

NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, January 7, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. FINAL MINUTES
REMOTE MEETING – GOOGLE HANGOUT MEET

Attending members: Melissa Burke, Johanna Bartlett, Barbara Doyle, Carla Halpern, April Thompson, Beth Erviti, Jack Radner Anna Wetherby (minutes), members; Bruce Turner, treasurer, Jennifer Culkeen, superintendent; Kelley Sullivan, principal

Teachers: Kelly Mallioux, Kirsten Lamotte, Lisa Aubin, Michelle Wolfe, Nancy Mead, Rachael Basdekis, Robyn Vitello, Jennylou Powers, Jill Putala, Gosia Spooner, Gillian Budine, Danika Tyminski, Sarah Thayer, Tina Newman, Pete Nolan

Public: Sarah Bauch, Jessica Morris, Jenny Potee (board of health), Claire McGinnis, Jody Bird, Shad, Joanna Moest, Miriam Maynard-Ford, Cailyn Reed, Kelsey Alvarez, Remi Carroll

- Call Meeting to Order -7:03

- Public Hearings

- None

- Warrants – #412 12/10/20 \$74,026.77; #413 12/24/20 \$74,569.00; #414 1/7/21 \$71,556.37; #812 12/10/20 \$26,222.31; #813 12/24/20 \$26,222.31; #814 1/7/21 \$26,222.31; #2812 12/14/20 \$1667.31; #2813 12/28/20 \$1215.40; #4024 12/14/20 \$28,434.17; #4025 12/14/20 \$801.30; #8120 12/10/20 \$83,299.37; #8121 12/10/20 \$340.38; #8130 12/24/20 \$84,104.95; #8131 12/24/20 \$340.38; #8132 12/24/20 \$34,511.75; #8133 12/24/20 \$43,012.57; #8134 12/24/20 \$4111.67; #8140 1/7/21 \$81,394.49; #8141 1/7/21 \$340.38

- Superintendent's Report

- Letter sent to the community regarding the events in Washington D.C. – asking all to be kind and to be the light in the darkness
- Received update from DESE Commissioner about MCAS
 - Modification on testing (shorter testing time for grades 3-8)
 - There will be a new Federal level head of education
 - Thanks for the support of members of the community writing to state legislature
- Student learning time survey – all data will be on DESE website
 - SRS met the student learning time for remote learning (40 hours over 2 weeks)
 - Hybrid will be 35 hours over 2 weeks
- Discussions happening regarding reopening
 - Leadership team is discussing return after MLK day pending no huge surge

- Return with a hybrid model and slowly phase in students
- Director of Finance and Operations Report
 - Door project complete
 - Windows still need work
 - Work done on air-handlers
 - Waiting on Franklin regional retirement to complete more of budget
 - Health insurance will come in later this month
 - Chapter 70 will come later than normal
 - In a holding pattern as to progressing with budget
- Principal's Report
 - Enrollment stays the same
 - Mr. Cortina held a sing-along at the end of December, a perfect way to end the term
 - Phasing in opening – discussions on how to bring in students – 2 week structured proposal would look like:
 - January 19 - Pre-k and k
 - February 1 - 1 and 2
 - March 1 - 3 and 4
 - March 15 - 5 and 6
 - Handbook of reopening shared with families
- Committee Reports
 - Report from Mahar Representatives
 - Last meeting December – decided to start hybrid return January 19th. To be revisited this month
 - Collaborative for Education Services
 - No meeting in December
 - Budget and Personnel – Next Meeting - none
 - Joint Supervisory – Next Meeting – January 11, 2020 6:30 p.m.
- January Items
 - 2020-2021 Reopening – Discussion
 - Melissa – asks for clarification as to the hybrid model
 - *Alternating cohorts with layered phasing in*
 - *If cohorts are small enough, would they come all 4 days (such as a class of only 12 students who could safely be in a class together*
 - Melissa – updates from the compiled research data sheet
 - Reviewed the updates from mass.gov – numbers doubled after the Thanksgiving holiday state-wide
 - Carla – questions in regards returning for in hybrid model:
 - Would there be possible routine testing?
 - How does the staff feel about the reopening?

- What is the schedule for teachers being vaccinated (February to April for teachers to receive the vaccination)
 - Concerned about not having procedures in place for regular testing.
- Beth – agrees with Carla about testing – 60% of people transmitting COVID-19 are a-symptomatic. COVID positive individuals in others schools have been not only teachers but also cafeteria workers and secretaries. They have no voice and would like to ensure they are protected
- Kelley- they applied for a grant for more COVID testing
- Nan – the testing covered by the grant is for testing those presenting symptoms
- Jenny Potee – likes the gradual reopening plan.
 - Will see a spike – New Salem has 0 cases but expects that to change. Doesn't expect it to be different later in the year unless the teachers get vaccinated.
 - Hard to give an answer as to the future.
 - Agrees that testing is very important.
 - Is it possible to get a rapid test machine? Is it worth the investment for the machine and the extra staffing?
 - Doing the daily screen is most important
- Jack – onsite school-wide testing is not feasible.
 - Asks about the rational of the 2 week phase in – it keeps the oldest students out for a very long time
- Kelley- many of the surrounding schools have had success with this phase in process. Starting slowly might give a better chance.
 - Erving has phased in all grades using this model.
 - Leverett and Shutesbury have only opened up to grade 2.
 - Youngest learners struggle the most with the remote model.
- Nan – there isn't easy access to testing in this area regularly and the testing is only a snapshot of that moment.
 - The numbers are higher – state-wide has a positive case rate of 8%, all three counties of SRS are higher.
 - Looking at the clusters on the state site – rise in day-care cases.
 - It is hard to say it is safe for students to return to the building.
 - The new mutation is appearing in 8 states new mutation is not causing greater illness but is more transmissible and is appearing in younger children.
 - Phase 2 of vaccine includes teachers and high-risk individuals.
 - Precautions will still be needed in the school. Delaying opening will bring better weather – open windows and outside learning and eating.
- Melissa asks about the cluster reporting
 - *2 or more cases spreading in a contained area (such as a nursing home)*
- Beth – clarifying that Nan's recommendation is for reopening in March

- Jennylou – the MOA was to cover all community members, not just the teachers.
 - By being so cautious all fall and winter we have ensured a predictable learning experience.
 - Looking at the next piece, we want to guarantee that everyone is safe. Are there enough people to cover in the case of a cold or other need for not being in school?
 - Phasing in focuses on the science – smaller numbers for contact tracing for example. Building safely and continuing the predictable education experience.
 - Would feel safer vaccinated.
 - Appreciates tying a date to reopening is incredibly hard.
- Lisa Aubin – we are so close to the vaccination – it has been so long, but it would be terrible to open a week or two too soon.
- Clarification on survey results- the total per cent were counted by the families responses regardless of how many students
- Gosia – child wants to be back at school. Currently home-schooling but wants to be in the classroom. Being at school is better than being at home
- Joanna Moest – speaking for the children – so eager to get back and to have interactions with other kids.
 - Agrees with the feeling that we are so close. This experience will not be all negative, thinking of the larger community.
 - The kids will be ok. A few more months will be a blip in their lives.
 - Thanks for the consideration and keeping the wellbeing of the students present
- Shad – has decided to keep children remote regardless – too much change is hard for his child (going to school some days, staying home some days).
 - Hopes there is a solid plan in place for keeping the remote students present when hybrid model starts.
- Rachael Vitello- reports that children are doing well with remote learning
- Cailyn – would like to hear how other U28 schools are doing. Do the other schools have testing in place?
- Jennifer- it is going ‘well’ in the other U28 schools
 - Not seeing trending cases in Erving (k-6) Shutesbury (k-2) paused for the winter break, Leverett closed briefly due to contact tracing and caution.
 - Only SRS qualified for the testing
- Pete Nolan - can’t wait to get back to teaching after vaccination.
 - Number 1 priority is teaching and instruction.
 - Only ½ of families will send students back.
 - Learning time will be interrupted; teachers will need to develop new teaching styles.

- If the main concern is social-emotional welfare, arrange outdoor playgroups and social- emotional curriculum.
 - Tina supports Joanna’s words, personally worries about how to teach while waiting for test results.
 - Beth moves that the SES phase in return to in-person learning beginning on March 1, Carla 2nds
 - Melissa - concerns about parents responding to rising numbers
 - Could the vote change on February?
 - Classrooms aren’t ready – has not asked people to spend time setting thing up in rooms
 - Will bring more students on IEPs into the building
 - Cannot get things ready on two weeks notice
 - Barbara – opening up the choice for families to make about returning students to school
 - Jack – what sets SES apart from the other U28 communities? The phase-in approach is very cautious
 - Carla – supports the right of families to make choices, but family choices could affect the entire community.
- Vote – Erviti – yes, Radner- no, Doyle – no, Burke – yes, Thompson – yes, Wetherby –yes, Halpern –yes, Bartlett – yes. Vote passes 6 – 2.

- COVID Handbook – Vote
 - Anna moves to approve the COVID Handbook, Melissa 2nds
 - Passes unanimously
- MCAS Resolution Letter
 - MCAS resolution letter – moved to next month.
 - If not in the building, it will be near impossible to take the MCAS
- Revision of Regional Agreement
 - Problem with transportation funding (chapter 74 reimbursement) – 80k refund to the towns
 - Each municipality must file individual reports
 - As a region, could not borrow funding for the renovation project – had to use school funds
 - Can the committee revise the regionalization agreement to create something more definitive?
 - Will give more efficiencies for reporting
 - What will be the process of governance? That will be part of the details of the agreement
 - Can we get a grant for advising? The state is currently putting up grant money for this type of project
 - Request to think on how the committee will be comprised – be prepared to vote on creating a committee next month

- It is important to include town officials members on the committee
- Would like a written memo outlining why this is important, especially around transportation funding – Bruce will create such a memo
- Bruce cannot amend town end of year report

New Business

- DESE 1% commonwealth virtual school –
 - MGL – there is a state-wide cap determining the per cent of students who can attend a commonwealth virtual school.
 - SRS has reached the cap
 - School committee can restrict student enrollment if the cap has been reached

• Policy Update and Review:

First Reading on:

- JBB – Educational Equity
- IHBEA – English Learner Education
- BEDH – Public Comment at School Committee Meetings

Second Reading, First Vote on:

- ADDA – Background Checks
- ADDA-R – DCJIS Model CORI Policy
- BBA – School Committee Powers & Duties
- BBBC – School Committee Member Resignation
- BBBE – Unexpired Term Fulfillment
- Anna moves to vote all 5 polices at once, Beth 2nds –
 - Passes unanimously
- Beth moves to adopt the five policies, Melissa 2nds –
 - Passes unanimously

Final Vote on:

- IHBHE – Remote Learning
- JLCB – Immunization of Students
- EBC-S – Policy on COVID-Related Issues
- Beth moves to vote on all policies on one vote, Melissa 2nds - passes unanimously
 - Amend wording on Attendance – (File JH) remove ‘and’
- Anna moves to adopt the three polices with amendment, Beth 2nds -
 - Passes with one vote against

Second & Final Vote on Deletion of Policy

- BBAB – Warrant Approvals
- Beth moves to remove, Jack 2nds –
 - Passes unanimously

• Future Business

- Next Meeting Date – February 4, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
- New Salem/Wendell Policy Committee – February 4, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.

- Approval of Minutes:

- December 3, 2020

- Beth moves to approved the minutes, Barbara 2nds –

- Passes unanimously

- Adjournment

- Beth moves to adjourn, Carla 2nds –

- Passes unanimously

- Meeting adjourned 9:13