

The Regular Meeting of the Brockton School Committee was held this evening in the George M. Romm Little Theatre at Brockton High School, at seven o'clock. These minutes contain a summary of the meeting and list items that were under discussion.

Present: Mayor Carpenter, Chair; Mr. Minichiello, Vice-Chair; Mr. D'Agostino, Mr. Gormley, Ms. Plant, Mrs. Sullivan, Superintendent Smith

Also Present: Executive Team

Absent: Ms. Asack, Mr. Sullivan

Mayor Carpenter called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m., followed by the flag salute.

Consent Agenda

Mayor Carpenter explained the purpose of the Consent Agenda and asked members if they would like to remove any items for discussion, there were none.

Mr. Minichiello moved the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the consent agenda in its entirety.

Voted: to approve the motion, unanimous.

Superintendent's Report

Student Recognition - National Honor Choir

Superintendent Smith was pleased to recognize two Brockton High students who were selected from over 4,000 applicants to participate in the 2017 American Choral Directors Association National Honor Choir. She asked Choral Director Matthew Cunningham to speak further about their award.

Mr. Cunningham explained that Michelle Garcia and Korina Kotsiopoulos submitted blind audition recordings of a select piece of music and were chosen, along with only 298 other singers across the nation, to perform with the National Honor Choir. They will perform in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in March of 2017.

Michelle and Korina were congratulated by school committee and presented with a letter of recognition by Mayor Carpenter and Superintendent Smith.

New Heights Charter School (NHCS) Update - The Superintendent reported that the current number of Brockton Public Schools students attending New Heights is 235, the school has been open in Brockton as of December 12th. The Superintendent informed the committee that in November she submitted a letter to the Commissioner with concerns that NHCS submitted student records release forms to Brockton that were not signed by a parent, but by NHCS staff. She received a response from Allison Bagg, Director of the Office of Charter School and School Redesign, stating that they were made aware of this and the practice was immediately corrected. The Superintendent said she wanted all parents to know that if they are taking their children out of the Brockton schools to please be sure to sign a release of records. She said will continue to work with the charter school in the best interest of Brockton students.

Accountability Waiver Update

The Superintendent reported that when Brockton was notified by the state that all grade 4 and 8 students would take the next generation MCAS exam online this year, the district filed for a waiver on the grade 4 requirement, one reason being the district does not yet have one-to-one devices. She explained that district administrators felt that it will benefit our grade 8 students to take the online test, they will be better prepared for the grade 10 exam. She asked Dr. Cancell to explain further.

Dr. Cancell said Brockton's rationale for the waiver included adding two elementary schools, the Angelo the George, and having all grade 8 students take the test online. He also said it was important for grade 8 to test online because when the test becomes high-stakes in grade ten, students should not be using the online medium for the first time. He reminded everyone that tenth grade students will take the paper-and-pencil MCAS this year.

Inclement Weather - Student Attendance Report

The Superintendent said that although student attendance was down on Friday, she felt the decision to keep schools open was the right one. She said the decision was based on a number of conditions, including that schools would allow students inside early, the temperature was not predicted to warm up enough to warrant a delay, and conditions were serious, but not dangerous for the children. Dr. Cancell prepared a chart comparing Friday's attendance to the year-to-date percentages, attendance was clearly down with individual school attendance dropping anywhere from 18.5% to 7.5%. Ms. Plant said a concern of hers was that although the schools opened early, she was told that staffing was not increased to accommodate the additional students. The Superintendent agreed with that concern and said she will make a note of that for the future.

SPRINT 1Million Project

The Mayor shared that 500 Brockton students will receive free mobile devices with free internet access as part of the Sprint 1Million Project, an initiative to bridge the digital divide and help close the homework gap between low-income high school students who lack a source of internet access at home, and the students who have ready internet access. He said he expects the devices to be deployed in late January, in September Brockton will be eligible to apply to expand the number of students, up to 1,500. The Superintendent recognized Karen Watts, Bob Perkins, and Dan Vigeant for being vigilant and applying for the grant. She said there will be an application process and the devices will be distributed evenly between the four houses at Brockton High.

BHS NEASC Accreditation Two-Year Report

Principal Wolder reported that when the school received accreditation, there were three areas that the evaluators asked for extended reporting: 1) advisory - they want every student tied to an adult who is not their coach or guidance counselor; 2) school wide analytic rubrics - at the time of the site visit this was in draft form, this is still a work in progress due in part to the significant changes at the high school this year with the schedule, and 3) budget - every year a budget report has to be submitted, they want to see budget impacts.

9C Cuts/Budget Update

The Superintendent reported that this is the time of year when the state budget is reviewed and 9C cuts are recommended by the governor. Governor Baker has made across the board cuts that will affect several grants that fund programs in Brockton, including the ELL summer program, adult basic education, the exact amounts are not yet known. She asked Mr. Petronio to talk more about the cuts.

Mr. Petronio said that for certain, Brockton has lost the \$100,000 McKinney Vento money that our legislators worked very hard to put into the budget and another \$100,000 that was to be used for repair of the cupola on the David A. Crosby building. With respect to the amount of other cuts, he said he is waiting for the actual details to come from the Department of Education, we don't know if some smaller cuts will affect any of our grants. Mr. Petronio explained that the governor bases these cuts on state revenues. Mayor Carpenter asked Mr. Petronio if he has an approximate figure of the total amount, Mr. Petronio responded he does not, he is only sure of the \$200,000 (above). Mr. Petronio said that bussing is an issue and he hopes that as more homeless students are placed in homes that this could help the district make it through the year without the extra \$100,000.

BPS Water Testing for Lead and Copper

Deputy Superintendent Thomas and Facilities Director Ken Thompson reported that the first results of the 2,400 samples taken from all 23 schools in Brockton have come back, from the Gilmore School. Mr. Thomas shared the results for the Gilmore School, which showed some elevated lead levels in the water coming from several fixtures; it was confirmed during testing that the problem is not in the water supply, but in the old fixtures. The identified fixtures were immediately taken apart and capped off. He assured the committee that as results come in they will be posted on the website and school committee and the public will be updated, but it may take through January. The Superintendent added that letters are going home to Gilmore parents informing them of the findings and she intends to be very transparent with the results. She said a full report will be prepared and presented after all samples are reported.

Mayor Carpenter said it will probably be between 6 - 8 weeks before all of the results come back, due to testing going on across the state the lab is backed up. He said all issues will be addressed immediately and parents and staff will be notified of results and remediations. He said the city feels confident about its water supply because it is regularly tested, however, there are many old buildings. The Mayor said high lead levels in our children is a concern in the city, Brockton has the third highest number of children with elevated lead levels in the state. He agreed with the Superintendent that it would be more prudent to do one comprehensive report at the end rather than a report every time results come in.

Ms. Plant thanked Mr. Thomas for being proactive by immediately accepting the state's offer to have water tested, and for quickly addressing the problem areas. She asked if they will be back to re-test after everything has been addressed, Mr. Thomas said he would look into that. Mr. D'Agostino the Mayor whether any reasons have been determined as to why Brockton has so many children with elevated lead levels, the Mayor responded that there are some common contributing factors among communities,

including older housing and poverty. Mr. Thomas said he will include a fact sheet for school committee in the Friday packet.

Items to Refer to Subcommittee

None.

New Business

Announcements/Acknowledgements

The Superintendent shared the following highlights:

- Holiday concerts are happening all over the city, showcasing the amazing music program in the district.
- Also across the district are many different activities to help those in need, building staffs take up collections to buy gift certificates, meals, collections of hats, coats, mittens to distribute to needy families, and schools find a host of other ways to help families during the holiday season. She will include a list in the Friday packet.
- The long-awaited opening of the Planetarium will happen in January, because there is limited seating there will be more than one event, she said many people, including former planetarium instructors, have been waiting to see the planetarium reopen.

Mr. Minichiello gave the following kudos:

- To South Middle School Chorus which gave an outstanding performance with the Brockton Symphony at the Holiday Concert on December 11th
- To the Brockton High band and choirs for an excellent, quality performance at the BHS Holiday concerts
- To Brockton Public Schools staff for their generosity and concern for the Brockton community

Mayor Carpenter reported that 300 children and their families attended the annual City of Champions Holiday Party on Monday at the Shaws Center and were able to enjoy a holiday dinner, entertainment, and each child chose a new toy to bring home at the end of the evening. He said he is pleased to partner with the school guidance department, where the event originated.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Smith, JD
Secretary

wka