

BROOKLINE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS
MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Participants:

Legislators: Congressman Jake Auchincloss; Senator Cynthia Creem; Representative Ruth Balsler; Representative Edward Coppinger; Representative Kevin Honan; Representative Tommy Vitolo; Ms. Dana Hanson, District Director for Congressman Auchincloss; Ms. Merrilee Rogers, Legislative Assistant for Representative for Congressman Auchincloss; Ms. Brittany Webb, Staff Attorney for Senator Creem; Mr. Garrett Casey, Policy Director and Counsel for Senator Creem; Ms. Nakeeda Burns, Legislative Director for Representative Moran; and Ms. Emma Staff, Legislative Aide for Representative Vitolo.

Brookline School Committee Members:

Ms. Suzanne Federspiel, Chair; Mr. David A. Pearlman, Vice Chair; Ms. Helen Charlupski; Ms. Susan Wolf Ditkoff; Dr. Steven Ehrenberg; Ms. Valerie Frias; and Ms. Jennifer Monopoli. School Committee members absent: Dr. Andreas Liu and Ms. Mariah Nobrega.

Brookline Schools Administration:

Dr. Linus Guillory, Superintendent; Mr. Sam Rippin, Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance; Ms. Lesley Ryan Miller, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; Ms. Erin Cooley, Senior Director of Data and Strategy; Ms. Jenee Uttaro, Senior Director of Educational Equity; Ms. Tye'sha Fluker, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Michael D'Onofrio, Office of Student Services Finance Manager; and Ms. Robin Coyne, School Committee Executive Assistant.

Brookline Select Board:

Ms. Heather Hamilton, Chair.

Town of Brookline Administration:

Mr. Mel Kleckner, Town Administrator.

Brookline Advisory Committee:

Mr. Cliff Brown, Advisory Committee School Subcommittee Chair, and Mr. Ben Birnbaum, Advisory Committee School Subcommittee Member.

Brookline Educators Union (BEU):

Mr. Justin Brown.

Baker School:

Principal Torrance Lewis and Students Chora Bayer, Carmen Infantine, and Sonali Morrissey-Dhekne.

Ms. Federspiel and Ms. Charlupski welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. The participants introduced themselves.

Ms. Charlupski provided an update on changes in the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) since last year's meeting. Ms. Charlupski, Dr. Guillory, and other School Committee/staff members outlined Brookline Issues and Priorities.

***Public Schools of Brookline
LEGISLATOR UPDATE AND LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2022***

There have been a great deal of changes in the PSB since we met last January. We hired a new Superintendent, Dr. Linus Guillory, in July. There are new senior staff, including Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Lesley Ryan Miller (former principal at Pierce elementary school), and Sam Rippin, Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance. With our new staff and all students back in school full time, we are excited about the 2021/2022 school year.

We are successfully managing COVID; our numbers of cases have been quite low (despite an uptick after Thanksgiving.) This success is due to the collaboration of:

- *PSB's outstanding staff;*
- *An expert panel (epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists, public health experts etc.) who have guided us through the pandemic, and have served as regional and national leaders in school-based guidance; and*
- *Students and their caregivers.*

Successful management has also been supported by our strong vaccination rates for our age-eligible students (~90%) as well as staff. We have agreements with all of our unions that everyone working in PSB be vaccinated. We are addressing academic and mental health impacts of the pandemic through social-emotional curriculum, newly hired social workers, and working with students to address any academic deficits caused by remote learning.

Using ESSER federal funding, we ran a four week project-based "universal summer program" for any Brookline elementary student who wanted to attend, free of charge. There was strong participation and we are hoping to run similar programming again this summer. This program was in addition to other summer programs that PSB runs every summer.

Brookline continues to be busy with school building projects:

- *The BHS addition and renovation are nearing completion. When complete, we will have a new STEM wing in the Main Building, a partial renovation of the Tappan Gym, a new MBTA station and a new 9th grade building. These projects will serve the High School population well for a long time.*
- *The Driscoll School began construction last summer and is progressing well. We were successful in getting Town Meeting to fund geothermal HVAC along with*

- photovoltaics for this project to bring the school close to net zero. The scheduled occupancy of the building is Fall 2023.*
- *The Pierce School project has finished feasibility and selected a Preferred Schematic Design. We are now awaiting MSBA Board approval to continue to the Design Development stage. We are also planning on this building being as close to net zero as possible taking into consideration that we are reusing the Pierce historic building.*

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2022

- 1. Fund Chapter 70 using 2019 enrollment:** *We appreciate the level funding of Chapter 70 for FY22 (\$15,212,527) and are hopeful that Chapter 70 funding for FY23 continues to be level funded or increased. Reduced enrollment is a statewide problem. Our enrollment has increased slightly from last year, but is still down by nearly 1000 students. Given the uncertainty of our enrollment forecast, particularly if/when international students will return, we will need support from the legislature to ensure our total Chapter 70 funding is maintained through a “hold harmless” provision that uses our October 2019 enrollment.*
- 2. Further fund Special Education:** *We appreciate the 25% funding for Special Ed transportation which for Brookline was \$300,000. We hope next year will be increased to 50% as laid out in the Student Opportunity Act. In addition, we continue to lobby for full funding of Special Education costs, along with maximum Circuit Breaker reimbursement and insurance participation for medically necessary treatment in School (e.g., 1-on-1 nurses).*
- 3. Universal Pre-K funding:** *The Build Back Better bill in Congress has funding for universal pre-K being distributed through Health and Human Services and would then go to DEEC in Massachusetts. Our concern is that because of this, public schools may not be included in the funding, and we would request advocacy to ensure that they are.*
- 4. Fair Share Amendment:** *We would like to ensure that public education receives a significant portion of these funds.*
- 5. Electric Bus grants or subsidies:** *We would like your support to identify funding for a pilot for Brookline. There apparently was a State pilot for 3 communities in 2018.*
- 6. MCAS Moratorium:** *We are grateful for the advocacy that led to minimized MCAS for the previous school year (2020-2021) and once again support the legislation put forward for a moratorium on MCAS testing.*
- 7. Enabling Virtual Meetings:** *Legislation to make permanent the March 12, 2020 Open Meeting Law Executive Order allowing remote meetings for the purposes of establishing a quorum and for voting is important for boards and commissions to operate. Remote participation has allowed for the public to be more involved in the work of the School Committee and allowed for greater flexibility of scheduling and attendance for members – these are all important benefits that will accrue even as the pandemic ends. This legislative initiative is also supported by the Brookline Commission for Women, and more broadly by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (see letter to Senate President Karen E. Spilka and House Speaker Robert DeLeo dated June 30, 2020.)*

- 8. Continued offsetting of COVID-related Expenses:** *Funding for COVID-related expenses, while reduced, continues to be an ongoing expense. Items such as surveillance testing, summer remedial programs and PPE are just a few of the extraordinary costs we are experiencing. ESSER funds are helpful to offset this but if expenses continue past any Federal relief, we will need support from the legislature.*
- 9. Menstrual Products Bill (H2354/S1445):** *We support this legislation and have already begun to make these products freely available in bathrooms in our schools.*
- 10. Continuing Needs:** *We thank you for your increased support for METCO, Steps to Success, and the Brookline Center for Community Mental Health. We appreciate it and hope that additional funding for these critical community programs will increase in the FY23 Budget.*

Participants discussed *Legislative Priority: Menstrual Products Bill (H2354/S1445)*. Baker School students Chora Bayer, Carmen Infantine, and Sonali Morrissey-Dhekne talked about their efforts to provide free menstrual products in their school's restrooms, and spoke in support of legislative efforts to provide access to free products in all Massachusetts districts. Ms. Ditkoff reviewed Brookline initiatives to provide free products, and noted that Brookline was the first municipality in the State to provide free menstrual products in public restrooms. The Legislators provided an update on the House and Senate Bills (now in Ways and Means because it requires funding) and expressed their support.

Participants discussed the following Legislative Priorities: *Fund Chapter 70 using 2019 enrollment* (including the enrollment impact of Brookline's high percentage of international students whose parents are not able to obtain visas due to COVID); *further fund Special Education* (including the importance of fully funding Circuit Breaker; Medicaid Reimbursement process is very labor intensive); *Universal PreK funding* (Congressman Auchincloss will verify that the Build Back Better Bill covers private and public schools); *Fair Share Amendment* (requested that Legislators keep the district informed of any Bills that would provide additional funding for education); *Electric Bus Grants or Subsidies* (Congressman Auchincloss and Senator Creem will follow up with PSB staff on Brookline's eligibility for federal/state grant funds for electric buses (perhaps for METCO buses and/or regional buses that transport students to out-of-district placements); *MCAS Moratorium* (the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is considering an extension of the moratorium and is reviewing the Competency Determination criteria); *Enabling Virtual Meetings* (the Town has not yet held a public hearing/submitted the Home Rule Petition; rules are approved by the Attorney General's Office, i.e., doesn't require legislative action; virtual meetings have helped to increase transparency and public participation/engagement in local government); *Continued Offsetting of COVID-related Expenses* (on January 11, 2022, an initial FY 2023 Budget, including American Rescue Plan Act funding, will be presented to the Select Board); and *Continuing Needs* (requested that Legislators keep the district informed about any Bills that could potentially help support vulnerable students/ families, e.g., Bills that address housing, food insecurity, WiFi access, safe streets, and student/family mental health; discussed the importance of funding to support young

people with mental health issues, and the lack of resources/placements currently available).

The Legislators offered their continued support to the Town of Brookline and the Schools. Ms. Charlupski thanked everyone for coming and for their work on behalf of the Brookline students and community.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.