

**THURSDAY, November 4, 2021**  
**REMOTE MEETING**  
**THIS MEETING HAS BEEN RECORDED**  
**NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (7:00 P.M.)**  
**FINAL MINUTES**

Attending: Carla Halpern, Barbara Doyle, Mariam Warner, Elizabeth Devlin, Johanna Bartlett, Melinda Hazen, Beth Erviti (minutes), members; Kelley Sullivan, principal; Jennifer Culkeen, superintendent; Bruce Turner, Director of Finance & Operations;

Gosia Spooner, Tina Newman, Dara LaPlante, Christine Morin, Anna Seeger, Danielle Boucher and Lauren Cerillo (Mahar), Jill Putala, Lisa Aubin, Chelsia Torchia, Allison Barnes, Rachael Basdekis, Srah Bauch, Amanda Brown Gillian Budine, M. Burke, Ciji cody, Z. Dziedzic, Peter Frost (Mahar), Hannah Hunting, Sara Jenney, Jake Johnson, Angela LeBlanc, Kelly Mailloux, Jennylou Powers, Robyn Vitello, S.E. Vular, Megan W., Michelle Wolfe and guests

**A. Call Meeting to Order 7:02 p.m.**

**B. Public Hearings**

Gosia Spooner thanked Principal Sullivan and Mr. Turner for attending the town meeting to speak on water contamination issues, and thanked SRS nurse (Anna) for keeping accurate and respectful covid information pathways.

Anna Seeger requests that the school redefine what is meant by “close contact” within school grounds to be six feet regardless of masking.

**C. Warrants**

4020	11/3/2021	\$42,487.72,
4019	11/3/2021	\$715.05
4018	9/30/2021	\$1,276.16
4017	8/31/2021	\$1,696.18
4016	7/30/2021	\$2,498.26
4015	10/18/2021	\$35,129.02
4014	10/18/2021	\$217.36
2809	11/3/2021	\$2,027.08
2808	10/18/2021	\$3,858.44
8080	10/14/2021	\$90,408.46
8090	10/28/2021	\$88,204.20
8091	10/28/2021	\$33,768.23
8290	10/26/2021	\$2,036.58

8092	10/28/2021	\$41,069.58
408	10/14/2021	\$81,663.78
409	10/28/2021	\$79,232.37
808	10/14/2021	\$25,742.37
		\$25,742.37
809	10/28/2021	

#### **D. Superintendent's Report**

Next Joint Supervisory meeting Monday November 15. On the agenda will be discussing a pay raise for substitute teachers since SRS pay rates are lower than those in the surrounding district. U28 has applied for ESSER III refunds via grants for each school, with the grants targeting student social/emotional needs, after school and summer programs, professional development for issues related to special needs students, addressing learning loss, and social justice.

October 8 Professional Development Day aimed at Unlearning Oppression was held with a future date planned.

Commissioner Riley extended the mask mandate through January 15, a letter addressing vaccination concerns was sent to parents from DESE and a "Vaccination Bus" has been scheduled to drive to various meet points.

U28 has received rural aid in the amount of \$36,580.66 and is target for addressing regional efficiencies and other issues.

#### **E. Director of Finance and Operations Report**

Bruce reports HVAC project is complete; up and running.

Larry (maintenance) has retired - Congratulations Larry!

The End of Year Report for FY21 has been completed and filed.

The water quality and testing will be done by WhiteWater, a company that has been contracted to monitor chlorine levels. A second company (Hoosatonic) will take over PFAS testing in the future.

#### **F. Principal's Report**

Kelley reported that SRS has 131 students enrolled, with 38 from Wendell, 67 from New Salem, and 26 from Choice. The fall weather has cancelled any further Outdoor Sing but further events will be streamed. Nurse Anna will continue to conduct on campus covid testing. Approximately 40% of students and 50% of staff are involved in covid testing. There are new hires in preschool, 3rd and 4th grades but there is still need for Enchanted Forest help. December 1 is the proposed date for moving indoors, weather being the major factor. Students can currently eat lunch inside only with parental permission. Once indoor school starts, logistics for keeping safe distances will mean there will be 3 classes/time having a meal until all are fed. Kelley met with DEP to check on PFAS levels in the school water and the recommendation is for utilizing a water treatment program. Any and all lead-containing faucets are being replaced.

## **G. Committee Reports**

### **· Report from Mahar Representatives**

Carla reported exciting news on Social Justice events at Mahar HS. Lauren Cerillo and Danielle Boucher are co-advisors to a new Safe and Supportive School group set up in Spring 2020 to address race relations, and other social justice issues. Students have become very active, discussing how to depoliticize conversations about race and racism, and working with representatives from FCOG and other agencies to deal with race issues in Mahar curriculum and among/within each other. Junior year Mahar student Peter Frost spoke on behalf of the new group. This group created and submitted a survey to staff, students, and parents in order to determine trends. Based on the survey results, students have created action plans which now, in year two, are being implemented in an “Awareness Calendar” focusing on inclusion. This calendar includes training on inclusivity via DESE for GLBTQ issues, looking at the Mahar curriculum for bias, and exploring anti-bias workshop options.

Kudos to Mahar student actions expressed.

Carla also reported the committee has decided to open contract negotiations with school staff for the purpose of making covid vaccinations a condition of employment. Also:

The school committee is updating it’s safety plan and bullying policy.

Mahar Juniors and Seniors will share a prom this year since there was none last year thanks to covid concerns.

The school anticipates an uptick in Special Ed referrals.

A Special Ed staff member has been hired who had been terminated from prior coaching job for anti-semitic and racist behavior and had resigned from a prior teaching job. This person willingly addressed these issues with the Mahar hiring entity.

**· Collaborative for Education Services** No meeting.

### **· Budget and Personnel**

**Next Meeting – November 15, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Joint Supervisory**

**Next Meeting – November 15, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.**

## **H. November Items**

### **· Email contacts**

Miriam Warner: [Warner@swiftriverchool.org](mailto:Warner@swiftriverchool.org) Melinda

Hazen: [Hazen@swiftriverschool.org](mailto:Hazen@swiftriverschool.org)

Barbara Doyle: [Doyle@swiftriverschool.org](mailto:Doyle@swiftriverschool.org)

Johanna Bartlett: [Bartlett@swiftriverschool.org](mailto:Bartlett@swiftriverschool.org)

Elizabeth Devlin: [Devlin@swiftriverschool.org](mailto:Devlin@swiftriverschool.org)

Anna Wetherby: [Wetherby@swiftriverschool.org](mailto:Wetherby@swiftriverschool.org)

Beth Erviti: [Erviti@swiftriverschool.org](mailto:Erviti@swiftriverschool.org)

Carla Halpern: [Halpern@swiftriverschool.org](mailto:Halpern@swiftriverschool.org)

Brian B. has resigned from New Salem school committee

A cautionary note: any correspondence or communication involving more than two school committee members on a school committee topic at any one time is a violation of MA law.

- **SRS Water System Update** Covered previously.

- **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

Carla and Elizabeth have modified an original letter submitted for school committee approval by Carla at October's meeting, with their sense the school committee needed to take a stand on the issue of Critical Race Theory.

Beth questioned the reasoning for bringing up a very contentious issue publicly when CRT is not and never will be taught at SRS. She said CRT could easily be misinterpreted by the community at large as a broader, more general discussion of race. She welcomed a broad discussion of race issues.

Carla requested that the letter regarding CRT be read into the minutes for the record, addressed to all stakeholders in SRS.

The letter in draft form reads as follows:

*Dear Stakeholders of Swift River School:*

*We, members of the New Salem/Wendell School Committee, make the following statement with regard to Critical Race Theory in k-12 schools:*

*We support the teaching of Critical Race Theory. We also seek to clarify, for those who are unfamiliar with Critical Race Theory, what this course of study is, and how it relates to elementary education.*

*We recognize, and we do not accept, the recent backlash against Critical Race Theory. Such backlashes are common any time a civil rights movement gains ground.*

*Critical Race Theory is a college-level course of study. It is a framework for analysis that scholars and lawmakers use to study racism and racial inequality in public policy, our legal system, and social structures. Critical Race Theory does not teach children to hate white people or to hate America. Critical Race Theory looks specifically at the role that definitions of race and racial divisions have played in the development of our legal system, our politics, and our entire society.*

*Because it is an adult-level course of study, Critical Race Theory is not taught at Swift River Elementary School. The New Salem/Wendell School Committee does support the age-appropriate teaching of history and other subjects to include voices, perspectives, and histories of peoples who have been marginalized, absent, or misrepresented in our country's history.*

*We recognize that struggles for racial and social justice are complex. We recognize that struggles for racial and social justice are part of our history and part of the human condition. We strive to make Swift River Elementary School a supportive learning environment where our students can make better sense of the world and where we can help them grow into more globally aware adults who can work towards a just world for all.*

*Sincerely,*

*The New Salem-Wendell School Committee  
Swift River Elementary School New  
Salem, MA*

Johanna spoke in support of the letter.

Carla suggested the Committee consider the letter more robustly and return to the discussion in the December meeting.

· **Home School Applications – Discussion and Vote**

Beth moved to consider 2 applications together, Miriam second

Superintendent Culkeen noted that the Committee has little, if any, power to amend home school applications. She stated that one family had failed to provide feedback on students' accomplishments/progress when asked to do so more than once, which was concerning. Carla suggested she could, as a spokesperson for the committee, draft a letter in support of the Superintendent's concern in order to help the family comply with SRS requests.

Vote: all Nay except for Elizabeth and Beth, who abstained: Motion fails.

Johanna moved to authorize Carla to create a plan that will allow the parents involved in this particular application to achieve approval for their education plan.

Elizabeth seconded. Vote: unanimous Aye: authorization passes.

· **Face Mask – Discussion**

Johanna wished to amplify Anna Seegers concerns about the details of contact tracing. There is confusion about rules/procedure that needs to be cleared up.

Miriam asked can we redefine the limits of close contact? Culkeen: we must follow MADPH guidelines. Carla: while we can't change the rules we could perhaps make a school policy specific to SRS. This could be a question for our school attorney.

To be addressed on the December agenda. Meeting needs to include nurse Anna.

· **Family Handbook**

Tabled until next meeting.

· **First Draft of FY23 NSW Budget**

New Salem student numbers down so it's share of the budget down 2%.

With Bruce retiring, the roles for the Treasurer should be redefined, as per the recent job audit. Duties such as check signing should be placed in one description, separate from the duties of finance director.

Superintendent Culkeen stated a proposal to increase the pay rate of school principals 4%, with a concurrent increase in work responsibilities to include summers. Currently, SRS principal is not paid for all summer work. Bruce supported this request. Further discussion to take place in next Committee meeting.

- **Policy Update and Review:**

- First Reading on:**

- GBEC –Drug Free Workplace\*
    - GBGF – Family and Medical Leave Act\*
    - HA – Goals for Negotiations\*
    - HB – Negotiation Legal Status\*

- Second Reading, First Vote on:**

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

- First Vote on Deletion of Policy:**

- GBA-1 – Harassment Policy\*
    - GBAA – Policy on Sexual Harassment\*
    - H – Negotiations\*

Due to length of meeting Carla requested these Policy matters be taken up in the December meeting.

## **I. Future Business**

- **Next Meeting Date – December 2, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.**

- **New Salem/Wendell Policy Committee – December 2, 2021 –6:30 p.m.– No meeting in December (we need a member from New Salem)**

## **J. Approval of Minutes from October 7, 2021**

Johanna moved to accept, Elizabeth seconded. Vote: unanimous Aye: Minutes approved.

## **K. Adjournment**

Johanna moved to adjourn 9:21 p.m. Beth seconded. Roll Call Vote: unanimous Aye: adjournment approved.