



**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES July 21, 2020**

<b>Meeting:</b>	School Committee
<b>Date:</b>	July 21, 2020
<b>Location:</b>	Via Webex
<b>Attendees:</b>	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Sarah Wolf, Chairperson Shannon Erdmann, Vice Chairperson Ken Warnock Ann Cameron Eric Bourke Theresa Whitman
<b>Absent:</b>	
<b>Guests:</b>	Frank Serreti, Powers and Sullivan, Joanne Maino, MS Principal, Patricia Puglisi, HS Principal, Jennifer Roberts, EES Principal
<b>Recorded by:</b>	Gail Hunter

**AGENDA**

**A. Call to Order** – Ms. Erdmann called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

**B. Business Meeting Open Session**

**1) Public Comment** –

Joanne Seaman, META Co-President and School Nurse – Ms. Seaman stated she was concerned about a distance of less than 6 feet separating children and strongly believes no masks will be unsafe. Ms. Seaman acknowledges information is changing daily and understands that children

younger than 10 are less likely to transmit the virus. She encourages the School Committee to identify the best remote learning program as possible.

Abbey Donnelly, META Co-President and Teacher – Ms. Donnelly reiterated Ms. Seaman’s comments encouraging the School Committee to consider remote learning with a gradual phased in approach to returning children to the classroom. She stated all teachers want to get back to classroom teaching, but they feel it is important to accomplish that safely. She is honored to work in the District and wants all teachers and students to safely return to school and if that is not possible to work remotely until it is safe to return.

Kristin McLaughlin – Ms. McLaughlin would like the School Committee to hear from parents and doctors who support opening schools. Ms. McLaughlin pointed out that only 30 kids have died in the US from Covid-19 and the health risk for children is extremely low. She encourages the District to plan to go back to school and when all pros and cons are weighed it is the kids who will suffer if schools do not reopen.

Phillip Furse – Mr. Furse stated virtual learning is taking a toll on school age children who are suffering from depression because of isolation. Children need the socialization school provides.

Andrew Burnett – Teacher at EES Mr. Burnett stated the environment children are returning to in the classroom will take an emotional toll. Nothing will be the same. There will be no play groups or meetings on the rug. Children will be expected to sit at their desks 6 feet apart, there will be no lunchrooms. Mr. Burnett is concerned the new experience may not be better than remote learning.

Tamar Lipof a physician in Beverly stated Massachusetts has done a great job at managing Covid-19 and believes it is time for children to return to school. As a Mom and physician, she supports going back to school.

## **2) Reorganization –**

Superintendent Beaudoin asked for nominations for Chairperson of the School Committee.

*Mr. Warnock moved to nominate Ms. Wolf as Chairperson, Ms. Cameron seconded the motion. The motion passed with all School Committee members present and sworn in voting to approve Ms. Wolf’s nomination.*

Ms. Wolf thanked Ms. Erdmann for her time as Chairperson and requested all on the phone to mute their phones. Ms. Wolf asked for nominations for Vice Chairperson.

*Mr. Warnock moved to nominate Ms. Erdmann as Vice Chairperson, Ms. Wolf seconded the motion. The motion passed with all School Committee members present and sworn in voting to approve Ms. Erdmann’s nomination.*

Ms. Wolf proposed the following subcommittee appointments:

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann)
- Finance Committee (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann)
- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Theresa Whitman)
- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock)

*Ms. Cameron moved to approve the slate as proposed, Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. The motion passed with all School Committee members present and sworn in voting to approve.*

### **3) Chairperson's Report –**

Ms. Wolf had no report this evening.

### **4) Student Report –**

Our student representative is taking the summer off. We look forward to Lukas rejoining us in September.

### **5) Consent Agenda**

- Acceptance of Warrants –
- Minutes – 7.7.2020

*Ms. Cameron moved to accept the Consent Agenda with the minutes as edited, Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion and abstained from approving #1072 of the warrants. The motion passed.*

### **6) Sub-Committee Reports**

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – Report

Ms. Cameron stated the new Memorial School project remains on time and on budget. The school will be ready for move in late August. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated the building is not yet ready for site visits, but all is going smoothly. Mr. Urbas stated the budget for the project is progressing smoothly with a complete budget review scheduled.

- Finance Committee (Anne Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – Report

Ms. Erdmann reported there is nothing new to report from Collaboration meetings, however the group will review the end of school year funding later this month.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Theresa Whitman) – No Report

The Policy Committee will be making policy changes related to Covid-19 as changes are and discussed and approved by the School Committee. Superintendent asked the Policy Committee copy her on all changes to policy.

- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – No Report

### **7) Continued Business**

- FY19 Financial Audit (visit from Powers & Sullivan)

Mr. Serreti thanked the District for their cooperation in preparing and providing information in a timely manner. For FY19 there were fewer adjustments due to the implementation of policy and procedure changes and with additional accounting support for the complex and sometimes tedious reporting FY19 reports were received in a timely, complete and accurate manner. Transactions were also completed according to policies and procedures and the audit of cash reconciliations were complete and accurate.

Mr. Serreti stated the District:

- Fund balance was \$2.3M
- Debt service of \$179K.
- FY 19 OPEB contribution was \$499K

Additional financial statements were made by Mr. Serreti, however, his statements were interrupted with participants exiting and joining the meeting.

#### Management Letter Recommendations:

Timeliness of Grant Reimbursement Requests – Powers and Sullivan recommends the District implement procedures to ensure that drawdowns for education grants are being requested on a monthly basis.

Framework for Assessing and Improving Cybersecurity – Powers and Sullivan recommended the management assess the risk exposure to a cyber-attack. Cyber threat prevention has been and will continue to be an ongoing , routine management process. The District will examine the potential for a third-party external review in the coming fiscal year.

Written job descriptions for all Business Office personnel. The School Committee Policy Subcommittee has been tasked with reviewing job descriptions for those few remaining positions in the Business Office that do not have one.

Financial Policies and Procedures – Powers and Sullivan continues to recommend that the District document and formally adopt it financial policies. We also recommend that the District document the Treasury function, accounts payable and accounts receivable in electronic format.

Additionally, Powers and Sullivan recommended that management follow the best practices for establishing and documenting their internal control system using the COCO internal Control Framework. The business manager and financial data analyst have met on several occasions during the current fiscal year to document its internal control system in accordance with the COSO framework. This work is ongoing and is on track to be completed during the next fiscal year.

Ms. Cameron stated the District has good practices and will complete a risk assessment. She noted job descriptions have made good progress, Policy Subcommittee will complete the job

description review this year. Ms. Cameron noted that from the Management Letter in 2010 the District has gained a lot of experience around building and managing an organization.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the management letter was a credit to the internal structure of the District from where we were and where we are 10 years later. She thanked Mr. Serreti for joining the meeting this evening and presenting the FY19 Audit.

- FY20 OPEB Trust Contribution

*Ms. Cameron moved to approve \$525,677.00 to be invested in PRIT as the District contribution for OPEB, Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

- VOTE OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

*Ms. Erdmann moved to approve the refinancing for the MERSD Bond, Ms. Cameron seconded the motion. The motion passed by a voice vote with all eligible School Committee members voting in support of refinancing: Mr. Warnock, Ms. Whitman, Ms. Cameron, Ms. Wolf and Mr. Bourke.*

- I, Gail M. Hunter the District Secretary of the Regional School District School Committee (the “Committee”) of the Manchester Essex Regional School District, Massachusetts (the “District”), certify that at a meeting of the Committee held July 21, 2020, of which meeting all members of the Committee were duly notified and at which a quorum was present, the following votes were unanimously passed, all of which appear upon the official record of the Committee in my custody:
- Voted: that in order to reduce interest costs, the District Treasurer is authorized to issue refunding bonds, at one time or from time to time, pursuant to Chapter 44, Section 21A of the General Laws, or pursuant to any other enabling authority, to refund all or a portion of the District’s \$5,000,000 General Obligation School Bonds dated December 15, 2009 maturing on and after February 15, 2021 (collectively, the “Refunded Bonds”) and that the proceeds of any refunding bonds issued pursuant to this vote shall be used to pay the principal, redemption premium, if any, and interest on the Refunded Bonds and costs of issuance of the refunding bonds.
- Further Voted: that the sale of the District’s \$2,155,000 General Obligation Refunding Bonds of 2020 dated July 30, 2020 (the “Bonds”), to BNY Mellon Capital Markets, LLC at the price of \$2,610,789.61, plus accrued interest, if any, is hereby approved and confirmed. The Bonds shall be payable on February 15 of the years and in the principal amounts and bear interest at the respective rates, as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Interest Rate</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Interest Rate</u>
2021	\$260,000	5.00%	2026	\$210,000	5.00%
2022	210,000	5.00	2027	210,000	5.00
2023	210,000	5.00	2028	210,000	5.00
2024	210,000	5.00	2029	210,000	5.00
2025	210,000	5.00	2030	215,000	5.00

- Further Voted: that in connection with the marketing and sale of the Bonds, the preparation and distribution of a Notice of Sale and Preliminary Official Statement dated July 8, 2020, and a final Official Statement dated July 15, 2020, each in such form as may be approved by the District Treasurer, be and hereby are ratified, confirmed, approved and adopted.
- Further Voted: to authorize the execution and delivery of a Refunding Escrow Agreement to be dated July 30, 2020, between the District and U.S. Bank National Association, as Refunding Escrow Agent.
- Further Voted: that the District Treasurer and the Chair of the Committee be, and hereby are, authorized to execute and deliver a continuing disclosure undertaking in compliance with SEC Rule 15c2-12 in such form as may be approved by bond counsel to the District, which undertaking shall be incorporated by reference in the Bonds for the benefit of the holders of the Bonds from time to time.
- Further Voted: that we authorize and direct the District’s Treasurer and Director of Finance to establish post issuance federal tax compliance and continuing disclosure procedures in such forms as the District Treasurer, Director of Finance and bond counsel deem sufficient, or if such procedures are currently in place, to review and update said procedures, in order to monitor and maintain the tax-exempt status of the Bonds and to comply with relevant securities laws.
- Further Voted: that any certificates or documents relating to the Bonds (collectively, the “Documents”), may be executed in several counterparts, each of which shall be regarded as an original and all of which shall constitute one and the same document; delivery of an executed counterpart of a signature page to a Document by electronic mail in a “.pdf” file or by other electronic transmission shall be as effective as delivery of a manually executed counterpart signature page to such Document; and electronic signatures on any of the Documents shall be deemed original signatures for the purposes of the Documents and all matters relating thereto, having the same legal effect as original signatures.
- Further Voted: that each member of the Committee, the District Secretary, the District’s Director of Finance and the District Treasurer be and hereby are,

authorized to take any and all such actions, and execute and deliver such certificates, receipts or other documents as may be determined by them, or any of them, to be necessary or convenient to carry into effect the provisions of the foregoing votes.

- I further certify that the votes were taken at a meeting open to the public, that no vote was taken by secret ballot, that a notice stating the place, date, time and agenda for the meeting (which agenda included the adoption of the above votes) was filed with the District Secretary and the Town Clerks of each of the member towns of Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts (together, the “Town Clerks”) and a copy thereof posted in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in or on the municipal buildings in which the offices of the Town Clerks and the District Secretary are located, or in accordance with an approved alternative method of notice prescribed or approved by the Massachusetts Attorney General as set forth in 940 CMR 29.03(4), at least 48 hours, not including Saturdays, Sundays.

#### **8) Superintendent’s Report –**

- Fall 2020 Reopening Update & Planning Report

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the outstanding question is which direction best suits Manchester/Essex? The documents with survey data creates a snapshot for the Committee to pursue through August 10, 2020. Safety is the priority.

The Department of Education has asked Districts to prioritize in person learning. However, all Districts must be prepared to go fully remote at any time.

In person for all students with social distancing, masks for grades 2 to 12. The logistics for teachers is 3-6 feet of social distancing with returning one class with one teacher.

Manchester/Essex cannot return to school with 20 students in a classroom. Groups would be identified as Green and White with one group in the classroom and the second group sitting elsewhere. This presents problems for planning from the beginning.

A hybrid return with 50% of the 1,400 students in at one time day to day or week to week to be decided. Teachers can live stream classrooms to the home. This redefines what it means to be in school. The challenge is what does at home and at school mean?

High School offers a full program assuming students attend every other day over 2 days the students and teachers interact with more than the recommended 15 to 20 individuals and if they are moving around the building there are more interactions. It has been recommended that the curriculum be modified by minimizing elective programs. Hybrid does not allow for the typical High School program.

The hybrid system works better at the Elementary and Middle School levels. This would put parents and kids at home day to day or week to week.

Budget Challenges:

➤ PPE for the school year	\$350K
➤ Custodial services an additional	\$120K
➤ Technology	\$250K
➤ Staff adjustments	\$300K
➤ Transportation	\$400K
➤ Additional nursing staff	<u>\$100K</u>

\$1,520,000.00

These budget numbers include replacement staff following projected loss of 20% of current staff due to underlying conditions. Transportation in person and hybrid will require bus monitors additional monitors will be required in school. There will be a walking plan protocol in schools. Students come in walk to assigned class and take their seats. It will take awhile to get kids use to moving around the buildings.

The cost numbers are estimates and do not include the possibility of grant funding. Additional expenses are estimated between \$500K to \$2M.

What we Know

Health and safety is the first priority. In person learning is ideal. There are two options: in person requires back to school or a second possibility teachers teach out of classrooms and the District improves remote learning. The outstanding question is which path do we go down:

- Full in person
- Full hybrid
- Full in person at Elementary with 4.5 feet of social distancing.
- Split in person at Elementary
- Full remote at Middle School
- Full remote High School

Determine hybrid model is it day to day or week to week. Districts on the North Shore are aiming to develop a common model.

Mr. Burnett was correct when he described the “new” classroom. It will be important to meet the Social Emotional needs of the students the instructional program will be different, small groups and working together will not be happening.

Ms. Cameron asked if the budget for full in school was the lower projected number of \$500K. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that was correct indicating the State budget remains an



unknown. Ms. Cameron stated the District could make the investment and then be directed to go full remote.

Ms. Cameron suggested pursuing a hybrid model with special needs students in person in school. Students completing lab work would also be in school and the campus would open for when students need to see teachers face to face. Ms. Wolf stated Ms. Cameron was describing remote learning with kids having time with classes to complete lab work. Ms. Wolf stated she thought hybrid model is complicated.

Mr. Bourke supports in person for the elementary schools. He believes younger kids need more guidance and older kids are better suited for the remote option. Mr. Bourke asked if teachers would be wearing face shields vs. masks. Superintendent Beaudoin stated teachers will wear both face shields and masks.

Ms. Erdmann stated she was torn and thought it was important for high school students to have the full program. She expressed concern that high school students would not have access to leveled classes, electives or AP classes in a hybrid model.

Superintendent Beaudoin addressed social distancing. DESE guidance allows for classroom distancing of 3 feet to 6 feet while the CDC guidelines call for 6 feet of social distancing. Superintendent Beaudoin would like the Committee to define the base for social distancing and with that decision made some program options will be eliminated.

Ms. Wolf stated she is in favor of 6 feet stating children understand they need to be 6 feet apart and that it is a safe distance.

Mr. Warnock stated safety comes first for students and teachers and suggested school start with staff getting comfortable and students coming in for a staggered start while developing a comfortable distance.

Ms. Whitman asked if there were desks at EES. Superintendent Beaudoin stated desks had been delivered to EES and were in the classrooms. Ms. Whitman understands CDC guidelines call for 6 feet of social distancing and asked how teachers will interface with small children. She is concerned the teachers new role will be enforcer. Her final question was around the 20% attrition rate for teachers and could Superintendent Beaudoin be more specific.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated one school in the District is already at the 20% range and she will have a better sense over the coming weeks how the attrition rate will impact the District.

Teachers as enforcer at this point there is no clear feed back on how this will work but it is important to follow the guidelines. This is how education worked in the past there is a possibility classrooms could leverage technology. The classrooms are going to feel stilted, but it is important to adhere to safety guidelines.

Ms. Whitman believes it is important to maintain 6 feet of social distancing. Ms. Erdmann agrees. Mr. Harrington stated he is Director of Operations at a charter school and they have decided to be in school one week in and one week out with 6 feet of social distancing.

*Ms. Erdmann moved to determine 6 feet social distancing as the standard for in person classes in the District, Ms. Whitman seconded the motion. The motion passed.*

Superintendent Beaudoin stated that rules out full in person and 6 feet is achievable at the elementary level in a hybrid model. Middle School Principal Maino stated 6 feet does not work in the Middle School 6 feet allows for only 7 to 12 students in a classroom. High School Principal Puglisi stated in the High School there would be 50 sections with 10 students in a class and it would be difficult to teach elective programs. In High School teachers would focus on core programming. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District would need to hire additional staff and move students to other areas of the building.

Principal Maino and Principal Puglisi agree fully remote programming would allow for the secondary schools to offer full programming. They support the remote model.

Ms. Cameron believes it is important to address the needs of kids who cannot be at home and remote learning does not work for students with special needs.

Ms. Wolf stated there needs to be a tiered response for students with special needs, kids doing labs and the District needs to determine which students need face to face instruction at all levels. She believes it is important for classes to get together safely. Ms. Wolf concluded the School Committee is recommending Hybrid Model for K-5 and Remote Model for Middle and High Schools.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked to clarify the School Committee policy decisions to satisfy the District and create a plan. The Department of Education asked for a plan to support in person education with a childcare component. Many parents are in need for childcare especially if the elementary school is in a hybrid model. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the more the School Committee discusses the decisions the better the public will understand the decisions are not based on emotions and in part support the instructional needs of the District.

Six feet tracks to fact-based hybrid model in elementary school and remote model for middle and high schools. The draft plan will be based on guidelines determined by the School Committee. Additionally, the District needs to know who is returning to school, who will require transportation and the public schools may have to provide in person services.

Ms. Wolf asked about the hybrid model and streaming quality for remote instructions. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the objective of streaming is to provide a first step and for students at home to work in collaborative groups of peers not to just focus on a camera from the classroom.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked the Committee for their feedback on a staggered start, resources to support in home learning and to consider outsourcing remote learning with a State contract.

Mr. Harrington stated he is in favor of determining the number of parents who want to stay with remote learning. Mr. Warnock asked for Ms. Wolf to reset what the Committee needs to decide this evening.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the Committee has decided 6 feet keeps students safe. Middle and High School students transmit the virus like adults. The Committee in seeking a balance decided the quality of programming at the Middle and High Schools is better achieved through remote learning.

Mr. Bourke stated some younger kids have a barrier with technology and the challenges impact some kids more than others. Ms. Cameron stated the best educational program is face to face and can be achieved safely at the elementary age.

Ms. Erdmann agrees with Mr. Bourke with the elementary program hybrid split weekly. And Middle and High Schools full remote and scale up as conditions allow. Ms. Erdmann asked for additional budget information given the decisions made this evening.

Ms. Whitman stated she is concerned the elementary kids need consistency and she believes week in and week out may be better than day to day. Ms. Whitman is in favor of hybrid and full remote for Middle and High Schools.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked the Committee if they were in favor of a staggered start. Ms. Cameron is not in favor of a staggered start Ms. Wolf, Ms. Erdmann and Mr. Warnock are okay with a staggered start. Ms. Whitman asked how many school days were on the calendar for 2020-2021. Superintendent Beaudoin stated she believes there will be flexibility around the total number of days in the school year.

Mr. Harrington suggested prioritizing the elementary school to be as consistent as possible.

Ms. Wolf asked about childcare for elementary aged children. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the Ipswich Y served as an emergency placement for first responders and the District will explore partnering with them for childcare services.

The Advisory Group will meet and includes META co-presidents, parents, principals and School Committee representatives. Advisory Group meetings are not open to the public. However, all stake holders are represented in the group and information from the meetings will be posted on the District website.

## **9) School Committee Comment –**

Ms. Whitman reminded the School Committee of their commitment to work towards equity in the District and suggested the one tangible thing the School Committee could do as a group is decide on a book to read together.

Ms. Wolf recommended the Committee read How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi.

## **10) Adjourn**

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