

*Draft  
Arlington School Committee  
School Committee Regular Meeting  
Thursday, November 19, 2015  
6:30 PM  
Robbins Memorial Town Hall  
Selectmen's Chambers  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA*

*Present: Paul Schlichtman, Chair, Jennifer Susse, Vice Chair, Jeff Thielman Secretary, Cindy Starks, Kirsi Allison-Ampe, and Bill Hayner*

*Kathleen Bodie, Ed.D. Superintendent, Laura Chesson, Ed.D, Assistant Superintendent, Diane Johnson, Chief Financial Officers, Rob Spiegel, Human Resources Director, Alison Elmer, Director of Special Education, Linda Hanson Arlington Education Association President Representative and Karen Fitzgerald, Administrative Assistant to School Committee*

*Absent: Judson Pierce*

*Jeff arrived at 6:44 PM*

*Diane arrived at 7:30 PM. and exited after her presentation.*

*Rob, Diane, Laura and Kathy exited 10:09 p.m.*

*Open Meeting*

*Mr. Schlichtman welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed them that the elevator is still one month out to completion.*

*Public Participation*

*Ms. Jane Biondi, invited Dr. Bodie and Dr. Chesson to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary AEF Annual Fundraiser at Flora's and asked the committee and community members to attend too.*

*Ms. Rebecca Steinitz, spoke on her concerns for more testing and assessments. Ms. Hanson spoke to continue with MCAS for the spring instead of PARCC and provided teachers to participate in a survey which 66 % said MCAS 26% PARCC paper and 9% choose PARCC computer based. (Linda's comments are included under the agenda item PARCC or MCAS)*

*Coaching of Teachers, in the Arlington Public Schools*

*Ms. Linda Hanson and Ms. Tammy McBride are the Literacy Coaches for Arlington Public Schools, and have trained teachers and meet to review and discuss data to support students and teachers. Mr. Don Miller is a 28 year teacher in Arlington, and worked with Ms. McBride during the school year to co-teach reading and writing units and support and implement curriculum. Mr. Thad Digman is the Dallin Principal for the past year, works with the coaches and teachers to plan meetings and support in content areas for reading and writing. They all agree the investment to teachers is paying off for the students of the elementary grades. After Dr. Allison-Ampe asked if we have coaches for the middle school Dr. Chesson said since resources are scarce the ELA Director goes there to support teachers with reading and writing.*

*It is a priority to expand the Coaching of Teachers program within Arlington Public Schools since this coaching model has inspired teachers and emphasis how important there work is to the students.*

#### PARCC or MCAS Discussion

*Ms. Hanson pointed out that The Arlington Education Association wants teacher input to be heard before the administration makes a decision to go with either PARCC or MCAS. Ms. Hanson read her comments, which is attached. Ms. Rebecca Stein wants to give the community more time before a decision is made too. Dr. Chesson provided some details on how the State Testing for spring 2017 will go for the teachers and students. The administration would prefer to go with PARCC in the spring. Per the AEA survey, teachers would prefer to continue with MCAS for a final year, they feel there is not enough IT support to pull off a computer-based test. Some concerns from the committee members were how students with IEPs will do with a computer based test versus paper, what will happen to professional development for teachers if we go with PARCC, will it hijack all our professional development? The Ottoson Middle school did a pilot test with ELA and Math and used the computer lab, and the setting was very streamlined and went well per Ms. Maureen Murphy. Mr. Hayner and Ms. Starks prefer to go with MCAS and said PARCC is just a different version of MCAS. Mr. Schlichtman said we are looking for alignment consistencies, and how the curriculum and the system is in alignment and said his mind is not made up but prefers the computer based test since we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*The committee members and administration agree to continue the PARCC versus MCAS decision at our next School Committee Meeting, December 10<sup>th</sup> and to take a vote at the December 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, since we need to inform DESE but if we are deadlocked then, we can vote it January 14, if necessary.*

#### Electronic Signatures for Vendor Warrants on the Agenda

**Mr. Thielman moved the Electronic Signatures for Vendor Warrants on the Agenda**

**Topic, seconded by Mr. Hayner.**

**Voted: 6-0**

#### Foundation Budget Review Commission Final Report

*Ms. Hanson presented the Foundation Budget Review Commission Mission which is to establish state budget to determine education programs and services, review budgets and how they are calculated and to determine which programs and services prepare students to pass MCAS and determine and recommend measures to of effectiveness. Dr. Allison-Ampe pointed out problems with calculations of in-district special education numbers, out-of-district special education numbers and with spending, some other issues; health insurance cost overruns, underfunding special education, mental health needs, to include technology, and address equity of local contribution, school aid calculations, and look at wage adjustment factors too. Both Linda and Kirsi have done a lot of work with the Foundation Budget, and would like know how the Commissions calculating the numbers that they recommended in the spreadsheet and recommends that the Community Relations subcommittee plan to invite Rep. Garballey, Rep Rogers, and Senator Donnelly to a meeting when they are available to help us advocate to fund an increase in revenue.*

### Superintendent's Report

*Dr. Bodie said the elevator may take longer than expected a total of 8 to 12 weeks. Ms. Johnson presented Financial Projections and FY 17 Budget Proposals. It was noted that the Long Range Planning will hold a meeting on Monday, November 23 and Dr. Bodie and Ms. Johnson will present Enrollment growth to the Town Manager to show the fiscal impact of the data. The committee members asked about per pupil cost, and a formula the town should use with enrollment, as well as a space plan and operational needs and to create a plan.*

### Consent Agenda

*All items listed with an asterisk are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the committee so requests, in which event the item will be considered in its normal sequence Approval of Warrant: Warrant # 16059 Dated 11/12/2015, Total Amount \$80942.64*

*Approval of Draft Minutes: none*

***Ms. Susse moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Warrant # 16059 Dated 11/12/2015, Total Amount \$80942.64 and no minutes, seconded by Ms. Starks.***

***Voted: 6-0***

### Subcommittee & Liaison Reports & Announcements

#### *Policies and Procedures subcommittee*

*The Reading of BEDB Agenda Format Preparation and Dissemination was brought for a first read tonight and it was suggested to release the materials on the agenda on Tuesday before the meeting instead of the day of the meeting so the public can see the documents prior to the meeting. It was determined additional language needs to be included in the policy, therefore, the Policies and Procedures subcommittee will continue discussion on the policy at the next subcommittee meeting to be held Monday, December 7 at 8:00 AM.*

#### *Budget Subcommittee*

*Dr. Bodie spoke on proposal of the Pierce Field Rental Fees and suggested to put in place in the spring to hire monitors to manage the field space, and will bring the proposal to the next meeting as a first reading.*

#### *Facilities Subcommittee*

*Ms. Starks presented a chart which showed Bishop and Thompson classroom sizes exploding and said we need to make this a goal to watch the size of classes.*

***Ms. Starks moved the ten o'clock rule to 10:30 PM, seconded by Ms. Susse.***

***Roll Call: Unanimous***

***Voted: 6-0***

*District Accountability, Curriculum/Instruction & Assessment Jeff Thielman (Chair) nothing  
Community Relations Jennifer Susse (Chair) will hold a meeting December 14, 2015 at 6 PM.  
Executive Session Minute Review Subcommittee Voted 5/28/2015*

*Warrant Committee - Voted 4/9/2015 Bill Hayner (Chair)*

*School Enrollment Task Force will hold a meeting on Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM.*

## Executive Session

***Ms. Susse moved to enter into executive session 10:05 p.m., to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with union and/or nonunion personnel or contract negotiations with union and/or nonunion in which if held in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect and to conduct strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation, in which if held in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect, Collective bargaining may also be conducted, and to exit only to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Hayner voted: 6-0***

## Adjournment

***Mr. Hayner moved to adjournment at 10:53 PM, seconded by Ms. Susse, Voted: 6-0***

*Respectfully submitted by  
Karen M. Fitzgerald  
Administration Assistant  
Arlington School Committee/jt*

*Attachments: LH Remarks for 11/19/2015*

### **LH Remarks for 11/19 School Committee Meeting - MCAS vs. PARCC Decision**

- *Here to address the recent decision of the BOE to support Commissioner Chester's recommendation to develop a new state test, currently being called "MCAS 2.0"*
- *Noteworthy that the vote on the BESE was 8-3 with the board members representing parents, teachers, and students all voting against the initiative.*
- *Believe that advocacy on the part of many constituents, succeeded in turning away the movement to tie MASS testing to the multi-state consortium. I think that was a significant victory.*
- *I applaud the fact that we have managed to maintain control of our state test - feel like Mass. educators and administrators will have more success influencing the content of the test/with state control.*
- *I support an amendment that passed 7-4 to continue the "hold harmless" clause for results based on the new test until 2018 (means first year of hybrid test in 2017 will also be "hold harmless"). Amendment was put forth by former Lesley U. President, Margaret McKenna, who supports the hybrid test, but feels like the rush to offer it in a year and a half does not leave proper time for test development, beta testing, and setting standards.*
- *Another statistic I want to mention is one I saw in the Globe West section last weekend. There it was reported that at the joint MASS/MASC conference, delegates took a non-binding vote in favor of the statewide moratorium on high-stakes, standardized testing until a better assessment system can be developed. Vote was 63-52 in favor of the ban. This is a conversation I hope to be able to come back to in the future.*
- *Tonight, the issue that will be taken up later in the agenda is what Arlington should do about our Spring 2016 test.*
- *Choices*
  - *Stick with MCAS for a final year*
  - *Try out PARCC paper and pencil - hold harmless*
  - *Try out PARCC computer-based - hold harmless*
- *As the people who will be responsible for preparing students and to take the test, I feel like it is critical for teacher input to be considered in this decision.*
- *Commend and appreciate the outreach from Asst. Supt. Laura Chesson, with whom I have had several long conversations about how to approach this decision. Laura also sponsored a teacher conversation on the topic on Wed. afternoon.*

- After a lengthy conversation with Laura last week, and after spending a lot of time on the DESE website, I put together a document for teachers that explained the decision before us, and listed the major factors that I felt were important to weigh in making a decision.
- Teachers were encouraged to review the information, and fill out a survey about what they would recommend for the district.
- In all, 58 teachers participated in the survey.
  - o 38/66% - stick with MCAS
  - o 15/26% - try PARCC paper and pencil withhold harmless o - 5/9% - try PARCC computer-based withhold harmless
- **Disaggregated Data**
  - o Half of Gr. 3,4, and 5 teachers responded - 41 teachers overall
    - **Gr. 3** - 18% PARCC paper and pencil; 82% stick with MCAS; 0% PARCC computer-based
    - **Gr. 4** - 8% PARCC computer-based; 46% PARCC paper and pencil; 46% stick with MCAS
    - **Gr. 5** - 9% PARCC computer-based; 27% PARCC paper and pencil; 55% stick with MCAS
    - **Gr. 3-5 SPED** - 1 PARCC paper and pencil; 2 stick with MCAS o **Middle School** - 12 teachers overall
      - 67% stick with MCAS; 25% PARCC computer-based; 8% PARCC paper and pencil
- Teachers were also asked to state their main reasons for their decision. Factors included both pro-MCAS and pro-PARCC choices. The factors teachers selected most often, in order of popularity, were:
  - **Technology – not enough IT support to feel like we could pull off a computer-based test**
  - **Stress of one more thing - want to stick with MCAS**
    - o **Technology** - current infrastructure too weak to support a computer-based test
    - o **Timed Test:** Concerns students would have a problem with the fact that PARCC is a timed test
    - o **Technology** - challenge of coordinating 2,600 students to take a computer-based test
    - o **Hold harmless** clause for PARCC 2016 would be worth taking advantage of
- Significant that Technology related issues were 3 of the top 6 factors listed. This is not a knock on our hard working IT staff, rather an acknowledgement of the daily challenges presented by the growing pains of increasing technology options for students and teachers. If we are really going to be ready to fully integrate technology into teaching and learning, AND prepare for a district-wide online assessment, we will have to make a much larger investment in our IT department.

Unlike a year and a half ago, I do not come with a single recommendation.

I can see merits of both sticking with what we know, and trying out the PARCC format under the hold harmless clause.

I urge you to read through the comments and preferences stated by teachers, and to consider their concerns.

If the decision is made to try out PARCC this spring, I have two very specific requests that I believe will be critical to the success of the endeavor:

- o 1. That the School Committee and the administration publicly embrace a PARCC trial as an opportunity to try out a new testing platform - with the sole focus on learning more about the way that PARCC approaches assessing the Common Core standards.
  - No time should be diverted from the important work the district is doing on aligning curriculum and continuing our efforts to support teacher with professional development on instructional practices and Common Core units of study.
  - At the elementary level, there are currently new units of study being rolled out in science, reading, writing, and math. This work is critical to supporting our efforts to improve the educational experience for students and our alignment to the CC. Time should not be diverted to study a new, and still evolving testing system in the few short months that remain before the spring administration.
  - If the decision is to go with PARCC, I hope all parties make it very clear to parents, teachers, and the community, that the accountability system for students, teachers, schools and the district will be **turned off**. It would be an experiment that would

better inform our work going forward. The goal would be to plan to spend time in the 2016–2017 school year attempting to process and learn from the experience.

o 2. If PARCC is the direction the district decides to go in, I think the message from teachers is strong and clear - there is major apprehension around the district's capacity to carry out a full district on-line administration. I think this could be a disaster for all involved. Thoughtful decisions should be made about the realistic capacity we have to try out the online version in a limited number of settings. With the current timeline, we have four years to get to 100% online administration. The district should consider ramping up thoughtfully, in stages over time. Many of us have very mixed feelings about some of the features of the current PARCC test, but I know we will have the chance to discuss this concern more fully another day

Now that we have the certainty of a four year plan before us, I urge the School Committee and the administration to consider the feedback from teachers, and to make a thoughtful decision that clearly articulates the reasons for the decision, the goals for the decision, and contains a clear plan to communicate the rationale and goals to teachers and the community at large.