



### Meeting Notice

Board/Committee Name: Orange Elementary School Committee

Day/Date: June 21, 2024

Time of Meeting: 6:00PM

Location: Fisher Hill Elementary School

Media Center

59 Dexter St.

Orange, MA 01364

### MINUTES

1. Call to Order - Mallory Ellis called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. She thanked everyone who has been in attendance at all of the school events over the past few weeks.
2. Pledge of Allegiance - Mallory led the pledge of allegiance.
3. Public Comment - Mallory reviewed the ground rules for public comments.  
Tina Spano asked about layoffs and stated that parents want to make sure that staff who help their children are considered before making cuts. She explained that cutting teachers will make classes bigger and would be especially hard on her son who has autism.
4. Approval of Minutes - April 8, 2024 & May 20, 2024  
***On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of April 8, 2024. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***  
***On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Jessica Reske, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of May 20, 2024. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***  
Mallory pointed out that it was noted in the May 20th minutes that Matt Fortier and Tom Smith were present and were asked if other town departments were asked to forgo their raises. They both stated that the other departments were asked. Mallory learned recently that they did not in fact ask the other departments and she wanted that on record.
5. Principal's Report - Dr. Lewis reported that MCAS was completed in May and everyone took the process very seriously. They had an art and design show that involved music and STEM and a spaghetti supper and cake walk for the grade 6 fundraiser. A Memorial Day event was held that was student led and attended by all students. The annual field day event was held at Mahar and is one of the students favorite events. The Dancing Through the Decades show recently took place after six months of practice, and the performance was outstanding. Kindergarten information night was held for parents as well as Colonial Day, a Kindergarten nursery rhyme program, animal adventure and Pre-K and Grade 6 graduation in one day. Student of the month was implemented this year. Student of the month winners receive school wide privileges and parents are notified by email. There was also a Grade 6 yearbook this year and that project

was taken on by Jennifer Laza. Dr. Lewis thanked the leadership team for developing the school schedule this year and thanked OES council for their hard work. Ideas for next year include a Jr. Key Club and Dexter dollars for a school store. Lastly, Dr. Lewis reported that the summer program is starting soon and that it will be held at Fisher Hill this year.

6. Report of the OETA - Gretchen Haibon, Union co-chair for ESP, reflected on the positives of settling into the new building. They are looking forward to the field being completed, the walkthroughs showed amazing improvement from beginning to end of year, they're thankful for the inclusion of morning meetings for all grades next year and the JLMC continuing to meet and work towards solutions. They are thankful for the support from parents and students and new school committee members. Unfortunately very little progress has been made regarding school culture and climate. There is little or no communication from the administration, especially regarding student discipline. Building administration is not available to most staff members. Non professional and professional staff are being pulled to sub in classrooms. An unlicensed person was hired by the district which has led to a DCF investigation and the most concerning is the loss of many veteran teachers to other districts. They cannot share why they left because exit interviews are not being done by the district. They are hoping the administration will look at staff and licensure status before making cuts. Three licensed staff members with proficient evaluations were non renewed while non licensed staff will be returning next year. There is concern about cuts to student facing positions in the budget. The union handed out the recent staff feedback survey to committee members and asked that they review the results.

7. June Items

- a. Fisher Hill Road Lighting - Mallory provided a little background about the lights: the road lighting is paid for as part of the OES budget. They are owned by the school since the lights are a part of the safety and security for the access road. Likewise we pay for the crosswalk sign at the bottom of Dexter, because it is a part of safety protocols for the school. The lights are programmed by the original design. They go on at sundown and go off at sunrise. No one has altered the program since it was installed and operational. I have received no complaints at the central office in relation to the lights. Josefa said the lights shine right into the room of someone that lives there and she cannot think of a good reason to light the road from sundown to sunrise every day. She proposed making a shift over the summer to shut lights off unless needed for an evening activity. Dr. Liz stated that it is a safety issue and will need to consult with the police department. No complaints about the lights have been received so far at the central office. Dr. Liz will reach out to public safety and this will be on a future agenda for vote.
- b. Update on communication system - Dr. Liz explained that Orange Elementary has used the SwiftRiver outreach system for many years. The system pulls contact data from our Student Information System (PowerSchool). When the two buildings merged, the data from both schools had to be reformatted at the state level first for DESE to recognize Fisher Hill as a PK-6 school. DESE required multiple layers of permissions over a significant amount of time for the merge to happen. Even though DESE merged the data, there have been instances where data did not transfer accurately. Suzor IT manages and supports the PowerSchool Student Information System. All state reporting pulls from this system. Swift River outreach also pulls information from PowerSchool. The issue was that the Swift Rivers platform could not make all the adjustments needed for various persons using the system after DESE merged the two buildings. Swift River outreach had to change many backend permissions at the school level to get the notices/announcements to work. However, they could not get notices sent through the

Superintendent's office to work correctly when the notice was only going to Orange Elementary families. Many requests were made to rectify the situation, and Suzor IT was involved. In early April, PowerSchool made a significant announcement saying it had acquired SwiftRiver outreach. As a result, they informed us that they would no longer be supporting the Swift River System. Initially, the program was scheduled to be taken offline by the end of May, but they have extended the date until June 30th. The Parent Advisory Committee will meet on July 1st and will look into this.

8. Matters for Action or Vote

a. Student Handbook - The Student Parent handbook has been updated. Dr. Lewis made some grammatical changes and updated school committee members, new start and end time and the daily schedule. Josefa mentioned that the following items need to be looked at:

- Visitor passes - Either give them out or take this out of the handbook.
- Who is the Supervisor of attendance? Dr. Liz said it can be the SRO or social worker/guidance department.
- Attendance at field trips and other special events - the "no fly list" term was being used but has now been discontinued. Make sure what the handbook says is the same protocol that is being followed.
- Student behavior - Change "color" to "race". There is a section on when the school might call the police and it only states because of drugs and weapons and that is not what's happening. It needs more clarity on when police are called and how/when families are notified.
- Updates needed for the wellness section. Josefa will let the Administration know which page numbers.
- Frank stated there is an error regarding riding bicycles. Going to Dexter Park needs to change to Fisher Hill.

***On a motion made by Frank Hains and seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, the committee voted unanimously to defer the handbook vote until the changes are made. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***

Michele suggested a vote during the school committee retreat in July.

Frank mentioned that it would be nice to have a student only handbook. Dr. Lewis suggested that the council could take that on.

b. Summer Business Vote - Dr. Liz explained that this is an annual vote to allow us to conduct business on your behalf over the summer when the School Committee does not regularly meet. If anything critical does arise, she will ask for a quick meeting of the committee.

***On a motion made by Frank Hains and seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, the committee voted unanimously to authorize the Superintendent to conduct the business of the district over the summer months. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***

***On a motion made by Frank Hains and seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, the committee voted unanimously to authorize the Director of Finance to make needed year end transfers to close out FY24. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***

c. Budget Revote - Mallory explained that at Monday's town meeting a motion was made to increase the OES budget to match what was voted on by the School Committee at the April 8th meeting. The motion was defeated in the Town vote. The School Committee has two options

related to the currently voted budget; vote the budget to match the Town's number or choose to vote against this motion leaving the current April number as is. We can only spend what was approved at Town meeting because the Orange Elementary Schools are a department of the Town.

Mallory reviewed updated class sizes (on file). A parent spoke saying as a mom with a special needs child, class sizes are concerning. Bruce Scherer stated that the vote at the town meeting is the ultimate authority. The budget is set and there is nothing we can do about it. The Principal's report and the teacher's report reflect serious issues that need to be resolved and the most important thing is to be coherent. Student facing staff should not be touched. The sentiment at the own meeting was clear that the tax payers want their money to go to the children. Josefa echoed what others said about the town meeting and residents wanting to support children. She said we need to take seriously as a committee what they are asking us to look at and stop cutting teachers and look at the administration line. She compared salaries of other town administrators to the schools'. Cuts were made to other departments admin's salaries but all of our administration had increases. There were questions from the public about the level of certification of non renewed staff as compared with staff that are being retained. Dr. Liz explained the current certification levels and requirements. A parent stated she is very frustrated by the dishonesty of the administration. Kate Cormier, resident & parent, spoke about the lack of communication from administration (unanswered emails from the Principal and Vice Principal). Bruce Scherer noted that kids are still leaving the district. He said we need to create an atmosphere that people want to be in. Dave Mastrionni noted that grade 1 has many self deregulation issues and the younger grades need smaller class sizes. Johnna Hebert said there are other people and places we can cut to help with class sizes. Stephanie Lupien agreed about class sizes.

***Josefa Scherer motioned to approve the FY25 Orange Elementary School operating budget of \$8,653,902 with the specific caveat that the committee is directing administration responsible for the line items to address the concerns of the committee, staff and public, of increasing teacher line items and decreasing non student facing line position line items. Seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez. Roll call: Ellis - no, Hains - yes with reservations, Ramos-Martinez - yes with reservations, Reske - yes, Scherer - yes.***

d. Long Term Sub Rates - Malory explained that since we now have a new teachers contract including a revised scale the school committee needs to vote to compensate a long term sub based on the newly revised Unit A contract rates.

OES LT Sub rates of pay:  
FY24= \$232.68 daily rate  
FY25= \$239.66  
FY26= \$246.85

***On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, the committee voted unanimously to approve the long term sub rates for FY25, FY26, and FY27 to be in accordance with the OEA Teachers Salary Scale. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***

Frank asked about the requirements of a long term sub. Dr. Liz explained that they prefer them to have a degree but they can be a Paraprofessional who has been working in the classroom/school. They try to look internally first.

e. RN Appointment - Mallory explained that the district searched for a new RN and received three applicants for the position. The posting remained active and open during the interview process, and no other applicants applied. One of the applicants was not certified as an RN and was not granted an interview. One applicant was not interested in a full-time position (seeking per diem work/substitute nurse work). The selected candidates' licenses, references, and backgrounds were checked.

***On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Mallory Ellis, the committee voted unanimously to appoint Beth Weismann as the Fisher Hill Registered Nurse. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***

Frank noted her license is expiring in July and she is currently in the process of renewing. Josefa asked for confirmation that the new nurse's email address will be added to the website and that the district will send out updates regarding nurse coverage in the school.

f. Superintendent's Evaluation - Mallory explained that the LAM subcommittee created a guide to completing the Superintendent's evaluation, especially for new members. That was sent to all school committee members and they were asked to complete the evaluation. All but one member completed it. The results were compiled onto a spreadsheet which included comments. They looked at the information and gave overall ratings based on what every SC member had rated. They assigned a value to each category and used it to figure out what the percentage was. The next step is to take that info and craft goals going forward for the Superintendent. Josefa noted this was a summative evaluation. The overall rating of the evaluation was proficient.

***On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Frank Hains, the committee voted unanimously to accept the Superintendents Summative Evaluation as presented. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***

Yarelyn noted that her last name was wrong on the evaluation sheet, as was Jessica's.

g. Policies - The following were presented for a first read:

JH Student Absences

JHD Exclusions and Exemptions from School Attendance

JIC Student Discipline

JICE Student Publications

The following were presented for a second read/vote:

HA Negotiation goals

HB Negotiation Legal Status

HF School Committee Negotiation Agents

JB Equal Education Opportunities

JBB Educational Equity

JFABE Educational Opportunities for Military children

JFBB School Choice

***On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Yarelyn Ramos-Martinez, the committee voted unanimously to approve the following policies: HA - Negotiation goals, HB - Negotiation Legal Status, HF - School Committee Negotiation Agents, JB - Equal Education Opportunities, JBB - Educational Equity, JFABE - Educational Opportunities for Military Children, and JFBB - School Choice. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***

9. Sub Committee / Liaison Updates
  - a. Report of Union #73 Committee - This committee has not met but will need to meet to approve the Superintendent's evaluation.
  - b. Report of the R.C. Mahar Representative - Frank reported that they accepted the Superintendent's evaluation, discussed the handbook, and did a subcommittee reorganization. The next meeting is on September 12th.
  - c. Report of the Leadership, Accountability & Measurement Subcommittee - see above regarding the Superintendent's evaluation.
  - d. Report of the Resources & Capacity Subcommittee - Frank reported that Head Custodian, Matt Hines, resigned. They discussed grants and end of year funds. The next meeting is on September 5th.
  - e. Report of the Communications & Policy Subcommittee - Jessica reported they are close to the end of the Js and a few policies were tabled to wait for more information. Mallory requested that the subcommittee create a letter to be sent to FinCom, BOS and town manager, that going forward that all forgoing raises would be equitable and all departments be asked. An audience member asked why exit interviews were discontinued. Dr. Liz said she was advised by legal counsel to discontinue them. They will talk about this further at the School Committee retreat.
  - f. Report of the CES Representative - The most recent meeting focused on the current director's contract which was approved.
  - g. Report of the CAPS Representative - CAPS had its meeting on Wednesday June 12th. The CAPS Board approved the selection of Sheri D'Annolfo as the next CAPS Executive Director.
  - h. Report of the School Building Committee - Josefa reported that they discussed the lighting issue. Representatives from the OES community came to the meeting to make suggestions about accessible playground equipment. There was a report of how hot it is on the playground and unfortunately a shade structure cannot be constructed at this point. There is a design flaw of gravel being on the ramp to the playground. Kids are throwing rocks so there have been suggestions on how to remedy that. The rooftop solar array project is in the works that can address all energy needs of the building and is likely to be mostly covered by grants and rebates.
  - i. Report of the SEPAC Representative - Yarelyn reported they had the parents rights training and kids can now participate in the IEP process (meetings, goals etc.). They have received submissions for the Wings Beneath Our Wings award to honor any personnel that are working with students with disabilities. They will have time during convocation to present the award.
10. Next Meeting - The next regular meeting is September 9, 2024. The annual School Committee summer retreat has been scheduled for July 25th at 6:00pm at Mahar.
11. Adjournment - ***On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Jessica Reske, the committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:35pm.***

Approved: 9/9/24

Signature of Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

The agenda reflects topics that the Chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed.

Public Comment Protocols

The School Committee welcomes public comment on items that are within the scope of the School Committee's responsibilities. The Public Comment agenda item is reserved for this purpose. Members of the public wishing to address the Committee should be aware of the following guidelines:

- ❑ The Chair will recognize those wishing to speak and give them the floor. Only persons recognized by the Chair may speak. For purposes of the minutes, speakers should identify themselves at the beginning of their remarks.
- ❑ The purpose of Public Comment is to receive input from the community, not to engage in prolonged conversation with the Committee. The Chair will ensure that any comment or question that requires a response from the committee or the School Department will be addressed in a timely manner.
- ❑ All comments should be addressed through the Chair, not any individual committee member or to others in attendance.
- ❑ Speakers are expected to respect confidentiality. This includes the confidentiality of the speaker's own child/ren as well as that of school staff and personnel.