

Medford Public Schools  
Medford, Massachusetts

Medford School Committee

Committee of the Whole  
September 10, 2015

Minutes

The Medford School Committee of the Whole was called to order at 7:05 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2015 by Chairperson John Falco in the Superintendent's Conference Room at Medford High School.

Members present: John Falco, Ann Marie Cugno, Erin DiBenedetto, Robert Skerry Jr and Paulette Van der Kloot. Also present: Superintendent Roy Belson, Deputy Superintendent Beverly Nelson, Assistant Superintendent Diane Caldwell, Director of Curriculum Bernadette Ricciardelli, Director of Administration and Finance Patricia Velie, citizens Kathy Kreatz and Mia Mustone.

All rose to salute the Flag.

Chairperson Falco stated that the purpose of the meeting was to receive reports from the school administration on the opening of schools SY 2015-2016.

He announced that there would be an executive session to discuss collective bargaining with teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries and day care staff.

The Superintendent began by reporting on enrollment as of September 10, 2015. He noted that the vocational school enrollment was significantly higher than in the past. Also that elementary class size was very good. Further, that pre-school classes would begin next week.

The Superintendent asked Deputy Superintendent Nelson to present the information on the administrative staff meetings; new teachers induction program; and the annual school supply drive. (see attached report)

A discussion followed on the issue of whether school based/class based school supply lists had become too onerous. The Superintendent said that he would review the matter and try to reduce the amount required. It seemed as if the requests for copy paper were unnecessary since the supply drive produced substantial quantities. Members felt that some of the class/school requests were good and often helped students to organize their work.

Director Pat Velie provided an operational services update. Her report covered a range of topics including: financial status FY15 and FY16; general personnel; school supplies; buildings and grounds; transportation; the new telephone system and the student information system.

Director of Buildings and Grounds John McLaughlin provided a detailed report on the various completed projects this summer as well as ongoing work. His report was a school by school listing. (see attached)

School Committee members then began a comprehensive discussion on the various update reports.

The major concern revolved around a kindergarten student who was dropped off at the wrong stop and then walked home. It was explained that the student was properly tagged but the bus driver did not follow our prescribed protocol. The bus driver was terminated from all Medford routes. While Director Velie spoke with the parent, member DiBenedetto and others felt that the Superintendent should also have called. Also the members felt that they should have been notified.

Mr. Falco suggested that the school system explore a buddy system for the younger students.

The committee discussed a particular stop at the corner of Waddell and Highland Ave. It was explained that the Waddell location was preferable due to safety reasons.

The committee asked for a report on the number of homeless children who were being transported this year.

The committee raised concern over the lack of a DCR crossing guard on the Fellsway. It seems that the position has been eliminated since the St. Francis School closed. The administration will contact DCR and report back to the committee.

Member Cugno raised questions about the high school schedules. The Superintendent distributed a memo on the schedule from Headmaster Perella detailing the work that has been done this year as we move toward an academically integrated high school/vocational program. (see attached) A subsequent meeting will be scheduled to discuss how a future schedule might be more flexible and accommodating.

The Superintendent stressed that no schedule would allow a student to take all the options offered by our school in any given year. He also pointed out a shared concern for academic overload and the resultant rise in student anxiety.

There was discussion about whether colleges actually required a fourth year of science. It depends on the major a student would seek to study.

The committee then discussed the adoption of a new scheduling and reporting software package called "School Brains". This software would replace the current "I-Pass" system. Both systems will run parallel this year. It is the opinion of the administration that the "School Brains" program will be more user friendly and also help with the scheduling process.

The committee discussed this year's Summer Fun Program which was held at the high school rather than at the Columbus. The high school location provided access to both the fields and the new pool. However, it was a very hot summer and the high school is not air-conditioned.

The topic of air conditioning at the high school was discussed. The cost to operate a full system would be prohibitive. The Superintendent suggested some targeted implementations so that there could be some availability in key areas. This will be explored.

The playground structure at the Brooks was discussed. A new slide has been installed. The old slide type was discontinued. While major holes in our playground surfaces have been addressed there will be more treatment of the surfaces to prevent new deterioration.

The Curtis-Tufts had some major painting and general improvements over the summer. Ms. DiBenedetto visited and made several suggestions. Work will continue at that site.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry and seconded by Ms. Cugno the committee voted 5-0-2 to enter Executive Session at 9:12 p.m.

The committee returned from Executive Session at 10:15 p.m.

On the motion of Mr. Skerry and seconded by Ms Van der Kloot the meeting was adjourned at 10:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Emmett Skerry Jr.  
Secretary