

**GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES: Wednesday, July 14, 2021**  
John Zon Community Center, 35 Pleasant Street, Greenfield MA

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

**Absent:** None

**Also present:** Judy Houle, Interim Superintendent; Justin Martin, TMS; Andy Paquette, TMS (*attending remotely*); George Van Delinder, Facilities Manager, City of Greenfield; other school staff, citizens, and the press.

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

With a quorum present (KC, SE, SH, GJM, AP, JW, RW), Chair Proietti called the meeting to order at 6:22 p.m.

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

**SH moved to approve draft minutes of June 15 and June 22, 2021. SE 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **III. Public Comment – None**

### **IV. Superintendent Selection**

Chair Proietti led a review of the process:

- JW, Chair of the Search Committee, described the timeline: diverse 15-member committee interviewed 8 candidates, chose 5 finalists, 2 left the search, leaving 3 strong candidates:
  - Bernard Audette
  - Christine DeBarge
  - Carole Learned-Miller
- School Committee members reported on virtual site visits, all positive.
- Survey of small groups selected to meet with candidates concurred with site visit impressions of each candidate's strengths.
- In-person interviews with full School Committee: Same questions, philosophical and pragmatic, were asked of each candidate.
- Mayor interviewed each candidate; all impressed her as excellent, with unique skills.

Informal poll showed Dr. DeBarge to be first choice of all members.

**GJM moved to authorize the Chair to enter into negotiations with Dr. Christine DeBarge to assume the role of the next Superintendent of the Greenfield Public Schools. JW 2nd.**

Discussion of reasons for choice:

- Direct experience as K-12 superintendent
- Leadership style that develops skills and shines light on others
- Understands Greenfield students' needs
- Professional maturity that integrates theories and best practices
- Has served in many central office roles, understands school law
- Connects well with community members

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Thanks to JW for search committee leadership and to MASC for supporting search process.

## **V. Green River School Heating System**

George Van Delinder, City Facilities Manager, reviewed details and timeline of plans to replace Green River School's heating system. Insufficient response to RFP for heat pump system, so moved forward with natural gas hot water system. City Council appropriated \$460K in Jan. 2020 based on estimate, with plan to complete and open Green River last academic year. However, engineering estimate is \$895K = \$479K discrepancy.

**RW moved to approve \$479,000 for the purpose of reaching the total amount needed to install a heating system in the Green River School, based on the estimate before us today. SH 2nd.**

*RW left the meeting.*

Discussion:

- This is intended as not-to-exceed number. Expense not to come out of operating budget.
- Support for cooling system provided by heat pump to allow year-round use of building, anticipating climate change.
- Reluctant to authorize without knowing where in GPS budget \$ would come from.
- Not usual for capital expense to come for funding by GPS; City has responsibility for capital expenses. Refer instead to City Planning & Construction Committee.
- Redesign to reflect new post-pandemic standards for air exchange.
- Concern that empty unheated building is deteriorating.
- Used Mass. School Building Authority funds for prior renovations; missed MSBA deadline to open building for students.
- Waiver to use natural gas will expire soon.

**GJM moved to put this motion on the table. SH 2nd. Motion to table passed unanimously.**

Next steps:

Refer to City Planning & Construction Committee for August agenda.  
AP will discuss with Mayor, attend Planning & Construction meeting.

## **VI. Reports from the Administration**

### **A. School Business Manager – Andy Paquette, TMS**

#### **1. Closeout of FY21 Budget**

Andy Paquette, TMS, working with Liz Gilman, City Finance Director on closeout. Will need to allocate retroactive pay, complete balance transfers. Any balance left to be used to pre-pay special education tuition or reallocated to general fund.

#### **2. FY22 Budget Update**

Revising budget to meet City-approved amount, apply ESER funds, update personnel changes. Goal to bring FY22 budget to School Committee in Sept./Oct.

### **B. Interim Superintendent**

#### **1. Strategic Communications Update**

Justin Martin, TMS, provided overview of goals and objectives; components of strategic communications plan; surveys can show improvement of community's opinion of schools; social media; coaching on how to talk with media; GPS survey results.

Discussion:

- Recommendation that GPS set up official Facebook page, with staff monitoring. Goal to launch for back-to-school.
- Improve website so community can find information easily
- Communications plan = 12-month calendar of topics, events
- Strategies to reach wider community
- Continue TMS contract to continue communications work
- AP, GJM, SE to design next steps: refer to Subcommittee or create special advisory committee

## **2. Summer work**

Dr. Houle reported:

- Anticipate smooth transition to new superintendent
- Strong start by Karin Patenaude, new Assistant Superintendent
- GHS: Principal search underway; Jon Cavallo serving as acting principal
- Central office vacancies: Director of Facilities & Grounds, Food Service Director
- Posting open school staff positions
- Capital projects: Discovery School flooring, Newton School parking lot, Federal Street School elevators
- Summer programs for students
- Continued implementation of MTSS
- Will bring to Budget Subcommittee plans for ESSER funds

**VII. Executive Session** - MGL c 30A, §21, (a): (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.

KC moved to enter into executive session. SE 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Entered Executive Session at 8:54 p.m. Returned to public session at 9:40 p.m.  
*SE left the meeting.*

## **VIII. Vote on Administrative Assistants Contract**

**SH moved to approve the Administrative Assistants settlement agreement, as presented to the Committee. KC 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.**

## **IX. Adjournment**

KC moved to adjourn. SH 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Farber  
Recording Secretary

## **Meeting Materials**

1. Agenda: July 14, 2021
2. Draft Minutes: June 15, June 22, 2021
3. Report of the Interim Superintendent, July 9, 2021
4. Budget reports, July 8, 2021
5. Strategic Communications Update, TMS, July 14, 2021
6. Construction Cost Estimate, Green River School, from BLW Engineers, Feb. 14, 2021
7. Settlement Agreement by and between the Greenfield School Committee and the Administrative Assistants Association, July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2023