



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date:	June 21, 2023
Time:	6:30PM
Location:	City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA 01852

Members of the public may view the meeting via LTC and those wishing to speak regarding a specific agenda item shall register to speak in advance of the meeting by sending an email to the Superintendent indicating the agenda item, a phone number and email address so we can provide a zoom link to access the meeting. Email address is mpalazzo@lowell.k12.ma.us. If no access to email you may contact us at 978-674-4324. All requests must be submitted before 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

1. SALUTE TO FLAG

2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:49 p.m., members present were, namely: Ms. Delrossi, Ms. Doherty, Mr. Lay, Ms. Martin, Ms. Thompson, Mayor Chau and Ms. Chhoun.

3. MINUTES

3.1. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee Meeting of Thursday, June 8, 2023

Mr. Lay made a motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the Special School Committee Meetings that were held on Thursday, June 8, 2023; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

3.2. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lowell School Committee Meeting of Thursday, June 8, 2023

Mr. Lay made a motion to accept and place on file the minutes of the Special School Committee Meetings that were held on Thursday, June 8, 2023; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

Ms. Thompson made a motion to suspend the rules to take item #8.2. Vote to Accept a Donation of \$4,900 from William and Christine Florence out of order; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 yeas APPROVED

4. PERMISSION TO ENTER

4.1. Permission to Enter: June 21, 2023

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve the Permission to Enter; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 yeas APPROVED



5. MEMORIALS

5.1. Francisco P. Rocha & Marie Valentina Rocha, Parents of Family Resource Center Administrative Assistance, Lina Faria

6. MOTIONS

6.1. [By Eileen DelRossi]: Request the Committee to vote to approve and ratify the enclosed contract proposal of the UTL for Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Cafeteria Employees, and Building Services Employees.

The following speakers registered and spoke:

Paul Georges
Pina Maggio
Michael Cooney
Deb Conway
Rose Bergeron

Ms. Doherty stated that the motion was out of order and asked Dr. Hall how this even ended up on the agenda and stated that she believes it's unlawful. She stated that there were executive session minutes that had not been approved for released.

Dr. Hall stated that this is an unusual situation and we haven't had this in the past. He stated that he did speak to city officials on the matter and he stated that nothing discussed in Executive Session was relayed to the public to his knowledge. The union published this proposal it to their members on or about June 1st to June 5th. He stated that Mr. Georges informed him that his body ratified this proposal. He stated that AFT didn't support the bargaining rules and that there were no bargaining rules binding. He stated that he called the Solicitor to see if the motion should be stopped and the Solicitor stated that he believed we could not remove it. He stated that again he would note that this is highly unusual.

Ms. Doherty stated that all negotiations were in Executive Session and that she is not here to be coerced. She stated that she feels like this is a one side negotiation. She stated that without city representation the full Committee shouldn't be voting on this. She stated that according to the rules the Committee was supposed to be abiding by, information on how the Committee voted was not supposed to be released and discussed and that she will be sending this to the Attorney General. She stated that this is clearly unfair labor negotiations. She stated that when there is a matter and certain people want to move forward they find a way to break the rules.

Ms. Martin stated that without bargaining rules the union can do what they did, but Executive Session has nothing to do with bargaining rules. She stated that someone released information that was shared and that it was inaccurate information. She stated that a commitment was made by all the members to uphold the law. She stated that the Committee should be abiding by the rules of the Executive Session of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Lay stated that he likes the motion and would like to have it in place. He stated that lower paid employees are underpaid and that the extension is only for one (1) year.



Ms. Thompson stated that she wants to be assured of her bounds and what she can and cannot be discussing regarding Executive Session laws. She asked what bounds are the Committee held to in Executive Session.

Dr. Hall responded that you can't discuss Executive Session.

Ms. Thompson stated that this was discussed in Executive Session and she stated that she's not sure what they can legally do without being in trouble. She stated that she agrees that paraprofessionals and teachers work hard.

Dr. Hall stated that the information has been made public by the union. He stated that the Committee can't talk about Executive Session.

Ms. Chhoun thanked the staff and thanked Dr. Hall. She stated that the staff is underpaid.

Ms. Delrossi stated that she has a high needs student that attends Lowell Public Schools and that we need staff and that she recognizes the role they play. She stated that when she made this motion nothing was confidential and she stated that she didn't break any Executive Session rules.

Mayor Chau stated that no violation of confidentiality has been made and asked Ms. Turner about the financial impact and about funding in the budget for this.

Ms. Turner stated that a placeholder was put in place in the budget for this and that the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) can sustain this for four (4) or five (5) years.

Mayor Chau asked if waiting makes any difference.

Ms. Turner stated that the same amount of money will be paid out if retroactive is agreed upon and stated that if needed they can adjust in other areas. She stated that they have \$11 million for this proposal as well as step increases.

Mayor Chau asked about savings.

Ms. Turner stated that this proposal is more affordable that was considered and that it will cost approximately \$7.3 million dollars.

Ms. Martin thanked everyone who came to speak tonight for their work and for sharing their thoughts. She stated that the Committee bears a different responsibility. She stated that during the Education Reform Act about ten (10) years ago, huge increases were given and that she believes in less than five years (5) the money won't be there. She stated that she was looking for additional language like capping the sick leave buyback and that her thought process was that it would allow the Committee to afford this proposal. She stated that it's hard to layoff teachers and that its devastating and heartbreaking process. She stated that she recognizes the hard work, but she was looking for the balance for all schools.

Ms. Thompson stated that during Executive Session the Committee was told not to reach out to Mr. Georges by legal counsel and that a lot of narratives have been spun. She stated that she clearly understands that the paraprofessionals are being underpaid. She stated that she was trying to follow the rules that she was given and that they are limited at times of how they can show their support. She stated that when she made the pledge to run, it was because of equity and equity is for staff as well as students. She again reiterated that she supports all of them.



Ms. Doherty stated that they're in violation of Executive Session. She stated that she completely supports everyone who works for the Lowell Public Schools and that she is an advocate for staff, students and families. She stated that years ago she had to cut 100 positions and that she worries. She stated that she fully supports parity and bringing those lower paid employees up. She stated that they're not making a livable wage and that they should be made whole and have their pay increased. She stated that some of the higher paid employees receiving this increase she doesn't see as parity. She stated that she feels like pandering is happening because it's an election year. She stated that tax increases are coming and that we need parody, but there is a fiduciary responsibility and that nobody goes into education to make a million dollars. She stated that she believes that this will go down as a low moment and that her colleague may not have known seeing this was her first term, but Dr. Hall and Mayor Chau should know.

Ms. Delrossi stated that she would have respected if they sent her motion to Executive Session. She stated that 50% of the staff lives in Lowell and their taxpayer dollars return to Lowell.

Mayor Chau thanked and stated that every member wants what is best and each vote is difficult and that the Committee wants to be fair and equitable. He stated that it is primary to have equity for everyone and that the most vulnerable need to be taken care of. He stated that this is not a campaign issue, but a quality of life issue.

Ms. Delrossi made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Chhoun. 5 yeas, 2 nays (Ms. Doherty, Ms. Martin) APPROVED

Ms. Delrossi made a motion to approve and ratify the enclosed contract proposal of the UTL for Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Cafeteria Employees, and Building Services Employees.; seconded by Mr. Lay. 6 yeas, 1 nay (Ms. Doherty) APPROVED

There was a five (5) minutes recess after the vote was taken while audience members left the chamber.

On a roll call at 8:24 p.m., members present were, namely: Ms. Delrossi, Ms. Doherty, Mr. Lay, Ms. Martin, Ms. Thompson, Mayor Chau and Ms. Chhoun.

6.2. [By Jackie Doherty]: Request the Superintendent provide the Committee with an update on the current K-8 physical education curriculum, including suggestions for incorporating more mental-health-supportive activities into gym classes districtwide such as yoga, meditation and stretching.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

6.3. [By Connie Martin]: Asking the Committee to vote to request an update from BHPK regarding the ongoing investigation, including a list of LPS Administrators and Supervisors who are expected to be scheduled for interviews as part of the investigation.

Mr. Lay stated that he didn't feel comfortable doing this and that they law firm is doing their work and he doesn't feel it's right to interfere with their work.

Ms. Delrossi asked if confidentiality would be preached.



Dr. Hall stated that the attorneys stated that they would address it at the end and they may redact names.

Ms. Martin stated that she is looking for the fact finding, not the complainants. She is looking to know who is going to be interviewed.

Ms. Doherty stated that she doesn't believe the attorneys would provide information that they can't provide.

Ms. Chhoun asked if this would affect the Superintendent search.

Dr. Hall stated that he can't answer that, because he doesn't know what they're looking for.

Ms. Martin made a motion to approve; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 years APPROVED

7. REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

7.1. April Monthly Enrollment Report

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement office stated that on Wednesday, May 3rd, the Family Resource Center (FRC) held a family information session regarding the 2023-24 kindergarten assignments and lottery process. The enrollment period for consideration in the first Kindergarten school assignment lottery closed on April 24th. Any applications received from April 25th through June 7th will be considered for the second lottery in mid-June. This year, through increased communication and outreach efforts, applications submitted in the month of April more than doubled, and on April 24th, 683 applicants met the deadline for the first lottery period. In the end, six (6) schools required a lottery (Bailey, Bartlett, Morey, Pawtucketville, Pyne Arts, Washington) and families started being notified of their school assignment status beginning on May 8th. Sixty percent (60%) of the available seats in these six (6) schools were assigned via the first lottery and of the 683 applicants, eighty-one (81) had not received medical clearance as of April 24, 2023. As of April 30, 2023, there are 14,363 students enrolled with the Lowell Public Schools. During the month of April, 78% of parents submitted their registration to the portal in one (1) day or less. Submitting their application means they attached all required items and completed the required field, but the FRC clerks still need to review the registration.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 years APPROVED

7.2. May Monthly Incident Report

Ms. Thompson made a motion to refer this to an Equity & Access Subcommittee meeting; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 years APPROVED

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 years APPROVED



7.3. May Enrollment Report

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement office provided a report that stated that during the month of May, 81% of parents submitted their registration to the online registration (OLR) portal in one (1) day or less. Submitting their application means they attached all required items and completed the required field, but the Family Resource Center (FRC) clerks still need to review the registration. The report stated that thirty-eight (38) student records were created in the OLR, but not submitted by parents during the month of May.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.4. Response to Motion 10. CFO of 02/15/23 by Jackie Doherty Regarding Health Program & Budget Planning

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer provided a report informing the Committee that all middle schools and the high school budgeted for at least one (1) health teacher for the FY23-24 school year. The report stated that two (2) schools did not add one (1) during the budget cycle so the district covered the cost for these two (2) schools for this year, but each will have to cover the cost in future years since it is now part of the guardrail requirements.

Ms. Doherty asked for clarity and making sure that the teachers who are hired are certified.

Ms. Turner stated that yes, they will be certified and it will go through the normal process.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.5. Response to Motion 12. CFO of 03/15/23 by Eileen DelRossi Regarding the Status of Tutors

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer provided a report informing the Committee that ESSER dollars were used to increase school allocations each year. The school site councils work together and have the autonomy to decide how to spend their ESSER funds after meeting the guardrails (must have positions). The report stated that tutors are not considered a must have yet are very much sought after by the schools and that most schools use their excess funds to hire more tutors since they find them very beneficial to have the educated and credentialed staff to support student learning. The current year has 129 tutors funded by general funds, thirty-two (32) from grants and twenty-eight (28) from ESSER as well as six (6) additional tutors were budgeted for next year.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.6. Response to Motion 15. CEO of 02/01/23 by Jackie Doherty Regarding Head Coverings

Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement office provided a report that stated that there is language within the 2022-23 High School Student Handbook that outlines which head coverings are prohibited. The language specifically refers to head coverings is in bold language. The handbook also includes



language on the expectations for how the rules are implemented. Students who refuse to adhere to this policy will be in violation of school rules and penalized according to school policy.

The Committee shared concerns about accommodations that were made for head scarfs and not reflected in the document.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.7. Response to Motion 8. CFO of 02/15/23 by Dominik Lay Regarding Outside Tuition Placements & Transportation Costs

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer provided a report that listed three (3) years of data for out of district costs funded by both local dollars and circuit breaker. The report also included the annual cost for Special Education transportation.

Mr. Lay stated that he believed with the money being spent we could acquire our own building.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.8. Response to Motion 07. COO of 07/13/22 by Jackie Doherty Regarding Updates on LHS

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer provided updates to the Committee from Lowell High School as well as slides related to the construction progress from the General Contractor.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

7.9. Response to Motion 28. COO of 04/05/23 by Jackie Doherty Regarding Feminine Hygiene Dispensers

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer provided a report to the Committee that informed them that the Facilities Department recommended to the Finance Office to purchase EVISS-Free dispensers. The report stated that although it is not the cheapest dispenser, it was a better option than alternative units. The total cost for the machine needed, including one (1) year of products is projected to be \$60,180. The Finance Office has begun the acquisition process.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

Ms. Martin made a motion to take Item # 10.1. Communication from Chief Academic Officer Regarding a Plan for the Student Resource Center for FY24; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 yeas APPROVED



7.10. Response to Motion 33. COO of 05/17/23 by Jackie Doherty Regarding Facilities Improvements, Costs and Timelines

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer provided a report to the Committee that informed them that the Lowell School Department recently submitted an RFP to develop a five-to-ten year comprehensive facilities assessment and master plan. A plan that analyzes, investigates, provides alternative options and solutions to all challenges/constraints that school department facilities are currently facing. The RFP was submitted in the Fall of 2022, however there were no bidders at that time. The RFP is scheduled to be submitted once again in July of 2023. The Facilities Department is developing a list, describing top priorities for facilities in the district that should be addressed within the five-to-ten years. The list includes safety for staff/students, a viable learning space, proper shades and blinds, ensuring that learning spaces are within the optimal temperature range, ensuring that maintenance issues within the facilities are handle in a timely manner, proper ventilation, functional common areas such as auditoriums, cafeterias and gymnasiums, and classrooms having proper furnishings and tools for students and staff.

Ms. Martin asked for monthly reports on the spend down for ESSER.

Ms. Thompson stated that we need to be thinking about climate change purposes.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the following Reports of the Superintendent 7.1 through 7.10 as reports of progress; seconded by Mr. Lay. 7 yeas APPROVED

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1. Vote to Accept a Donation of \$5,000 From The Links for Learning Sweepstakes

A fifth grade student at the Stoklosa School, with the help of his mother, entered the “Links for Learning” Sweepstakes sponsored by Eckrich Sausage Company and won the \$5,000 cash price and they wish to donate these funds to the Stoklosa’s K-8 Student Activity account for the purpose of field trips.

Ms. Thompson made a motion to accept a donation of \$5,000 from the Links for Learning Sweepstakes; seconded by Ms. Chhoun. 7 yeas APPROVED

8.2. Vote to Accept a Donation of \$4,900 from William and Christine Florence

The Florences wish to donate Life Vac anti-choking devices to the Lowell Public Schools for use in each of our schools and buildings.

Ms. Delrossi made a motion to accept a donation of \$4,900 from the William and Christine Florence; seconded by Ms. Thompson. 7 yeas APPROVED



9. CONVENTION/CONFERENCE REQUESTS

9.1. Out of Country and Overnight Travel Request: For Lowell High School Students and Chaperones to Travel to Costa Rica

Ms. Doherty made a motion to approve the convention/conference requests; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 yeas APPROVED

10. COMMUNICATIONS

10.1. Communication from Chief Academic Officer Regarding a Plan for the Student Resource Center for FY24

Ms. Desmond, Chief Academic Officer, provided a communication that stated that over the past two (2) school years, a significant number of students have dropped out of Lowell Public Schools with no known high school equivalency plan. In response to this heightened need for flexible pathways and student re-engagement efforts, Lowell Public Schools proposed a new Student Resource Center that began operation in November 2023 upon hiring a Director and two (2) part time Graduation Mentors. Since then, The Student Resource center has re-engaged fifty-five (55) students who had dropped out in diploma or equivalency programs, and supports an additional caseload of 170 referred students who are at high-risk due to their attendance and course grades. These efforts are toward the goal of ensuring equitable, flexible pathways for students to remain in school and lower the dropout rate from a record high of 5.5% in SY21-22. The Center will support district and community goals of fostering academic and economic success for all students. Specifically, the Center aims to improve aggregate and subgroup graduation outcomes through school-based student engagement programs, personalized pathway case management, and collaborative referral practices. This work aligns with ongoing district strategies including Portrait of a Graduate, Community Schools, and strengthening Mental Health and Social Emotional supports through mentoring and clinical partnership. The \$1,250,000 is allocated in the FY24 budget.

Ms. Doherty made a motion to immediately post by noon on Friday, June 23, 2023, a Community Schools Manager & Guidance Counselor to serve at the Career Academy & Engagement Center, as well as a Mathematics Teacher at the Career Academy for the FY23/24 school year; seconded by Ms. Delrossi. 7 yeas APPROVED



11. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Thompson made a motion to recess at 9:06 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Martin. 7 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

**Joel D. Boyd, Ed.D., Superintendent and
Secretary to the Lowell School Committee**

JDB/mes