

NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, October 7, 2021, 7 PM

REMOTE MEETING-GOOGLE MEET AGENDA

FINAL Minutes

Attending: Carla Halpern, Barbara Doyle, Mariam Warner, Elizabeth Devlin, Johanna Bartlett, Beth Erviti, Anna Wetherby (minutes), members; Kelley Sullivan, principal; Jennifer Culkeen, superintendent; Bruce Turner, treasurer; Melinda Hazen, New Salem member

Public: Gosia Spooner, Jill Putala, Dara LaPlante, Christine Morin, Anne Martin, Anna Seeger, Kelsey Alvarez, Rachael Basdekis, S. E. Vular, Karyn Briand, Kelly Mailloux, Lisa Aubin

A. Call Meeting to Order -7:04

B. Public Hearings

- Anna Seeger - letter sent to the school committee and on file - concerns regarding COVID policies
- Mask wearing moved to the top of the agenda
 - Responses from the teachers:
 - Interested in community safety and keeping everyone in school
 - Approach the issue little by little- addressing certain aspects immediately and other can wait
 - Immediately: absolutely everyone should wear a mask when children are in the building or provide a note from a doctor for exemptions
 - More testing - pool testing, would like more efforts made and have parents respond to 'will students partake in the testing' - parents need to give feedback either way on testing
 - DESE guidelines are not helpful and speak to specifics and there are grey areas (3 feet? 6 feet? Contact tracing?)
 - Teachers would like broad and timely communication when there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the building without breaching confidentiality
 - Communication with the classroom teacher of anyone testing positive should know who the positive test is from and help with the contact tracing
 - More time for professional development to understand and meet the DESE guidelines
 - A concern of mixing of grades makes distancing and tracing harder - until details are known, mixing of grades should not happen
 - Meals - continue to monitor over the next month to see how things are going
 - Parents who wish to make accommodations for snacks have the ability to do so
 - Teachers would like the staff to be vaccinated or provide weekly testing at their own expense
 - Written document shared with all families of what the procedure will be if a positive COVID case is in the school
 - Question on pool testing: Karyn Briand - pool testing for children would be reassuring but details of the size of the pool needs to be known and the implications and effects on families should a positive test come back in the pool
 - Anne (school nurse) - there is a second test for a positive pool test - no need for the entire pool to quarantine. A whole class will no longer be quarantined.
 - Kelley- slow in pushing out information on testing as the state has been slow at getting the tests available. There is no one available to conduct the pool testing. The state does not have the staff to conduct the tests.
 - Carla will reach out to Nan Meade to see if she would like to work on this
 - Lunch is outside, DESE has no restrictions on eating outside
 - The tent comes down on November 15
 - Lunch will need to move inside soon - there is a schedule for the lunches inside
 - Cohorts are meeting outside

- DESE has no guidelines about distancing inside. CDC has recommendations for masks and handwashing
 - Small groups are the best for helping students catch up
 - Cannot mandate vaccinations for staff- part of the bargaining agreement
 - Community sings is taking place outside, will be streamed when it is too cold
- Anna Seeger - response to the information:
 - Not having classes quarantine does not seem likely due to the timing of contact tracing for a positive case for a close contact
 - Being clear about the quarantine will make more people sign up for the pool testing
 - School should come up with own standards for good practices, not just following "DESE has no standards"
 - Appreciates that the teachers have concerns and that some of the concerns (but not all) have been addressed
- Gosia Spooner- thinks that SRS has good standards for keeping safety
 - The school does make a stand
 - Appreciates that masks are not required outside
 - All the bad things that are happening are happening outside of the school
 - Mixing the grades is not a concern as the students mix outside
 - Swift River is going above and beyond to make kids happy
- Jennifer - DESE does have standards and has relaxed their standards based on reports and research of DPH and other professionals
 - Close contacts are only indoor
 - Protocols for responding to COVID-19 are updated for 2021-22
 - Following what DESE and DPH are giving as directives
- Carla - there is a mandate for masks going into November
 - There are a lot of moving parts and it will take time. Looking to create a COVID subcommittee
 - Suggests Johanna and Melinda to meet and suggest what needs to be addressed as a subcommittee

C. Warrants – Record in minutes with numbers

4013 10/5/2021 \$420.00; 4012 10/5/2021 \$37,385.31; 4011 9/20/2021 \$233.88; 4010 9/20/2021 \$37,741.90; 4009 9/8/2021 \$126.29; 4008 9/8/2021 \$46,125.42; 2807 10/5/2021 \$2,701.83; 2806 9/20/2021 \$1,012.36; 2805 9/8/2021 \$4,431.98; 8043 8/19/2021 \$44,256.68; 8042 8/19/2021 \$28,551.31; 8060 9/16/2021 \$87,096.89; 8070 9/30/2021 \$93,471.44; 8071 9/30/2021 \$43,302.60; 8072 9/30/2021 \$46,659.80; 406 9/16/2021 \$77,983.62; 407 9/30/2021 \$79,102.36; 806 9/16/2021 \$25,742.37; 807 9/30/2021 \$25,756.92

D. Superintendent's Report

- Friday 10.8 is the first U28 professional development day, "Unlearning Oppression" teaching justice
- Bruce is retiring earlier than expected - the job description is on SchoolSpring. The deadline is November 1 for applying
- Finished ESSR funds applications. **Thanks, Pam for making sure it was all done and on time!**
 - Hiring school adjustment councilors for social-emotional growth
 - Funding summer and after school programs to scaffold the learning
 - New assessment tools
 - Thanks to the people who attended meetings and gave ideas and feedback
- Attended meeting with legislators with members of Wendell FinCom and Shutesbury School Committee
- Received rural aid in all 4 schools
 - NSW will receive \$36,588

E. Director of Finance and Operations Report

- Carla thanks Bruce for all his works
- The HVAC system is being finalized
 - Boilers connected to heat system and energy management system
- MSBA - waiting for final reimbursement from the state - might come in February once then give final

approval. Currently out over 100k. E&D may be impacted as neither town could support the project and the school district cannot borrow money

- Will eventually be worked out financially but will take over a year
- Working on budget. Plan to have the first draft at next meeting

F. Principal's Report

- Larry Ramsdell will be retiring on October 12
 - The first recipient of Swift River Action Award
- Hired Dana Peterson as new evening custodian
- 6th-grade candy bar bingo under the tents. Raised over 600 for nature's classroom
- Seeking 2-3 more paraprofessionals and after school help
- Met with towns on September 29 to look at options
 - Will drill tests wells to see if a new well will solve the problem
 - Towns can use COVID money for test drilling
 - Unsure as to the ongoing costs for the treatment system
 - Bruce has been in contact with the drilling consultant
 - Will be sampling water from neighboring properties to see what the PFAS levels are
 - Call from DEP this morning to give an update
 - Looking also at the water storage tank for breachers in the system

G. Committee Reports

- Report from Mahar Representatives
 - Still adjusting to COVID - everyone is masking indoors but everyone is eligible for the vaccine
 - 82% of the staff is vaccinated
 - Held lipsync (outside)
 - A vaccine mandate would need to be negotiated with the union
 - A subcommittee is looking at the parameters of a vaccine mandate for staff
 - There cannot be a mandate for the students
 - Petersham has a 100% staff vaccination rate
 - Revising the dress code - belief that it is currently sexist as how it is applied and interpreted
- Collaborative for Education Services
 - Budget looks good
 - DYS - reviewed all the great things teachers are doing with DYS students
 - Priority on diversity in the staff
 - The new director is very excited and engaged
- Budget and Personnel – Next Meeting – October 18, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.
- Joint Supervisory – Next Meeting – November 15, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.
 - Jen received feedback from the evaluation

H. October Items

- SRS Water System Update - covered in principal's report
- Critical Race Theory
 - Carla - As a society, we have yet to achieve racial and social justice. Recently there has been more activism and there is backlash
 - CRT has been around for decades - it is a college and adult level study
 - Looks at the culture and laws and history through a racially aware lens
 - Many laws have racist roots, such as social security
 - This is relevant to us as we are the board of an educational body
 - CRT is not relevant to what we teach but we need to take a stand for racial and social justice
 - Not sure where the statement should be and who the audience is for the drafted letter
 - Johanna- thanks Carla for writing the letter

- It is a good time to make a statement as CRT is a 'lightning rod'
- Good teachers have been addressing this (at the high school level) before it had a name
- Would like to have the letter in place as something
- Elizabeth offers to join in the revision process
- Beth feels it needs to be something the committee agrees on wholeheartedly but the letter needs a little more work. Looking for a creative way to come up with more adjustments
 - Who is the audience? Is the letter intended to educate about CRT?
 - Carla is unsure who the audience is, but we cannot be silent on this issue

Johanna moves that Carla and Elizabeth works on crafting a statement in support of CRT at that aims at consensus, Beth 2nds

- Vote taken by role call - passes unanimously

· Home School Applications – Discussion and Vote

- Beth moves to accept homeschool applications 12, 13, 14, Elizabeth 2nds
 - Passes with one abstention

· Mask Wearing – Discussion and Possible Vote - discussed earlier, no need to vote

· Policy Update and Review:

First Reading on:

- DJ - Purchasing
- EB – Safety Program
- EBCD – Emergency Plans
- ECA – Buildings and Grounds Security
- EFC – Free & Reduced-Price Food Services
- FA – Facilities Development Goals

No vote needed

I. Future Business

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

J. Approval of Minutes:

- September 2, 2021

Beth moves to approve, Barbara 2nds

Vote taken by role call - passes with one abstention, one technical issue

K. Adjournment

Beth moves to adjourn, Elizabeth seconds - passes unanimously. Meeting 8:32