



Cohasset School Committee Meeting

School Committee Minutes

Wednesday, October 3, 2018
Cohasset Middle-High School
Community Use Room
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA

In Attendance: Jeanne Astino, Chairman
Ellen Maher
Barbara Stefan
Jennifer Madden
Paul Kearney

Also in Attendance: Louise Demas, Superintendent
Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent
Michael MacMillan, Director of Finance & Operations

Chairman Astino called the meeting back to order at 7:30 p.m.

Pledge-Recited.

Mrs. Maher read a prepared statement about district policies and how they are implemented. All policies are on the recommendation of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and are thoroughly vetted. She outlined what the responsibilities of the school committee are and what the administration handles. She noted that all district policies are on the district's website. Once an issue is in the hands of the Police, District Attorney or Department of Children and Families, the school steps aside. Chairman Astino reminded everyone that the School Committee meetings are open to the public but are not public meetings. There is a public comment period at the start of every meeting. The Chairman asked that all questions and comments be directed through the Chair and be no longer than three minutes.

Public Comment-Mohamad Omran-19 Ledgewood Farm Drive asked if the Superintendent is required to advise the School Committee about an issue like the one that happened in February and April. Chairman Astino responded that the SC was notified in May when it became a police matter.

Rob Johnson-27 Linden Drive asked who has the authority to remove the Superintendent from her position. Chairman Astino responded the SC hires and relieves the Superintendent of duties. Mrs. Stefan added that all information on SC roles and responsibilities are on the website.

Wendy Neubert-92 Aaron River Road stated people feel there is a lack of communication. The situation was not properly addressed in a timely manner. She attended the meeting last week held by the Superintendent and asked why her attorney was with her. Chairman Astino responded that the attorney present was the SC attorney not the Superintendent's. She cannot comment further as there is an ongoing investigation. Ms. Neubert added that the Police Chief was the point of information for parents and she felt the information should have come from the school.

Paul Grady-2 Cushing Road stated he understands that the SC cannot discuss an ongoing investigation. He asked if the SC was preparing for a vote of no confidence with head of administration. Chairman Astino stated they would not be discussing that.

Mohamad Omran added that he felt the SC is not willing to talk about the safety of the students or the person that oversees their safety. It is not right.

Rick Schiffmann-107 Sohler Street stated he understands the legal constraints. There are many people that could not be here tonight, but they also want answers. The community needs to be heard and the SC should be doing that. He encouraged the SC to find a forum as their representatives and to listen to the public.

Patrice Smith-6 Ledgewood Farm Drive stated the DCF report of negligence contains a date in February that the incident occurred. She asked why they waited until September to discuss and why they still have no information. This is very concerning.

Wendy Neubert asked why there wasn't a roll out to educate the public. Chairman Astino responded that they cannot answer that question at this meeting. Ms. Neubert asked why mandatory reporting didn't take place. The students should know who they can report to and trust. She then asked why the Superintendent's lack of reporting the incident had not been addressed.

Ron Woolley-28 Hillside Drive stated there is a lot of tension in the Middle and High School. The message the kids are getting is that they cannot talk about anything at school and they are scared.

Superintendent Demas stated there was an assembly for all students. Dr. Sullivan stated they had three goals for the assembly: informing students of the situation to the best of their ability, assuring them they have a trusted adult they can go to and reminding them they are safe in their school environment.

Jaime Suvak-62 Spring Street stated parents are frustrated because they haven't heard anything from the school and students are being told they cannot talk about anything. She started a Facebook page. There should be experts involved to help explain. Chairman Astino stated they have an independent investigator looking into policies and procedures and how they are currently followed. They have reached out to Cohasset PD to partner with communication. They are looking into the MOU with Police so that they are all working collaboratively. There is also an ongoing Title Nine investigation. Ms. Suvak asked what they are doing about sexual assault and harassment. They need to figure out a way to speak to experts and help the district.

Maggie Moy-33 Ledgewood Drive stated parents received a letter in May stating counselors would be available for students. She would like to know who the counselors were and if they were outside counseling or school staff. Students do not trust and have confidence with staff and administration.

There is no one for them to go to. She would like to know who the counselors were. Dr. Sullivan stated students were advised to speak to school staff.

Dima Omran-19 Ledgewood Farm Drive stated the high school students had an assembly and it was great. The middle school students didn't understand the assembly. It is vital that coaches at school address boys respecting girls.

Rob Johnson-27 Linden Drive added that the girls need to be taught to respect boys and girls as well.

Paul Grady-2 Cushing Road asked when the answers from the investigation come out, how will the parents be notified. Chairman Astino introduced SC Attorney Roseann DiPietro. Attorney DiPietro responded when the investigation is complete the district will share any info that is within the bounds of confidentiality. They will discuss at a future SC meeting.

Maura Sharry-15 Virginia Lane stated everything would be better if school started later. She said she sent a letter for the discussion to be on the next agenda.

Mrs. Stefan thanked everyone for coming tonight and wants to let everyone know they are listening.

Mohamad Omran added that the Superintendent and SC need to get information out to the public before the kids and news media hear it. They all should be on the same team.

Superintendent Demas stated she shared some suggestions at her superintendent's coffee this week. She discussed implementing several different support and reporting mechanisms for students during this time, including providing an anonymous tip line for students. She also discussed the creation of a Safe School Committee to review policies, legal guidelines, procedures and communication between the schools and the community. All school employees will also be getting an additional, in-depth training on mandated reporting at an upcoming professional development day this month; this is in addition to annual training that teachers already get.

Rob Johnson stated the leadership should lead in crisis and they are not.

Jaime Suvak said they need something now for the kids. They need a crisis line.

Dima Omran stated the study last year showed there are several kids that have considered suicide and she would like to have that addressed before it becomes a problem.

Approval of Warrant-Motion by Mrs. Maher to approve Warrant 19-05S, seconded by Mrs. Stefan. Roll Call Vote-Barbara Stefan-Aye, Jeanne Astino-Aye, Ellen Maher-Aye, Jennifer Madden-Aye, Paul Kearney-Aye.

Superintendents Report-AP Awards-Superintendent Demas read aloud the list of AP Scholars, AP Scholars with Honors, AP Scholars with Distinction and National AP Scholars.

National Merit Awards-Superintendent Demas read aloud the list of recipients.

Private School Enrollment Report-Superintendent Demas reviewed the annual report of private school enrollments.

Camp Wing Report-Middle School Associate Principal Kerry Agashe reported that Part One of Camp Wing took place on September 12th and it was great. The students enjoyed a dance party, kayaking,

looking for turtles, wall climbing, relay races and archery. They also had a great time singing on the bus ride. The students are looking forward to Part Two, which will happen in May.

Draft 2019-20 School Calendar-Superintendent Demas stated there is one change to the calendar. There is a day added to winter break on 12/30, which is a Monday. They will stay closed instead of opening and closing the buildings for a day. The SC agreed to wait a couple of weeks before they vote on the calendar.

SC Comments and Communication-School Committee FY19 Goals-Draft #5-Motion by Mrs. Stefan to approve School Committee FY19 Goals as presented, seconded by Mr. Kearney and the vote was unanimous (5-0).

Reports from Sub-Committee and Liaisons-Mrs. Madden will be attending the Cohasset Education Foundation meeting on 10/15 and will report back.

Motion by Mrs. Maher to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Kearney and the vote was unanimous (5-0).

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Documents used at the Meeting

AP Awards	F-1
National Merit Awards	F-2
Private School Enrollment Report	F-3
Draft 2019-20 School Calendar	F-4
School Committee FY19 Goals	G-1