



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REMOTE
BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

September 14, 2022

The Boston School Committee held a remote meeting on September 14, 2022 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Vice Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; Lorena Lopera; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; and Quoc Tran.

School Committee Member Absent: Stephen Alkins

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Meeting Minutes: July 13, 2022; August 10, 2022; August 31, 2022

Grants for Approval Totaling \$959,498

Memo: BTU BPS SY 21-24 Collective Bargaining Agreement

Memorandum of Agreement For Successor Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Period September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2024 Between the Boston Teachers Union, Local 66, AFT-Massachusetts and the School Committee of the City of Boston

BTU Collective Bargaining Agreement School Committee PowerPoint Presentation

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. Mr. O'Neill and Ms. Lopera were absent. (Mr. O'Neill joined the meeting immediately after roll call; Ms. Lopera joined the executive session in progress). All other members were present.

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Ms. Robinson announced that the Committee would immediately adjourn to an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union as well as litigation strategy regarding the Mission Hill K-8 Pilot School. To have this discussion in an open meeting could have a detrimental effect on the Committee's bargaining position. She said that the Committee would return to public session at 7 p.m.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

Approved - On roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union and litigation strategy regarding the Mission Hill K-8 Pilot School.

RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson reconvened the meeting in public session at approximately 7:05 p.m. Dr. Alkins was absent. All other members were present.

She announced that the Committee has just returned from an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union and pending litigation regarding the Mission Hill K-8 Pilot School.

Ms. Robinson said that tonight's meeting was being streamed live on Zoom. It will be rebroadcast on Boston City TV. It will also be posted at bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee and on YouTube. She announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and American Sign Language (ASL) and provided instructions on how to access simultaneous interpretation by changing the Zoom channel. Translated meeting documents were posted at www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee prior to the start of the meeting.

Ms Robinson announced that BPS has not yet received the final version of the third phase of the Mission Hill K-8 Pilot School report. Therefore, the presentation scheduled for this evening will be rescheduled for a future meeting. Acting Superintendent Drew Echelson expressed regret that he and his team would not be able to present formally on the topic as planned, adding he hopes to receive the final report soon and prepare a formal presentation for the next meeting. He said that BPS has already begun to identify and address the system failures that led to the events outlined in the Phase 1 report at the Mission Hill school. He pledged to show what the system failures were and what actions BPS is taking to cure those failures. Ms. Robinson said it will be important to share with the public what failures are identified in the report. as well as lessons learned and next steps.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked when BPS leadership received a draft of the third report. Dr. Echelson said he saw a draft report two or three weeks ago that was not yet redacted. He expressed a sense of urgency to have the document redacted swiftly.

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Mr. Tran expressed concerns about school autonomy. He requested that the School Committee be notified about legal issues at the onset.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Approved – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the following School Committee meetings: July 13, 2022; August 10, 2022; and August 31, 2022.

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you, Madame Chair. I am happy to join you this evening. I want to begin tonight by addressing a topic that is on everyone’s mind in light of the incident at Burke High School on Monday. I want to be clear: violence of any kind has no place in our schools. What happened at the Burke is unacceptable and we must as a whole City work together to prevent incidents like this. At BPS, we have made significant investments to support our young people as we deal with the trauma from the past few years. We have school based social workers at every school and 9 district social workers to support as well. The growth in social work capacity has enabled us to be both proactive and provide triage support in tandem with city based agencies, as evidenced by our response to the incident that occurred at the Burke. We were able to respond with district social workers and to collaborate with and support efforts with Project Right and the Neighborhood Trauma Team. This is our common practice to support students, staff and families. We are also continuing to make investments in building security like the millions in security cameras which will be upgraded this year– prioritizing some schools in need of immediate updates and then moving to a multi year predictable upgraded schedule for the entire district. The safety and security of our students and staff remains our top priority–I am grateful to the school staff who are on the ground every day supporting our young people. It’s not easy work, but seeing our students thrive makes it all worth it.

As you all know, this is my last meeting as acting Superintendent. I am so excited (I don’t think there is anyone more excited than I am) to welcome Mary back to BPS. We are in constant communication and I am confident that she will lead with compassion, joy and love for our students and our work. Superintendent Skipper’s first day back at BPS will be September 26th. Her first School Committee meeting as Superintendent will take place on Wednesday, September 28th.

I was so thrilled to welcome back our staff and students last week and this week with our youngest learners. I want to thank all of our Executive Team, school leaders, teachers, paras, nurses, custodial staff, bus monitors and drivers, cafeteria staff and BPS Central team for all of their hard work in ensuring a good start to the school year. Prior to the school year, we worked with the Re-Engagement Center to reach out to students who had been chronically absent. Dozens of volunteers knocked on doors and reached out to students to ensure that they would attend school. They canvassed the Dorchester, Roxbury and Jamaica Plain sections of the city.

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They knocked on 166 doors and reached 77 families during their outreach. On the first day of school I have to share that there was so much JOY and momentum as students headed back into their classrooms. We started the day at the bus yard and continued to Forest Hills to meet with the BPS orange line ambassadors who were out in front of the higher trafficked areas to greet and guide students. Lastly, I was at the Mattahunt School along with Mayor Wu, BTU President Jessica Tang, Chair Jeri Robinson, and others to pass out pencils and greet the students for the first day of school. Being at the Mattahunt brought so much joy. There was music, dancing, cheering and even a red carpet. The students felt excited to be back at school. On the first two days of school, I also visited the Taylor, Ellison, Mildred Ave, Mendell, and PA Shaw Schools, along with the Boston Arts Academy and the Hernandez Dual Language School. It was wonderful to see our student back in the classroom ready to learn. While visiting Mendell, I had the opportunity to visit the 6th grade expansion hosted by our partners at the YMCA. It was great to see students and staff settling into their new home and we're thankful to the YMCA for partnering with us. Many of our Executive Team members went to visit schools across the district, some with our partners on the City Council. And finally, It was great to be at the Boston Arts Academy and see the excitement of the students over being in the new building but also seeing the surprise of Big Papi and Celtics player Grant Williams. What a wonderful start to our school year— thank you again to everyone who worked so hard to welcome all of our students back to school.

Hispanic Heritage Month begins tomorrow and will continue through October 15th. Our Equity Strategy & Opportunity Gaps Division will help to plan activities for the month. During the week of October 3rd, there will be a Latinx high school competition along with events that are planned on October 13th and 14th.

Our Office of Community Engagement facilitated two virtual meetings to share with families how we are prepared to welcome their children back to school. These were promoted via robocalls, texts, emails, and the weekly parent newsletter. Close to 1,000 parents attended the sessions and were able to directly engage with members of the BPS leadership team to get answers to their questions around COVID-19 protocols, transportation information, Special Education and more. The new BPS Helpline actively supports families through the back-to-school process. The team, which is still hiring, has logged nearly 2457 calls and emails, both inbound and outbound, with most communications in the last two weeks about assignment, transportation, Aspen access and Chromebook unlocks.

I want to thank Director of Transportation Del Stanislaus and her team, who have been working nonstop to address the transportation issues and innovation, working alongside the Mayor, her team, and all the other partners involved. Our main concern is ensuring that our students and staff have a means of transportation to get them to school safely. We have been monitoring our morning and evening transportation numbers. Getting our students safely to school in the morning and returning them home at the end of the day is central to our mission of making sure every student gets what they need to succeed. Our bus arrival times before bell time and after bell time continue to improve, as you can see from the data on screen. We continue to make improvements to our operations and respond to the transportation needs of families throughout the district. Attendance stayed steady during the first couple of days of the school year. We were at 78 percent on Day One, 81 percent on Days Two and Three.

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On September 8th, the first day of school, we submitted the second set of deliverables as part of the Systemic Improvement Plan. These documents fulfill our second set of commitments related to Student Safety, Facilities, Transportation and Data. All deliverables we submitted can be found on the BPS website at www.bostonpublicschools.org/strategicprogress. The district team continues to engage with senior-level DESE staff to review their feedback and make adjustments as we continue to collaborate on this critical systems work. Looking forward, we will be receiving recommendations from external reviews related to Special Education, Transportation and Student Safety this fall, and presenting the Strategic Plan for Multilingual Learners. We look forward to engaging with the larger BPS community around these recommendations as we plan for the future.

Finally, this is my last Boston School Committee meeting as Acting Superintendent. I want to thank everyone who helped me during this journey. It has been an honor to be a part of this BPS team and to see the work that is happening. I am remarkably proud to serve the children and families of Boston even though I know the organization must do far more to push accelerated improvement. The way in which every member of our team centers their lens on students and families and provides the best possible support has been inspiring for me. We must build systems of support and accountability throughout the BPS. I will continue to work with Incoming Superintendent Skipper to help shape her vision for the district and to ensure we make progress on how our system provides support and hold ourselves accountable for the improvements we collectively envision. I know there are a lot of hard conversations ahead and I welcome them because I understand that we need to have them in order to repair the wrongs of an inequitable system. It will take all of us working together to achieve the level of quality, excellence and opportunity that our students deserve. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the students and families of Boston Public Schools in this role. I am excited to continue to serve in my new role and to welcome Mary in just 11 days, not that I'm counting. That concludes my Superintendent's Report this evening.

That is my Acting Superintendent's Report for this evening.

Ms. Robinson thanked Dr. Echelson for his leadership during this critical interim period.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez thanked Dr. Echelson for his service and leadership during this complex time. He asked for an update on staffing shortages. Dr. Echelson said that there are approximately 180 teacher vacancies, with five or six schools carrying the heaviest load of vacancies. Secondary science positions are the most common vacancies. Central office staff have been deployed to support schools. School secretaries positions are also critical to fill. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez encouraged the district to communicate with impacted families and explore creative strategies to fill critical vacancies.

Ms Lopera asked about the impact of the Orange Line shutdown on students and families. Dr. Echelson acknowledged that while the vast majority of students are getting to school on time, there have been some significant challenges, particularly with afternoon buses. Transportation staff are working to address those issues. He said that the data suggests that BPS is moving in the right direction in terms of improving on time-performance. Director of Transportation Del Stanislaus agreed and thanked her team for their hard work. Dr. Echelson said that DESE

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officials have acknowledged that the Orange Line shutdown will likely impact BPS on-time performance for the first month of school.

Mr. O'Neill spoke about the importance of relationships when it comes to school safety. Dr. Echelson emphasized that schools are safe. Deputy Superintendent of Operations Sam DePina said that staff are reviewing and updating safety protocols and providing additional training for employees. Mr. O'Neill asked about the safety review being conducted by the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS). Dr. Echelson explained that as part of the Systemic Improvement Plan, CGCS is auditing three areas of work, including school safety. CGCS is focusing on the protocols, systems and structures, and student supports that are available in the district. CGCS is reviewing documents, interviewing stakeholders, and will make a set of recommendations.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked district leadership to follow up with the date by which BPS must communicate with the families of students who do not have a permanent teacher. He requested a more robust staffing update at the next meeting. Interim Chief Human Capital Officer Rae Catchings said she will work closely with Incoming Superintendent Skipper to provide the Committee with a robust update.

Ms. Polanco Garcia asked about efforts to improve air quality in schools as well as any plans for tents to accommodate outdoor eating. Deputy Superintendent Operations Sam DePina said he will provide a list of schools with tents and/or air filters.

Ms. Robinson said that she has heard positive feedback from many school communities who are happy to have newly installed air conditioning in their buildings.

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Acting Superintendent's Report.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Michael Heichman, Dorchester resident and Boston Education Justice Alliance member, testified regarding a variety of educational issues.
- John Mudd, Cambridge resident and advocate, testified regarding achievement gaps, teacher diversity, and access to native language.
- Lisa Jeanne Graf, Fenway resident and Quincy Upper School parent, testified regarding options for neurodiverse students
- Ruby Reyes, Dorchester resident and Boston Education Justice Alliance Executive Director, testified regarding school reopening
- Sharon Hinton, Hyde Park resident and advocate, testified regarding school safety and transportation

The following people testified with concerns regarding the proposed merger between the Sumner and Philbrick elementary schools:

- Elizabeth Ferrenz, Roslindale resident and Sumner parent
- Alison Friedmann, Roslindale resident and Sumner parent

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- Jess Manna, Roslindale resident and Sumner parent
- Laprema Dunn, Roslindale resident and Sumner parent
- Rachel Young, Roslindale resident and Sumner parent
- Lauren Peter, Roslindale resident and Sumner parent

ACTION ITEM

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved grants for approval totaling \$959,498.

REPORT

Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Boston School Committee and the Boston Teachers Union - Senior Advisor Megan Costello provided an overview of the tentative agreement between the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) regarding the collective bargaining agreement for school years 2021-2024. The negotiated agreement contains a number of features that support strong student outcomes, including the recruitment and retention of a diverse and talented workforce, paid parental leave, tuition reimbursement, laptops and increased coverage rate for paraprofessionals. The agreement deeply focuses on serving the district's most vulnerable students with a complete overhaul of the inclusion language in the contract. The new contract language provides the opportunity for the district to work in collaboration with union partners on this important work. The BTU ratified the contract today. The School Committee is scheduled to vote on the agreement and an FY23 supplemental appropriation request to the Boston City Council on September 28th.

Ms. Lopera asked how the inclusion working group outlined in the agreement will incorporate community engagement. Ms. Costello said that the inclusion working group is just one way that BPS will have community and family voice, adding that Chair Robinson will be fleshing out the details of the working group in the coming weeks. She noted that administrators were included in the process.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez praised changes to the contract's language regarding students with disabilities. He asked about the timeline for inclusion implementation, which Ms. Costello explained will vary by school. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked a number of questions about implementation and double licensure which were answered by district staff. He cautioned about unintended consequences. Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics Dr. Linda Chen and Executive Director of Special Education Lauren Viviani reaffirmed the district's commitment to placing students in the least restrictive environment, using autonomy to create innovation while supporting and protecting students.

Mr. O'Neill asked about the financial impact of the tentative agreement. For FY22, all costs are in reserve. For FY23, the Superintendent will request that the Committee approve a supplemental budget increase of \$37,674,337. For FY24, cost increases will be built into the budget proposal presented to the School Committee on February 1, 2023 for the 2023-24 budget planning

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process. The total cost of the three year contract is \$141,651,361. Mr. O’Neill thanked Chair Robinson for her deep involvement in the collective bargaining negotiations.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez emphasized the importance of deploying strong recruitment and retention strategies to promote a strong workforce.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Echelson announced that the Boston Teachers Union is holding its annual Book Fair at BTU headquarters in Dorchester on September 24th. The Boston Public Health Commission is holding a free vaccination and booster clinic on September 17th at White Stadium.

ADJOURN

Approved - At approximately 9:56 p.m. the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn to the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan
Executive Secretary