

South Hadley Public Schools School Committee Retreat Minutes

August 24, 2021

*South Hadley High School Library
153 Newton Street*

I. Call to Order

Noting a quorum, Chairperson A. Schlachter called the School Committee Retreat to Order at 6:13 pm.

In Attendance: Allison Schlachter, Chair of School Committee

Dr. Jahmal Mosley, Superintendent of South Hadley Public Schools

Mark McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of South Hadley Public Schools

Allyson Garcia

Charles Miles

Jen Matos

Kaily Godek, Student Representative

Melissa Rainville

Absent: D. Cooke

I. Public Comment

Melina Bourdeau from the Town Reminder was present and took notes and engaged in conversation with School Committee and Central Office participants for the duration of the retreat.

II. Dinner

Pizza, salad, beverages, and dessert was served.

III. Review of School Committee Handbook

A. Schlachter advised participants that policies relative to the School Committee may be found online on the South Hadley Public Schools website at

<https://www.southhadleyschools.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=14&DomainID=25&PageID=6454&ModuleInstanceID=7586&ViewID=1e008a8a-8e8a-4ca0-9472-a8f4a723a4a7&IsMoreExpandedView=True>

Policies regarding roles and responsibilities are included.

IV. MGL Assignment

Dr. Mosely distributed a hard copy of the Selected Massachusetts General Laws 2021 for School Committees and School Personnel book published by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Inc. to each School Committee member.

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Video Conference Meeting accessible via SCTV15

Conversations and understanding of alternative assignments have historically been and currently remain unclear. The committee would like to have universal language that all schools use to allow everyone to be on the same page. Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71 § 32A a student may opt-out and be exempt from sexual education, however The First Circuit United States Court of Appeals determined in a case called Parker v. Hurley that selective exclusion from lessons about homosexual relationships will not be permitted to be excluded from the curriculum, however the student will not be required to actively participate in classroom discussions surrounding this topic unless the student voluntarily chooses to engage in the discussion.

Consideration will be given to conducting future public forums to educate the community and allow questions to be asked and answered in a safe and supportive environment.

V. District Communication Roadmap

With the influx of communications being sent to the School Committee and Superintendent's Office via e-mail, telephone calls and social media, it is determined that a system needs to be put in place to allow the appropriate person to answer versus the entire group responding. It was agreed that any personnel matters will be sent to and/or responded by the Superintendent. Matters concerning finances will be sent to and responded by Jennifer Voyik, subcommittee communications will be addressed by the chair of the subcommittee and all matters concerning complaints not resolved at the school department level will be addressed by the School Committee.

To improve customer service, The Superintendent's Office will be implementing an automated phone directory to allow callers to reach Payroll/Benefits, Human Resources etc...directly. Additionally, work will begin to improve the South Hadley Public Schools website to make areas such as transportation, homeschooling, staff directories, school menus etc...clearer.

Caution is raised not to forward or share student's personal identity information electronically as it violates FERPA. Members are asked to utilize the student's initials when sharing written communication.

Discussion was had whether implementing a flow chart would be helpful for the public to know who to contact with questions or concerns. Given that social media often misconstrues information, the potential to host quick interview segments on the local community television channel that would highlight current happenings will also be explored.

Because students and children of South Hadley Public School employees and the School Committee watch the meetings, the public is being asked to be respectful with their words, tone, and actions both in person and on Zoom.

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K. Godek reported that students like being asked for their input and appreciate surveys and having their questions answered. She anticipates that more students will follow school committee meetings and the website as it relates to their interests.

VI. District Wide Improvements

Future School Committee planning will occur to set goals for the Committee. Topic will be tabled for in-depth conversation and goal setting to a later retreat; date to be determined.

VII. Open Discussion

DESE Commissioner Jeffrey Riley issued a mask mandate for public school students (age 5 and above) and staff in all grades through at least October 1, 2021.

On September 4, 2021, Michel E. Smith Middle School will host the State's mobile vaccine unit. COVID-19 vaccines (1st or, if needed, 2nd shots) will be available from 1:00 pm - 9:00 pm.

The Racial Justice Task Force flyer on-line is outdated. A. Garcia has asked I.T. to take it off the website so it can be reviewed and updated.

A Covid 19 Reopening Plan webpage is available on the South Hadley Public Schools website to assist the community in staying up to date with current information from governing bodies such as DESE, DPH, etc...

With no further matters to discuss, the School Committee Retreat adjourned at 8:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Rainville
Executive Assistant, South Hadley Public Schools.

Reviewed and Approved by,
Allison Schlachter
Chair, South Hadley School Committee.
Date: 9/01/2021