

Bourne Public Schools

BOURNE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting Minutes

DATE: Wednesday, September 22, 2021

TIME: 6:00 PM

PLACE: Bourne High School Auditorium

ATTENDANCE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Emily Berry; Paul McMaster; Erin Perry; Steven Strojny; Kari MacRae; Maureen Fuller; Ryan Bagdonas; Student Representative Viveca Stucke

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHER ATTENDEES PRESENT: Dr. Kerri Anne Quinlan-Zhou, Superintendent

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Emily Berry calls the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

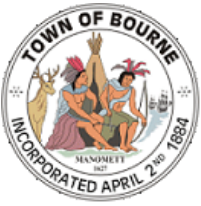
2. PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

All stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

a. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT, *Emily Berry, School Committee Chair*

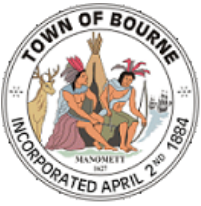
- Chair Berry opens by providing a timeline of recent events. She states that on August 25th she received an email from a concerned citizen that was sent to members of the school committee, the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent regarding social media posts made by school committee member Kari MacRae. She says Dr. Zhou, who received the email at the same time, contacted



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her with concern to the staff and students. Next she says an executive session was called to discuss the matter and it was decided to hold another executive session to create a resolution to demonstrate support of all students, staff and community members. She states that on September 15th it was brought to the committee's attention that the social media posts directed at the LGBTQ population had circulated and staff and students were very upset. She says the Bourne Educators Association had met and voted 100% to make a public statement against the comments made by Ms. MacRae. Chair Berry says the school committee also began receiving emails from other concerned citizens regarding the matter and was also made aware that media outlets had been contacted. She says it was decided that public comment would be held prior to entering executive session. Chair Berry clarifies that the school committee has not discussed Ms. MacRae's comments regarding critical race theory as CRT is not taught in public schools so she is not breaking any policies.

- Chair Berry then asks if any committee member would like to ask questions or make a statement.
 - Maureen Fuller comments that school committee members want what's best for all students and work to make sure our schools are safe, welcoming and inclusive for all students. She says she does not feel this is an issue about free speech but about an elected official representing our school district actively advocating for denial of equitable treatment for whole groups of students. Maureen says she firmly believes that Ms. MacRae has no place on the Bourne School Committee.
 - Ryan Bagdonas addresses comments that were made suggesting any review of this matter is intolerant of opposing views. She states she does not believe the committee needs to be tolerant of homophobia. She says this is not about opposing views but about not condoning a school committee member making fun of transgender kids on social media.
 - Kari MacRae states that she ran for and was elected to the school committee because she cares about her community and public education. She says that videos were posted on Tik Tok responsibly under a pseudonym and that because of her political views on certain topics especially related to public education she is now being labeled as a homophobic, transphobic racist. She states that the video that is quoted in the Cape Cod Times is a response to female athletes and their inability to compete fairly against athletes that identify as female. She says she is passionate that everyone is treated equally, including women. Ms. MacRae says she does not believe children should be taught CRT in schools or that children should be taught that they can choose whether or not to be a boy or a girl, and that the key word is taught. She says she does not believe anyone should be bullied or harassed for being who they are. Ms. MacRae says she is disappointed in the accusations and slander against her. She thanks those that have reached out to voice their support for her. Ms. MacRae states that she will not resign her position on the school committee.
 - Paul McMaster states that this is not an issue of whether CRT should be taught in schools or an issue of different political views, [an audience member ruled out of order for interrupting] he says that this is an issue of treating people equally and fairly. Paul references a social media post made by Ms. MacRae where she refers to Dr. Rachel Levine, a transgender woman, as an obese



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man who thinks she's a woman. He states that this is not a tolerant or accepting statement to anyone in the trans community. Paul says that this is not about right and left, this is about right and wrong. He states that the challenge of the school community is to reaffirm to students who may have seen that post that they are welcome and safe.

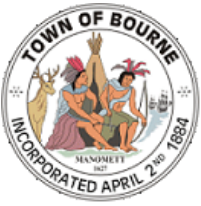
- Chair Berry comments that they are not here to pick apart political views, they are here to make sure students and staff feel safe coming to Bourne Public Schools. She says it is our role in society to make sure children feel safe, welcome, appreciated and accepted and that these posts clearly go against that.
- Chair Berry states the meeting will move on to public comment and explains the general guidelines. She says public comment will end at 7:00pm.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

Ann-Marie Strode on behalf of the Bourne Educators Association, speaks against Ms. MacRae's social media posts. She says the BEA does not question the right to say or post one's beliefs, but there has been a breach of moral and ethical responsibilities by an elected official. She references the Bourne School Committees Code of Ethics and states that Item #1 is to realize that his or her primary responsibility is to the children, Item #5 is to remember that he or she represents the entire community at all times, and Item # 6 is to accept the office of the Committee Member as a means of unselfish service with no intent to play politics in any sense of the word or to benefit personally from his or her committee activities. Ms. Strode states that in viewing the videos and memes that were posted it is the position of the BEA that those responsibilities have not been met. She says that the agenda of teachers is to support all students, increase their confidence and create an environment that is inclusive, welcoming and safe. She states that the social media posts have had a negative impact on the school community and the BEA asks that Ms. MacRae resign from the school committee.

Liz Carpenito on behalf of the Bourne Public Schools' Administration team, speaks against Ms. MacRae's social media posts. She states that these posts are harmful to the well being of the school community and have had a negative impact on stakeholders at large which may last for years to come. She references a post that specifically regards Ms. MacRae's intentions for her role on the committee as standing against the many core values the district stands for. Mrs. Carpenito states that the views are in direct violation of our district values, vision of a graduate and multiple policies. She says it will be difficult for Ms. MacRae to serve in a leadership role and asks her to step down from her position on the school committee [an audience member is ruled out of order for interrupting]. Mrs. Carpenito says her statement is submitted by Christine Borning, Liz Carpenito, Amy Cetner, Kelly Cook, Lisa Dixon, Ken Girourad, Kate Hartley, Dave Lundell, Kelly Mooney, Jane Norton, Ryan Place, Dr. Zhou, Dr. Starkey, Leslie Sullivan and Jordan Geist.

Alex Stanton of Sagamore Beach, would like to remind the audience of why they are here. She feels that as residents of Bourne we need to encourage a diverse student population as diversity sparks innovation, creative thinking and better problem solving skills. She says that her 2 young sons are excited for the school year and that one of her sons is autistic. Ms. Stanton states that it is because of him and other kids who are made to feel different and not completely accepted, that she feels the need to speak up. She says the purpose of school and this committee is to make sure we are doing the



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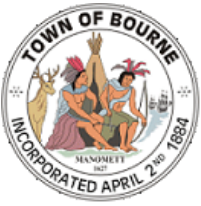
best to prepare these children for the world. She shares that according to the CDC, suicide is the second leading cause of death among LGBTQ+ people ages 10-24. She says a study also shows a 73 percent increase in suicide attempts among Black adolescents, while attempts by white adolescents decreased. She explains that her point is that the things we say and do as adults matter and that we have the power to change the lives of our children for better or worse. She begins to ask the school committee to remove Ms. MacRae from her position before her time runs out.

Sarah Nathe of Sagamore Beach states that she is there to ask Miss MacRae to resign from her position on the school committee as she does not represent the values of someone who belongs making decisions for the students in Bourne. She says that due to Ms. MacRae's comments and actions on social media she has broken policy and will continue to hurt the school community and school district as a whole by not resigning. Mrs. Nathe refers to the policies that all school committee members agree to. She believes Ms. MacRae to be in violation of many policies but specifically references the non-discrimination policy which states that the school committee's intent is to encourage positive experiences in human values for children, youth and adults all of whom have differing personal and family characteristics and come from various socio-economic racial and ethnic groups and that school committee has an intent to work toward a more integrated society; second, the School Committee Member ethics section states that a Committee Member, in her relations with the community, agrees to remember that she represents the entire community at all times and it does include social media post, that she accepts the office as a Committee Member as a means of unselfish service with no intent to play politics in any sense of the word or to benefit personally from committee activities. Mrs. Nathe asks how Ms. MacRae's posts insinuating that teaching certain things regarding sexuality and race will not happen in her school district, represent the entire school community. Mrs. Nathe urges school community members to vote for Ms. MacRae's immediate resignation due to her breach of contract and selfish intentions.

Erin Perry reads a letter submitted by Merrill Ponce of Bourne. Merrill states that they are non-binary and has stayed in Bourne for so long due to the push for Bourne 2 B Kind. They say that when they heard the comment made by Ms. MacRae it was the first time they felt that their family didn't belong in Bourne and were concerned about the education their children might receive in this school system. They say that it took away their feeling of safety and belonging. Merrill states that the Trevor Project reported that 40% of LGBTQ+ youth surveyed had considered taking their own lives and trans youth that are not accepted by their families are 8.4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their trans peers who are accepted and included. They feel that attitudes like MacRae's have no place in a school system that promotes kindness, empathy and inclusion and that a school committee member should not be able to choose which students are supported and which are shunned. They state that damage has already been done by MacRae's comments and it is imperative that the school committee repairs this damage by demanding her resignation.

Chair Berry takes a moment to make sure video recording is allowed and that all audience members that are recording announce that they are doing so.

Mary Zunino starts by saying she came to speak in support of Ms. MacRae because she had only seen 2 of the social media posts but after seeing some others she cannot support her. She says that Ms. MacRae was dishonest by only telling her about 2 videos. Ms. Zunino says the 2 videos she saw were fair and appropriate but she did not know there were more than that. She addresses the committee saying that it is getting dangerous to be a conservative person and



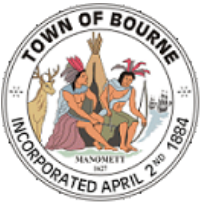
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not be viewed as a bigot, hater, or homophobe. She says she is a Christian woman who was able to put aside what she believes in order to love and respect another person. She addresses the audience and says she's speaking to everyone with a rainbow flag and asks them to be careful to not stop honoring us. Ms. Zunino states that she loves all people but we are getting dangerously close to shutting off conservative thought. She urges the committee not to do that as there are a lot of conservative people and they need to be represented on the board.

Francis Cichowski of Pocasset, states that Ms. MacRae risked her career and that of her family to run for school committee with aspirations to help guide curriculum and policy to better serve her constituents as many were concerned for the welfare of their families and students. Mr. Cichowski says it was known that Ms. MacRae held the unpopular position that CRT would be detrimental to the future of our democracy, would destroy all progress made in this country to provide equal opportunity and integration for all, and, by the substitution of equity for equal opportunity in order to ensure equal outcome, it would lower expectations for all students. He says MacRae also felt that the family was a place for guidance and support of physical, intellectual and emotional growth and that family was responsible for the establishment and nurturing of their collective moral compass. Mr. Cichowski questions the presence of the teachers union and wonders how many of those present are Bourne voters. He says the union is a lobbyist group with no place in this forum. He states that he believes the school committee's job is to establish policy and it is imperative that they act as representative to their constituency and to ignore voters' desires is a clear violation of public trust. Mr. Cichowski does not believe the committee has any right to disenfranchise those who voted for Ms. MacRae. He says the entire committee serves at the voters pleasure and they all have the responsibility to fulfill their terms and support the wishes of the voters until they resign or are removed. Mr. Cichowski is out of time but continues. Chair Berry warns Mr. Cichowski and he continues. Mr. Cichowski is ruled out of order and police escort him from the podium.

Wandra Harmsen says she is a 34 year resident of Bourne. She states that everyone has done a great job expressing their concerns and she would like to give a different perspective. Ms. Harmsen says that when her children were young they did not feel welcome here and she had to move them to a different school system. Ms. Harmsen says she appreciates the efforts in the mission and vision statements and the equity and inclusion committee, which is trying to move the town forward and make the town more welcoming. She says she is not speaking on behalf of people of color, she is speaking for herself and also as a member of the Bourne-Wareham Race Amity Committee. She goes on to say she disagrees with Ms. MacRae sharing her views in such a public way as a member of the school committee. She tells Ms. MacRae that she is in violation of the ethics of the Bourne school committee and is in violation of the mission and vision statements of the town of Bourne which embraces diversity and inclusion. She says that if we want to make the town welcoming to everyone we need to support teachers and curriculums that do that. Ms. Harmsen runs out of time before she is finished.

Becky Brown of Sagamore Beach, says she has 2 boys who attend Bournedale Elementary. She says she grew up in Tennessee in a different environment than she has found here and she feels lucky to live here because of the people, the teachers and the administrators that she has encountered over the three years that her children have been at Bournedale. Ms. Brown says she is a lesbian and her family is the same as all the other families and they are treated that way. Ms. Brown states that with over four hundred students in Bournedale Elementary, statistics show that about forty of them are LGBTQ students and they are hearing this and taking this in. She says she knows however this is not the



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message they receive at Bournedale, where they are valued and worthy and in a culture of acceptance for who they are. Ms. Brown says that makes all the difference in the world to a person like her.

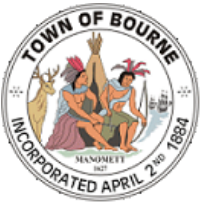
June Duarte, of Sagamore Beach, states that years ago her son started a Gay-Straight Alliance in Bourne. She says she thought we were there again but when she sees the audience standing she knows we are not here again, we are better. She says Ms. MacRae's posts are highly damaging and by denying there are intersex children that can choose their gender or be non-binary, she has publicly denied their existence. Ms. Duarte says this is extremely harmful. She states she works in substance abuse treatment and sees the damage kids who are victimized and ostracized suffer. She also sees it in people who are victimisers and have bullied other kids and how shame and guilt from that leads to addiction. She says the issues are serious and damaging and she asks Ms. MacRae to resign.

Vanessa Williams, of Bourne, states she had a speech prepared but that this just seems like a witch hunt. She compares it to the same thing we went through with the mask mandate where the committee did not ask for the public's vote. Chair Berry clarifies that masking requirements were a state mandate. She states that asking someone to resign based on their own beliefs is a witch hunt. Ms. Williams states the committee is ignorant and racist and worse than Democrats. She says they have used the black community every four years for their vote and then do things like this when someone sees eye to eye with the average black family. She says this is an attack on Ms. MacRae's First Amendment right and we still live in America whether the committee likes it or not. Ms. Williams calls the committee a joke. Chair Berry gives Ms. Williams a warning for name calling. Ms. Williams leaves the podium while continuing to shout profanities.

Thelma Mellin, of Sagamore, addresses the public asking what if it were your child.

Connor Ryan, of Carver, states that he is an out and proud transgender student. He says he is speaking on behalf of both the Gay Sexuality Alliance and the transgender students in Bourne high school and public school in general. He says he transferred to Bourne schools after not being supported in Carver and immediately found support and respect in Bourne. He says that he has now learned that a member of this school committee in the district he is proud to call his own believes that his identity is not only a choice but that it should be erased in education. Mr. Ryan states that Ms. MacRae has said directly both on Tik Tok and during a public statement today that she ran for school committee to ensure students are not being taught that they can choose whether or not they are a boy or a girl. He says this is harmful and not a First Amendment issue. Mr. Ryan references the Journal of Adolescent Health stating studies show supporting transgender kids instead of denying their identity greatly reduces of the risk of depression and suicidal thoughts and actions. He says that when suicide is the second leading causes of death for youth any work done to prevent suicide is good work regardless of political ideology. He says he can personally vouch for the positive effects of being properly supported and although he is graduating he would rather stay four more years than see this school turn into the nightmare his old school was for trans kids. He asks the committee to keep this community as it is, welcoming, respectful, accepting and safe, for the sake of all transgender students.

Chair Berry announces that there are 2 minutes left for public comments.



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Kaitlin Griffin says she is non-binary and bisexual. She says she exists and she can't be told otherwise. Ms. Griffin says that when you put views into the community that are hateful you teach kids to be hateful and that is unsafe. She says Ms. MacRae's comments are gross and asks her not to culturally appropriate anybody. Ms. Griffin finishes by saying gender queer people are here and to get used to it because its not changing.

Chair Berry states that time is up for public comments. She says that speakers were called in the order their requests were received and anyone who wasn't able to speak is welcome to email the committee or the school administration.

5. ADJOURN-PAUL McMASTER MOTIONS TO MOVE INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION; ROLL CALL VOTE 8-0-0

Meeting ended at 7:00 PM

List of documents and exhibits used (GL c.30A, sect 22(a))

Agenda Item	Document
0	School Committee Meeting Agenda

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Jessica Moerman
Recording Secretary