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MEETING MINUTES

TOWN OF ROCKLAND



Board or Committee

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Date & Time of Meeting

Monday, March 24, 2025 At 6:30 PM

Meeting Location:

DAVID CABLE-MURPHY STUDIO

or

Remote Information:

Meeting ID:

Passcode:

Requested By:

Noelle Novio

OF PAGES (including cover sheet) 6

REVISED

☐

Yes

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No

**ROCKLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ROCKLAND, MASSACHUSETTS
MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025, 6:30 PM
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
The David Cable-Murphy Studio**

In attendance: Chair Mrs. Maroney, Vice Chair Mrs. Hennessy, and members Mrs. Bissonnette and Dr. Mauro-Small. Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. Cron, Assistant Superintendent Ms. Hackett, Mrs. Novio, and Ms. Carpine in the audience.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Acceptance of the minutes of the March 10, 2025 School Committee Meeting, a motion to approve by Mrs. Hennessy, (with Dr. Mauro-Small abstaining) seconded by Mrs. Bissonnette, unanimous.

Nothing under Audience.

Financial Reports for the School Department; Rockland High School Student Activities, Rogers Middle School Student Activities and Food Services; four motions to approve the financial reports from Mrs. Hennessy, four seconds by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

Department Head Monthly Reports; Athletic Department, Mr. Kimball; Art, Mrs. Thompson; Computer Technology, Mr. Wells; Consumer Science/Phys. Ed, Ms. Newcomb; Dean, Mr. Damon; English, Ms. Donovan; Foreign Language, Mrs. Tabares; Math Department, Mr. Casagrande; Middle School, Mr. Griffin/Ms. Thomas; Music, Mr. Piazza; Radio/TV Station, Ms. Breeden; Science, Ms. DiCanzio; Social Studies, Mr. Rowe; and Special Education, Mrs. McGonnigal.

Old Business. FY26 Operating and Capital Budget. Dr. Cron, "I'd like to begin by saying thank you to the town once again for their cooperation. Thank you to the Teacher's Union for their cooperation. Thank you to the School Committee for your support. Thank you to Jane Hackett and our team for always being exceptional with our data gathering. We had requests for certain information in certain formats from the Finance Committee and putting all those things together is a lot of work, but we do it gratefully. We were asking for a little bit of extra money this year. We looked at what was presented to us and what we needed to make ends meet and we did as much whittling as we could and we came back to the need for another \$500,000 to really keep from cutting what we felt was too deep. We came up with a strategy that included asking the town to find a way to give us an additional \$300,000 and an additional \$200,000 is coming from the school side in the form of cutting some of our estimates by a little bit and getting a little more

aggressive with our estimates. So we added another 200,000 to that and it helps to make ends meet and Jane and I met with Jill and Jaime about this quite a bit. We also met with the Union because this does affect jobs and it affects teachers and it affects classrooms and affects everything. So I'm very proud of the work that's been done over the last couple of months and especially the last week. Our visit to the Board of Selectman and to the Finance Committee last week were exceptional conversations. Thank you to Doug Lapp for his leadership and creativity in coming up with some ideas and again thank you to FinComm and the Board of Selectmen for being supportive. This budget does point out the challenges that we are facing in the coming years. We have had two years of challenging funding from the State and we are a town that really depends on State funding. So when the State is challenged, we are challenged. So I think we are in a very good place going forward. Our town is very united around the importance of our children and our schools. We serve nearly 2400 students, and we have nearly 500 employees. We have a long history in Rockland. Well before me, before John Retchless, going back before John Rogers we have a history in this town of valuing public education. Not just saying it; but proving it through our actions. We have a brand new Phelps Elementary School that proves that the town has continued to step up and support us when we present our case. I'm pleased that we are where we are. With that said, I am also concerned for the next couple of years and this budget is reflective of wanting to make sure that 26 and 27 are also very good years. The details of the budget are; the revenue side of this spreadsheet – we are 3.9% increase. The 600,000 from town meeting represents an additional 300,000 of free cash being designated to the schools to help us and an additional 200,000 when you go down to the circuit breaker and revolving accounts. We are throwing in an additional 100,000 from each of those two to make ends meet this budget. Though we are going further than we wanted to in our estimates it is still a step in the direction of becoming less dependent on revolving funds, less dependent on town meeting appropriations. There are certain items that come up year after year that are a rub for finance people. No one likes the idea of using revolving funds for non recurring costs. The fact is just like we can't tell what kind of winter we are going to have, we don't know what kind of special education costs we are going to have. It is just a reality of every public school. We are trying to become less and less dependent on our revolving accounts and less dependent on asking the town for free cash every May. So this budget is a step in that direction. Although it's not as big a step as we wanted; it is still a step. If you look at the expense; the bottom half of this, there is just a couple of things I would like to point out. Our expenses are coming down in homeless/foster transportation and our unemployment and legal fees. We have seen what we hope is a leveling off of some of those costs and so for example, our out of district last year was a 28% increase which is very difficult to facilitate. This year it's at 13% so we are very happy to see that leveling off. It makes it a little easier to deal with. Substitute costs are down because we have fewer maternity leaves. That is the budget that is proposed that you'll be asked to vote on. Town appropriate details when the budget was first presented to us. We were presented with an increase of 3.18%. Jane came up with a wonderful idea and explored the criteria for certain grants and found that we were able to move \$374,000 to the town side and they were able to then

add that to our budget. Now they added that in complete transparency. They added that to our operating budget which is important to know. When we receive one-time cash that solves the problem for one year but the following year we are hit with it again and it's compounded. So what the town was able to do is move this 374,000 into our operating budget which helps us next year and that increases our current proposal to 4.39% and with the additional 300,000 that brings us to an 5.36% increase for the year. For Capital requests – there's 50,000 in there for a sidewalk machine and sander and part of the 300,000 that they gave us; they asked us to put this off for a year, so we agreed to that. You will be asked to vote to update our capital request number and a second vote for our overall proposed budget so the new capital request number is \$490,000. We need a separate vote for the capital budget FY26 at \$490,000 and a vote for the FY26 operational budget which is \$37,335,969. Any questions or comments?" Dr. Mauro-Small commented a big thank you to everyone who is working so hard to help us be able to provide the educational needs for all the kids in Rockland. I know it's a heavy lift by a lot of people in this room, people outside of this room, and across the street in Town Hall. So just a big note of gratitude for all that hard work. Mrs. Maroney commented the Finance Committee and at the Selectman that these are all our kids and that they understand that. They also want what's best for all of our kids. It's not something that we really need to keep repeating or reiterating or fighting for because they get it and they know that we are doing the best we can for what we are handed. I am also grateful and appreciate the team that we have. Mrs. Hennessy to make a motion to approve our fiscal year 26 operating budget at \$37,335,069 (amount corrected from what was previously stated), seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

On to the Secretaries Contract. We are very happy that we settled with secretaries at 2.5%. It's an opportunity to say thank you to the secretaries for what they do every day. Any parent who has ever walked into a school; they are the first face you see, they are the first face that a kid sees when they come down to the office with a skinned knee and we appreciate them. They handle a million different things and they do a great job and we couldn't do what we do without them so thank you to them. Jane continued with this is a 2 ½%. There were a lot of language changes that just updated a course of things. We added Juneteenth to the holiday schedule. It's a straight up 2 ½% over the next three year contract. So well deserved. A motion to approve the secretary's contract by Mrs. Hennessy, second by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimously approved.

The last day off EECC is June 9, 2025. They use that week for evaluating students. Motion to approve by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimously approved.

Summer Programming of 2025 for Phelps. This is the program run by Marissa Hoadley. Start date is June 23rd and the end date is August 15. All the details are on the flyer registration which will open on April 7th and close on May 30th. They wanted to get this flyer out to you for your approval or review. There are really very few changes from last year. It's \$8.50/hour with a registration, a minimum of three days of week with a minimum of six hours a day. It's one of

the most flexible programs in the area. It's a great program. A motion to approve the Summer Program 2025 by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimously approved. The Rockland Daycare Summer Program Parent Guardian handbook was just for your reading information and will be placed on the agenda for a vote.

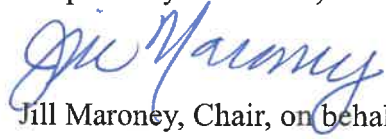
We have a new fundraiser. The Rockland High School Student Council is going to do a SNAP raise. Students set an account through SNAP and raise money for school events, homecoming expenses, field trips and project pumpkin. A motion to approve by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimously approved.

Dr. Cron's Superintendent report. Thank you and congratulations to Steve Bergman and his team for the Spongebob performances over the weekend. Amazing.

Public Service Announcements. Dr. Mauro-Small added that Phelps is currently doing a fundraiser drive of mostly toiletries for the Rockland Food Pantry. Anyone whose kids are there, it's a great opportunity to teach our kids about giving back to the community. I think we often think about it around Thanksgiving but not at other times of the year. The kids did a great job last year; we were second in the State with raising coats. Mrs. Hennessy - thank you to everyone that came out and bought a mattress over the weekend. We sold a few and we are looking forward to a great event on Wednesday. We have the Harlem Wizards coming which is going to be really great. We have over 570 tickets. We have a lot of great volunteers with the staff and souvenirs, raffles and concessions. Mrs. Bissonnette attended Spongebob and it was wonderful. John killed it as Spongebob, he was wonderful. Kudos to everyone who attended, it was well supported. Mrs. Maroney reported that Colin, our Student Representative, last Tuesday he and Nicole Cedrone were recognized at the Reuben A. and Lizzie Grossman Foundation Awards luncheon in Quincy. This award has been offered by the Grossman Family to two graduating Seniors from multiple south shore schools for their academic and overall achievements for the past 69 years. Congratulations to Colin and Nicole. Also on March 18th, Emily Dunhan and Colin McKenna were recognized at the 15th annual South Shore League Scholar Athlete Awards Banquet in Plymouth which they attended with their families. These students were recognized for their outstanding leadership in the classroom and on the playing field. Congratulations to Colin and Emily. On Wednesday the drama students performed songs from the production of the musical at Phelps. The kids loved the show and enjoyed a visit from the talented high school students. Global Play day at Phelps is coming up Thursday, March 27th. Students are allowed ample time to play without the use of screens, structured games or adult direction. The idea is to let the children explore their creativity, problem solve and have social interactions in an unstructured and spontaneous environment.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:53 pm by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jill Maroney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jill" and last name "Maroney" clearly distinguishable.

Jill Maroney, Chair, on behalf of
Emily Davidson
Secretary