

**GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES: Wednesday, March 10, 2021
Greenfield MA**

Note: This meeting was held fully remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, §20.

Present: Katie Caron (KC); Susan Eckstrom (SE); Susan Hollins (SH); Glenn Johnson-Mussad; (GJ); Amy Proietti (AP); Jean Wall (JW); Roxann Wedegartner (RW)

Absent: None

Also present: Judy Houle, Interim Superintendent; Allen Himmelberger, TMS; Liz Lafond, MASC; school staff and citizens.

I. Call to Order

With a quorum present (KC, SE, SH, GJ, AP, JW, RW), Chair Proietti called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

JW moved to approve draft minutes of February 10 and March 1, 2021. GJ 2nd.

Roll call vote: Yes – KC, SE, SH, GJ, AP, JW; Abstain – RW (absent March 1). Motion passed 6-0-1.

III. Public Comment

Doug Selwyn, Greenfield, expressed health concerns re: schools re-opening, questioned state government's motivation.

Melissa Webb, Greenfield, spoke in support of redrawing district map, desire to help.

Brittany Cooley, Greenfield, Four Corners parent, spoke re: parent survey, concerned that parents don't have enough information to decide in-person vs. remote.

IV. Reports

A. Chair – AP

Planning in process to return School Committee meetings to in-person. Challenging to find larger meeting space, meet health standards for public meetings. Working with GCTV to continue public access.

B. Superintendent – JH

Supt. Houle commented on long workdays, with progress coming as quickly as possible.

C. GHS Student Reports

Students S.T. and D.T. reported on GHS activities, including Polar Plunge, Taste of World Cultures, virtual Best Buddies. Winter sports concluded; football, cheer, soccer practices underway. Mayor will help promote food drive.

D. City Planning & Construction – SH

Under-road repairs to Sanderson Road, next to GMS.

Recommendation for School Committee to make earlier, more detailed presentations of capital requests to City.

E. Racial Justice Advisory Committee – GJ

Planning for evening forum. Welcome comments: racialjustice@gpsk12.org

F. Policy - GJ

Policy affecting online learning platforms on tonight's agenda.

Subcommittee in process of revising emergency cancellation policy requiring superintendent to seek School Committee permission for closures of 3+ days.

V. Business

A. Superintendent Search Committee – JW

JW recommended special School Committee meeting to plan criteria, strategy for search. Planning online community focus-group discussions, online survey. Selected 16 people for search committee, based on letters of interest, need for diverse representation. Strong community interest: twice as many had applied.

JW moved to approve the membership list for the Superintendent Search Committee, as presented. RW 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

AP will schedule special meeting. Requested GPS website include superintendent search information. Advised smaller committee.

Liz Lafond, MASC, will schedule individual interviews with School Committee members.

B. Donation from Dean's Beans

AP presented \$500 donation to school food program from Dean's Beans, with thanks for their continued generous support.

SE moved to accept the donation from Dean's Beans. JW 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Policy IJNDB

Supt. Houle introduced proposed changes to Policy IJNDB "Empowered Digital Use Policy," formerly called "Acceptable Use." Directs what students can present on-screen in digital classrooms.

Recalled incident of GHS students using confederate flags as avatars. Houle requested waiving first and second reading to allow quick implementation of this policy.

RW moved to waive the second reading of Policy IJNDB. GJ 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion:

- IJNDB-R are regulations detailing the policy. Important to consider, publish both together.
- Concern that expedited process doesn't allow think time; recognition that policy discussion has been delayed, need for quick implementation.
- Concern that regulations are at college-level readability. Houle will ensure "kid-friendly" version will be prepared for students to sign.
- Reminder that School Committee needs to approve the student handbook.

RW moved to endorse the proposed changes to policy IJNDB and regulations IJNDB-R and have the Superintendent develop changes to the regulations and instruct her as part of the student handbook review to translate into language that could easily be understood by students. GJ 2nd. Roll call vote: Yes - KC, SE, GJ, AP, JW, RW; Abstain - SH. Motion passed 6-0-1.

D. Redrawing District Map: Goals and Timeline

- Complex, multi-year project needing community input
- Inequality between different elementary schools. Strategy to put all elementary students together at single schools by grade levels. Financial implications; effect on neighborhood schools.
- Request for comments from community via email: SchoolCom@gpsk12.org
- Suggestion for separate administration building, not at GMS.
- Need to include educational research – e.g., effect on students changing school buildings

E. Green River School Project

- School needs new heating system. City approved \$460K, about half of cost. GPS needs to find approx. \$430K in own budget. State funding requires it be used as school building.
- Referred to Budget Subcommittee.
- Recent history of building, repairs, delay due to pandemic; Student programs: K-5 elementary school; Math Science Academy; proposed alternative high school program.

F. Update on In-Person instruction

Supt. Houle provided overview of return to In-Person Learning (IPL), including:

- DESE Commissioner requiring IPL 5 days/week: – elementary April 5; middle school grades 6-8 April 28; high school TBA April. Remote/hybrid hours no longer count as structured learning time.
- Parents have option to continue remote learning for their children.
- DESE says 3-foot separation is adequate, no need for 6-foot separation.
- GPS has In-Person-Learning Command structure.
- Some in-person already happening: instruction for high-needs students, athletics, GHS AV Club.
- Daily 4: Mask, wash hands, stay apart, stay home if you don't feel well
- Mitigations: Staff vaccinations; school/classroom capacities; HVAC & air purifiers, grab & go meals; cleaning; pooled testing; transportation with capacity restrictions lifted but windows open, masks.
- Allen Himmelberger reported on pooled testing.
- Preliminary results of family survey

Discussion:

- State funding for pooled testing ends April 16. How will GPS pay for this?
- Disagree with state requiring IPL, but support GPS efforts to comply.
- Families do not need to apply for “waiver” to continue remote learning this year. Remote option fully available in GPS.
- If parents request later to move child from remote to in-person learning, lead time needed (4-6 weeks?).
- DESE grade-level timeline does not match GSP grade configurations.

SH moved to authorize the Interim Superintendent to request a waiver from DESE to delay the implementation of full-time, in-person learning for grade 5 until the middle school implementation timeline begins. GJ 2nd. Decision about 8th grade at GHS to come later. **Motion passed unanimously.**

G. In-Person Instruction: Policy EBCFA Face Coverings

SE moved to waive the first and second reading of Policy EBCFA Face Coverings and to approve the policy as presented. GJ 2nd.

- On agenda as part of in-person learning discussion
- Concern for unclear wording re: consequences

- Concern re: families' expense to provide masks
- Roll call vote: Yes - KC, SE, GJ, AP, JW, RW; No - SH. Motion passed 6-1.**

H. DESE Program Review on April 5

Bad timing: Supt. Houle will request to reschedule not on first day of IPL.
Preparations will require work by Policy Subcommittee.

VI. Executive Session - MGL c 30A, §21, (2) and (3): (2) To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; (3): To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

RW moved to open executive session. 2nd SH. Motion passed unanimously.

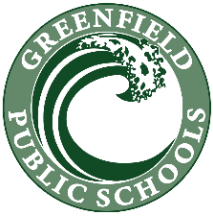
Entered Executive Session at 8:13 p.m.
No intent to return to public session.

Meeting adjourned from Executive Session at 9:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Farber
Recording Secretary

Meeting Documents

1. Agenda: March 10, 2021
2. Minutes: February 10, March 1, 2021
3. Financial Reports (March 4, 2021)
4. Dean's Beans, donation letter, February 15, 2021
5. Policy EBCFA Face Coverings
6. In-Person Learning Command Center organizational chart
7. School newsletters
8. IJNDB Empowered Digital Use Policy
9. Addendum: Acceptable Use Policy for Students and Staff
10. Superintendent Search Committee list of members
11. IJNDB Empowered Digital Use Policy



GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

195 Federal Street, Suite 100, Greenfield, MA 01301


“Every Child’s Success is Our Mission”

Ph: 413-772-1300 / Fax: 413-774-7940

Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools

MEMORANDUM

TO: Greenfield School Committee Members

FROM: Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools 

DATE: March 16, 2021

RE: Greenfield Teachers of Excellence and Pioneer Valley Teachers of Excellence

The Harold Grinspoon Foundation hosts an annual Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching awards program. School districts across the valley are able to nominate teachers for this prestigious awards program, based on their enrollment. The Greenfield Public Schools have two awards that we can give to deserving teachers this year. The first step in the process is the nomination of teachers who have been recognized by their colleagues as outstanding educators. Those nominees are then interviewed by the Superintendent, who makes the final selection to the Grinspoon Foundation. This year, I would like to recognize five teachers, nominated for the Pioneer Valley awards, as Greenfield Teachers of Excellence. These five individuals were cited not only for their outstanding work with students, but for their contributions to the district and to their profession. Each teacher was recognized by their colleagues for their joy in teaching, their collaborative spirit with colleagues, their willingness to share ideas with others, and for their overall contributions to the schools in which they work.

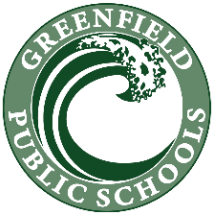
I was so incredibly impressed with all of the Greenfield Teachers of Excellence. Their passion for teaching and commitment to their students was clearly evident in our conversations. I loved hearing about why they chose this noble profession: a career change in order to make a difference in the lives of students, their own struggles with school as students fueling their desire to help the next generation, and a change of focus from one discipline to another in order to have a greater impact were the themes that resonated with me. In each instance, they have been compelled to teach in order to make learning come alive for their students and their enthusiasm was contagious!

The 2020-2021 Greenfield Teachers of Excellence are:

- Judith Bennett, Grade 8 Science Teacher at Greenfield High School
- Brooke Mele, Library Media/Reading Specialist at Discovery School at Four Corners
- Samantha Slater, Reading Specialist at Federal Street School
- Erik Stone, Grade 4 Teacher at Newton School
- Brian Tucker, Grade 7 Social Studies/Literacy Teacher at Greenfield Middle School.

These teachers were so outstanding that it was very difficult to narrow down the field to just two. These two individuals have yet to be notified of their status as Pioneer Valley Teachers of Excellence, so there will be a reveal at our School Committee meeting on March 18, 2021!

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Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools

MEMORANDUM

TO: Greenfield School Committee Members

FROM: Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools 

DATE: March 16, 2021

RE: Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Academic Excellence Award

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents sponsors an award program that allows Superintendents to recognize student achievement for deserving seniors. These awards are given to high school students who have distinguished themselves in the pursuit of excellence during their high school careers.

The criteria are: Three (3) year cumulative average,
 Rank in Class,
 Personal Selection by the Superintendent.

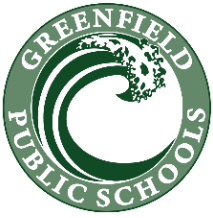
When I asked Principal Karin Patenaude for her recommendation of a deserving member of the Class of 2021, there was no hesitation in recommending Alara O’Bryan for this honor. Alara is currently ranked #1 in her class while carrying a very rigorous course load. Throughout her high school experience, she has taken the most challenging courses that were available to her and meets those challenges with hard work and perseverance. Her academic awards include:

- Franklin County Superintendents Award
- University of Rochester’s Xerox Award for Innovation and Information Technology
- National Merit Scholarship Commended Student
- College Board National Rural and Small Town Recognition Program
- John and Abigail Adams Scholarship
- National Honor Society.

In addition to her academic excellence, Alara also displays leadership qualities by engaging in the life of the school. Her activities include:

- Greenfield Film Festival Winner
- President of the French Club and organizer of Coffeehouse Night and The Taste of World Cultures Festival
- Organizing National Honor Society Inductions
- Member of the Audio-Visual Club
- Community Service Key Club
- After-school Community Service Events organizer

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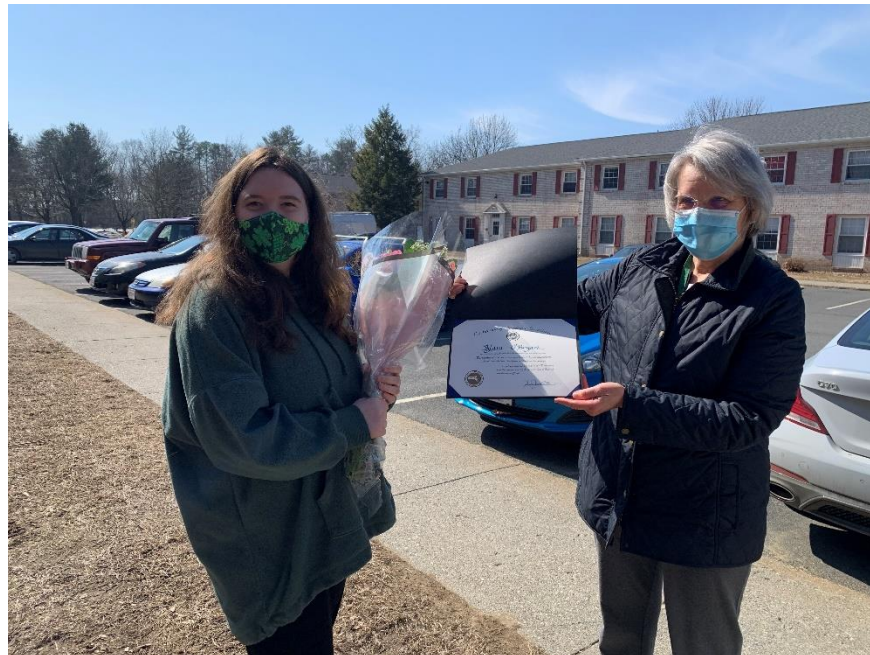
Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools

-
- Environmental Science Club
 - Student Representative at the Student/Community Issues Youth Engage with Legislators and Officials

Alara also spends time volunteering in her community:

- Tutoring students from elementary through high school
- Visiting a French speaking elderly woman in a local nursing home before the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you can see from her impressive list of accomplishments and activities, Alara is more than deserving of this recognition. Alara will be attending Yale University in the fall, majoring in Linguistics. She is the first generation member of her family to attend college. I had the pleasure of presenting this award to Alara in person and was impressed by her confidence and excitement as a student. I know she is going to make her mark in the world!



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Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools

MEMORANDUM

TO: Greenfield School Committee Members

FROM: Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools

DATE: March 16, 2021

RE: Special Education Handbook

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "JH", is written over the "FROM:" line of the memorandum.

As my colleague, Nadine Ekstrom, has been working with the Special Education Department in preparation for the program review scheduled in the coming weeks, she has learned that the Special Education Handbook for the district is very out-of-date. In a review of the document and a list of district policies, she has discovered that there are several policies that need to be either added to or updated in the School Committee policy manual. There is a wide range of topics that need to be addressed from a policy perspective. Once these are addressed, then those changes, as well as some additional changes required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Office for Civil Rights, will be infused into the handbook and brought forward for School Committee review and approval. Dr. Ekstrom is working closely with our Director of Special Education and our partners at the DESE to ensure that a fully revised, compliant handbook is completed and brought forward for your review and approval.

I am requesting that the Policy & Program Subcommittee schedule a series of meetings in the very near future to address the necessary policy updates and/or additions to get this work underway. Many of these same policies will also be necessary prior to updating the Parent-Student Handbook for our entire school community, so this will be time well spent.

I look forward to our discussion at the March 18, 2021 School Committee meeting.

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Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools

MEMORANDUM

TO: Greenfield School Committee Members

FROM: Dr. Judith Houle, Interim Superintendent of Schools

DATE: March 16, 2021

RE: Update on Return to In-Person Learning

Our IPL Command group is meeting twice weekly to discuss the goals we are setting to move us closer to a return to in-person learning, starting April 5th for grades PK-4. In between meetings, individual teams are meeting according to our IPL Command structure to do the detail work necessary to move us closer to those opening dates. As we get closer to reopening, we may increase the frequency of our meetings to make sure we are well coordinated at the district level.

Our maintenance staff is busy preparing classroom and other spaces to be used for learning with a six-foot distance between students for learning activities. This allows us to place student desks and tables a little closer than six feet, so long as the person-to-person distance of six feet is maintained. We are looking at other ways to provide protection where that might not be possible with the use of Plexiglas barriers. Desks are being brought out of storage and deployed to the various schools as requested to meet these specifications.

We have inventoried PPEs and cleaning supplies and orders are being placed to ensure sufficient stock for reopening. The permissions to conduct pooled testing have been sent out to families and to staff and responses are being received. Our goal is to have supplies in place to begin testing next week for those who are already on site. The vendor has given us reasonable assurance that we can expect delivery of those supplies in the next few days.

Air purifier units for all classrooms that require them have been ordered and we expect delivery on the first order, targeted for our youngest grades, within the next few business days. The remainder will be delivered by the end of the month or very shortly thereafter. We have secured quotes for units for our larger spaces and I anticipate that those orders will be placed by week’s end with an understanding on the part of the vendor that we require a very quick turnaround to get these in place.

Staff have been kept informed about the availability of vaccines and how to secure a spot at either at a mass vaccination site on an educator-designated day or through other means in Franklin County. Our hopes for a Greenfield-specific site were not realized when the Governor changed course on the delivery of vaccines for K-12 education personnel last week. I am grateful to the Greenfield Health Department

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and FRCOG for keeping us up-to-date on where and how education personnel can find vaccines. As soon as we receive those updates, we are passing them along to staff.

We will have a videographer on site on Friday to film footage for the virtual tour project that will allow families to see the set-up of the classrooms and other spaces. This will also include tours of a GPS Special Education van and a bus that Kuzmeskis, Inc. will bring into the district that will allow families to see the transportation environment. These will be posted to our website and families will be sent links via our School Messenger system.

Our technology department is working closely with principals to ensure that staff and students have the necessary technology to support the teaching and learning environment in their classrooms when they return. The needs assessment process is wrapping up this week so orders can be placed. Our food service staff is also working closely with principals to coordinate meals in a way that makes sense for their schools.

The transportation team will be meeting again this week to work on logistics to ensure that buses are able to bring students to school in a manner that ensures minimal exposure to others upon entry into the buildings. We will be engaging with families who intend to transport children themselves to ensure that they are clear on the safety protocols that will be necessary to have a safe and orderly entrance to and exit from school each day.

We will continue to work with our educators and staff to identify challenges and work collaboratively to meet them. This massive undertaking will require that we work together to bring everyone back to a safe and welcoming environment.

The goal is to have more logistical details solidified by the end of this week, so we can communicate with families and staff prior to hosting some public forums and sending out a follow-up survey aimed at getting more detailed information about how many students we can expect when we reopen for in-person learning. This additional survey information will help us further refine our plans.

I will present additional details as I have them at our meeting on Thursday, March 18, 2021.

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