



## WHITTIER REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

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A regular meeting of the Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School Committee was held hybrid (remote/in-person) on **Tuesday, February 13, 2024** at 115 Amesbury Line Rd., Haverhill, MA.

Members Present: Ron Fitzgerald    Johanna True            Mike Rossi  
                         Brett Murphy    Patty Lowell        Donna Holaday  
                         Scott Wood        Richard Early       Kurt Slevoski

Members Remote: Dave Irving, Lisa O'Connor, Garry James, Sandi Coppinger

Members Absent: Chip O'Connor

Others Present: Maureen Lynch, Superintendent  
                         Chris Laganas, Principal/Asst. Superintendent  
                         Kara Kosmes, Business Manager  
                         Katrina Jensen, Associate Principal

Mr. Fitzgerald, the Vice Chairperson called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. Mr. Fitzgerald took attendance. All members listed as present were in attendance at Whittier Tech High School. Mr. Irving, Ms. L. O'Connor, Mr. James, and Ms. Coppinger were present via ZOOM. Mr. Fitzgerald began the meeting with the pledge of allegiance.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if there was any public comment. Mr. Fitzgerald reminded the public that public comment is not a discussion, debate or dialogue between them and the School Committee. It is an opportunity for them to express an opinion on issues with School Committee authority. He stated they would be allowed up to 3 minutes to present material and begin by stating their name and city/town. There was no public comment.

By motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Ms. True to approve the Minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting for January 10, 2024 as presented. Motion Approved by roll call vote - 13 - Yes; 1 Present (D. Holaday)

By motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve the Treasurer's Report for January 2024 as presented. Motion Approved by roll call vote - 13- Yes; 1 - Present (D. Holaday)

## OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business posted.

## STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

There was no student representative report.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

### Personnel Action

The Superintendent, Maureen Lynch reported on the hiring of a CAD/Drafting instructor, interim transportation coordinator, maintenance mechanic, route bus driver and an ELL instructor to provide SEI training. She also reported on the resignation of an electrical instructor LTS.

### Budget Update

Ms. Lynch reported that the Executive Subcommittee met February 13, 2024 and they are recommending a 2.69% budget increase for FY25.

### MCAS Update

Ms. Lynch reported that 23 sophomores and juniors took the biology retest on February 6th and 7th. Results should be made available in April. Ms. Lynch reported that results from the November retest have been received and 4 juniors will take the math MCAS again in March based on those results. Ms. Lynch provided current stats:

- Class of 2024 100% MCAS Passed - all areas
- Class of 2025 100% ELA MCAS Passed - 98.7% math MCAS passed  
99.4% Biology MCAS passed
- Class of 2026 93.4% biology MCAS passed - These students take the ELA and math this coming spring

### School Building Update

Ms. Lynch reported that the vote to approve a new building failed at the polls. She met recently with 10/11 of the town managers or mayors in the Whittier District. Some of the feedback they provided was:

- Lack of communication regarding the project
- Regional Agreement's capital apportionment

- Lack of community buy in
- Conflicting interest - no Debt Exclusion attached to positive vote
- Feeling that MSBA should not look at a vocational school the same way as another school
- Need to look at communication of the school committee to the town boards
- Overall cost of the project
- Feeling that the SBC should have had elected officials apart of committee
- Feeling that our messaging was not clear and/or effective

Ms. Lynch also met with Representative Dawne Shand and Newburyport Councilor Khan along with Kara Kosmes. They too provided feedback and we look forward to working together. Over the next few weeks, Ms. Lynch will continue to meet with elected officials ( and anyone else interested in talking) to gain more insight on how Whittier will move forward.

Ms. Lynch reported that they have to decide if they want to vote to go back to the voters by the first week of April with the same building project or remove the Statement of Interest and possibly try again some time in the future. Ms. Lynch recommended removing the Statement of Interest from the MSBA capital pipeline. Mr. Early suggested that minutes from the school committee meetings be sent to all cities and towns once approved. They can be found on the Whittier Tech website once they are approved.

By motion of Ms. Holaday, seconded by Mr. Murphy to remove the Statement of Interest from the MSBA capital pipeline and submit again at another time in the future. Unanimously approved by roll call vote - 14-0

Ms. Lynch read the MSBA Capital Pipeline Program Declaration of Removal of a Statement of Interest to the Committee. This is the document that she and the Chair will be signing and sending to MSBA as a result of the above vote to remove the Statement of Interest for the building project. Ms. Lynch reported that they were recently approached by the town of Merrimac to possibly tie into their new wastewater treatment plant. Over the next few months Whittier will begin talks with Merrimac to see what the possibilities are. Ms. Lynch stated that they also need to develop a strategic plan to fix the current building. She knows many people are looking for answers right away but Ms. Lynch stated they will be taking a thoughtful approach and learning from what has happened over the past 6 months. She welcomes input from the community.

## Superintendent's Update

There was no Superintendent update.

Ms. Lynch stated she has an out of state field trip request from Collision Repair to go to Bayberry Vintage Cars in Hampton, NH on February 27, 2024. She requested approval from the School Committee.

By motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Slevoski to approve the out of state field trip request from Collision Repair to go to Bayberry Vintage Cars in Hampton, NH on February 27, 2024. Unanimously approved by roll call vote 14-0

## PRINCIPAL/ASST. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Chris Laganas, the Principal/Asst. Superintendent, provided an update. The wrestling team hosted the Travis Yell Tourney at Whittier on Saturday, February 3rd and hosted the Haverhill Hammers wrestling club on Sunday, February 4th. Eight schools represented for the Travis Yell Tourney and hundreds of youth wrestlers competed on February 4th. It turned out to be another successful day for the Whittier wrestling team and for the entire wrestling community. February 1st started Whittier's celebration of Black History Month. Whittier continues to highlight contributions of African Americans to create lessons/discussions to educate students on all aspects of diversity. All students have completed midterm assessments and have begun Quarter 3. The last day of school is June 13th. That's with 2 snow days. Mr. Laganas congratulated the guidance team, Deb Costello, Marcia Curtis, Michelle Catena, Jill Karatkewicz, Andy Bonifacio, Heather Sweeney, Rachael Rossi, Lillian Levesque, Dr. Whitney and Lee Gastonguay, for the great work they do everyday and beyond with the students. He stated they have been celebrated and honored during *National School Counseling Week*. Mr. Laganas reported that winter vacation begins on Monday, February 19th - 23rd. Whittier is offering a Boot Camp and attendance make-up during four days of vacation from 8AM to 12(noon) starting Tuesday, February 20th - Friday, February 23rd. The freshmen have chosen their shops and will start in their vocational areas on March 13th. Letters are going out the week after February break. The guidance team has been interviewing at the middle schools. These interviews will be completed by the beginning of March. Monday after vacation, Whittier will welcome 17 new incoming freshmen. On Friday, February 2nd, the staff took part in "Embedded Academics". All academic teachers, guidance counselors, specialists, teacher aides and support personnel were placed in vocational/technical areas based on their particular area of interest. The Booster Club is selling merchandise and snacks. Thanks goes out to Heather, and Janice for working and fundraising on behalf of our student athletes.

This year's high school play is "Mean Girls" *The High School Version* is a musical based on the 2004 film that tells the story of Cady Heron, a teenage girl who finds herself in a suburban Illinois public high school after years of being home-schooled on the African savanna. Cady devises a plan to topple the queen bee and her cohorts. The drama club cast have been rehearsing three to four days a week. The dates for the play are Friday, 3/22 and Saturday 3/23 at 7:00 pm and Sunday 3/24 at 2:00 pm. As part of the SkillsUSA American Spirit Award Project, Whittier welcomed three Senators and their Representatives for a "Meet Your Rep Fair" on Friday, February 9th. Senior and Junior students had the opportunity to further educate themselves on the value and importance of voting. They were also introduced to the roles and importance of their state reps and how they impact their day to day lives. Students also had the opportunity to pre-register or register to vote during this fair.

#### BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT

There was no Business Manager report posted.

#### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Mr. Fitzgerald, Vice Chairperson reported on the annual agenda items for March. The School Committee Self-Evaluation is available for members to complete on google classroom.

#### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Executive Subcommittee met January 10, 2024 and February 13, 2024.

By motion of Mr. Murphy, seconded by Mr. Rossi to approve the minutes of January 10, 2024 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote 14-0.

The Instructional Subcommittee has not met.

The Plant Operations Subcommittee has not met. They will meet on March 13, 2024 at 5 PM.

The Salary & Negotiations Subcommittee met on January 30, 2024. They will meet again on February 14, 2024.

By motion of Mr. Murphy, seconded by Ms. Holaday to approve the minutes of January 30, 2024 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote 14-0

The Policy Subcommittee met on February 13, 2024. They will meet on March 13, 2024 at 4:30 PM. Policies that were reviewed at the February 13th meeting will be sent in the school committee packet on March 13th for a first reading.

#### MEETING DATES

The Policy Subcommittee meeting is Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 4:30 pm.  
The Plant Operations Subcommittee meeting is Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 5:00 pm.  
The Budget Workshop is Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 5:30 pm.  
The Regular School Committee meeting is Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 6:30 pm.

#### NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business posted.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Fitzgerald, Vice Chairperson stated that there is a need to enter into Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel- route bus drivers as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee, as decided by the chair, and upon completion of Executive Session will return to open session.

By motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Ms. Holaday to enter into Executive Session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel- route bus drivers as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee, as decided by the chair, and upon completion of Executive Session will return to open session.  
Unanimously approved by roll call vote 14-0

The Committee went into Executive Session at 7:02 P.M.

The Committee returned to Open Session at 7:24 P.M. Mr. Fitzgerald reported that in Executive Session the School Committee voted on salary increases for the route bus drivers.

By motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Mr. Slevoski to approve bus driver route rates increase to \$77.00/route; \$82.00/route for Ipswich/Rowley routes; \$23.00/hourly rate and \$65.00/evening call-back rate effective March 1, 2024 as recommended by the Salary Negotiations subcommittee. Unanimously approved by roll call vote 14-0

By motion of Mr. Wood, seconded by Ms. Lowell to adjourn at 7:25 P.M.  
Unanimously approved by roll call vote 14-0

Respectfully submitted,  
*Lisa Rand*  
Recording Secretary

*The following list of documents and/or exhibits were used:*

School Committee minutes 1-10-24  
Treasurer's Report January 2024  
Executive Subcommittee meeting minutes 1-10-24  
Salary Negotiation Subcommittee meeting minutes 1-30-24