

NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, February 4, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
REMOTE MEETING – GOOGLE HANGOUT MEET

Attending: Melissa Burke, Beth Erviti, Johanna Bartlett, Jack Radner, Elizabeth Devlin
Barbara Doyle, April Thompson, Carla Halpern, Anna Wetherby, Kelley Sullivan, Bruce
Turner, Jennifer Culkeen,

Teachers: Robyn Vitello, Patty Savage, Goisa Spooner, Jill Putala, Jennylou Powers,
Karen Nelson, Lisa Aubin, Nancy Mead, Ciji Cody

Public: Cailyn Reed, Corey Eckert, Celesia Torchia, Jessica Morris, Domenic Poli
(Greenfield Recorder), Mariam Maynard-Ford, Rachael Basdekis, Nicole Burton, Marie
Macginnis, Dara LaPlante, Jennifer LeVangie, Jody Bird, Kelesy Alvarez, Michelle
Wolf, Shad, Molly Bremner

A. Call Meeting to Order -7:03

B. Public Hearings

C. Warrants – Record in minutes with numbers

#2814 1/11/21 \$1,179.88

#2815 1/25/21 \$449.67

#4026 1/11/21 \$345.00

#4027 1/25/21 \$31,127.65

#4034 1/25/21 \$224.88

#4035 1/25/21 \$43,649.62

#8150 1/21/21 \$83,200.09

#8151 1/21/21 \$340.38

#8152 1/21/21 \$33,660.63

#8153 1/21/21 \$48,670.56

#8160 2/4/21 \$84,937.46

D. Superintendent's Report

- Flu Vaccine rescinded by governor
- Esser 2 grant money awarded
 - 10k to support social/emotional learning
 - Have until 9/2023 to spend money
 - Pool testing for Swift River, but the cost will fall to the school to cover cost
- Vaccine is being rolled out but teachers have been dropped to level 3 or round 2
- Rob Curtain states that there will be flexibility for accountability (what state does with the results of state testing), not assessment (MCAS still stands)
- Shutesbury is back with 5/6

- Erving is preK-6
- Leverett is K 1 2 with 3&4 next week
- Question about levels of students remaining remote in the other U28 schools
 - All other schools have some students home schooling and some remote
 - Other schools do not need to create the hybrid module
 - There are many configurations depending on the school and available faculty
 - No COVID outbreaks in the U28 schools – some close contacts and individuals quarantining

A. Director of Finance and Operations Report

- a. Esser grant – awarded total \$94,977
- b. State corona prevention grant 6325 – to be spend by end of fiscal year (can on be applied to expenses from last fiscal year)
- c. Door/window project completed. To be closed out by end of fiscal year
- d. Updating air handlers, ending completion, will allow for remote adjusting of the air flow
- e. Health insurance – 2% decrease in health insurance rates for the district
 - i. Saving \$56,569
- f. Chapter 70 up this year – \$718,733 based on House 1 – up from 688k this past year
- g. School choice up \$50k more than budgeted - \$85k for next year
- h. New salem increase 6,303 Wendell 91,755
- FY22 Draft Budget – Discussion

B. Principal's Report

- a. 122 students – 1 moved to Florida
- b. 7 students in person throughout the day at SRS
- c. HVAC work is happening and allows for people to see how the air flow is happening in the building
- d. PEBT cards- for lunch reimbursement distributed to families
 - i. Eligibility of the school community being level 2 , not reflective on individual income
- e. Conferences are wrapping up
- f. Report cards 2.26
- g. Mid year reading bench marks – students making slow but steady progress
- h. Maintenance crew catching up on needed work
- i. Carla thanks Kelley for her leadership this year
- j. Question regarding any students know to be deeply suffering as a result of nearly a year of remote learning
 - i. Not a higher number of concerns, just looks different
- k. Is there anything the school committee can do to help support the families of concern

1.

C. Committee Reports

- Report from Mahar Representatives
 - Voted to go back in a hybrid model on January 21
 - So far, so good, limited trial period due to weather
- Collaborative for Education Services
 - Meeting with interim director
 - Sorting through resumes
 - Hired consulting company to help with strategic planning to help with the next five years
- Budget and Personnel – Next Meeting –
- Joint Supervisory – Next Meeting – March 15, 2021 6:30 p.m.
 - Member towns and schools looking at regional efficiencies

D. February Items

- 2020-2021 Reopening – Phase in Model
 - Corey Eckert – works at Deerfield Elementary School – 247 of 311 are in person 4 days a week, full days. It is going amazingly well. Have had a fair percentage (estimate 10%) in the concern category. Seems higher than normal. It is possible to have in person learning, it is hard, but kids need this. Sees no issues with compliance of masks. Sees teachers as being more comfortable. Frustrated that there was no in-person learning when the numbers were lower in the fall. Pleads for getting students in person
 - Nicole Burton – echoes Corey's statement. Proposes that 6th grade goes back first as it is their last year, small class, can be role models for the younger grades
 - Margie MacGinnis – school cannot fully see if there are students that are struggling at home if that is being considered as a factor for reopening
 - Nancy Mead – numbers are trending better than from the beginning of December, had added her comments in the letter from the SREA
 - Jennylou – thanks the committee for again hearing from the SREA. Read letter from the SREA to the school committee
 - Carla – concerns of SREA appear valid. How many of these concerns can we address with grant money? Double masking, yes. Vaccines, no. Testing? Are we in agreement that hybrid is better than entirely remote?
 - Nancy Mead – double masking is a recommendation currently, not a CDC requirement. The current testing option (pool testing) from DESE is really not viable. Will be looking for better options if possible
 - Carla – hoping teachers are level 3 – getting the first vaccine by March 1 – does that allay any concerns of the teacher's association?
 - Jennylou – yes – a first round of vaccine will make a big difference and allay fears of the teachers

- Barbara – went through CDC website about double masking. Relieved to see the 2nd portion of the letter where the teachers see the negative impact of remote learning. Seeing all schools around us opting for hybrid and being successful, why do we keep the school closed?
- Melissa – hardest decisions made on school committee. With the evidence of all school around us not having a problem with reopening, cannot see a reason to keep the schools closed
- Beth – teachers and staff are not currently allowed to get vaccinated; wonders how many have gotten the vaccine?
- Jack – echoes many of Barbara's feelings. Checking that March is still the reopening date. Is it really necessary to have the two week phase in or can it be sped up? Would like to speed up the return process. Appreciates the return to school handbook.
- Johanna – yes, the school committee can make the decision as to how to return to school.
- Elizabeth – thanks administration for the clarity of the plans. Based on the December survey - how many students will actually be in school (potentially)?
 - Yes – but the information changes all the time and families would be called – looking at approx. 50 students in the building every day
- Elizabeth – current hybrid model still the same plan as September? Yes.
 - Review of the phased in hybrid model – size of Swift River requires alternating cohorts, grades introduced on DESE recommendations
 - Would this still be the model for March? The models have not shifted in U28, just the dates
 - Will there be enough staff? Yes
 - Will eligible staff return? There is a procedure and protocol for this
- Melissa – will a motion need to be made to decide which classes come back and when?
- Carla – asks to hear from SREA about flipping the ages of the return to school. Does that sound reasonable or allay concerns?
- Jennylou – technology serves the littlest learners the least and have the hardest time with impulse control
- Jennifer – bring high needs students back first, then the youngest students who respond less well than the older students
- Jack would like to dispense with the phased in model
- Jack moves to bring the school back to hybrid cohort model on March 1, Melissa 2nd
 - Elizabeth – if all the grades come back (prek-6), is that 66 students and how many in each grade? With the numbers of returning students known, could there be a chance for more students to return more students in specific grades

- Kelley preK 9 every day K 6 in each cohort, 1 7 4 days , 2 10 in each cohort, 3 8 in each cohort, 4 7-8 in each cohort, 5 8-9 in each cohort, 6 8 4 days a week. If more children decide to come back, the numbers would change and the class could switch back to 2 cohorts, 2 days a week.
- Carla – after COVID – will we meet in person? Is it hypocritical to meet remote when asking the teachers and students to return to in-person?
- Beth – supports Jack’s motion and likes that the teachers and families will have a month to prepare
- Barbara – vaccinations are not mandatory
- Jack – responding to Carla – it is entirely different than attending a day school. Unfortunate that the teachers vaccine priority has changed.
- Melissa – we don’t have the negative consequences that the students have by meeting remotely
- Kelley – requests to break the school into two groups – half one week, half the next (prek-3)
- Amended motion - Return to hybrid model ½ the school March 1st, other ½ March 8th – Melissa 2nds
 - Elizabeth – would like to know that Kelley has the time to reflect and think on the motion and new reopening plan. Teachers will be separated in the school and their health and safety is being considered. Same for the students and the staff.
 - Jennifer – we are not voting on a hybrid model on the spot. The administration has the purview to make small changes if necessary
 - Johanna – thrilled that the teachers are hoping to be vaccinated and back in the building by March 1st. Wants the original plan of phased in return to remain in place.
 - Kelley- the current motion will take us past the height of the flu season. The January proposal was for a slow re-entry of 6 weeks
 - Jack – the 6 week phase in was during the spike of cases and before vaccines were available.
 - Beth – CDC website forecast – trend for Franklin County, flat to slightly decreasing. The motion gives parents and teachers something to prepare for and expect. Concerns are still here but they are not huge.
 - Kelley – teachers have done a phenomenal job with remote teaching. They have mastered it but they are most likely exhausted and tired but can return to it if necessary.
 - Nancy Mead – phase in reasons was to help with learning and practicing new routines. Could this be done in three groups?
 - Kelley proposes 3 groups (over 3 weeks)
 - Elizabeth – there is a real responsiveness on administration. Wishes she sees the SREA more supportive of this
- Vote on motion to begin reopening school on March 1 – passes 5 to 3 with 1 abstention

- MCAS Resolution Letter – all schools in U28 wrote letters asking state to not hold MCAS this year. Would need a vote to send the letter. Letter will come from school committee – read letter drafted for different school committee.
 - Beth supports the letter as read
 - Beth moves to accept the letter read, Jack 2nds – passes unanimously
 - Jennifer will send draft to Johanna who will sign it on behalf of the full committee
- 1% Virtual School Issue – Discussion and Vote
 - School committee must take a vote on maintaining the cap
 - Beth moves to not instill a cap on remote learning schools on students from Swift River, April 2nds – passes with 2 abstentions
- Discussion of Regional Agreement
 - Would like to set up a committee with 2 members of each school committee town, town officials and residents at large
 - There is a regionalization committee in Wendell (for Mahar) – those members should be asked to join the elementary level
 - Regional efficacies to be discussed at a future meeting
 - Beth moves that we form regionalization committee of school committee, town officials, and members at large to look at the options for regionalization – Anna 2nds - passes unanimously
- Policy Update and Review:
- Second Reading, First Vote on:
- Anna moves to vote in one vote, Beth 2nd – passes
- Anna moves to vote, Beth 2nd – passes
 - JBB – Educational Equity
 - IHBEA – English Learner Education
 - BEDH – Public Comment at School Committee Meetings

Final Vote on:

Anna moves to vote on all five in one vote, Carla 2nds – passes

Anna moves for final vote on all five policies, Beth 2nd -

- ADDA – Background Checks
- ADDA-R – DCJIS Model CORI Policy
- BBA – School Committee Powers & Duties
- BBBC – School Committee Member Resignation*
- BBBE – Unexpired Term Fulfillment*
- Future Business
- Next Meeting Date – March 4, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
- New Salem/Wendell Policy Committee – March 4, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.

- Approval of Minutes: Beth moves, Jack 2nd to approve with minor corrections – passes with one ab

- January 7, 2021*

- Adjournment – Carla moves Elizabeth 2nd 9:11