

**GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES: Wednesday, November 10, 2021**
Jon Zon Community Center, 35 Pleasant St., Greenfield MA

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

Absent: Susan Eckstrom (SE)

Also present: Christine DeBarge, Superintendent; Karin Patenaude, Assistant Superintendent; Andy Paquette, TMS; other school staff, many citizens & the press

I. Call to Order

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

II. Business Manager's Report

Andy Paquette, TMS, reassured no alarm re: negative balance on budget reports: \$1.8million yet to be added from revolving accounts. Reconciliation in progress, no significant changes expected.

Supt. DeBarge presented summary of planned use of ESSER I, II, III funds, including academic & social-emotional supports; technology staff & devices; safety/security upgrades. Interviews to begin soon for Director of Behavioral Support.

Discussion:

- Planned facilities expenditures do not include Green River School
- Would SRO be fundable with ESSER money?
- Concern for how to continue positions & programs beyond ESSER one-time funding

III. Approval of Minutes

JW moved to approve draft minutes of October 13, 2021. SH 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Public Comment

All speakers expressed concerns about student behavior & disruptions at GMS & GHS; many commented that students do not feel safe. Comments pro & con for bringing Student Resource Officer (SRO) into schools. In addition, speakers offered:

Andrea Michael: Because of staff shortage, son is watching movies, playing computer games in class led by long-term sub. Son reports problems with racism. Wants to support teachers to stay. Opposed to SROs.

Jennifer Widelo: Need to address psychological problems resulting from pandemic. Supports SROs.

Faythe Hayes: Request to improve communication with parents, include in dialogue. Parents want to help.

Jayne Winell: Spoke to difficulties of remote & hybrid learning. Increasing control worsens misbehavior. Caring approach such as therapy dogs, cool-down space. Opposed to SROs. Encourages partnerships with Community Action & other organizations.

Alex Siano: Teachers need support. Give administrators authority to expel students.

Matthew Lafleur: Concern that schools are losing teachers, students choicing-out. Supports SRO especially for GHS. Improve communication with parents.

Rachel Cronen-Townsend: Seek help from community. Ask every parent to volunteer in schools. Some people in schools are traumatized by police, so opposes SROs.

Shelly Allenby: Need to ensure respect for teachers & coaches. Move 5th grade back to elementary schools. Zero tolerance for violence. Supports SROs.

James Henry: Son called him to ask to leave school following 3 lockdowns.

Sarah Pruitt: Called on schools & community to come together for difficult conversations. Concern about rumors, lack of direct information. "Dads on Duty" in Louisiana as model.

Jamie Hawkins: Has moved her son to Eaglebrook. Is probation officer, so understands SRO can be positive support.

Abaz Cecunujanin: Read daughter's letter describing frightening incident at GHS. Distressed that school is emotionally unsafe for his daughters.

M.H. and M.G., 9th-grade students at GHS: Scared to go to school, asked for change.

Nate Tripp: Family considering choice-out. Trusts that Greenfield police are in touch with community. Supports SROs.

Penny Ricketts: Supports SROs. Concern that school staff are exhausted by disruptions. Bring parents into schools.

Marguerite Rancourt: Parents, teachers want to help. Upsetting to hear parents planning choice-out.

Cathi Flynn: Today's shelter-in-place announcement sounded panicked, upset students. Supports SROs who can engage with students.

V. Reports

A. Student Representatives

S.T. and B.W. reported on GHS organizations, including Student Council, National Honor Society, Key Club; Turkey Trot, Festival of Trees and other upcoming activities; AV, Library, Spanish clubs; fall sports; start of winter sport sign-ups. Described bathroom rules. Concern that some students disregard mask policy without consequences. Behavioral issues, fights increasing. Students not informed, hear only rumors. Verbal fight in cafeteria today with no staff present; need more staff.

B. Administration Reports

1. Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

Karin Patenaude summarized recent work in PD, curriculum work, Beacon Learning Experience. *(Details in written report.)*

2. Superintendent

Christine DeBarge presented current progress & challenges. *(Details in written report.)*

- Priority for students to feel safe. Disruptive behaviors are unacceptable, extremely challenging; staff is doing exceptional work in response. All schools in Mass. seeing similar challenges of student behaviors, staffing shortages.
- Positions filled: GHS assistant principal, school counselor, restorative practices facilitator. Seeking to fill GHS principal, hall monitors, special education positions, many others.
- Meetings with GHS student groups
- Newly updated Student Handbook providing guidance in progressive discipline, including expulsion as last resort
- Shelter-in-place: planning additional training for staff, practice drills with students
- Working on increasing in-school resources

Discussion by School Committee:

- Gratitude to all who spoke & wrote; important information & dialogue
- Requesting views of educators/staff on SROs
- Acknowledge challenges for students in transitional years, especially 5th graders
- Support for Supt. DeBarge, reminder that she arrived week before school opened
- Expect some immediate solutions and some slower, methodical solutions
- Importance of federal ESSER \$
- SROs to be on next meeting agenda, likely special meeting soon. Support for Chief Haigh, officers, who all have mental health incident training

B. School Committee Reports

1. Chair (AP)

- Elections: Recognized newly elected School Committee members Glenn Johnson-Mussad (re-elected), Kathryn Martini, Elizabeth Deneve. Recognized outgoing members Susan Hollins Katie Caron. Congratulations to Penny Ricketts for re-election to City Council.
- GHS sports: Field Hockey team is Western Mass. champs; Boys' Soccer made playoffs; Boys' Cross-Country headed for state playoffs.
- Gratitude to Greenfield Police Dept.

2. Subcommittee Reports

a. Personnel & Collective Bargaining Subcommittee

Expect vote this meeting on cafeteria workers agreement

b. Policy & Program Subcommittee

Second reading of policies coming at next meeting

VI. New Business

A. 2022-2023 School Year Calendar (Columbus Day)

GJM moved beginning with the 2022-2023 school year calendar to change the name of the October holiday to be Indigenous Peoples' Day for all calendars moving forward. RW 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

V. 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.

RW moved to enter executive session. GJM 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Entered executive session at 8:20 p.m. Returned to public session at 8:38 p.m.

VI. Cafeteria Workers Settlement Agreement

RW moved to approve the settlement agreement by & between the Greenfield School Committee and the UPSEU Local 424: Cafeteria Workers, as presented. JW 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

Thanks to staff & Committee members for good cooperative work.

VII. Adjournment

GJM moved to adjourn. KC 2nd. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Farber
Recording Secretary

Meeting Materials

1. Agenda: November 10, 2021
2. Draft minutes: October 13, 2021
3. Superintendent's Update, Nov. 10, 2021
4. Assistant Superintendent Update, Nov. 10, 2021
5. Financial Reports:
 - a. Year-to-Date Budget, Nov. 3, 2021
 - b. Revolving Account Balances, Nov. 3, 2021
6. ESSER I, II, III funds