

ROCKPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING  
Wednesday March 6, 2019

Chairperson Colleen Coogan called the regular meeting of the Rockport School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Middle/High School Library. Present were Nicole Altieri, Colleen Coogan, Richard Drost, Michael Kelley, and Mary Porter. Also, present were Superintendent Robert Liebow and Recording Secretary Ingrid Keating.

I. Opening of Regular Meeting

A. Approval of Minutes

Motion: Michael Kelley motioned to approve the February 6, 2019 regular minutes correcting the amount under section C – FundFlow second sentence from \$125,000 to \$150,000.  
Seconded: Mary Porter seconded the motion.  
Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

B. Personnel Actions N/A

II. Community Participation

A. Student Advisory Representative

Middle school Task Group students in Whitney Swanbergs classes presented the following:

Ava MacDowell proposed one-to-one computers for students. She believes that chrome books would eliminate paper, and would create a more organized and less overwhelming place to keep student work. The school would benefit by expanding resources and attention, save money, and create educational opportunities for students who are interested in technology.

Julia Sekercan proposed to add the language classes into the core rotation. The benefits to the change are: reduced class sizes, position would be filled with a fulltime teacher, who would be available afterschool and would teach consistent lessons to all the students which would help students who want to study together.

Kyle Curtin is inspired to improve school safety to create a more positive environment and increased feeling of safety in the schools. Improvements would save lives, students and staff would feel safe and have less worry, and evacuating the building would be faster. He proposes more pop-out windows, security cameras, and better entrance procedures/locations for visitors. Although cost might be high any step would be a big step forward and it is better to be safe than sorry.

Fiona Canning would like to start a People Helping People Club. Fiona has received interest from teachers to lead this club and her next step is to get the club approved and find a location to meet. This club would be a safe place for students to attend, talk, participate in activities and receive support from peers.

Nathaniel Kirby reported that a Ghanaian master drummer visited the high school on March 4<sup>th</sup>, the annual Art Show begins this week at the Rockport Art Association, and Spirit Week went well.

B. Public Participation

Zenas Seppala, 92 Granite St., Rockport, wanted to discuss the new Chapter 296 an Act to Promote and Enhance Civic Engagement in the schools. The law wants neutral and rigorous teaching of civics along with local history and government, promote students 18 and older to participate in the voting process, and implementation of specific civic curriculum, including a project. The project will analyze complex issues with different points of view and support claims. He feels that this is not how the town of Rockport is governed and supplied notes from an April 3, 2012 selectmen's meeting which he feels reflects that notion. Mr. Seppala attended a FinCom meeting and was very impressed by the Cape Ann Study for Education that Mr. Kelley presented.

Student Advisory Representative Amanda Verga reported that currently the high school offers the following civic courses: US History 1600-1877, 20<sup>th</sup> Century America 1900-present, AP US History, We the People, Current Events, Investigate! World History, Justice and Law, Facing History and ourselves, and History of Cape Ann.

Nicole Altieri reported that local history starts in kindergarten and in second grade in the first half of the year by reading the “Cat Nip Man” along with a tour of Cape Ann and later grades lessons include Art in Rockport.

### III. Discussion and Recommended Action

#### A. K-12 Guidance/Deans

Middle School Dean Brett Hall explained the Dean and counselor partnership, they work to improve attendance, social emotional health, behavior and school culture. He also works to create a positive academically oriented learning environment, discipline, schedule development, lunch duty, is the liaison for the courts and DCF, parent meetings, monitors in-school suspensions and collaborates with counselor and principal. Some of the duties of the Middle School Counselor Samantha Merrill are to listen and counsel students regarding academic, social and emotional concerns, to collaborate with staff to best serve students, meet with parents, transition planning between schools, IEP counseling, and coordinate with outside service providers. Mr. Hall and Ms. Merrill reviewed the top 3 social, emotional and academic concerns of middle school students. They explained with pie charts the content of student visits and the counselor’s activities, which are within the range of the American School Counselor Association recommendations. Students groups consist of Social Skills, Text Anxiety Reduction, GIRLS (Girls in Real Life Situations) and Building Champions. Ms. Merrill also offers classroom lessons by grade regarding; gossip and rumors, conflict resolution and empathy and perspective which ties in to the curriculum of “To Kill a Mockingbird”. Mr. Hall reported that attendance has improved by 20% with daily announcements, signage, student meetings and parent communications. Kindness notes and chain, the Ed Gerety Presentation, student of the month awards, and the birthday calendar have helped to build a positive school culture. The school committee discussed interventions, proactive vs. reactive, and promoting the high school vs Essex Tech.

High School Dean AnnMarie Luster reported that the Caregivers group (dean, guidance, nurses and counselor) meet once a week to discuss what is going on with students to keep on the same page. They try to make it a solution based approach. Saturday detentions have worked out really well, there are less in-school, which requires her monitoring all day, and the Saturday detention allows time for discussing positive behavior. Mrs. Luster reported that students settled in to the new “no cell phones in class” rather quickly and have received feedback that it is a relief and that there are more conversations at lunch since students in classes aren’t able to communicate back. Mrs. Luster explained that the N-grade is a motivator for better attendance and allows the student to correct an issue and receive a passing grade if there no more than 10 absences in a semester. The policy also states that the designee can consider waiving the policy due to extenuating circumstances, such as illness, injury or social/emotion issues. There have been no fails due to the N-grade and only one college called for more information and the student in question was accepted. There are 43 students who make up chronic absenteeism and the high school is looking into a transition program, such as “Bright” to help them be successful in attending school.

Ruth Price and Heather Murphy outlined the mission and daily activities of the high school guidance department, which include scheduling, career development education, social/emotional support, partnering with parents, teachers, SPED, nurses, administration and outside services. Ms. Price explained the Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and treats/barriers (SWOT) that the guidance department has. Strengths and opportunities include: the guidance team, flexibility, transitions and dual enrollment. Weaknesses/threats/barriers are the student information system, space and enrollment. Dissuasion with the school committee included AP exams, PSAT & connecting juniors to college, career exposure and opportunities, senior college services and school profile data.

B. Sabbatical Request

Motion: Richard Drost motioned to approve Nathan Cohen's partial sabbatical request from January 2020 to the last day of school in June 2020. Since this request does not align with the Teachers Agreement a non-precedent memorandum of agreement will be developed.

Seconded: Nicole Altieri seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

C. Field Trips N/A

D. Policy Revise/review

First reading for the following policies:

File IHBG: Home Schooling  
File IHBG-E Relations with home schools application for home instruction  
FileLBC Relations with Home Schools (to be removed)  
File LBC-E: Relations with Home School Application for Home Instruction (to be removed)  
File EFD: Meal Charge  
File KI: Visitors to the school

E. Warrants and Payroll

IV. Information and proposals

A. School Council Update

Nicole Altieri reported that the elementary school council reviewed the elements of the school improvement plan, social/emotional issues and the new report card. They realized that there isn't a central school data base that stores student results. Moving forward the report card may compress the standards and an additional conference time may be added with the teacher. Mrs. Altieri reported that the report card survey had equal feedback from both sides of the spectrum, most wanted to know how a letter grade would reflect in this format. Parents/guardians were unhappy that comments were not included. Parents were able to view a webcast and attend a conference that explained the new format prior to the report cards distribution.

Mary Porter reported that the high school council discusses Rockport Gives Back; there were 20 responses this year compared to 7 at this time last year.

Richard Drost reported that the middle school council had discussion on goals for the school improvement plan, which included a schedule change and math scores.

B. Donations N/A

C. Updates

Sub-committee reports:

Communications Sub-committee: Mike Montgomery found that the company that covers Midas website design did not cover all the necessary components and 1623 no longer does website design. The sub-committee is talking about putting a small working group to develop a plan to move forward. The school committee discussed how the Student Information System and the Website development need to interact.

Superintendent

Colleen Coogan stated that Mr. Liebow did an excellent job presenting additional financial information that was requested by FinCom for their last meeting.

D. Other Business

Colleen Coogan reported that the last affordable housing meeting was cancelled. The committee will be changing the name to include “sustainable” and will add that the housing be available to multi-generation al.

Mike Kelley has emailed the School Committee Self-evaluation to the members.

V. Correspondence N/A

VI. Future Agenda Items

- A. Social Emotional (3/20)
- B. Counselors/Psychologist (3/20)
- C. EL Report Card Update (3/20)
- D. Superintendent Evaluation (4/3)
- E. PD & Tower Grant Update (4/3)
- F. Tech Plan (Security/refreshment of equipment) (4/3)
- C. Superintendent’s Report/FundFlow (??)

VII. Calendar

- A. March 20, 2019, regular meeting
- B. April 3, 2019, regular meeting

VIII. Executive Session

Motion: Michael Kelley motioned to adjourn the regular meeting at 10:37 pm.  
Seconded: Mary Porter seconded the motion.  
Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Liebow  
Superintendent of Schools