

RECORD OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BROOKLINE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ON **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020** AT 6:00 PM (REMOTE VIA ZOOM). STATUTORY NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS FILED WITH THE TOWN CLERK.

School Committee Members Present: Suzanne Federspiel (Chair), David Pearlman (Vice Chair), Helen Charlupski, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Andreas Liu, Jennifer Monopoli, Mariah Nobrega, and Barbara Scotto. Also present: James Marini, Mary Ellen Normen, Casey Ngo-Miller, and Robin Coyne.

Others present: Senior Director of Data and Strategy Erin Cooley and Senior Director of Programs/Remote Learning Academy Principal Meg Maccini.

Ms. Federspiel called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1. JOINT CONVENTION OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND SELECT BOARD - QUESTION OF VOTING TO SELECT A CANDIDATE TO FILL THE VACANT SEAT ON THE BROOKLINE SCHOOL COMMITTEE TO SERVE UNTIL THE MAY 2021 TOWN ELECTION

Chair of the Joint Convention David Pearlman called the Joint Convention to order.

School Committee Members Present: Suzanne Federspiel (Chair), David Pearlman (Vice Chair), Helen Charlupski, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Andreas Liu, Jennifer Monopoli, Mariah Nobrega, and Barbara Scotto.

Select Board Members Present: Bernard Greene (Chair), Raul Fernandez, Nancy Heller, and John VanScoyoc. Select Board Members Absent: Heather Hamilton (Vice Chair).

This Joint Convention is being held in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 41, Section 11, to fill a vacancy in the School Committee until the next Annual Town Election. Section 11 requires that the remaining members of the School Committee and the members of the Board of Selectmen meet in Join Convention to fill the current School Committee vacancy. The candidates are: Mr. Dimitry Anselme, Dr. Natasha Archer Hartmann, Dr. Steven Ehrenberg, Dr. John Hermos, Dr. Yael Jaffe, Dr. Andrei Krivtsov, Ms. Rachel Levy Wexler, Dr. Joseph Reilly, Ms. Lisa Rodrigues, and Dr. Sheri Simmons.

Members indicated who they plan to vote for to fill the vacant seat, and their reasons.

ACTION 20-114

On a motion of Mr. Greene, and seconded by Ms. Scotto, it was UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to appoint Dimitry Anselme to the School Committee, to serve until the May 2021 Town Election.

Roll Call

Aye: Suzanne Federspiel (School Committee Chair), David Pearlman (School Committee Vice Chair), Helen Charlupski, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Andreas Liu, Jennifer Monopoli, Mariah Nobrega, Barbara Scotto, Bernard Greene (Select Board Chair), Raul Fernandez, Nancy Heller, and John VanScoyoc.

Mr. Pearlman declared Dimitry Anselme as the new member of the Brookline School Committee, to serve until the May 2021 Town Election. Members extended their congratulations to Mr. Anselme.

Members expressed their appreciation to everyone who participated in this process, and remarked on the strength and range of qualifications of all of the applicants. The candidates' credentials and obvious commitment to the Town of Brookline and the school district are impressive. Members encouraged the applicants who were not selected to consider a future run for office, and noted the many opportunities for involvement on behalf of the children of Brookline, including participation on the Remote Task Force.

On the motion of Mr. Greene, and seconded by Ms. Monopoli, it was unanimously voted to dissolve the Joint Convention.

Roll Call

Aye: Suzanne Federspiel (School Committee Chair), David Pearlman (School Committee Vice Chair), Helen Charlupski, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Andreas Liu, Jennifer Monopoli, Mariah Nobrega, Barbara Scotto, Bernard Greene (Select Board Chair), Raul Fernandez, Nancy Heller, and John VanScoyoc.

2. UPDATE ON FALL REOPENING

Dr. Marini provided an update on the Fall Reopening. He commented on what he observed during his visits to schools on the opening day. Dr. Marini expressed his appreciation to Director of Senior Programs Meg Maccini, who is serving as Remote Learning Academy (RLA) Principal. Establishing the RLA is a substantial and complicated undertaking, and there have been a number of challenges. Ms. Maccini and others have been working tirelessly to address these issues, and provide the best possible experience for students, families, and staff. Dr. Marini and Ms. Maccini summarized what went well, challenges, and steps that have and will be taken to address issues.

What went well?

- Each student was greeted by a teacher in all of their classes.
- A sense of community has truly developed among teachers and staff members. This positivity will quickly permeate to students.
- Teachers and paraprofessionals worked as a team to cover multiple classes.
- Parents/guardians provided positive feedback.
- Hiring has continued.
- Most parent/guardian concerns were addressed promptly.

What challenges were encountered?

- Technology:
 - Students and parents/guardians were not able to access instruction through the Learning Management Systems (Seesaw, Google, Canvas).
- Communication:
 - Tuesday night was the first time Kindergarten families were informed about the schedule for Kindergarten students this week.
 - Links to class meetings were sent late in the evening and did not include all the necessary information for students to access successfully.
- Staffing:
 - RLA is still working with the central office to fully staff the school. There are still gaps in 5th, 6th and 7th grades that the district is working to fill. Secretarial and administrative staff also need to be hired.
- The term schedule for the school still needs to be finalized.

What will be better on Day 2?

- A parent/guardian forum will be held by the Principal today to give parents/guardians the chance to share their feedback directly.
- Parents/guardians will receive correct links for day two from teachers that include all information necessary to log into class meetings.
- The district will continue to work on hiring.
- A schedule that includes special classes and support services will be drafted.
 - A staffing plan will be developed in order to meet the needs of this schedule.
- Teacher and staff names will continue to be updated in Aspen and parents/guardians will be able to view changes in real time via the Aspen Parent/Guardian Portal.
- Classes will be uploaded to the Learning Management Systems to allow for delivery of instruction through those platforms next week.

Celebrations

- Despite significant challenges to opening a new school, staff remains incredibly positive, upbeat, and focused on the children,
- Parents/guardians have reported positive classroom experiences and great appreciation for the “herculean” efforts of RLA teachers, staff members, and administration.
- Drastically reduced technical problems on Thursday (as evidenced by reduction in principal receiving emails asking for help),
- Unwavering support from the Office of Strategy and Performance, Office of Student Services, Office of Teaching and Learning, Office of Administration and Finance, and Superintendent’s Office.
- K-8 principals are supporting the staffing needs of RLA.
- Held a 5th grade parent/guardian listening session with the principal to express concerns, answer questions, and share their experience of RLA thus far.

- 6th and 8th grade teams rolled out a “landing page” to assist students with easily navigating their classes.

Challenges

- Some students are having a rocky start by not seeing familiar faces in their classes.
- RLA is understaffed.
 - Staff are balancing supporting multiple classrooms.
 - Worried about sustainability.
- Full schedule is still in development.
 - Specials are scheduled asynchronously until RLA is fully staffed.
- No secretary or additional administrator.
- Cross communication between homeschool and RLA to parents/guardians is confusing and has resulted in RLA students showing up to home school.
- Volume of emails is difficult to manage and troubleshoot in a timely manner.

Kindergarten

- After conducting multiple listening sessions with RLA and kindergarten parents/guardians this week, kindergarten will continue with a half day schedule next week as part of a phased in approach to experiencing a full day of school.
- The district is carefully monitoring the amount of screen time for these students.

School Committee members asked how the School Committee can support this work. Dr. Marini reported that the administration is reviewing the full needs of the RLA educational model. Ms. Normen is in the process of reconciling district staffing with the budget to see whether there are funds within the School Department budget that could be used to provide additional supports.

Ms. Ngo-Miller provided a brief update on the experience of students and staff that returned to the classroom, including what went well and challenges. At the next School Committee meeting on September 24, 2020, Dr. Marini will provide an update on the next phase of the reopening plan.

3. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Charlupski informed the School Committee that Zaftigs would like to extend temporary use of a portion of the paved, emergency access drive at the Coolidge Corner School, adjacent to Zaftigs at 355 Harvard Street, through the end of September 2020. Use is conditional based on School needs, and is subject to licensure and conditions set by the Select Board and Fire Department (e.g., removal of all tables and chairs when not in operation). No objections were raised.

Ms. Charlupski informed the School Committee that EDCO Collaborative Executive Director Nadine Ekstrom will be resigning from her position, effective November 1, 2020. A Transition Committee has been formed.

4. PROPOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

By unanimous roll call vote at 7:10 PM, the School Committee entered into Executive Session pursuant to Massachusetts General laws chapter 30A section 21(a) for Purpose 3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Brookline Educators Union (BEU) (Unit A, Unit B, and Paraprofessionals), and with AFSCME (School Food Service Employees), because the Chair declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body. Ms. Federspiel announced that the meeting will not reconvene in open session at the end of the Executive Session. By unanimous roll call vote at 8:15 PM, the School Committee reconvened in public session for the purpose of adjournment.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Federspiel adjourned the meeting at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robin E. Coyne, Executive Assistant
Brookline School Committee