

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Education Committee

Town Hall Council Chambers

October 6, 2014, Monday

Present: Thomas J. Lacey, Chairperson
Jane Hackett, Vice Chairperson
Rebecca Haugh, Councilor
Brian McDonald, Councilor
Michael Molisse, Councilor

Also Present: Sean Guilfoyle, Chair/School Committee
Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chairman Lacey called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Introduction of New School Administrators

PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College & Careers) Curriculum Update

School Committee Chair Sean Guilfoyle reported that all members of the school administration team are now in place and Superintendent Salim introduced the new Assistant Superintendents; Susan Kustka (Personnel) and Dr. Jen Curtis-Whipple (Instructional Services & Support). Curriculum is a topic of discussion at every school committee meeting. Dr. Curtis-Whipple will provide a comprehensive report out on the new standards and assessment criteria on PARCC to the school committee at its next meeting.

Dr. Salim provided some background on PARCC and the differences in the new and existing standards. The decision to transition to PARCC was made by a vote of the school committee. He reviewed the former standard, Common Core. It was developed and adopted by 42 states; the first time there were national standards. Massachusetts schools performed well with high graduation and college acceptance rates, but a third of the students tested at remedial level. There was an impetus for higher standards and grant funding provided for a major initiative to fund consortiums and develop assessments- PARCC and Smarter Balance a result. Massachusetts chose to begin field tests of PARCC in spring of 2014. It is a computer based assessment with video or audio complex questions. Some classes did the pc-based; some the traditional paper-and-pencil based. After the initial testing, the state gave the districts the option of either a move to the PARCC test for grades 3-8, 9 and 11 or to stay with the MCAS. Grade 10 is still required to pass MCAS for competency graduation requirements, and will still be used for Science requirement until PARCC had developed a science module. PARCC has worked out better than MCAS. The level of questions delves more into the subject matter, it uses other evidence and students are better engaged. MCAS is good, but PARCC is the

next generation.

MCAS will be phased out in the next few years so the district will have to transition to something else. The DESE will hold the district harmless during the transition phase so it won't affect student ranking. Grades 5-8 will continue with traditional pencil/paper testing because the district does not have the resources to equip both middle schools with the technology. Dr. Curtis-Whipple reviewed the support in place for the testing:

- Parent University course on PARRC – an online interactive assessment. There are many websites for parents
- Teacher Support-professional development time set aside (workshop on 10/7)
- Technical Support- provided by Laura Stevenson and practice time allowed

Chairman Lacey asked when testing will take place. Dr. Curtis-Whipple responded that it will be in the spring, she noted that the trial run went well. This year's third and fourth graders will all take a pc- based version. Chair Lacey asked if it will pose a problem for Murphy School, which does not have wireless access yet. Dr. Curtis-Whipple responded that the test doesn't require an active internet connection; it can use a proctor caching approach.

Councilor Hackett noted that she had an earlier conversation with the administrators who addressed many of the concerns. She asked about the hold harmless component- and questioned if the results will be capped. Dr. Salim responded that results will be released publicly. MCAS had some of the same issues when it was begun. They will get results of PARRC next year; the growth data will be important for teachers also. The statistical model maps out MCAS/PARRC to compare students. They will still have robust data although the accountability level will be lower in the transitional year. In fall 2015 the DESE takes an official vote, but PARRC is the only option that has been presented by the commissioner. MCAS will be gone and the state has contracted with vendors to create a science assessment. The MCAS graduation requirement for grade 10 will continue until 2018.

As for teaching to two tests, there are differences. The PARRC test is much more in-depth, while MCAS is not as straightforward. Councilor Hackett noted that the possible state infusion to support the technology is encouraging news. Councilor Haugh asked if the district envisions the testing all on pc's in the future. Chairman Lacey asked if the communities choosing not to participate in the early testing could be at risk. Dr. Salim responded that many of the overall wealthier western state communities chose to stay with MCAS; Boston is transitioning to PARRC. The district has two years of field testing. Councilor Hackett asked if the district will offer primary school tutoring to prepare students. Dr. Curtis-Whipple responded that they do not have a definitive answer yet, but if it is offered it will be used to provide comfort with the test taking, not to increase scores. Chairman Lacey asked aside from funding, what other needs the district has. Dr. Salim responded that it could use support talking it up and getting parental

engagement. Councilor Haugh requested a copy of the school Capital Improvement Plan once it is available. Chairman Lacey noted the committee may request another meeting in the future to discuss the wireless structure/CIP and future needs. Councilor Hackett requested that school administration provide the committee with a copy of the MCAS presentation from the School Committee meeting. She noted it has been several years since such significant administration transition and it's an exciting time in education.

Chairman Lacey congratulated Dr. Salim on behalf of the committee on the recent birth of his first child, Simon.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:15 PM, there being no further business, a Motion was made by Councilor Hackett to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Councilor Haugh. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Chairman Thomas J. Lacey
Voted favorably on November 10, 2014