

MASCONOMET SCHOOL COMMITTEE CORNER- Winter 2017

The eleven members of the Masconomet School Committee meet twice a month to guide Masconomet's programs, policies, and budget. In addition, the school committee has recently been engaged in four other projects: start time, artificial turf, student support organizations, and the long term district capital investment plan.

Start Time Transportation Study

In the spring of 2017, the Masconomet, Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield school committees voted to explore the proposed start time changes for our schools: an 8:30am start for Masconomet and, ideally, an 8:00am (or later) start for the elementary schools. We agreed that it was important to obtain a detailed transportation study and plan to see how we could achieve these start time goals.

NRT (who provides busing for all of our districts) was contracted to study our existing bus routes with respect to the proposed start times. Their data will be incorporated into a thorough transportation analysis by an independent consulting firm, School Bus Consultants. SBC will analyze the school start time plan and develop transportation proposals for our districts. The SBC transportation report and recommendations will be due in early January. We will be providing an update once the report is available and invite you to join the conversation at an upcoming meeting.

Artificial Turf

On November 1, the school committee met with Barry Davidson of Turf Up Masconomet to discuss the addition of an artificial turf field. Barry presented Turf Up's financial analysis that showed that although artificial turf is most costly than natural grass, the potential rental income can offset most or all of the cost because the fields are available for more frequent play, particularly in the summertime, when Masconomet's grass fields need to rest.

A site survey and field design study have already been completed, with the financial support of Turf Up. The next step will be to hire a consultant to perform an independent financial analysis of the cost of installing, maintaining, and replacing a field with artificial turf. Turf Up has generously offered to raise money for the consultant and, ultimately, the cost of installing the field. The committee

agreed that it's important that an artificial turf field not become a financial burden for the district.

In addition, the school committee will want to understand the potential rental market for field rental, overhead costs, and the safety and health risks associated with artificial turf before approving the project. School Committee member Tasha Cooper from Middleton is assisting the Administration in coordinating the follow-up with Turf Up Masco.

Facilities Use and Student Support Organizations Task Force

Masconomet is very fortunate to have many student support organizations (SSOs) that support the interests of our students, especially in the areas of athletics and performing arts. The Masconomet School Committee is grateful for the time, effort and financial support that the members of these organizations (often referred to as "booster groups") contribute to the success of our students.

In 2015 an administrative and school committee task force was convened to review facility use and fees with the intent to establish a fairer fee structure and a simpler process. Over time, it became clear that the new facility use rules and fees were not equally applied to all SSOs.

Over the summer of 2017, school committee attorney Attorney Naomi Stonberg completed an independent review of the practices surrounding the use of Masconomet school buildings and grounds by SSOs. She identified certain areas where changes need to be made in order to avoid conflicts of interest, prevent the violation of Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) policies, and standardize the handling of funds by the school district and the SSOs.

In response to her report, a Facilities Use and Student Support Organizations Task Force has been formed by the Masconomet School Committee to address these concerns and to provide clear guidance and policies to our SSOs. The members of the task force view this process as an opportunity to better assist the SSOs in their mission of supporting our students, to help ensure that parent members of SSOs are aware of potential problem areas and to clarify the role SSOs play in our school community. As a first step, the task force has been reaching out to the SSO groups and are conducting mini-interviews to improve our understanding of their activities, and help us get to know more about the groups. The task force will then work to incorporate this knowledge to identify any policy or procedural changes that need to be made, and update our facility use policy and applicable fee

schedules for use. Once our study is concluded, recommendations will be voted on by the full Masconomet School Committee prior to implementation.

The Facility and Student Support Organization Task Force is chaired by Tasha Cooper of Middleton and members include Carolyn Miller (Boxford), Bill Hodges (Topsfield) and Kevin Lyons (Superintendent).

Masconomet Creates the District Capital Investment Task Force

The Masconomet Regional School building was last renovated and updated in 2001. The Habeeb report (an engineering analysis of the facility commissioned by the school committee in 2016) shows that many components of the building are nearing the end of their life expectancy. In October the School Committee created the District Capital Investment task force, which is tasked with creating a responsible long-term strategic capital improvement plan that ensures the Masconomet campus meets the evolving instructional needs of students and preserves the taxpayer's investment. The committee is chaired by Hagan Rivers of Boxford, and members include John Spencer (Topsfield), Kosta Prentakis (Middleton), Susan Givens (Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations), Dorothy Flaherty (Middle school principal), and Douglas Batchelder (Director of Operations). Meetings and more information are be posted on the Masconomet web site under the School Committee section.

The school committee's meeting schedule, agendas, materials, and contact information for members are available on the Masconomet web site under the heading School Committee. The public is welcome at all meetings. Recordings of meetings are available on www.boxfordcabletv.com. As always, please feel free to contact the Committee, or the superintendent if you have any questions or comments.