

August 15, 2023
Uxbridge High School Library

School Committee Members in Attendance:

	Present	Absent
Mr. Barry Desruisseaux, Chair	X	
Ms. Arlene Liscinsky, Vice-Chair	X	
Mr. Ed Maharay, Clerk	X	
Mr. Ben Casper	X	
Mr. David Shinnick	X	
Mr. Aaron Lenart	X	
Mr. Michael Dion	X	

• **Call to order (6:00)**

Mr. Desruisseaux called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

• **Public Comment (6:00-6:01)**

No public comment

• **Superintendent Update (6:01-6:14)**

Dr. Baldassarre shared the following:

1. **Taft Vice-Principal**: Dr. Baldassarre has hired Jennifer Collins to be the new vice-principal at Taft. She has 25 years experience as a Kindergarten and grade 2 teacher. She is coming from Marlboro Public Schools.
2. **District Design**: He handed out a draft of the district design as it will be posted on the district website. There will be an additional 6th component which will be a feedback loop that will be able to be accessed via the website.
3. **21st-century grant**: The Uxbridge program will have a state mentor to help them navigate the program. They have been asked by the grant's director to open up 40 seats for grades 2 and 3. The posting for the program's coordinator is up and active. Dr. Baldassarre will submit a revised budget to the state by that Friday. The job descriptions for the after-school program teachers are drafted. Dr. Baldassarre will continue to provide the Committee with updates.
4. **New after-school YMCA partnership**: Uxbridge schools will be embarking on an exploratory after-school program at Taft and Whitin in partnership with the Central Mass YMCA. The target start date is September 11, 2023. The program will be operated by the YMCA after school and have 3 classrooms at both Taft and Whitin. The enrollment will be open for up to 52 students. The program is separate from the 21st-century program. The total cost of the YMCA program will be \$72/week. Once the 21st-century program is

up and running, Dr. Baldassarre said it will be easy to share its project-based ideologies with the YMCA.

5. Wednesday through Friday the district will host its Launching Pad with its administrative team.
6. Surveys: Surveys will be sent out to parents about the after-school programming.
7. Taft Playground project: Before the end of August, Dr. Baldassarre noted he has to schedule two playground planning meetings in accordance with the playground project timeline.

● Legal RFP questions & Vote (6:14-6:23)

Dr. Baldassarre restated his recommendation to hire Paige Tobin for special education legal services and Mirick O'Connell for labor and negotiations legal services.

Motion: Mr. Maharay made a motion to approve the firm Paige Tobin. Ms. Liscinsky seconded the motion. The committee voted 6-0-1 in favor of the motion. Mr. Desruisseaux abstained. The motion passed.

Motion: Mr. Maharay made a motion that we hire Mirick O'Connell. Ms. Liscinsky seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mr. Casper stated that given an environment that has started to heat up a little, he thought there was a potential for needing more legal services this upcoming year than has been typical. Mr. Lenart said that he felt selecting a firm with a fixed rate could serve as an insurance policy for the district and could also help with the district's current tight budget because they would know the legal budget upfront. Ms. Liscinsky said that because they had not worked with either firm, she would go with the recommendation of those who had had experience. She confirmed that legal appointments are annual and that they can be revisited next year if the Committee wishes.

The Committee voted 4-2-1 in favor of the motion. Mr. Casper and Mr. Lenart voted no. Mr. Desruisseaux abstained. The motion passed.

● Warrant Article FATM (6:23-6:40)

Dr. Baldassarre stated that he had shared the 3 warrant articles they have proposed to the Committee and had submitted the articles to the town. They will still need to provide specific dollar amounts that will be attached to the articles.

He shared that he will be sharing information and a report with the Committee in the future in regards to the addition of staff post-Covid. He said that since Covid the district has added 32 staff members, not the nine positions that have been consistently mentioned. He will be preparing an accurate assessment for the Committee that will be presented prior to the fall town meeting.

Dr. Baldassarre said he had met with the Special Education director and she has said the district is going to need an additional 4 paraprofessionals. Dr. Baldassarre said he was concerned, from a

ratio perspective, that the overall number of paraprofessionals compared to the number of students that are being serviced, requires a longer-term look at program delivery. He believes that he and the Special Education department could handle a program evaluation of special education, but that Uxbridge needs a continuation of services evaluation. This type of evaluation would help the district determine whether it might be better served by hiring more special education teachers.

Mr. Maharay asked when the district will have information available for the warrants and asked Mr. Desruisseaux to contact the chair of the finance committee to learn the dates for the public hearings. Dr. Baldassarre said the plan to get information out is already in progress and they will provide timely reports to the Committee even if it includes sharing parts as they become ready.

• **Therapeutic Program Draft (6:40-6:57)**

Dr. Baldassarre shared a document with the Committee about the program. He said that throughout the 22-23 school year he had been facilitating the development of the program with staff. He said that the district sends out a number of students to private placements and collaboratives because of its inability to work with their social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. He said Uxbridge has the capacity in place to provide this service. He said the way the program works is basically like a school within a school, which means the program works by its own rules that are separate from the school. It has its own mission statement and core values.

The program could have a capacity for seven students.

The program would require the following staff:

1. Full-time teacher
2. Full-time intervention specialist
3. A clinician assigned to the program for behavioral changes

He outlined how the implementation of the program would work:

1. The district sets up the physical space
2. When the time comes that,
 1. The district's special education out of district personnel say Uxbridge has a student who can come back or
 2. The district has a student or two who is going to need placements that they can move into this new environment

then the district would use the funding that would have been used to fund those students' out of district placements to pay for the staffing and professional development. This would allow the district to move into the new program slowly. He stated that once the district has three students in the class—with staff—then it would have the option to go out and find more students to come back and that the option potentially exists to open up 1-2 seats for neighboring districts that might need therapeutic placements.

Discussion:

Mr. Shinick asked if the idea is that this program would be self-funded. Dr. Baldassarre said the only money he needs upfront is for the classroom renovation and that after that it becomes a standalone thing. He also said it had the potential to become a revenue center. He explained that 7 collaborative students cost @\$400k in tuition and @\$250K in transportation, so the program could potentially provide \$650K in services with only 2 full-time staff and specialized training. Dr. Baldassarre said that this training is the training he is already trying to bring into the district.

Mr. Casper questioned whether the district would want Dr. Baldassarre to provide the training or use an outside trainer so that Dr. Baldassarre could use that time for other areas of the district. Dr. Baldassarre said an outside trainer would cost @\$43K to train 20 people and he would be happy to provide the training himself but, if the time comes and he cannot do it, he would bring someone in to train the staff. He explained the training lasts 28 hours and needs to be completed within 30 days. Following a conversation about whether Dr. Baldassarre conducting the training would be the best option if the Committee was willing to fund an external party for training. Mr. Maharay asked Dr. Baldassarre to put together a chart for the school committee that says "here is the cost involved and here is the savings involved" and then the Committee and Dr. Baldassarre could have a conversation on what direction to go in regard to training staff.

● New Business (6:57-7:27)

Mr. Maharay asked about the logistics associated with the upcoming Administrator Launching Pad. Dr. Baldassarre gave an overview and invited the Committee to attend the Thursday morning of the workshops.

Mr. Casper shared that he would like to have a conversation at some point in regard to an email that was sent to the Committee by the public and a reply to the Committee in regards to that email by Dr. Baldassarre. Mr. Desruisseaux said he did not feel a conversation was appropriate at that time because he felt it concerned a personnel issue. He suggested that the Committee figure out how to address the conversation and potentially discuss it at the next meeting. Mr. Shinnick asked how they would go about doing that. Mr. Casper said the conversation he wished to have was not about personnel and Dr. Baldassarre said he was open to having the conversation because he felt there were not any personnel issues. Mr. Casper and Mr. Shinnick both spoke about their general concerns about the email. Dr. Baldassarre asked if the request to have the conversation was a formal complaint. Mr. Desruisseaux suggested that Mr. Casper put together a list of questions that he could provide to Dr. Baldassarre. Mr. Maharay said he believed that suggestion would be constructive and that a response from Dr. Baldassarre would be beneficial for everyone.

Mr. Shinnick said it was his personal preference that they try not to name individual people who aren't privy to a conversation in something that could be discoverable as a public record and would prefer that the general gist of a story be conveyed without naming specific people.

Mr. Shinick proposed that they consider conducting exit interviews with Ms. Bellville and Mr. Aicardi, when they are no longer employees of the district, to hear their thoughts on things they believed the district could do to improve itself. Multiple members of the Committee shared their

thoughts on collecting feedback from former employees in regard to the practicality and effectiveness of understanding why employees leave the district. Dr. Baldassarre recommended that before the Committee deliberate Mr. Shinnick's suggestion, it should discuss it with MASC and the district's legal counsel.

Ms. Liscinsky stressed the importance of making sure that all members of the community, not just those with students in the schools, are included in the school's communication and feedback initiatives.

● **Old Business (7:27)**

No old business

● **Approve Minutes (7:27)**

Motion: *Mr. Casper made a motion to approve the minutes you provided (August 1, 2023). Mr. Maharay seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion. **The motion passed.***

● **Adjournment (7:28)**

Motion: *Mr. Desruisseaux entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Maharay moved the motion. Mr. Dion seconded the motion. The Committee voted 7-0 in favor of the motion. **The motion passed.***

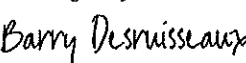
The meeting adjourned at 7:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

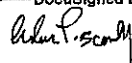
Debbie Stark

Uxbridge School Committee Recording Secretary

School Committee Members:

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Mr. Barry Desruisseaux, Chair

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Ms. Arlene Liscinsky, Vice-Chair

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Mr. Ed Maharay, Clerk

Mr. David Shinnick, Member

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Mr. Ben Casper, Member

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Mr. Michael Dion, Member