



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES March 17, 2020

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	March 17, 2020
Location:	Webex
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Rachel Fitzgibbon, Vice Chairperson Sarah Wolf Ken Warnock Caroline Weld Ann Cameron Lucas Shan, Student Representative
Absent:	Eric Bourke
Guests:	Patricia Puglisi, MERHS Principal
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

AGENDA

A. Call to Order – Ms. Erdmann called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

- 1) Public Comment** – There was no public comment this afternoon.
- 2) Student Report** – Lucas reported students had received an email with the cancellation notice regarding spring sports and the Freshman Sophomore dance. He understands if students return to school on April 6, 2020 sports will start on April 27, 2020. Lucas stated teachers were communicating with students regarding assignments and teacher's office

hours. Superintendent Beaudoin asked Lucas if he had any questions for her or the Committee. He did not but Lucas chose to stay in the meeting and ask questions if he had them.

- 3) **Chairman's Report** – Ms. Erdmann yielded her time to Pam. Ms. Erdmann asked how Mr. Urbas would like her to approve the pay roll. Mr. Urbas stated an email approval would work at this time and formal approval could occur later when the office is reopened.

4) **Consent Agenda**

- Acceptance of Warrants
- Minutes – 3/3/2020
- Approval of Out of State Travel -- None

Warrants were previously approved and signed by the Committee in the District Office.

Members received the minutes at noon and needed time to read prior to approving. Members emailed their approval to Superintendent Beaudoin on Wednesday morning, 3/18/20.

Ms. Wolf had moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Weld had seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously via email approval.

5) **Sub-Committee Reports**

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Caroline Weld/Ann Cameron) –

Mr. Urbas reported construction on the Memorial School is continuing there is currently no prohibition on construction in Manchester. Workers on site are practicing safe distancing.

Meetings of the School Building Committee will remain on schedule although will occur remotely. There is some room in the schedule for working around school closing. Limited construction work is taking place in Memorial School entry, final cleaning of Memorial School will take place prior to students returning. Administrative work and coordination will continue without interruption.

The team is thinking about a possible shut down and what this will do to timelines, but we are not facing this yet.

- Finance Committee (Anne Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – No Report
- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Rachel Fitzgibbon) – No Report
- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – No Report

6) **Superintendent's Report – Closure & COVID-19 Update**

What We Don't Know

- Impact on Graduation Date

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the decision to reopen will come from the State and once the District knows when schools will be reopening decisions about student activities like the prom, play and sports will be made. At this time the District knows the last day of school will be June 23, 2020. April vacation remains on the table as a make-up period.

- Will this be extended
 - This is the question that will determine answers to many of the student activity-based questions out there examples: Prom? Sports Season? SCORE? Plays
- Will we need to use April Vacation for a make-up period?
 - Maybe – unclear as whether it will be a local or State determination
- Will we have to take MCAS?
 - MCAS postponed potentially cancelled depending on date of return

Superintendent Beaudoin stated MCAS are State mandated testing. The District will follow the final recommendation of the State. Ms. Weld asked if there was any latitude for the District to decide? Superintendent stated no.

- State determination

What We Do Know

Operations

- All buildings are closed through April 6th
 - No access for students, staff, or the community
 - Beginning Wednesday, 3/18/2020 buildings will be cleaned and sanitized during the .
 - Construction will continue at Memorial unless shutdown by State.
- All regularly employed staff will be paid during shutdown as well as contracts.

Superintendent Beaudoin placed a hold on contracts. This will require further consideration and she will follow up in the next meeting.

If the Committee has no objection to the above plan, the District will continue to pay the staff. All employees are working remotely. Ms. Fitzgibbon asked if we continue to pay the staff are there contractual or budget implications for making that decision. And are there any other considerations for the Committee? Superintendent Beaudoin stated there are no budget implications as the FY20 budget has been fully funded.

Ms. Fitzgibbon also asked about keeping the schools heated. Mr. Urbas stated the District will heat the schools. Custodial staff are going through the final clean but will not be in the building once the final clean is completed. School buildings are monitored regularly. Ms. Fitzgibbon asked if CDC guidelines were being followed. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the cleaning company has the CDC guidelines and equipment to comply with the guidelines. Mr. Urbas stated

over the past weeks additional cleaning staff was added to make sure surfaces were cleaned to standards. He also indicated there will be some savings for decrease use of heat and electricity.

- All employees will be working remotely until further notice.
- We will not need to make-up any day beyond June 23rd.

Administration and staff were in the buildings this morning handing out computers and picking up personnel items left behind last Thursday.

Lucas asked what the conditions have to be for there not to be school for the rest of the year. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that was an unknown and a decision that will be made by the State.

Teaching & Learning

- March/May SATs have been cancelled. June 6 is still scheduled.
- AP Tests currently targeting make-up window – last two weeks in May.
- The District will be providing online Supplemental enrichment Activities Plan with Resources to maintain skills and keep students connected with their school community.
 - There will be learning activities provided by all disciplines and all levels.Teachers will have daily online office hours.

Ms. Cameron asked about students with IEP's she had seen several questions about that on-line.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated students with IEP's are included in the learning activities and will hear from their teachers.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated these are not school days and the District is not required to provide full services. Plans in place are so students do not regress in their already developed skills.

The language from the Department of Education was for Districts to provide supplemental enrichment not new learning. The objective is to provide equity throughout the State supporting and maintaining skills not to introduce new learning.

Ms. Erdmann asked what this means for the end of the semester. Will students receive full credit? And what will graduating students use for credits?

Principal Puglisi responded to Mr. Erdmann's questions stating she and regional High School principals will be meeting on Monday, 3/23/20 to discuss all those issues. She stated they will discuss the best way to manage going forward.

Ms. Erdmann asked how students would be ending the year. Principal Puglisi stated she understands the confusion and believes students should receive full credit for the year. One of the possibilities is a Pass-Fail Model to make things equitable for all students. This too will depend on the Department of Education.

Ms. Cameron was interested in knowing how the District would deliver the content that kids need to advance to the next grade level. Ms. Cameron also asked how this information was being communicated to parents.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated students will not be penalized for what is beyond their control. There is going to be a gap to fill. She mentioned 2nd graders who have not completed 1st grade and the need to develop curriculum to catch them up. There is a part of the year the students will not get back and every consideration will be given to help them achieve.

- This program will be going live tomorrow (Wednesday 3/18/2020)
- The overall goal of the District's approach is to keep kids in contact with the school and maintaining their skills during closure. We are not trying to replicate the school day, but we are making our best effort to keep the students engaged.

Student Needs

- Laptops and Internet Access has been made available for all who need it.

Mr. Warnock asked if the District was satisfied that all students in need of computers and internet access had been reached. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District had anticipated the needs of the students and believe the 40 laptops passed out this morning met the need.

- Free Lunch is available to all who need it.
 - Pick-Up sites are currently in Gloucester, but we are working on adding locations.
 - MESD has donated all perishables to help support the effort.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District is working with Rockport and Gloucester to provide free lunch to any student who would like to participate. Additional sites are planned for pickup of lunches in Essex, Rockport and Manchester. Sites will be posted on the school web site when identified.

Ms. Erdmann stated she was very impressed and appreciative of how quickly the staff turned the needs of the students around without better information from the State.

Ms. Weld stated emails from the school Principals were very comforting for parents and parents are looking forward to hearing from the Principals regularly. She hopes the emails will continue. Ms. Erdman stated it would be helpful for parents to hear from guidance counselors too. Principal Puglisi assured the Committee that all guidance counselors are available for parents and students.

Mr. Warnock asked about autonomy and local choice. Was it possible for the District to act in its best interest and suggested Committee members discuss with neighboring communities what they were doing with regard to learning and the shut-down? Superintendent stated it is important to be respectful and responsible for all and believes the District is close to keeping the train moving forward.

Social Distancing: This is Not a Snow Day

7) Continued Business

- Executive Order on Public Meeting – Public Meeting on Webex is the implementation of the Executive Order.
- Essex Elementary Playground Replacement Update

Mr. Warnock reported the Committee has maintained its schedule to deliver the new EES playground by the end of summer. He thanked everyone in the working group who kept things moving even with all that was going on with Covid-19.

The group met with 2 representatives and selected Kompan a company with a new wood-based line of playground equipment. With the selection the EES playground will receive additional discounts and become a show place for the Kompan company.

Mr. Warnock stated this has been an intensive process including a survey of students, teachers and residents. The survey has received 130 responses. Ms. Cameron indicated that number of was a good representative sample and expressed concern that additional responses may slow the process. Mr. Warnock stated he was aware but would like to keep the survey open. Ms. Cameron stated that was fine as long as funding and schedule were not impacted.

Mr. Urbas stated the timeline was tight but doable. Kompan is a reliable vendor who will listen to feed back and adjust designs accordingly. Additionally, Kompan will drive the schedule.

Mr. Warnock concluded by stating in two weeks we will know more on the timeline and indicated in the survey there were 40-50 volunteers identified for a community build.

- FY19 E&D Certification Updates for FY20 and FY21

Mr. Urbas stated funds in the General Fund had increased due to interest on the Memorial School bonds and the insurance check reimbursing the District for the Bridge restoration. The Collaborative Group has discussed General Fund increase and the District's plan to utilize the funds for capital project. However, according to State law the Towns need to be informed when there is an Excess and Deficiency for a given fiscal year.

That said the Towns will be informed and have 45 days to respond to the information. Mr. Urbas proposes moving \$489,109 into the District's Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Warnock moved to amend the FY19 budget by transferring into Stabilization (following the Excess and Deficiency confirmation) \$489,109.00, Ms. Wolf seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Fitzgibbon abstaining.

Ms. Cameron moved to affirm the District's proposed use of \$250K from reserves to the FY21 operating budget as a revenue source, Ms. Weld seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Fitzgibbon abstaining.

- FY21 Budget Update

Mr. Urbas was happy to inform the Committee that the FY21 Health Insurance increase was decreased to 3%. The decrease was achieved through negotiating with the provider and indicating the District may go out to bid. Additionally, District's claims were low due to the implementation of higher deductibles and employee HAR's negotiated in the new contract. Mr. Urbas stated overall, it is good news for the District.

8) School Committee Comment – There were no additional comments this evening.

C. Adjourn

Mr. Warnock moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Cameron seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.