

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES**

**September 23, 2024 School Administration Bldg. 7 PM**

**Committee Members Present:** Michelle Badger, Chair; Luis Pizano, Vice Chair; James Sorenson, Robert Morgan, Vedna Lacombe Heywood, Ashley Shaw; Members and Anna King (PNHS) and Shea Braz (PSHS); Student Representatives.

**Committee Members Not Present:** Katherine Jackson, Secretary.

**School Administration Present:** Christopher Campbell, Superintendent; Stacey Rodgers, Assistant Superintendent; Erik Cioffi, Human Resources Director; Adam Bissel, Business Manager.

**Pledge of Allegiance and Land Acknowledgement** (reading approved at last meeting.)

**Executive Session:** for purpose of collective bargaining moved and voted upon unanimously.

### **Contract Ratification – Education Association of Plymouth and Carver (EAPC) Teacher, ParaEducators, and Educational Secretaries:**

Motion passed to separate votes between EAPC Teachers from ParaEducators and Educational Secretaries, per legal advisement. Recommendations accepted with respect to Contract Ratification for necessary actions. Superintendent Campbell shared his recommendation to ratify per the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement. Chair Badger expressed appreciation for the time and effort exerted to reach the Contract Ratifications. Representatives of the union expressed their appreciation for the collaborative and open dialogue exchanged during the negotiations.

**Community Donations:** President Shawn Costa of the Education Foundation received acknowledgement for the generous donation to the Go Gold for Hope campaign for pediatric cancer research. A parent and student representative displayed their support for the campaign.

### **Student Representatives Reports:**

Anna King of Plymouth North and Shea Braz of Plymouth South High Schools, newly appointed student representatives each presented a timeline of scheduled events in the upcoming months, including Homecomings, Open Houses, College Visits, and outreach activities for the Going Gold campaign. A \$65M grant to upgrade technology resources and a \$201K grant for graphic design enhancements were announced.

### **Special Education Program Director Update**

Newly appointed as of July 1, 2024, CJ Smith, Director of Special Education for the PPS, presented a summary of findings from the Tiered Focus Monitoring and Academic Discoveries Reports. Findings included recognition of achievements and areas for improvement. 1600 students are receiving special education services across all schools. 32-35 students receive services in out of district placements. Director Smith and her team are scheduled to visit the out of district placement settings throughout the fall. She has put in place a school wide Corrective Action Plan with timelines for completion by January of 2025 that will address timed accountability for paperwork compliance, discipline compliance with regulations, improved mapping of student curriculum from entry to exit of receiving services and maximization of federal funding. Director Smith is convening an all-day Professional Development agenda for

November 5, 2024. She stressed that special education is not a place. It's a service provided as close to peers as possible.

**Early Literacy Data Presentation:**

Dr. Lisa White, Coordinator of English Language Arts (ELA) for the Plymouth Public Schools PPS, presented data metrics derived from early literacy screening assessments mandated by DESE with procedures, protocols and guidance to identify students at risk of reading difficulties. DESE mandates that the screenings be administered during grades Kindergarten through third grade. Plymouth continues their use through the fifth grade. The tool used is available in Spanish and Dr. White is promoting the addition of Portuguese. Some of the data highlights Hedge as an outlier in outcomes due to the large English as a Second language (ESL) population. Dr. White cautioned the use of the instrument as an indicator for special education services.

**Out of Town, Overnight or International Field Trips:**

Following presentations by the Teacher Advisors and recommended for approval by Superintendent Campbell, the following trips were voted upon and unanimously approved:

- PNHS Overnight trip to Boston to attend the Harvard Model United Nations; and
- PSHS international field trip to Quebec, CN

Dr. Sorenson reminded all that these trips should come before the School Committee in advance of student engagements. Again, unanimously approved.

**Superintendent's Report:**

Dr. Campbell presented a summary as follows:

- Visits from the MA School Building Authority were conducted. Next steps will be known in mid-November;
- FY'26 Budget Discussions with the town are currently taking place;
- PPS received a MA Service Alliance Grant to create a comprehensive Volunteer Program Model;
- The second year of the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Implementation grant is underway;
- Details about PPS participation in the No Place for Hate MLK Breakfast; and
- National Banner Recognition, Special Olympics North America was received.

**REPORTS:**

No Master Planning Committee Report was provided.

**Proposed Recommendations by the Charter Review Committee (CRC)**

Steve Bolotin, Vice Chair and Len Levin, Clerk of the CRC presented on behalf of the CRC. Steve opened by stressing that the approach undertaken by the CRC was of an institutional focus without policy or operational implications. He also stressed that the recommendations would be decided upon at Town Meeting. He stated three aims of the committee's work were to make the Charter more understandable, more transparent and flexible, and to gain accountability in the structure of and responsibilities of town government. Regarding the deletion of the School Committee overseeing its building,

grounds and furnishings, he emphasized that the recommendations were to provide future opportunities for change in our manner of governance, versus mandates.

Mr. Bolotin indicated that the verbiage of the current Charter under review by the CRC would prevent the Town from a shared services arrangement with the schools without a state government approved change. He noted that the School Committee is part of the Executive Committee, and that concerns about the appointment of the Administration and Finance Committee members were raised by that committee.

Member Shaw asked if any discussion of implementation of shared services occurred. She inquired if any school committee representatives had been consulted. Mr. Boltin responded that the proposed changes do not mandate changes; but they allow for discussions to occur.

He also indicated that the current version of the Charter conflicts with the current by-laws and mentioned that aligning them will take time. Mr. Bolotin noted that an outside consultant is working on the by-law conflicts with the Charter.

Member Sorenson commented that the proposed recommendations create the potential to remove authority from the School Committee and questioned the legality of doing so. Member Lacombe Heywood stated that the proposed changes have created a very grey opening of possibilities and that the by-laws require updating/amending to address the process of achieving them.

Chair Badger expressed her opinion that, “The process seems to be the cart before the horse.” Member Lacombe Heywood commented on the existing checks and balances by the State and asked what is the emergent need to change the process? Mr. Bolotin noted that Section 4.2d of our current Charter is not included in MA general laws.

Member Shaw challenged Mr. Bolotin’s interpretation of the laws, stating that the School Committee is not prohibited from entering shared services and that the by-laws are crystal clear regarding operationalization.

Vice Chair Pizano stated that review of the proposed changes should be taken up chapter by chapter, not all or nothing. He questioned what was the identification of the problem that the CRC believed needed a solution. Mr. Bolotin responded by indicating that the enactment of the by-laws was at least a two-year process, assuming Town approves them. It was noted that any changes must be approved by the State. Member Lacombe Heywood stated her view that the situation was a Catch 22. Mr. Bolotin agreed and reminded the School Committee of the role of the CRC as advisory.

Upon questioning, Mr. Bolotin confirmed that no further changes to the proposed recommendations can be made prior to Town Meeting. Member Shaw stated that the current Charter allows for modifications. It does not disallow them. She encouraged committee members to educate voters on this point.

Chair Badger expressed that the proposed recommendations are not personally about the School Committee, nor the CRC, to close the discussion.

Lawrence Pizer introduced himself as a member of the CRC who vehemently expressed that the reality of the related discussions by the CRC were driven by the promise of saving money. He encouraged all to watch the recording of the Charter meeting to observe for themselves.

### **Committee Member Reports (Cont.)**

Reports from the Plymouth Building Committee Liaison and a Human Resources summary of appointments and resignations was provided.

**Approval of Consent Agenda, Home Education Plans and Accounts Payable Warrant #S091224:**

The School Committee unanimously approved the Superintendent's recommendation of the Consent Agenda. Also unanimously approved were the School Year Home Education Plan(s) and the Report and Schedule of Accounts Payable Warrant dated 9/10/24 in the amount of \$2,027,480.17.

**Disposal of Equipment and Materials:**

All of the Superintendent's recommended disposal of obsolete equipment and materials were accepted and voted upon unanimously.

**Adjournment:** Chair Badger announced the adjournment of the meeting at 9:54 pm.

**Next Meeting: October 7, 2024**

Respectfully Submitted by Kate Brown, Observer Corps