



**Haverhill Public Schools - School Committee  
Hybrid Regular Meeting Minutes of September 28, 2023**

Moment of Silence in memory of former school committee member Dorothy (Dottie) Court who passed away on September 12, 2023 [Dorothy C. Court 09.28.23.pdf](#).

**Roll Call - Pledge of Allegiance.**

Mayor Fiorentini, Chairperson called the meeting to order (7:00 pm) and requested a roll call vote:

|                      |                   |                        |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Mrs. Sapienza Donais | Present in person | Attorney Rosa          | Present in person |
| Ms. Sullivan         | Present in person | Attorney Magliocchetti | Present in person |
| Mr. Wood             | Present in person | Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello    | Present in person |
| Mayor Fiorentini     | Present in person |                        |                   |

Superintendent Margaret Marotta, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent Michael Pfifferling were also in attendance.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the members and the audience.

**Communications/Reports.**

Public Comment (In-person & Remote).

Mr. Kevin Herlihy from the city’s Community Development Department noted that there Regional and Housing Production Plan invite the committee to a virtual engagement session that will be held next Wednesday, October 4, 2023.

**Student Advisory Council Report - Melanie Palacios.**

Ms. Palacios provided the following update on high school activities which included yesterday’s painting of parking spots by the juniors and seniors; the announcement of October 23-26, 2023 as Homecoming Week with activities in the planning stages along with a discussion among students to who are advocating for AP credits counting as Early College credits.

**Superintendent Comments/Reports.**

HHS CTVE Career Vocational Technical Education) Student Update.

High School Principal Michael Downs was introduced by Superintendent Marotta. Mr. Downs stated that his attendance tonight was to support the career vocational technical students.

Mr. Higginbottom thanked the committee for its earlier support with career vocational technical education.

The following students for the various CTVE vocations provided brief updates on the curriculum, internship program benefits, job opportunities, college plans and future careers: **PLTW Biomedical Science** (Taylor Lewis and Melanie Palacios); **Information Technology** (Sahelis (Aria) Ramirez Rosario and Jacob Kelley); **Healthcare Occupations** (Myan Pham, Cameron Morse and Valery Ospina); **Computer Science & Web Development** (Emmanuela Raymond, Luis Escobar and Anushey Zahid); **PLTW Engineering & Manufacturing** (Ashley Auguste and Kailyn Aquino).

Ms. Leydi Diaz Breton, recruiting specialist thanked the school committee for funding the many programs that are offered within the high school and for the opportunity to showcase the students in the program.

Attorney Magliocchetti, Attorney Rosa, Mrs. Sapienza Donais, Mayor Fiorentini and Ms. Sullivan thanked the students for their individual presentations and acknowledged the exceptional vocational programs offered at the high school.

Ms. Sullivan recognized Mr. Downs and asked him to speak about a recent student honor.

Mr. Downs acknowledged high school student Liam Jordan for his National Merit Scholarship award. He noted that Liam was also a talented artist and had painted his parking spot with the image of Abbey Road album cover.

### **Haverhill SEPAC Updates.**

Ms. Ibanez honored Anne Marie Rosa's contributions to special education and SEPAC. [Sept. 2023 SEPAC Update \(1\).pdf](#). She extended a heartfelt congratulations and displayed a plaque that will be presented to her.

Ms. Ibanez introduced new chairperson Mandy LaClair, who provided a brief overview of her involvement in special education. Ms. Zwadita Morrison, new secretary provided some introductory remarks.

**Overview of SY23 MCAS results** [MCAS Draft 2 2023.pptx.pdf Quick Overview HPS MCAS Scores 2023.pdf](#). Superintendent Marotta noted that many leadership team members were present at tonight's meeting

Superintendent Marotta, Mrs. Antkowiak, Ms. Petersen, and Mr. Higginbottom provided an overview of the results.

Dr. Marotta noted the harmful impact of COVID and lack of in-person school instruction on student achievement during the pandemic.

Mrs. Antkowiak commented the goal was to move forward and exceed expectations. She reviewed the highlights and next steps to boost achievement.

### **Committee Questions and Observations.**

There was an extensive dialogue between the school committee and the leadership team regarding the MCAS scores.

In response to Attorney Rosa's question on student growth percentile, Ms. Peterson, ELA Curriculum Supervisor related that the greatest growth was in ELA (grade 5) with the implementation of writing in other classes. Superintendent Marotta answered that student comparisons are done in the same percentile. Mrs. Antkowiak clarified that there was no growth percentile for grade 3.

Attorney Rosa asked about correlation between increase in high needs (i.e., ELL, economically disadvantaged and special education) students and the scores.

Mrs. Antkowiak noted that the needs of students had changed post-COVID and there was a review

of our programs to achieve better learning outcomes.

Superintendent Marotta related that Tier II intervention students (high needs) outperformed other students and the district was in the process of identifying the interventions that worked in the classroom along with consulting other districts to understand what they might be doing differently that could be incorporated into Haverhill's program.

Ms. Sullivan asked if the RBT (Research for Better Teaching) as a model for observation was being used during the walkthroughs including data collection and information sharing.

Ms. Peterson replied the walkthrough model was TNTP with an emphasis on student engagement, high order thinking questions, student ownership, and higher quality instructional textbooks. She added that information was collected on clipboards and/or phones. Ms. Peterson commented that the data sharing included bright spots and areas there was room for growth).

Mrs. Antkowiak commented that the focus was on the whole school along with collecting everyone's debrief regarding the testing data.

Attorney Magliocchetti reflected on the strides that had been made post-pandemic. He stressed the importance of teacher buy-in for programs along with feedback. Attorney Magliocchetti asked how their input was obtained in the district.

Ms. Peterson replied there was teacher-initiated suggestions.

Mrs. Antkowiak explained the collaborative process in obtaining staff contributions.

Attorney Magliocchetti commented that MCAS was a gauge for the standards. He examined K-8 reading (grade-level reading) and math (grades 5-6).

Ms. Catherine Lally, Mathematics Supervisor (remote participation) was excited about the implementation of the Eureka program.

Attorney Magliocchetti requested a presentation on the Eureka program at a future meeting.

Superintendent Marotta noted that on-line tutoring programs had previously been very costly but she would again explore this option to see if there were reductions in cost.

Ms. Peterson outlined the 4-8-week intervention cycle and what were the most successful strategies for particular students.

Attorney Magliocchetti asked for a future presentation.

Mr. Wood was concerned with the results and did not see increased outcomes even though there was significant investment in educational funding. He did not see the correlation with funding and scores.

Superintendent Marotta commented that if there had not been a financial investment the scores might have been much lower than with these resources.

Mr. Wood asked what were the contributing factors.

The superintendent offered that there was Inconsistency and lack of education especially in grade 3 since they started kindergarten the first year of the pandemic.

Mr. Wood asked about the ELA scores and any theories.

Ms. Peterson answered that the foundational skills were lacking due to remote learning.

Mrs. Antkowiak explained the learning to read process. She stated that changes needed to be made in the district based on the scores. Mrs. Antkowiak noted phonetics were important and programs had been implemented in the district to address these deficiencies.

Mr. Wood was concerned with the downward progression for current students.

Mrs. Antkowiak was making goals with stretch goals, identifying problems and addressing the needs. She promised that the district would move forward with support in the school.

Mr. Wood challenged the administrators to find the reasons and help the students. He related that young families would leave Haverhill if the test scores do not show improvement. Mr. Wood was confident that the leadership team would find solutions.

Mrs. Sapienza Donais was concerned with not competing with Methuen's scores. She noted the "negative vibe" surrounding MCAS results. Mrs. Sapienza Donais agreed with Mrs. Antkowiak's identified steps and urged some community events.

Ms. Sullivan asked if there was a substantial increase in ESL students.

Dr. Marotta responded that 15% of the student population identified as ESL.

In reference to Ms. Sullivan's question on the variety of languages, the superintendent answered that some of the newer languages were from the following countries: Haiti, Afghanistan, and many African dialects. Dr. Marotta noted the reality of the greater array of languages.

The mayor noted the importance of the performance and education gap.

Dr. Marotta reported that all schools were now in the high needs category. She stated the need to focus on tier 1 instruction.

In relation to the mayor's question on Tilton School's scores, Mrs. Antkowiak answered that previously the school was at a 38% accountability rate and now 12% (last year was 7%). She noted that Silver Hill was at 46% percentile.

The following principals provided data over a three-year period (if available):

- Dr. Poor (Consentino) 55% towards target along with percentile ranking of 11% (high needs students are doing well);
- Ms. Doherty (Nettle) 15%, 7%, 12%;
- Mr. Condon (Whittier) 14%, 15%, 20%;
- Mr. Gage (Hunking) 25% (2022), 36%

The mayor asked what caused the improvement in grade 5.

Ms. Peterson replied increased reading in other content areas besides ELA.

The superintendent related that increased writing across the curriculum was a major factor.

Mayor Fiorentini asked how the students who participated in summer school scored in the MCAS and would identify the successful programs.

Dr. Marotta replied that there would be a review of the iReady data comparing student summer school participants with other students.

Mr. Wood asked about the high school scores.

Mr. Downs reported the following figures 20%, 12%, and 15% over a three-year period at the high school.

Mr. Downs outlined accountability and getting students to class along with connecting to the teachers.

Regarding the mayor's inquiry regarding students in the hallways, Mr. Downs replied he and his team monitored the hallways and also the team brought students to their classes.

In response to Mr. Wood's question on skipping classes, identification of students and coordinated effort, Principal Downs reported that there was an organized effort to address these concerns with follow-up to referrals and monitored detentions. He underscored the improvement in this area. Mr. Downs emphasized that there were great kids at the high school unfortunately this fact was overshadowed by a few bad students. Principal Downs stressed the importance of structure and discipline which was fair and equitable along with consistency.

Attorney Rosa inquired about phone policy.

Mr. Downs replied that it started with enforcement in the classroom and if needed there was a call made to the home.

#### **School Committee Reports/Communications.**

Ms. Sullivan asked for the waiving of admissions to athletic events. Mrs. Sapienza Donais indicated it would be a great way of have seniors involved in our schools.

Attorney Rosa agreed with this suggestion and noted there was an athletic subcommittee meeting scheduled tomorrow morning and this item along with reinstating the gold card for 62 years and older Haverhill residents would be on the agenda for discussion.

A motion was made by both Ms. Sullivan and Mrs. Sapienza Donais to waive fees for individuals 62 and older for events pending the guidelines. Attorney Rosa seconded the motion.

Mayor Fiorentini commented that this age group was the wealthiest group and had no trouble paying for events.

Mrs. Sapienza Donais stated that many senior citizens were living on a fixed income.

The mayor requested a roll call vote with the following results:

|                      |     |                        |     |
|----------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|
| Mrs. Sapienza Donais | Yes | Attorney Rosa          | Yes |
| Ms. Sullivan         | Yes | Attorney Magliocchetti | Yes |
| Mr. Wood             | Yes | Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello    | Yes |
| Mayor Fiorentini     | No  |                        |     |

6 members voted in the affirmative                      Motion passes  
 1 member voted in the negative  
 0 members abstained

Mrs. Sapienza Donais: School Committee Meeting September 14, 2023.

Mrs. Sapienza Donais commented on the receipt of a number of emails, texts, phone calls regarding the last meeting. She indicated that it was an unfortunate occurrence and showed a lack of professionalism and was unacceptable under any instance especially the behavior towards Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello. Mrs. Sapienza Donais related the decrease in decorum and hampered the work of the school committee.

Mayor Fiorentini set a standard for himself and his staff and at the last meeting did not live up to the standard and hoped to have better meetings.

**Subcommittee Reports**

Maintenance Subcommittee Update: Attorney Magliocchetti & Mrs. Sapienza Donais. Attorney Magliocchetti commented that there were no visits but on a related matter, the pickleball court bids would soon be received and was maintaining an optimistic viewpoint.

The mayor noted that recent bids were very high in terms of cost.

Mrs. Sapienza Donais had no further information to add to this agenda item.

**New Business.**

Superintendent’s Recommendation to request approval of the financial transfers [09-26-23 Budget Transfer Request.pdf](#) as indicated in the agenda material.

Regarding the mayor’s inquiry on this item, Mr. Wood responded that it was a result of hiring positions (mostly from collectively bargained positions) above or below the budgeted amount.

A motion was made by Mr. Wood to approve the financial transfers as presented. Mrs. Sapienza Donais seconded the motion. The mayor requested a roll call vote with the following results:

|                      |         |                        |     |
|----------------------|---------|------------------------|-----|
| Mrs. Sapienza Donais | Yes     | Attorney Rosa          | Yes |
| Ms. Sullivan         | Yes     | Attorney Magliocchetti | Yes |
| Mr. Wood             | Yes     | Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello    | Yes |
| Mayor Fiorentini     | Present |                        |     |

6 members voted in the affirmative                      Motion passes  
 0 member voted in the negative  
 0 members abstained

Superintendent’s Recommendation to approve Warrant Number EV202300929 &



|                  |     |                     |     |
|------------------|-----|---------------------|-----|
| Mr. Wood         | Yes | Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello | Yes |
| Mayor Fiorentini | Yes |                     |     |

7 members voted in the affirmative                      Motion passes  
0 member voted in the negative  
0 members abstained

A motion was made by Mr. Wood to adjourn the meeting (9:14 pm). Attorney Magliocchetti seconded the motion.

The mayor requested a roll call vote with the following results:

|                      |     |                        |     |
|----------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|
| Mrs. Sapienza Donais | Yes | Attorney Rosa          | Yes |
| Ms. Sullivan         | Yes | Attorney Magliocchetti | Yes |
| Mr. Wood             | Yes | Mrs. Ryan-Ciardello    | Yes |
| Mayor Fiorentini     | Yes |                        |     |