

# **Gardner School Committee**

**Regular Meeting – March 14, 2022**

**City Council Chambers, 95 Pleasant Street, Gardner, Massachusetts**

Members present: Mayor Michael Nicholson, Chairperson  
Jennifer Pelavin, Vice Chairperson  
John LaFreniere, Finance Officer  
Rachel Cormier, Secretary  
Anne Hurst  
Shannon Leighton  
Robert Swartz

School Personnel present: Dr. Mark J. Pellegrino, Superintendent  
Terri Hillman, Recording Secretary  
Mark Hawke, Director of Finance and Operations  
Dr. Catherine A. Goguen, Chief Academic Officer  
Gino DiVito, Student Representative to the School Committee  
Mrs. Katie Abbott, former SEPAC President  
Mr. Dan Forte, Athletic Director

## **Call to Order**

Mayor Nicholson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. The meeting opened with a roll call and the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was broadcast live on Channel 8 (Gardner Educational Television Station).

## **Open Time for the General Public**

There was no one from the General Public present at the meeting.

## **Recognitions by the Superintendent**

Dr. Pellegrino recognized Mrs. Katie Abbott, the former President of the SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council), for her work on the Council. She pushed the Superintendent to make sure the District was going in the right direction regarding the students with special needs.

Mrs. Hurst said Mrs. Abbott has done a phenomenal job as liaison between parents whose children have special needs and the administration. She was dedicated to her position.

Dr. Pellegrino recognized Mr. Dan Forte, Athletic Director, for his contributions to the sports programs at the Gardner schools. In addition, Mr. Forte received the Ted Damko Award which recognizes an athletic director in each district for their contributions to their school and community. Mayor Nicholson presented him with the City Employee Award recognizing his work in sports and community. He has also received the Sportsman Award from the MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association).

**PUBLIC HEARING – FY23 SCHOOL BUDGET**

Mayor Nicholson opened the Public Hearing on the FY23 Budget at 7:08 pm. He read the announcement which was published in the newspaper:

“Public Notice, Gardner Public Schools, Budget Hearing. In accordance with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38N, a public hearing for the proposed 2022-2023 school budget will be held on: Monday, March 14, 2022 at 7:00 P.M., Gardner City Hall, Council Chambers, 95 Pleasant Street, Gardner, MA 01440.”

• **Budget Presentation**

Dr. Pellegrino presented the FY 2023 Level Services Budget. He presented information on the changing demographics in the district, information on the higher expenses for students leaving the district, and the School Choice enrollment trends. He explained the budget preparation process beginning with meetings of the principals and directors to final meetings with the Superintendent and Director of Finance and Operations.

The presentation included information on the Student Opportunity Act, charts of salaries and expenses from FY19 to FY23, information on the Circuit Breaker Revolving Fund, and the revenue projection from FY19 to FY23.

The proposed FY23 General Fund Budget, the Net School Spending Budget (NSS), budget costs that do not apply to NSS, and Indirect Costs were presented. No positions are being eliminated for FY23, and various expense lines were condensed to achieve a \$79,423 reduction.

• **Public Comments**

Mayor Nicholson asked three times if anyone from the general public had questions or comments. No one from the general public was present.

Mayor Nicholson closed the Public Hearing at 7:25 P.M.

**FY23 School Budget**

**Mr. LaFreniere moved that the District School Committee move to approve the FY 2023 Gardner School Budget as presented in the amount of \$35,324,865.**

**Seconded by Mrs. Pelavin.**

**Vote – so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

There is a shortfall of \$795,735 which will be covered by Planned ESSER funding.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**Mrs. Pelavin moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented:**

- **Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of February 14, 2022**
- **Approval of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:**
  - **Warrant #22-34 dated 02/17/22 in the amount of \$108,042.01**
  - **Warrant #22-35 dated 02/24/22 in the amount of \$477,482.29**

**Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

**Vote – so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Facilities Subcommittee**

Mr. Swartz, Chairperson, said that the Facilities Subcommittee met on February 15, 2022. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

Mr. Anderson presented a list of 2021/2022 Facilities Projects with updates and comments. Dr. Pellegrino, Mr. Hawke and Mr. Anderson have been making frequent tours of ESS to plan for the moves of GALT and Central Office.

**Finance Subcommittee**

Mrs. Pelavin, Chair pro-tem, said that the Finance Subcommittee met on March 7, 2022. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

Mr. Hawke reviewed the budget sheets and answered questions during the presentation. The FY23 Budget has a \$795,735 shortfall which will be covered using ESSER funds.

The Subcommittee reviewed the Expense Report for February. Mr. Hawke explained the issues creating negatives in several accounts. All of the negative accounts will be made up from within the existing budget.

Mr. Hawke reported that the work in the GHS Landry Auditorium is continuing. The seats are being reassembled and carpeting work is complete. The GHS Musical, “You’re A Good Man Charlie Brown” will be performed there on March 17, 18, and 19, 2022.

**Policy Subcommittee**

Mrs. Hurst, Chairperson, said that the Policy Subcommittee met on March 10, 2022. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The following policies were reviewed and determined that no changes were required and they will be updated as “Reviewed March 2022”:

- Policy AC Non Discrimination
- Policy AC-R Non Discrimination Policy Including Harassment and Retaliation
- Policy ACAB Sexual Harassment
- Policy JICK Harassment of Students

**STUDENT ADVISORY MEMBER**

Gino DiVito, GHS Student Representative to the School Committee, reported on GHS student activities during the month of February.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Item #3385 – First Reading of Policy**

Mrs. Hurst presented the following policy for a first reading as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:

- Policy EBCFA Face Coverings

The Subcommittee recommended changes to remove procedural language as the District has a very comprehensive Face Coverings procedural document to address such topics. That document is frequently updated to align with the most recently updated guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH).

**Item #3386 – Second Reading of Policies**

**Mrs. Pelavin moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the following policies for a second reading as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:**

- Policy DA Fiscal Management Goals
- Policy DB Annual Budget
- Policy DD Grants, Proposals, and Special Projects
- Policy DIE Audits

**Seconded by Mrs. Leighton.**

**Vote – so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

Policy DJ – Purchasing which was approved for a first reading on February 14, 2022 will be sent back to the Policy Subcommittee for review of some minor suggested changes.

**Item #3387 – Removal of Policies**

Mrs. Hurst moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the removal of the following policies as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:

- GBAA Sexual Harassment
- GBAA-E School Acknowledgement Form, Sexual Harassment
- GBBA Harassment

Seconded by Mrs. Pelavin.

Vote – so voted

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

**Item #3388 – COVID-19 Update**

Dr. Pellegrino reported that the numbers of Covid-19 cases are trending down. Mrs. McCaffrey, School Nurse Leader, and the Safety Committee will continue to meet as necessary to ensure the continued safety of all school personnel.

**Item #3389 – School Improvement Plans – GHS, GALT, GMS, GES**

Mr. Swartz moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the School Improvement plans for Gardner High School, Gardner Academy, Gardner Middle School, and Gardner Elementary Schools as presented at the February 14, 2022 meeting.

Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere.

Vote – so voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

**Item #3390 – GHS 2022-2023 Program of Studies**

Mr. LaFreniere moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the Gardner High School 2022-2023 Program of Studies as presented at the February 14, 2022 meeting.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Vote – so voted.

Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

**Item #3391 - Curriculum Coordinator's Update**

The Curriculum Coordinator's Update was included in the members' packets. Dr. Goguen was present to answer questions.

**Item #3392 – Grants Administrator's Update**

The Grants, Communications & Compliance Update was included in the members' packets. Mrs. Dunn was not present this evening.

**Item #3393 – Special Education Update**

The Special Education Update was included in the members' packets. Ms. Joyce West was not present this evening.

**Item #3394 – SEPAC Update**

Mrs. Hurst thanked Mrs. Katie Abbott for her work on SEPAC.

**Item #3395 – MSBA – New School Building Project**

Dr. Pellegrino reported that construction of the building continues to be on schedule and on budget.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Dr. Pellegrino thanked Mrs. McCaffrey, School Nurse Leader, for getting the staff and students through the Covid-19 pandemic. She and the Safety Committee have done a phenomenal job. He is thrilled to be able to again have musicals performed at Gardner High School - “You’re A Good Man Charlie Brown”.

He announced the award of a grant of \$200,000 from Accelerating Literacy Learning which will be used to enhance early learning experiences in the elementary grades.

**FINAL COMMENTS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Mrs. Leighton thanked the teachers for their work during this tough year. She is excited to see concerts and other performances by the students.

Mrs. Hurst attended the 5<sup>th</sup> grade band concert. The students were all very enthusiastic. She thanked Katie Abbott and Dan Forte.

Mrs. Pelavin attended the musicals at ESS. She mentioned that spring sports will be starting soon.

Gino DiVito said it is good to see things coming back to normal.

Mr. Swartz attended the Grades 6 and 7 musicals and is looking forward to the GHS musical.

Mr. LaFreniere congratulated Dan Forte on his awards. He expressed appreciation to all the school nurses during this difficult time.

Mrs. Cormier reminded members of how the City has backed the School Budget. The budget was very well put together and Dr. Pellegrino provided a very good presentation.

Mayor Nicholson showed the miniature City souvenir chair now being made by GHS students.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mrs. Pelavin moved to go into executive session under M.G.L., Chapter 39, S.23B for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the City's bargaining position. The Committee will reconvene in open session only to adjourn.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Roll Call Vote:

- Mrs. Cormier                      Yes
- Mrs. Hurst                        Yes
- Mr. LaFreniere                  Yes
- Mrs. Leighton                  Yes
- Mrs. Pelavin                      Yes
- Mr. Swartz                        Yes

Count – 6 yes to enter into executive session. Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.

The Committee went into Executive Session at 8:05 pm.

The Committee reconvened in open session at 8:25 pm.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. LaFreniere moved to adjourn.

Seconded by Mr. Swartz.

Vote – so voted.

Mayor abstained from voting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

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**Rachel A. Cormier**  
Secretary

Terri Hillman, Recording Secretary