools. That was something that was very prominent when we looked at the survey data.

All schools will have access to an ELA and a Math instructional coach/expert teacher. Some schools will have access to academic interventionists. One teacher will work across 8 grade spans. This will be an important part of our MTSS strategy for next year.

The district is increasing access to high quality science and nutrition programming through a partnership with the food core and in partnership with Sodexo. There will be gardens at each of the pre K to five schools and lessons will be embedded into the elementary programming around that.

The district will continue to invest in the Bryt program.

There will be investments in curriculum adoption and extensive training opportunities for leaders and staff alike.

There is an allocation for counseling across the schools so that principals will not have to decide on whether they can fund that service for students.

There will be a significant investment in facilities with the bulk of the work happening over the summer.

Schools will have PPE and appropriate furnishings to that we can safely bring back students.

Every school will have a family engagement coordinator. These are going to be critical in terms of reengaging students and working with families, to make sure that they're getting what they need from our schools.

A significant amount of federal dollars will be used in staff f allocations.

Schools have the choice to purchase additional staff which could likely reduce some class sizes, depending on what choices principals are making we're working on the guidance right now.

Net school spending increased about \$4 million or 4.5%percent. That's primarily because of the student opportunity Act.

There was an increase in our Charter reimbursement of \$419,000.

The district will use \$3.5 million dollars in some of that federal money to sustain core services.

Salaries will be up \$2.9 million or 6%.

Supplies based on level service, up approximately 4%.

Insurance has gone up about 415,000.

circuit breaker carryover funding was used to reduce the amount for out of district tuition. We anticipate about \$8.8 million for out of district tuition next year.

Retired teachers health insurance increased about 13%.

Charter tuition increased another 3.4%.

Budget assumptions are based on the House Ways and Means budget.

The majority of the budget is salaries and wages.

Health Insurance is another cost driver of the district. The average, plan cost is about \$10,700 (the employer cost.) Every year, that that has gone up pretty significantly.

Most of the district's expenditures are compliance driven.

Because the Governor reduced Chapter 70 funding to the district, \$2.3 in ESSR funds are being used to balance the budget.

Support staff is real bare bones and there's a need to increase there.

The district returned \$2 million to the City this year from transportation because we didn't start in in-person at the beginning of the school year. That makes the transportation cost look like a large increase, but that is not the case.

Ms. Brunelle commented that the City only funds at the minimum required, which is about 12% of the school budget. Holyoke is one of only a very small handful of districts in the state that does not fund above foundation. If Holyoke schools are going to improve and succeed into the future, that has to change.

GRADUATION AND EOY ACTIVITIES

Cross Campus events include senior car parade, May 23, 9 am-12 pm, Gary Rome Car Give away, May 23 (post car parade) Lawn Signs, distributed to both campuses on Friday, May 14, Senior Banners, Pictures on April 28 from 1-6 pm, Banners hung on North and Dean campuses by 5/22.

Dean Campus events include HHS Dean Tech Beautification Day, May 8th, 9:00 - 12:00, Cap And Gown Day, May 22, 11:00 - 2:00, Markiyon Memorial Tree Planting Ceremony, June 1st, 3:30 - 4:30(Limited to family event)Breakfast and Class Day,June 2 time TBD, Barbecue and Rehearsal, June 3 from 11:00-2:00, Graduation, June 4, 5:30 pm.

North Campus, Graduation, June 6, 1:00 pm, Graduation Rehearsal, TBD , Class Day, June 4 (Breakfast from 9:30-10:30,Class Day from 0:45-12:00, Cap and Gown Day, May 15 from 11:00-2:00.

The Holyoke BOH approved up to three family members per student. However, in the case of inclement weather, all of those family members will not fit in the gym.

COVID 19 UPDATE

Anthony Soto: We continue to push messaging around COVID 19 vaccination. One of the biggest changes since the last meeting is that the Pfizer vaccine is now available for students ages 12 and up as you know, we held a Moderna at Dean Campus for staff.

For three weeks in a row, Holyoke is in the yellow in every single one of our health metrics.

OTHER/ST. VINCENT STREET PROPERTY

Mayor Murphy met with Anthony and Dr. Mahoney about the St. Vincent property on St. Vincent St. above the Dean Parking Lot which belongs to the school department.

Mayor Murphy has been meeting with the city engineer about the potential of cleaning up the land and future opportunities of Homeownership.

Any use of that property would require the school committee to vote that that property is no longer needed for educational purposes.

OTHER/RECEIVERSHIP UPDATE FROM MAYOR

Mayor Murphy said he had been in contact with DESE and is expecting an announcement in terms of receivership. The city can expect to be able to leave receivership and this school committee can resume its governance role. He is expecting to see a timeline for how existing receivership will happen.

Quarter 3 Update

The Q3 update shows the district scorecard and where we're at. We developed 25 different project plans, which represents our equity work.

The majority of the priorities are on track and some of them are slightly off track, so we have a plan in place to make sure we get back on track.

NEW BUSINESS - NO NEW BUSINESS

ON GOING BUSINESS- NO ONGOING BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rebecca Birks: Car parade for both HS campuses this Sunday, 9am for the seniors. Cars can line up on the streets.

Anthony Soto: DPAC meeting tomorrow, Tuesday 5/18 at 6PM, SEPAC Wednesday 5/19 at 6 pm, ELPAC Thursday 5/20th at 5pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Sheehan made a Motion to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Whelihan.

Mayor Murphy yes, Mildred Lefebvre yes, Devin Sheehan yes, Erin Brunelle yes, Rosalee Tensley Williams yes, Rebecca Birks yes, Irene Feliciano Sims yes, John G. Whelihan yes, William Collamore yes, Nyles Courchesne yes.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:26pm.