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**ROCKLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ROCKLAND, MASSACHUSETTS
MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2025, 6:30 PM
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
The David Cable-Murphy Studio**



In attendance: Chair Mrs. Maroney, Vice Chair Mrs. Hennessy, Secretary Mrs. Davidson 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.

Organization of School Committee. A motion was made to approve the affirmation of the current structure of the School Committee by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Mrs. Davidson, unanimous.

Acceptance of the minutes of the March 24, 2025 School Committee Meeting, a motion to approve by Mrs. Hennessy, (with Mrs. Davidson abstaining) seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

Nothing under Audience.

Monthly Reports for the Administrators: Ms. Schipper, Mr. MacAllister, Mrs. Scheufele and Mrs. Sheehan; Guidance, Ms. Black; Nurse; Ms. Davis and Pupil Personnel Services; Dr. Maniglia; seven motions to approve the monthly reports from Mrs. Hennessy, seven seconds by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

School Newsletters were noted for the Esten, Phelps, Middle School and High School.

Old Business. Completed Fundraisers. The Class of 2026 sold \$975 worth of sweatpants; congratulations.

New Business. Rockland High School Curriculum Corner; Ms. Schipper; "Good evening, I'm very excited tonight to invite Kendra Donovan. She teaches the AP Psych classes. We have two AP Psych classes totalling 48 students. She has brought two students with her and they are going to show a little bit about what they are doing in her classes. Students: Leo Figueiredo and Emilee Dunham. Members were asked to watch a short video and advise how many passes did the students wearing white shirts pass the ball. But did you see the Gorilla? What was learned by watching this video? Inattentional blindness; which is basically when you fail to see objects when your attention is directed elsewhere. So essentially it is very difficult to multitask even if

you think you can. Humans are really good at focusing only on one particular part of the environment. Leo Figueiredo, Class of 2025 and Emilee Dunham. Leo who is planning to study next year at Bridgewater State University majoring in Biology with a concentration in Biomed and Premedical Sciences and Emilee is planning on studying at Boston College with a major in Applied Psychology and Human Development. The goal of the course is to teach students how to apply psychological concepts in the real world like research methods, learning sensation and perception, cognition, motivation, emotion and personality and social psychology. These are just some of what we have learned and we make our content meaningful with in-class discussions to really just get the content across. We have received a grant for Career Pathways this year that has allowed us to get brand new equipment to use in our classes. One piece of equipment showed the Human2Human Interface (slide) that allowed students to use our biopsychology concepts such as the action potential and communication in the nervous system. We were hooked up to the machines that allowed one student to use their brain and move another student's muscles. Another demo was sensation and perception by wearing goggles that kind of changed the way you see the world. (slides). Feeling test and smell test (slides). Goggles were passed to members that changed your perception. They can either shift your vision 30 degrees or flip your vision upside down. Trying to do a high five (slide). Students learn best out of their seats and explore Psychology in the real world which is something we really try to advocate for. We get a hands-on interactive experience in class by doing so. Photos were taken by students to demonstrate the practice of monocular cues that we use to understand depth perception. First one is me and another one of our classmates showing the concept that the distance makes it look smaller. Second is you focus on the thing closest to you and everything beyond that gets out of focus. This is social psychology which is how we see human behavior in the real world. Miss Donovan had us take our shoes off and other things; most of us willingly complied because of blind compliance. We talked about how that can be dangerous such as examples like cult behavior that they will blindly follow. We also learned about group behaviors. During a puzzle scenario where there are people who don't help out in the group. Those people also acted as instigators towards other groups. This was a test to see if the group members would mirror the behavior or other members in the class would start slacking off. Another part of Social Psychology that we learned is social traps. We were offered extra credit with a catch; if everyone asked for five points anonymously; everyone would get it, or you could either get 15 points of extra credit. But if three or more people choose that 15 – no one gets any extra credit. We had two opportunities and no one got any extra credit. A lot of people asked for the 15 and that's just more how people tend to choose short-term benefits over long-term for the group. Shown here in our cognition unit demonstrations in class helped us learn how our brains are learning without our conscious awareness. We were taken around the school blindfolded and asked to stop and determine where we were just based off of just the map. We have been walking these halls for a while and just seeing if we were able to know the place we were in the school without being able to see around us; we learned human fallibility with memory and thinking you would never have to know what a penny looks like; even if you see one every day. So when asked to draw penny;

everyone was looking around like I have no idea what to do. It's like selective attention when we are not focused on it so it's not necessary we don't encode it to memorize how to do it. Our teacher listed off a list of words and we had to try and pay attention. There were two groups in the class; half the class had to decide the importance of the items listed in a deserted island scenario. How important would they be to your survival. The second half of the group had to determine how many vowels were in each word. At the end of the list of words we had to perform some distracting tasks like writing our name, our birthday, just talking to other classmates and then maybe two minutes later we had to try and recall how many words we could remember on the list. People who were able to determine the importance of the words did better because of something called deep processing as opposed to shallow processing which is what people who tried to count the vowels did. When you process something not just based on the word itself you memorize it better. On the list is eggs, water, a coconut or something you're going to remember; those remember a lot more when you have to determine the survival need for it. Another way that we use to memorize is we use the list of words and we tried to envision a scenario in a situation that was very common; like pick a spot in your house and try to be able to place each object in your house and if you are able to close your eyes and recall where those objects are, you are more likely to remember them because you are putting them in a familiar situation. It's just a lot easier to recall them once you put a meaning attached to it rather than just the letters in the word itself. Another thing that we saw most of the time; we did this word list. Memories is the primacy effect which is we are more likely to remember stuff that is at the beginning of the list and also stuff that's at the end of the list instead of what is in the middle. Slide showing AP scores and the dramatic increase. Dr. Cron stressed how impressive the pass rate with 48 students taking the course and the success rate is so high. Kendra Donovan is an extraordinary teacher and you must be working very hard. This is the same curriculum that's being offered in Seattle, Washington, Hingham, Cohasset; and it's very impressive and great to see that it's coming to life and that you are enjoying it. It's carried into other coursework but academically this is a very rigorous course and you guys are killing it so thank you and good luck on your exams in a couple of weeks. Dr. Mauro-Small asked the question of who was in charge in getting the grant – it was part of the Career Pathways program which was supposed to be used for construction technology but then that course got cut so pretty much anything where a student could use the courses as part of a career path – we got to use a portion of the money. I was told to dream big and ask for whatever I wanted to bring the class to life and we got as much as we could. It's been great this year, we have had so many more tools at our disposal that have been really helpful. Dr. Mauro-Small commented on how impressed Rockland's teams are by taking opportunities to look for innovative methods for teaching and it's clearly paying off, so thank you for your hard work.

Federal Grants. Ms. Hackett wanted to let the public know what our connections are to Federal Grants and how profound the policies that are being discussed are. How it could affect us. It's about \$1.2 million. There are five grants that come to us from the federal government. They are

in two categories. IDEA which is Individuals with Disabilities Act and SRSA which is the Every Student Succeeds Act. Under the IDEA, is what we refer to as the 240 grant which is \$700,000. We use this to fund a part-time Out of District Coordinator, we run our extended school year program under this grant, we pay our out of district tuition costs of \$500,000. Under the IDEA grant, is the early childhood special education which is a subprogram of a federal entitlement grant. We use that \$30,000 to partially fund one of our Preschool Teacher salaries under ESSA which is generally referred to as the entitlement grant. Title One is actually Title One, Title Two, Title Three and Title Four. We only utilize Title One, Title Two and Title Four under Title One which our basic grant to LEA (Local Education Authorities). SEA's are the State Educational Authorities. So we are an LEA number 251. We use this money to fund our four interventionists; three reading specialists at Phelps elementary and one math and reading interventionist at the Esten. We do our homeless stipend, who has helped coordinate all of the activity our recent increase in homeless independent of the Comfort Inn; a clerical salary of \$26,000 and then our contracted services. We are required to pay MTRS which is the retirement out of federal grants. For every salary that we pay; we also pay the MTRS benefit for the employees involved. The second one is Title Two part and this is supporting effective instruction and funds the coordinator which is Kelsey Holbrook's stipend for coordinating all of these grants; a paraprofessional and then again contracted services and supplies. The benefit of you using contracted services in paying for supplies and specifically paying for the out of district with the 500 is that we save that MTRS which is an 8% surcharge on anything. So by using the IDEA 240 grant to fund out of district tuition; we are saving \$40,000 in MTRS costs by having it paid for that rather than the teacher salaries. Last one is the Title Four which partially funds our site coordinator and that is our student support and academic enrichment grant and that partially funds the Bridges Site Coordinator. So in total it's 1,210,510. This is what you see in our budget under recurring grants as part of our revenue stream. Question from Mrs. Hennessy - obviously these are considered recurring grants; does the amount fluctuate year to year or have you seen it be pretty stable of what we are getting from the government knowing it is \$1.2 million worth of our budget and we have had budget constraints. Ms. Hackett – yes, this is based predominantly on our demographic as a high needs community. It's a formula that data goes in and the funding spews out. We had one year where it was down, but for the last two years it has gone up. We also are outstanding at expending it, utilizing it and all of our reporting has been timely, etc., so we have had no dings for either inappropriate use of funds, untimely reporting or budgeting for something.

New Fundraisers. The National Honor Society Rotary can and bottle drive. They are looking to do this on May 17th from 9-12:00 pm in the stadium parking lot. We have the Class of 2026 doing senior lawn signs. All signs to the senior class for graduation and then we have the Class of 2027 Spring garden Fundraiser – the Rockland Garden Center will donate 15% of their proceeds to the Class of 2027 on Friday, May 9th, it's the Friday before Mother's Day. Three motions to approve by Mrs. Hennessy, three seconds by Mrs. Davidson, unanimous.

Surplus. A vote is just needed to authorize the sale of the stage risers to be sold to other school districts. We have been unable to see or give away the cafeteria tables. A motion to approve selling the stage risers by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Mrs. Davidson, unanimous.

RPS 2025/2026 RPS School calendar. Historically in the very same way every year we have Professional staff back on Monday/Tuesday the last week of August, we bring the students for two days and then there is a four day weekend and everyone hits the ground really running the following week. It seems to work very well this way. The second thing to point out about this year's calendar which is unique around holiday time. Break this year because of when it falls is actually going to be a two week break. This is what we were proposing. In our contract we get the 23rd, a no school day, so by extending it to include the Monday and Friday, January 2nd, it does result in a two-week holiday break this year which is the first time ever. It's great for families and kids and unique this year. Thank you to the community and School Committee for supporting our professional development calendar. It's very important for our staff doing teamwork, and curriculum on special topics and it's a commitment. There were a few concerns on color coding, and conferences; it was determined that this has been this way in the past that they are held Thanksgiving week. A motion to table the school calendar for 2025/2026, unanimous.

Rockland Daycare rate increase proposal. Marissa Hoadley proposed a .50 rate increase for before and after school care. It's still comparable to Hanover, which is really the only town that is similar to what we offer. With contract negotiations coming up for staff and really the increase in supplies that we need to provide for the students for the daycare. This will bring the infant room to \$10.75/hour, toddler classrooms to \$10/hour; while a little more than Dove's Nest we offer curriculum. Preschool classrooms are looking to raise .75 which will bring it to \$9.50 which is still comparable to other centers. We are not increasing registration fees for any site and continuing with the voucher program which provides relief for many families. We have about 50 plus that utilize; about 40 at Phelps and about five to ten families at the Rockland Daycare. A motion to approve the rate increase for the Rockland Daycare by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

Two policy changes for Rockland Daycare – the first is to change the decline payment fee; it's \$3.50 is what our payment processor charges us; with research, other centers charge a \$25 for a return check and the second policy as long as enrollment suffices keeping the Rockland Daycare open to 4:30. We have a few families that could push from 4:15 to 4:30 so it isn't a huge difference but something that would help a few families. A motion to approve two new policies by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

Rockland Daycare Parent handbook. This has been revised to align with the structure of the before and after school handbook. It has been rewritten with our lawyer's help providing the language from the before and after care and reflecting the same policies. There will be a \$10 late payment fee if your account goes past two weeks until you pay; language about the behavior management policy which has recently been important to implement. New this year is that in the event Rockland Daycare is closed due to inclement weather you will still be responsible for daily tuition; reason is they still have to pay the staff also it's an immediate loss on both programs. While with these changes, we are the only program that allows the flexibility that you only have to come two hours at minimum and we don't require you to come all day every day or a three day minimum. Our minimum requirements are the lowest and the most flexible. There have been a few questions this year; it is a two day a week minimum at the Rockland Daycare, same as before and after school summer camp; two days, six hours. Right now every room is at its capacity. A motion to approve the changes to the Rockland Daycare Parent Handbook by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

Final reading of the Summer camp handbook. The changes are again; same policies, tuition, date for summer programming, late fee. Nothing has changed except it's an eight week program this summer and we are opening earlier; 7:00 - 4:30 instead of last years 8:00 - 4:30. A motion to approve the Rockland Daycare Summer program handbook by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous. We are servicing in the before and after school program at Esten on a day-to-day basis 150-175 and Daycare is servicing 80-90 maybe not daily but enrolled. Thank you to Marissa for doing a remarkable job for the District and servicing our families needs with the extension of hours.

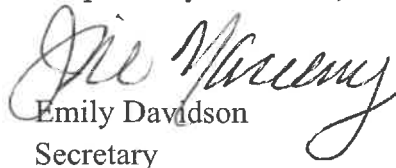
June 6, 2025 Retirement Luncheon by Dr. Cron. I have been wanting to get all of our retirees together for a luncheon. Some time to see one another but also to update them on where the Rockland Public Schools are now. We would also like to present the retirees, in a business card format, a card that would encourage them to come to sporting events and music concerts and things like that and not have to pay. We want to encourage retirees to stay a part of the community. We would like to do the luncheon annually and it hasn't been done for about ten years. A motion to approve the event pass for Retirees by Mrs. Hennessy; with Mrs. Bissonnette abstaining; seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

Dr. Cron's Superintendent report. I would like to thank Jeanne Blaney and Christine Flaherty for their work for Mental Health Awareness month. They have organized a committee and Freea Lahey from the schools is working with them and trying to coordinate. As you know we have many safety nets and programs in place in the schools but this is something that they are spearheading for the town. There are two particular events coming up to make the public aware of; one for the youth on May 6 at 5:30 in the Lecture Hall at the High School and one on May 15 at 5:30 for adults. I hope a lot of people turn out; we are distributing flyers.

Public Service Announcements. Mrs. Davidson – thank you to my committee members for helping and letting me take time off for maternity leave, I am glad to be back and I'm looking forward to finishing out the year and thank you to the Rockland voters for voting this weekend for my re-election and Melissa. Mrs. Hennessy – I want to thank everyone in the district for their support from the athletic boosters for the Wizards event. That was such a fun event with the community. We had over 630 tickets sold and probably upwards of 50 volunteers, lots of community sponsorship. So thank you to all of the businesses that once again continue to support our schools. I also wanted to say have a safe trip to Miss Walsh and the travel club; they are headed to Dublin, London and Paris. They leave on Friday and hopefully have a great time. Enjoy April vacation. Dr. Mauro-Small – I also want to thank the town for showing up and voting; the opportunity to continue to serve the community in this role. I also want to congratulate the RHS varsity cheerleaders who received their state championship rings this past week and they had a nice celebration. Thank you to everyone who made that happen. As a pediatrician I would be remiss if I didn't remind everybody with the beautiful weather today that for us in Pediatrics the season has changed from colds and flu to injuries, so just make sure everybody is remembering to wear their helmets when they are out and on motorized or just wheels; skateboards, bikes, etc. Mrs. Bissonette – I hope everybody has a wonderful vacation. Mrs. Maroney – I would like to thank you ladies for signing up for three more years; this isn't an easy task but sometimes in this world it could turn into a lot of pressure and a lot to carry. We are here for the kids. We are responsible for a \$37 million dollar budget, lots of faculty, lots of staff, lots of families in this town. I appreciate this team that we get to sit here, and I appreciate you ladies for stepping up for three years and I appreciate the town for believing in us.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 pm by Mrs. Hennessy, seconded by Dr. Mauro-Small, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,


Emily Davidson
Secretary