

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in special session on Wednesday, July 8, 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: None

Administration present: Dr. Serino, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance and Mr. Petronio, Athletic Director

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

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, 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 Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes from the June 24, 2020 special meeting.

In favor of approving the minutes of the June 24, 2020 special 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.

A. Board of Education special session meeting June 26, 2020

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes from the June 26, 2020 special meeting.

In favor of approving the minutes of the June 26, 2020 special 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 - July 15, 2020 at 6:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School

Mr. Moore confirmed that the meeting will be held via Zoom.

Strategic Plan for Reopening and Recovery Process

Mr. Petronio reviewed the CIAC's latest updates regarding fall sports. At this point, the CIAC has decided that they are on as scheduled, starting football on August 17th with the rest of the sports to start on August 27th. Football cannot begin scrimmaging until August 30th. The CIAC has recently made modifications to summer conditioning and on July 6th, all schools were able to begin live in-person conditioning as long as it is done in groups of 10 or less.

District 13 has decided to hold off until July 13th in order to properly inform parents and get coaches on board. They have created a schedule where the sports teams have no more than 60 minutes, three days a week and the athletic training group will be there to do check-ins and screening. The team will have their 60 minutes and there will be a 15-minute gap in between teams. This conditioning will happen Monday through Thursday, with no teams on Friday.

Dr. Friedrich asked what the screening would consist of and Mr. Petronio explained that it will be just a list of questions. Mrs. Booth asked if captains' practices were happening as she saw a group of girls with volleyballs who were not social distancing. Mr. Petronio explained that captains' practices are not mandated or governed by the district and are unsupervised. He did add that he saw a group as well and spoke to them about social distancing. Mrs. Booth asked if it was okay for that to happen on school property and Mr. Petronio stated that the fields were reopened to the public as of June 17th. Mrs. Geraci noted that she just saw a group of about a dozen boys and asked if maybe the district should reach out to all of the teams to express the importance of social distancing. Mr. Petronio explained that they have asked coaches to emphasize social distancing.

Mr. Petronio also noted that the Coginchaug Soccer Club rents the fields on Monday and Wednesday evenings.

Dr. Taylor asked what the current policy is on the public using school property regarding masks and social distancing. Dr. Serino stated that there is no COVID-specific policy regarding field use, but there is a sign outside encouraging social distancing. Dr. Taylor was concerned that there is nothing in place to prevent large groups from gathering without masks and not social distancing. Dr. Serino will bring up the issue with the Health Director as well as the First Selectmen. Dr. Taylor felt that it may be worthwhile to restrict use of the fields to students only and Mr. Moore felt it would be fairly difficult to enforce that. Mr. Yamartino added that Middlefield has had experience at Wadsworth Falls with both DEEP police and state troopers and it has not been a deterrent to people.

Mr. Yamartino asked how the district will maintain the integrity of cohorts to assure safety with athletes from other districts coming in to practice. He also asked if the Board felt it wasn't safe to participate in football this year, what would the consequences be relative to their relationship with the CIAC. Mr. Petronio felt that the separate cohorts could be maintained, however the purpose of a cooperative team is to integrate as one team. Those cohorts would be maintained until August 3rd when the CIAC is anticipating team integration. Mr. Petronio did explain that the cohorts starting next week are currently not segregated by school though they do not recommend car-pooling. Regarding the consequences, Mr. Petronio felt that there would be consequences if the district were to decide not to participate in a sport, but he did not know what they might be.

Dr. Serino stated that the administrative team talked about the fidelity of cohorting just this morning and how easy it will be to diminish. When a cohort is unable to be maintained, they will look at other ways to mitigate the spread of the virus. Mrs. Booth felt that football is one of the highest risk sports and her main concern would be that kids from other schools would come into the school buildings. She wondered if District 13 would have to shut down if one of the other co-op towns had an outbreak. Mr. Moore explained that teams from other towns come into the school buildings for every sport, not just football.

Dr. Taylor asked what the policy is for mask use during training/conditioning. Mr. Petronio explained that the CIAC's recommendations are that all conditioning programs are to be outdoors, so no students are coming into the buildings. He also noted that they have told parents that the expectations are that students wear a mask coming onto the field and going off the field. Once checked in and on the field, the students will be allowed to remove their masks.

Mr. Moore asked if there was a question on the checklist about having visited one of the states on the quarantine list and Mr. Petronio stated that it does not as of now, but things are constantly changing. It does state, however, that anyone who has recently traveled must adhere to the State of Connecticut travel guidelines before beginning or resuming conditioning programs with their team. Mr. Petronio did explain that the state was looking for more of a self-check process rather than outside groups doing it. Mrs. Geraci felt that that question should be mandatory and Mr. Petronio stated that they could certainly add that.

Mrs. Caramanello asked if volleyball will be played outside this season and Mr. Petronio stated that, as of now, the CIAC has not changed anything in the fall plans. He added that the CIAC has not really given them any guidelines on what fall sports will look like and they hope to issue those before August 3rd.

Mr. Moore thanked Mr. Petronio for coming to the meeting and also thanked him for all of his work on the graduation video.

Mrs. Neubig then reviewed that they had estimated a \$794,000 surplus, with an estimated loss of revenue of \$110,000, leaving a \$684,000 surplus. From that, \$616,000 was used to balance the 2020-2021 budget and roughly \$68,000 was allocated to the fund balance for 2021-2022. As the fiscal year closed, Mrs. Neubig has computed the actual unaudited surplus to be \$791,000 which is \$106,000 higher than what was anticipated. There is also an additional \$57,000 surplus from unused purchase orders. The loss of revenue was also lower than expected by \$49,000. Refunds were issued for preschool, parking fees and unused lunch balances for seniors. This all leaves \$106,730 available, above and beyond the \$68,000 that was allocated for 2021-2022.

Mrs. Neubig recommended allocating the additional \$106,730 surplus to the salaries line of the 2020-2021 budget because of the unknown needs for distance learning and having budgeted at 95 percent. The use of the funds would have to be clearly earmarked. Mrs. Neubig did discuss this with Attorney Ritter at Shipman and he stated that it would be perfectly acceptable. If that additional money is not needed, it would just stay for the 2021-2022 budget.

Mrs. Neubig also noted that the district has spent \$117,000 on COVID-related expenses to date and that was absorbed into the 2019-2020 budget. She also explained that food service has experienced a loss in the last three months of \$134,000 net of revenue, primarily due to paying full salaries under executive order. Mrs. Neubig will submit this for FEMA reimbursement which should be at 75 percent. Mr. Yamartino asked if the food services loss was included in the \$117,000 and Mrs. Neubig explained that

that number was just for supplies and PPE. She also added that the \$106,730 additional surplus is Board of Education general budget numbers and does not include food service. There was then a discussion about redirecting fund balances and how FEMA would reimburse. Mr. Yamartino would feel more comfortable directing funds to specific line items to help with perception. Dr. Serino mentioned that ERC should look specifically at these issues and Mr. Yamartino felt that it should be discussed at the Finance Committee as well. Mr. Moore hoped to have an ERC meeting next week.

Dr. Serino reported that, on today's conference call, a fire marshal asked the Commissioner of Education about fire drills and they are working on that. Another comment was made about the lack of childcare for teachers and how that is impacting the availability of teachers.

Dr. Serino then reviewed how the various board committees could function throughout this and suggested several different issues that should be addressed. Dr. Serino felt that the HR Committee should meet before the end of July. Mr. Moore added that the Policy Committee needs to meet as well. Dr. Serino stated that they will be receiving a batch of approximately 12 model policies from Shipman and Goodwin, including a policy on masks.

Mr. Yamartino felt that Dolphin Days supplementing childcare should be addressed by both Utilization and ERC and also suggested looking into the issue of on-site daycare for the children of teachers. Dr. Serino reported that Dolphin Days has already submitted paperwork to the state for the use of Brewster School. Revenue would come directly from building usage fees that would be charged to Dolphin Days. Daycare is a significant issue for staff and they have talked to Dolphin Days about that as well. Mr. Yamartino suggested that they could open part of Korn School for daycare for staff and Dr. Serino stated that they will discuss that at the Utilization meeting tomorrow.

Dr. Serino updated the board on her conference call with the Commissioner of Education which focused on provisions for staff, included several questions about the 180-day requirement and the 900-hour requirement. They did discuss possibly not having full days for the first few weeks, if not longer. There are significant questions and concerns about the requirement for all students to wear masks and they have been told there is no intention to change that expectation.

Dr. Serino also reported the webinar with Attorney Tom Mooney from Shipman and Goodwin about district liability and that when expectations are published, the district needs to follow them. There is a mandatory 14-day quarantine for people who have visited hot spots and that quarantine will be paid time, even if no telework is available. Dr. Serino added that they have asked Blum Shapiro if they can tell people that they cannot travel and they will get back to her. Mr. Yamartino stated that his company has recently let employees know that they can travel, but quarantine will use up PTO and then be reimbursed at 60 percent. Dr. Serino explained that this will not be PTO because, between April and December, 80 hours of coverage is allowed under the act. Mrs. Geraci added that her company has the same policy as Mr. Yamartino's and felt that it has more to do with the types of employees. She felt that teachers would be exempt. Dr. Serino will forward any updates from Blum Shapiro to the board members.

Mrs. Booth felt that there was a difference between being exposed to someone with COVID and actually traveling to a place that is at-risk and then being expected to be paid. She noted that she has been told if she and her husband travel to a hot spot, she must return to work anyway and her husband has been told that he must resign his position.

Dr. Serino then reviewed the question that went out to all staff today regarding returning to work and explained that they need to supply the information to the state. She also reviewed the self-certifying

checklist that is currently being used and explained that they hope to have it available online soon. Dr. Taylor asked what the intent of the checklist is and Dr. Serino explained that the areas on the checklist have been identified with COVID and is ultimately supposed to be for contact tracing and to give the district the ability to send people home, if necessary. Dr. Taylor asked if it will be used as a set of criteria to mandate people to go home and if the same type of checklist will be created for students as well. He worries about the application of this since many people can check these items on any given day. Blum Shapiro had explained that some of their clients have modified the checklist to ask if these were new symptoms. Mrs. Caramanello felt that this could lead to having a good deal of teachers out every day and the greater need for subs. Dr. Serino agreed that that presents a whole new set of problems and also explained that they worked with the union to create a provision to encourage teachers to sub for other teachers as well. Dr. Serino also talked about additional ways of staggering classes, etc. might be possible.

Dr. Taylor asked if the district knew how many subs would be available and Dr. Serino stated that they will be reaching out to subs to see who is willing and ready to come back. They are also considering a virtual hiring fair to get more subs and how more in-house people might be utilized. Mr. Hicks felt that they should have a conversation about substitute compensation because he didn't feel that a lot of people would work for the rate that is currently paid. He believed that ACES now pays around \$135 per day. Mrs. Neubig stated that the district's day-to-day subs get paid \$90 a day. Dr. Taylor stated that another option would be hiring permanent in-house subs that would be paid a salary. Mrs. Neubig explained that that would be another employee that would be subject to benefits as well and potentially cost the district more in benefits than salary. Mrs. Geraci asked if there could be a special benefits package just for subs. Mrs. Neubig stated that they could provide any benefits package that they'd like, but could get into a problem with the affordability clause with the ACA. Mrs. Neubig also explained that they had talked about going with a service for substitutes, but you pay more for a daily rate. Mrs. Caramanello felt that it was a good idea to pay substitutes more anyway and Dr. Friedrich agreed, especially since the market will be tight this year.

Dr. Taylor also asked about staggered schedules and how much of that is being dictated by the state. He felt that staggered schedules could help with the substitute issue as well. Dr. Serino did not know how much flexibility the district actually has.

Dr. Serino then went on to review the work groups that have been formed and have now let people know that the district will pay \$30 per hour for them to be part of a school-based work group that would look at individual areas within each school. They are hoping to have teams of six to 10 people, at about 20 hours. Mrs. Neubig added that this had not been budgeted for, but the surplus could be used for that.

Summer school and ESY began this week and four students came into Brewster School today. Staff members have masks, shields and gowns and there is one student per classroom. Mrs. Geraci explained that her daughter was one of those students and everyone did a great job.

Mrs. Booth asked why staff is wearing gowns and Mrs. Neubig explained that they wear gowns if they are with a student who might have bodily fluids, just as a protective barrier. Mrs. Booth also thought that the money for the work groups would come out of curriculum writing and Dr. Serino stated that that is also a salary item. Dr. Serino also mentioned that she will add the discussion of the sub rate to the agenda for the ERC meeting.

Dr. Friedrich asked what the state plan is for when a school system is breached and Dr. Serino stated that contingency planning for a second wave is part of their plan. Dr. Serino explained that there is not yet anything planned for a breach in a school.

Mrs. Caramanello asked if the teachers are being given more resources or professional development on distance learning. Dr. Serino explained that Mrs. DiMaggio had focus groups with all departments and grade levels and gathered information about what they need. Some technology has been ordered as well. They do have planned professional development to enhance distance learning as well. Dr. Serino commented that the teachers' needs seem to fall at the base of Maslow's hierarchy and they are frightened for themselves, their families and children. Dr. Serino added that she thinks a four-day week will be critical during distance learning, with the fifth day for professional development and planning.

Mr. Yamartino asked if the district has any leeway to delay opening until October and Dr. Serino did not believe they did. Mr. Yamartino felt that there are many four-day or three-day weeks in September anyway. He wondered if they could skip September and modify the mid-year breaks and go until the end of June. Again, Dr. Serino did not believe that they could do that, but she wasn't certain. Mr. Moore stated that he will raise that issue with other board chairs.

Mrs. Petrella also suggested looking at spreading the school year over the full year, at maybe three days a week or a combination of being on one week and off another. Mr. Roraback felt that if the state is mandating the districts to provide distance learning for those students who do not come back to school is saying that they have to do it all. He felt that the very first question that needs to be asked is how many students will return to school. Dr. Serino explained that the state is providing a survey for the district to send to parents.

Dr. Taylor was thinking just the opposite of this, thinking they should be in school now and cramming until October when cold season hits and they will inevitably run into problems. He appreciated everyone thinking outside the box, but wished they had some guidance from the state regarding flexibility.

Mrs. Petrella also commented that all the protocols seem to hinge on preventing someone from coming into the building and spreading it. She asked about the status of testing, how accurate it is and how much it is being pushed. She thought if everyone was tested every day that would be a good way to prevent spread. Dr. Taylor explained that Yale is running two independent tests to clear people right now and felt that there are a lot of questions right now.

Mrs. Geraci asked when Dr. Serino thought the focus groups with parents will be done and Dr. Serino hoped to kick that off next week. Mr. Moore hoped that the groups could be held at Peckham Park, but Dr. Serino felt that people might be more comfortable with a Zoom meeting. Dr. Taylor felt they would get greater participation by Zoom.

Communications

Mrs. Geraci stated that she had heard from several families who have not received refunds from Middlefield on the sports programs that were not held after school. She hoped that someone from Middlefield would check into that. Mr. Yamartino will follow up and get back to Mrs. Geraci.

Mr. Moore received a complaint about the basketball courts at the high school not being usable and he did explain that they have been reconditioned. He also received communication from Donia Viola, but it was then agreed to table communications until next week due to technical issues.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

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

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

Meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First

Public Comment Received Via Email**From:**

Date: July 9, 2020 at 10:37:47 AM EDT

To: Robert Moore <rmoore@rsd13.org>, Norman Hicks <nhicks@RSD13.ORG>, cgeraci@rsd13.org, mbooth@rsd13.org, mcaramanella@rsd13.org, vfriedrich@rsd13.org, lpetrella@rsd13.org, jroraback@rsd13.org, ataylor@rsd13.org, ryamartino@rsd13.org, Kathryn Veronesi <kveronesi@rsd13.org>, Kim Neubig <kneubig@rsd13.org>

Cc: Lfrancis@townofdurhamct.org

Subject: Board of Ed Meeting July 8, 2020

Board Members and Staff:

After watching last night's BoE meeting, I want to thank each of you for your engagement, effort, and intellect in solving what appears to me a very complex situation. Thank You.

I have three comments:

First, I am concerned that academic progress might be disrupted by the sports programming. Interscholar sports, in my opinion, should be suspended for at least this school year.

Second, I agree with the concept of childcare using RSD13 facilities. I was in favor of Mr. Yamartino's idea of utilization of Korn School. However, I was concerned by Dr. Serino's comment regarding the ability to utilize Korn. I hope that that issues of Korn's suitability will be addressed publicly at the next Board meeting.

Finally, I agreed with Dr. Taylor's comment in favor of opening schools now. We seem to be in a relatively good place statewide regarding COVID-19. It would be a shame to miss an opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your time and service to OUR community,

Chuck Stengel

Resident of Durham, CT