

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, July 1, 2020 at 6:00 PM remotely.

Board members present: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino

Board members absent:

Administration present: Dr. Serino, Superintendent of Schools

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Election of Officers

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to nominate Mr. Moore as Chairman. Hearing no other nominations, motion to elect Mr. Moore as chair carried unanimously.

Mr. Moore asked for a nomination for Secretary. Mrs. Geraci made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to nominate Mr. Hicks as Secretary. Hearing no other nominations, motion to elect Mr. Hicks as secretary carried unanimously.

Mr. Moore then asked for a nomination for Treasurer. Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to nominate Mrs. Geraci as Treasurer. Hearing no other nominations, motion to elect Mrs. Geraci as treasurer carried unanimously.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education special session meeting June 24, 2020

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, to approve the minutes from the June 24, 2020 meeting.

In favor of approving the minutes of the June 24, 2020 meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Board Meeting - August 12, 2020 at 7:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School

The board had discussed meeting frequently before the August 12th meeting and committees will begin to meet as well. Utilization will meet remotely on Thursday, July 9th.

Review of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Strategic Coherence Plan

Dr. Serino has asked for this item to be tabled until the next meeting.

Fall 2020 Reopening Guidelines

Dr. Serino reported that they received the reopening guidelines on Monday and they will need to submit a plan to the state by July 24, 2020. She is working to prepare the plan based on the district's plan, cross-referencing it with the guidelines and based on feedback from the unions. Currently, the CEA and AFT do not feel that the reopening plan is supportive of the health and well-being of teachers and Dr. Serino expects to get push-back from other unions as well.

Commissioner Cardona is holding a webinar next week and has invited up to 1,000 people to participate.

Dr. Serino reviewed the current plan, called Adapt, Advance and Achieve. Dr. Serino stated that they have received feedback from district staff with regard to a higher level of concern about their safety in returning to in-school teaching. The state will also send out a survey to all of the districts.

The state is encouraging stable cohorts in grades K through 8. Dr. Serino noted that the district does plan to include preK as well though it may be quite challenging. Groups of students will be kept together and travel together throughout the school day. Dr. Serino believes that the state intends for groups to be kept together, to the extent possible, as that makes contact tracing easier. She added that the trend across the country is that 50 percent of parents are seriously considering not having their child return to school which would mean that the district would need to provide distance learning as well as in-person learning. The State Department of Education has created a learning hub which has materials for parents and students. A hybrid model will include both in-school and out-of-school teaching and learning.

The state has talked about low risk where students can be back in school and moderate risk where the amount of students in school would be reduced and there would be a focus on at-home learning.

Communication will continue and a mailbox called Reopen20@rsd13.org has been created for people to submit questions. Staff has been encouraged to reach out directly to school principals. Dr. Serino asked the board members to help her with focus groups of parents.

In the area of operations, the child nutrition program will continue and expectations with regard to transportation have been very much relaxed. Because of the low risk right now, buses can be used at close to full capacity. Approximately 40 percent of parents did respond that they would be able to transport their child to school, especially if they can drop off early and pick up later.

Regarding health practices and protocols, the district will need to identify what materials have been ordered, including masks, face shields, gowns, sneeze guards and hand sanitizers. People will be expected to self-report on any symptoms or exposures. They are working to identify specific conditions that would qualify someone for not having to come back to work, but there are also people who are just not comfortable returning. The district continues to work with legal counsel on those issues.

Dr. Serino described the potential significant nuances that will come into play with the curriculum and potential staffing patterns. They are being encouraged not to do assessments as soon as the kids return, but to do them in more real time.

The final area in the plan talks about family and student engagement. Dr. Serino reviewed that there is a comprehensive plan in the district for social emotional learning and well-being and that will be adjusted and enhanced, as necessary. Research shows that most school avoidance is due to anxiety about getting sick or dying. Dolphin Days has submitted to the state to expand their childcare at Brewster School. The CIAC has indicated that athletics will move forward in the fall, including all sports. Professional development is encouraged, specifically in enhancing staff's understanding of how to monitor and use precautionary and preventive methods as well as addressing social and emotional learning support and mental health support. The district will also focus on enhanced distance learning.

Mr. Yamartino asked about how the district will actually fit masks and what the plan will be to teach the children how to wear masks. Dr. Serino explained that part of the requirement includes in-person and/or virtual training on several areas, including properly wearing masks. They have talked about moving some professional development days from the school year into August to do in-person training, including wearing masks. Dr. Serino is also concerned about the psychological impact of people walking back into the buildings.

Mrs. Geraci asked about exemptions for face masks and what would be expected of students who can't wear them. She suggested that that might be the subject of a focus group of the special needs community.

Mrs. Booth felt it was important to stress using the masks correctly. She added that she does not feel that a face shield takes the place of a mask. Mrs. Booth noted that several parents have told her that their children will not return to school if they have to wear a mask. She suggested that the schools have some sort of backup supply of masks in case students forget them. Mrs. Booth also asked who is going to be the COVID liaison for the district and Dr. Serino stated that the district has not yet designated one. Dr. Serino does feel that would be an appropriate role for someone in HR and they are in the process of interviewing for that. She noted that some districts are using their head nurse or special education coordinator. The district has been using a team approach at this point, but she is hopeful that they will have an HR candidate who can get started by the beginning of August. Mrs. Booth also asked if they were thinking about doing a drive-by pick-up and drop-off at Lyman as they do at Brewster and Memorial. Dr. Serino felt that the volume of drop-off and pick-up will increase significantly, so they will be looking at that.

Mr. Moore met with CABA and it was suggested that boards create a policy about wearing masks to provide the strength to be enforced. Attendance and the issue of not coming back to school were also discussed. Dr. Serino added that if the teachers feel there is a change to their working conditions, it will involve impact bargaining.

Dr. Taylor is reticent about the whole plan and is concerned that the fear of getting infected can be a bigger issue than being out of school. He felt that an environment where students and teachers all have to wear masks and are not allowed to touch may be worse. Dr. Taylor asked how the district will address the real potential that a lot of teachers will not want to put themselves at risk by coming back into the buildings and when they will know the number of teachers that won't be coming back.

Dr. Taylor also felt it might be worthwhile to do some type of student assessments over the summer so that they know where everyone is in the fall. He also agreed that the board should have a policy in place regarding masks. Dr. Taylor felt that there were almost zero medical conditions where a patient can't

wear a mask and he can foresee it being a very difficult process. He does believe that the policy would also need to address larger congregations of students, including music and sports, and felt that they should consider what sports they would allow students to participate in while still maintaining the social distancing component.

Dr. Taylor felt that there would be a lot of issues around the protocols for sending kids home as COVID presents with a lot of variations. Would they, in fact, not allow kids with colds to come to school at all? That would mean that there will be a significant population of students out of school. Dr. Taylor agreed that the types of masks should be identified.

Dr. Taylor summarized that this is a huge, huge task and the board should dedicate significant resources now. He suggested having a group of teachers come back during the summer months to help with these tasks. Dr. Taylor does not feel that this should be a volunteer position with no pay.

Dr. Serino explained that they need to get a clear picture of how many students and staff will be returning and hoped that they could gather that information in the next month. They are also working on identifying work groups. She gave the example of having a group of teachers who will work on classroom layout. They are considering paying people the same rate that is paid for curriculum writing which is \$30 per hour. She has reached out to the unions about this, but also mentioned that there are people in other unions and non-union employees as well who should contribute to this.

Mr. Yamartino felt that there were probably half a dozen policies that may be needed and felt that a Policy committee meeting should be scheduled. He felt that an ERC meeting is necessary to look at the cost implications as well as any prioritization that may be necessary. Mr. Yamartino had also heard that spring and fall sports may be switched and doesn't see how students can play football and maintain social distancing. He also suggested having a standing weekly meeting at 6:00 on Wednesdays for board meetings.

Mrs. Booth was concerned about bringing in students from other towns for football and the high risk that that presents. Dr. Serino had that conversation with someone from the football program just today and mentioned that, as far as the stable cohorts, kids will be in a different cohort on the bus or in other sports. She felt that it will be extraordinarily hard to maintain the fidelity of a cohort. Dr. Serino explained that the administrators' mind set has shifted to creating action plans.

Mr. Hicks stated that he felt that the board needed to reach out to their attorneys and CABA before proceeding with any new policies. Mr. Yamartino agreed that they should not be writing the policies, but felt that the committee meetings should be scheduled and on the calendar now so that it dovetails with all of the other meetings. Dr. Serino stated that there is a webinar with Tom Mooney and another attorney from Shipman on Monday at 1:00 PM about guidance relative to the plan. She will continue to update the Google doc to share with the board and they can discuss any issues at the Wednesday meetings.

Dr. Serino also suggested the board should have very specific outcomes related to reopening for each committee. Mrs. Geraci asked if there could be a specific drop-down on the web page for COVID-related information. Dr. Serino explained that that does exist under the drop-down called Reopening.

Mr. Moore noted that Vin from CABA has been asked to review all of the district's policies.

Dr. Serino asked if everyone was in agreement with having a weekly board meeting, with just one item on the agenda, and everyone agreed.

Committee Reports**A. Playground Committee Meeting - June 17, 2020**

Mr. Yamartino reviewed that the playground committee met remotely and have formed two subcommittees, one for the playground equipment at John Lyman School and one for the playground equipment at Memorial Middle School. They went out to bid for the court resurfacing and configuration at Memorial.

Mrs. Booth reported that they got three different quotes for playground equipment at John Lyman and she, Mr. Giammatteo, Mrs. Dubuc and Mr. Ford met last week and chose equipment from UltiPlay who is the vendor that did Peckham Park and Allyn Brook Park. They added a balance beam without any additional cost. They then met at John Lyman on Monday and everything has been measured out and everything was ordered today. She has been promised that installation would be complete by September 1st. The vendor then went over to Memorial to meet with Mrs. Stone on Monday, but that will likely not be done for the beginning of the school year. Mrs. Booth would like to have a ribbon cutting ceremony when the installation is complete.

Mr. Yamartino reviewed the process of using Connecticut-approved contractors which meant that the project did not need to go out for bid. As for the court resurfacing, that project does require competitive bids which will take well over a month.

The board generally felt that the kids will be very happy with the new equipment. Mrs. Booth added that the equipment at Lyman is being installed so that it can be moved, if needed, though it will be at a hefty price. She has also shown it to a couple of students who were quite happy with it.

Mr. Yamartino added that the vendor will also take care of removing the existing footings at John Lyman. The equipment at Memorial will be slightly different and they are also looking for Eagle scouts to incorporate a walking path. An individual is also donating a gazebo for the garden area. Mr. Yamartino also explained that the playground equipment needed to be ordered and installed, whether schools are scheduled to open or not in September.

Communications

Mrs. Geraci stated that she had received a letter from an unknown person about radio frequencies and cell phone towers and other board members did as well.

Mr. Moore received a thank-you note from T.J. Isleib and his parents for the board's scholarship. He also received a long letter from Oanh Stephan with a lot of medical information related to the importance of getting kids together. He also received a note from Chip Dumas, from the executive search firm, who is offering a training program on psychological evaluation to board members that will run for two hours on six Tuesdays.

Mr. Moore has also started receiving letters on reopening from different parents, including Scott Silver, Heidi Pizzo, and has begun getting daily letters from parents concerned about reopening. Dr. Taylor asked if those letters can be circulated to the board members and Mr. Moore will distribute them. Mr. Yamartino would like to see Mr. Moore's response as well.

Mr. Moore also commented on the turnout for the elections and the great comments of support for the board members.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
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