

ROCKPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING
Wednesday September 4, 2019

Chairperson Michael Kelley 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 Cathy Reilly. Also, present were Superintendent Robert Liebow and Recording Secretary Ingrid Keating.

I. Opening of Regular Meeting

A. Approval of Minutes N/A

B. Personnel Actions

Henry Strzemiloski has been appointed to the position of MS Permanent Daily Substitute at the rate of \$90/day.

II. Community Participation

A. Student Advisory Representative

Nathaniel Kirby and Patrick Morin reported that the students and staff met to discuss their summer book group readings. They felt there was meaningful discussion and it was a way for students to get to know faculty that they otherwise they would not meet. One school committee member was impressed by the content that the students brought to the floor and another member's 6th grader loved the book group discussion.

B. Public Participation

Senator Bruce Tarr and State Representative Ann Margaret Ferrante supplied the "20th Conference Committee Report Education Funding Highlights". The state has had an increase in revenue and may have between 5M to 1Billion in unexpected revenue this year. The educational funding's include \$20 million in Early Education, \$5,176,002,652 for Chapter 70 aid (\$268.4 million more than last year), an estimate of 75% reimbursement rate, new line item for Low-Income Supports (school can apply for funds), and SHARE = Supporting of Healthy Alliances Reinforcing Education grant program (helps schools address non-academic barriers). SHARE integrates schools, social services, mental health and behavioral health resources. The representatives discussed declining enrollments, SPED costs by adding transportation costs to reimbursement and lowering the threshold for tuition reimbursements. The funding bills will hopefully be debated in September or October keeping in mind the rural communities who don't always qualify for funds like urban communities. They explained the "Promise Act" would be the biggest overhaul of how public schools are funded, which isn't about providing "new" or "extra funds" it's about making good on the states promises. They both feel strongly that the foundation budget be reviewed on a regular basis. The representatives discussed the surplus and is it sustainable allowing schools time to "catch up" if it is not, keeping up with benchmarks if there is a slowdown in revenue, transportation issues – new commissioners, and lack of community mental health facilities for placements. They may request that superintendents and school committees write to the state budget chairperson and to be part of a coalition supporting promised funding from the state, the more individualized the communication the more powerful the impression. The Secretary of Health and Human Services is looking at the delivery of behavioral services and the lack of ability to respond in a timely way, looking at reforming MassHealth, and reimbursing schools for behavioral health service. Other topics discusses were: safety and security, shrinking population, and affordable housing. Michael Kelley explained the Cape Ann Study for Education (CASE) study with Gloucester. There are polarized factions in town, those who want the schools to go away and those who want a viable community. The focus is not to regionalize but to share resources and swap course offerings. The groups will meet to decide what to focus on and then bring a proposal forward to each city and town's various committees. A request to the Donahue Group for a quote on the second phase of the study since there may be state funds to help with that expense.

III. Discussion and Recommended Action

A. Communications Schedule

The school committee discussed scheduling informational budget meetings at alternative locations such as the public library or community house. The meetings would start with information on how the school budget is developed and then would allow for open discussion or it was suggested to have break out locations for information on specific budget topics. Selectperson Sarah Wilkinson also suggested having people available at public locations like the transfer station to answer questions one-on-one.

B. School Committee Proposed Goals.

Michael Kelley presented a draft of the School Committee Goals for 2019-2020 school year. The full committee will review and come back at the next meeting to discuss, make any revisions and possibly adopt.

C. Field Trip N/A

D. Policy Revise/review

The Policy Sub-committee offered the following policies for a second reading:

File IMG A – Therapy Dogs in School (this policy needs to be reviewed within twelve months of the initial introduction.

File JRA – Student Records

Motion: Cathy Reilly motioned to adopt File IMG A: Therapy Dogs in School and approved the revised File JRA: Student Records as presented.

Seconded: Richard Drost seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

E. Warrants and Payroll

IV. Information and proposals

A. School Council Update N/A

B. Donations

C. Updates

Sub-committee reports: N/A

Superintendent Report:

Superintendent Liebow reviewed the opening day enrollment figures. He explained that the number of elementary staff would be the same, as per policy, except in one grade level, with or without school choice students. Without the school choice students the district would be paying these wages without the benefit of extra funds from school choice to supplement the budget.

D. Other Business

V. Correspondence N/A

VI. Future Agenda Items

- A. MCAS/AYP/AP Data (10/2)
- B. Capital Improvement Proposals (10/2)
- C. 3 Year Strategic Plan Review (10/16)
- D. Superintendent's Report/FundFlow (TBA)

VII. Calendar

- A. September 28, 2019, regular meeting
- B. October 2, 2019, regular meeting

VIII. Executive Session

Motion: At 10:04 pm Cathy Reilly motioned to adjourn the regular meeting.
Seconded: Richard Drost seconded the motion.
Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Liebow
Superintendent of Schools