

**GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES: Wednesday, December 13, 2023  
Jon Zon Community Center, 35 Pleasant St., Greenfield MA**

**Present:** Elizabeth Deneve (ED); Susan Eckstrom (SE); Kathryn Martini (KM); Glenn Johnson-Mussad (GJM); Amy Proietti (AP); Jean Wall (JW)

**Absent:** Roxann Wedegartner (RW)

**Also present:** Christine DeBarge, Superintendent; Karin Patenaude, Assistant Superintendent; other school staff, and citizens.

### **I. Call to Order**

With a quorum present (ED, SE, KM, GJM, AP, JW), Chair Proietti called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

### **II. Approval of Minutes**

**Motion made, seconded, to approve draft minutes of November 8 (as corrected), November 14, and November 20, 2023. Motion passed unanimously.**

Correction to Nov. 8 minutes, IV. Update: "JW, Chair of redistricting committee, stated initial goals: ... to create equity..."

### **III. Public Comment**

Alex Cooley, Greenfield, spoke in favor of allowing in-district choice students to continue attending their current schools.

Stacey Sexton, Greenfield, spoke in support of redistricting and ending in-district choice; asked about school policies allowing visitors especially parents.

Seth Mellen, Greenfield, shared concerns re: increase in elementary class sizes as a result of moving 5th grade into elementary schools; deemed potential solution to hire additional classroom assistants unlikely.

Melissa Webb, Greenfield, spoke in favor of spending money for elevator at Federal Street School; concerns re: not allowing parents to participate in classroom activities without cumbersome CORI clearance.

### **IV. Student Representatives Report**

S.T. reported on GHS Student Council, clubs, sports. Limited progress on problem of bathroom closures due to vandalism.

### **V. Budget Update**

In absence of Andy Paquette, Business Manager, Dr. DeBarge reported on budget work:

- eliminating negative balances via reclassifying expenses, in process
- reviewing budget effects of currently unfilled positions
- operating expenses are right on target, as expected

## **VI. Business**

### **A. Re-envisioning our School Facilities / Intradistrict Choice**

Discussion:

- Class sizes – Reviewed projected elementary class sizes under different options. Continuing intradistrict choice students would create larger class sizes at Four Corners; would have minimal effect at Newton and Federal Street.
- Caveat that enrollment and class size figures are estimates and can change.
- Data on number of intra-district choice students is based on bus lists & routes; no actual intra-district choice data available due to limitation of enrollment database design.
- Supports for students, families affected by changes
- Suggestion to delay vote on intradistrict choice to allow additional communication with parents.
- Suggestion to approve redistricting but delay implementation for one year. Benefits of delay: overall better planning; crowding at Four Corners eased; special education programs would not have to move; reduce need for additional teachers at middle school.
- Proposal for intradistrict choice: Accept no new requests, even from siblings of current intradistrict choice students. With one-year delay, possible for current intradistrict choice students to remain in current school.
- Acknowledged work of GPS staff, especially Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and principals.

**AP moved that new intradistrict choice for all elementary grades will end, beginning with the 2024-25 school year. ED 2nd.**

Clarify intent: No new requests accepted; does not affect current students.

**Motion passed 4-2 (Yes – AP, JW, KM, SE; No – ED, GJM)**

**JW moved that beginning with the 2025-26 school year, the Greenfield School Committee's Policies JC, JCA, and EEAA are closely followed, and that elementary school students already in an elementary school through intradistrict choice may remain until grade progression to Greenfield Middle School. ED 2nd. Motion passed 4-2 (Yes – SE, GJM, AP, JW; No – ED, KM).**

**ED moved that beginning with the 2025-26 school year, the Greenfield School Committee and Greenfield Public Schools adopt the Re-envisioning our School Facilities Option 2B, which redraws boundaries for the elementary schools, to better reflect the makeup of the City, and allow for three elementary schools to house Grades K-5, and move Grade 8 to the Greenfield Middle School. KM 2nd.**

Request for friendly amendment to change 2025-26 to 2024-25 (next school year). Amendment accepted by ED and KM. Revised motion is:

**ED moved that beginning with the 2024-25 school year, the Greenfield School Committee and Greenfield Public Schools adopt the Re-envisioning our School Facilities Option 2B, which redraws boundaries for the elementary schools, to better reflect the makeup of the City, and allow for three elementary schools to house Grades K-5, and move Grade 8 to the Greenfield Middle School. KM 2nd. Motion failed 0-6 (Yes – none; No – ED, SE, KM, GJM, AP, JW).**

**KM moved that beginning with the 2025-26 school year, the Greenfield School Committee and Greenfield Public Schools adopt the Re-envisioning our School Facilities Option 2B, which redraws boundaries for the elementary schools, to better reflect the makeup of the City, and allow for three elementary schools to house Grades K-5, and move Grade 8 to the Greenfield Middle School. SE 2nd. Motion passed 5-0-1 (Yes – ED, SE, KM, AP, JW; No – none; Abstain – GJM).**

## **B. New Substitute Teacher and Substitute Instructional Assistant Wages**

**ED moved that the substitute teacher and substitute instructional assistant rates be increased, as outlined in the December 12 memo from the Superintendent. JW 2nd.**

Dr. DeBarge explained that GPS pay is lower than surrounding districts and is below minimum wage. Proposal simplifies pay categories: certified/retired and not certified. Significant shortage of subs.

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **C. Policies**

### **1. BDA “School Committee Organizational Meeting”**

**GJM moved that we amend policy BDA “School Committee Organization Meeting,” revised from full section B, as presented on a 2nd reading. ED 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **2. Policy Section I “Instruction”: 1st Reading**

**GJM moved to approve the first reading of amendments to Policy Section I, “Instruction.” ED 2nd.**

Discussion:

- Section I is 100+ pages long, available online. Online version includes proposed changes.
- Request to have link to Section I separately posted online for ease of access.
- Most cross-outs in red are to remove duplications (GPS and MASC versions). Some policies are unique to GPS; not all MASC versions.
- Suggestion to approve 1st reading of whole section, consider smaller pieces for 2nd readings.
- Importance of completing policy review to allow MASC to host online as searchable document.

**Motion passed 4-1-1 (Yes – ED, GJM, AP, SE; No – KM; Abstain - JW).**

## **VII. New Agenda Items**

KM requested outline of GPS music program from Superintendent.

## **VIII. Reports**

### **A. Reports of the Administration**

#### **1. Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning**

Karin Patenaude summarized recent work including professional development; DESE site visit; new elementary librarian and request for library volunteers; mentor program. *(Details in written report.)*

#### **2. Superintendent**

Dr. DeBarge presented recent work, including:

- FY25 budget preparations
- MASC Award for Academic Excellence presented to GHS senior Maree-Ellis Benitez
- Supt. and Jake Waldsmith, Transportation Coordinator, walked routes; proposed changes will come to School Committee’s January meeting
- Staffing: new positions of float custodian and HR/personnel clerk; resignation of Jake Waldsmith.

*(Details in written report.)*

FY25 Budget Hearing Scheduling and Timeline, as recommended by Superintendent:

- Budget summary complete Feb. 2
- Public hearing Feb. 28
- March 8 vote by School Committee
- March 11 deliver budget to Mayor

**B. School Committee Reports: Chair (AP)**

Wishing the best for departing School Committee members Jean Wall, Susan Eckstrom, Mayor Wedegartner. Will not seek position of chair for 2024.

AP serving as School Committee representative on District Wellness Committee. Who should attend next Wellness meeting on January 8? Important work on creating wellness policy.

**GJM moved that Amy Proietti continue in the role [of School Committee representative on District Wellness Committee] for first meeting in January until committee assignments can be made. SE 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.**

**IX. Executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a) (2): To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; (7): to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements** (approval of executive session minutes from August 9, 2023 and November 20, 2023 meetings).

*The Committee will not return to Open Session.*

Motion to move into executive session made, seconded, passed unanimously.

Motion to adjourn public session meeting made, seconded, passed unanimously.

Public session adjourned at 9:01pm.

**X. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned out of Executive Session at 9:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Farber  
Recording Secretary

**Meeting Materials**

1. Agenda: December 13, 2023
2. Draft minutes: November 8, November 14, and November 20, 2023
3. Student Report: December 13, 2023
4. Superintendent’s Update, December 13, 2023
5. Assistant Superintendent Update, December 13, 2023
6. Financial Reports, December 8, 2023
7. Policies JC “Attendance Areas,” EEAA “Walkers and Riders,” JCA “Assignment of Students to Schools,” BDA “School Committee Organizational Meeting”
8. Memo from Christine DeBarge to School Committee, “Substitute Teacher & Instructional Assistants Rates,” December 12, 2023