

Special Board of Education Meeting – Approved Minutes July 6, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

Present Board Members: Jenny Emery, Mark Fiorentino, Melissa Migliaccio, David Peling, Sarah Thrall, Rosemarie Weber, and Brandon Webster.

Absent Board Members: N/A

Melissa Migliaccio called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

I. Chairman's Corner

Melissa Migliaccio, Board Chairman, the sole purpose of this meeting is to receive an update from the Reopening Task Force as to the Governor's plans. The Board will meet again next Monday, July 13th on the same topic.

II. Superintendent's Announcements

- Dr. Grossman welcomed everyone and welcomed new Assistant Superintendent, Jennifer Parsons, who started on July 1st.
- Taylor Wrye, Middle School Principal also started on July 1st and has made a great transition.
- First round interviews will be held this week for the Kelly Lane Primary School Principal. The committee consists of 19 members. Thank you to Brandon Webster for serving on the committee. Dr. Grossman requested the Board meet the candidate later in July.
- The Reopening Task Force will meet again tomorrow and have had several meetings thus far. Thank you to Mike Dunn, Rosemarie Weber and Jennifer Parsons, Co-Chairs of the Task Force.
- Virtual summer school is up and running. In the next three weeks, students will be brought into the physical environment for more assessments.
- Jennifer Parsons is continuing work on the Cultural Proficiency and Equity Action Plan. Dr. Grossman stated he is excited about the work to be done with the Granby Equity Team.
- All principals will meet with Shannon Sullivan, Director of Facilities, to tour the buildings and seek each school's needs.
- Gained permission from the Town Manager, John Ward, to use Kearns School for any large items or materials. This will save the district money with regard to storage fees.
- Working with Brian Liss, Executive Director from the YMCA, regarding daycare needs for staff. He is developing a plan in partnership with us should we have any needs.
- A survey will be sent to families this week with information you will hear about this evening. We will also share our initial plans with the opening of schools. Dr. Grossman stated he is very excited to welcome back students.
- The Hartford Area Superintendents' Association is now meeting weekly to discuss and align with what all Hartford area schools are doing about reopening.
- Building projects are continuing and on track.
- Working with high school administration and the Athletic Department and will be sending out information this week following CIAC guidelines for athletes to begin summer training.
- Planning has begun to focus on the social/emotional well-being for staff and students.
- The Board Retreat on August 19th will also include a tour of the facilities.
- Dr. Grossman stated he would like the Board to think about the school calendar for next year to provide leeway of when school starts. Teachers and administrators have a lot to do prior to August 27th and he wants to make sure they are prepared. Teachers are scheduled to come back on Monday with three professional days. He will bring a recommendation to the Board that we start school on Friday, August 28th making Thursday a PD day and also change Friday to a half day and make Monday a half day for students as well. He would like the Board to vote on this next week in order that he can communicate to families as soon as possible.

- Granby Public Schools needs to submit a plan to the State of Connecticut by July 24th including a full reopening, students that opt out and a hybrid approach if the Governor says you can have 50% attendance and a remote environment. Jen Parsons is going to provide a high level view of the plan this evening. Administrators are doing an outstanding job and the Task Force is providing a tremendous amount of information.

III. Reopening Task Force Update

Ms. Jennifer Parsons, Assistant Superintendent, provided an update on the work of the Reopening Task Force Committee to the Board stating the plan is due to the state prior to July 24th. She informed the Board the Task Force will review the full reopening model and during the day tomorrow the administrative team will gather all of their thoughts which will also be shared with the Task Force. On July 14th, it is hoped the Task Force can review a draft plan and be able to modify it for the July 21st meeting. Work groups will meet to compile sections of the plan under advisement of the reopening Task Force. Ms. Parsons reviewed the six guiding principles from the Connecticut State Department of Education: 1) health & safety of students and staff; 2) return to the classroom full time; 3) monitoring school populations and potentially cancel classes in the future if necessary to contain the spread; 4) emphasizing equity, access and support to students; 5) fostering strong two-way communication with families, educators and staff; and, 6) factoring challenges to the physical safety and social/emotional well-being of our students when they are not in school. She then reviewed the four main operational considerations: 1) Cohorting (encouraged to place students in cohorts for grades K-8 and where feasible for grades 9-12); 2) social distancing and facilities (building space/ reconfiguring classroom space and cleaning of high-touch surfaces); 3) Transportation (buses will run at full capacity and load from back to front); and 4) Face Coverings (requirement that all staff and students wear face coverings – will provide mask breaks throughout the day). Dave Peling inquired if the district ordered personal protective equipment. Dr. Grossman stated that masks, gloves, face shields, and partitions have been ordered and that there may be more items to be purchased from a consortium as well. Mark Fiorentino inquired if students will be required to bring their own mask. Dr. Grossman stated every student will be given two masks up front and disposable masks will be on site if students forget them. Brandon Webster inquired if there will be a policy for face masks and Dr. Grossman stated, yes, CAFE is currently working on a policy for facial masks and this is a requirement by the state. He informed the Board that Granby is putting together district and school plans as each school's face mask policy may be a little different. Jenny Emery commented about requirements vs. guidelines and the underlying assumption is that Granby's intent is to take advantage of the guidelines as well as research and only if Granby has well researched reasons not to follow the guidelines would we want to do an alternative. She stated she feels this will be a helpful message to the community.

With regard to what needs to be included in the plan for a full return, Ms. Parsons stated there may be students and staff who will opt to not return. There will be a better gauge of this after the questionnaire is completed. Ms. Parsons explained there will also need to be a hybrid model which can be implemented on short notice to remote learning and this is a fluid motion based on tiered hot points as follows: 1) A low tier is 100% capacity; buses at full capacity; face coverings required; and, isolation areas for sick students. 2) A moderate tier level would need the hybrid model implemented with schools at reduced capacity; buses at reduced capacity; and maximize spacing of seating up to six feet. 3) A high tier level would be 100% remote learning with the suspension of extracurricular and athletic activities. In addition to full-time instruction plans as indicated above, districts must be prepared to modify their plans for a partial reopening or to allow for scaling back at future date if the public health data changes. Sarah Thrall inquired if the level determination would be on a state-wide or local level. Ms. Parsons stated this can be determined at the local level working with the local Department of Public Health for the criteria to help determine the levels but we are waiting on additional guidance. She then reviewed the notice of the full return plan stating the Superintendent of Schools will share the detailed plan we submit to the state after July 24th with families.

Ms. Parsons stated the district will ask for preliminary planning in the questionnaire with regard to opting out and transportation. The district is awaiting guidance for when families decide to opt out what the length of time will be to plan for the students who opt out. At the high school, it would be a virtual high school or another platform to ensure a breadth of course offerings. At the K-8 level, Granby staff will provide asynchronous remote learning using published programs and platforms as well as sharing staff across other school districts. Jenny Emery inquired if a picture of what the voluntary opt-out option looks like right now. Ms. Parsons stated, yes, there will be a question if you plan to send your student back and, if you choose not to, the model will be asynchronous learning. Dr. Grossman stated the other part to be added in is if any child who has an IEP, 504 or medical plan, those parents will be instructed to contact their principal. If someone opts out, it will be asynchronous learning with posted assignments and check-ins with teachers. Ms. Parsons stated if the model is 100% remote learning, Granby will strive for the highest quality possible for remote learning, such as, established schedules, calendars of assignments, weekly planners, tier 1 social emotional lessons, accountability check-ins, G-suite with more opportunities, etc. She also stated the Hybrid Model on a short notice would be an A/B rotating model of students in the physical school building and on their off days working on what they need to do to reinforce that physical school building learning. Mark Fiorentino inquired if there are guidelines or criteria for opting out. Dr. Grossman stated, no, you can opt out just because you want to. Mr. Fiorentino stated he hopes Granby stays on top of this and continues to explore a period of time that parents can opt out. Mr. Webster inquired if the district is asking teachers of opting out. Dr. Grossman stated he is speaking to attorneys and, right now, this is something the district is looking at. In some states this has been controversial. We are going to try to present as much information as we can but it will be an ADA type survey. Ms. Parsons stated what has been done to frame the work for tomorrow's Task Force Meeting is to pull out the guidance and the requirements and what the expectations are for each school. As we respond to the requirements, we will be looking at the best practices around these requirements. This will all be discussed at the Task Force meeting tomorrow. Sarah Thrall inquired if any monetary impact is being attached to the requirements. Ms. Parsons stated, yes, and potentially there may also be hidden savings along the way as well.

Dr. Grossman stated this is exciting and challenging work but we are excited to welcome students and staff back. Staff and students are going to have to reacquaint with one another. The safety and health of all individuals within the Granby Public Schools is our main priority - to provide an environment that is safe for staff and students to come back. The Task Force has been very open and transparent. Granby Public Schools will put together a plan that will work and be strong. The social/emotional development of our staff and students has to remain at the core with anything we do. We want to do it right and thoughtfully and that is why the Board has been requested to look at the calendar to have school start one day later so teachers can have the time to plan. Melissa Migliaccio stated it is the goal of the Board to get as many students back as close to a normal learning environment as possible. She thanked Dr. Grossman, Ms. Parsons and the Task Force for their work. Ms. Migliaccio inquired about Virtual High School (VHS) vs. Edgenuity. Ms. Parsons stated VHS is taught by an actual teacher with synchronous and asynchronous learning and Edgenuity is solely asynchronous coursework with no point person teacher to demand work so a staff person would need to monitor this. Jenny Emery commented regarding the calendar stating the suggestion seems reasonable but inquired if it will really make a difference. Dr. Grossman stated it is within the teachers' contract and we would give the teachers an extra day up front instead of a professional development day in May. He feels what he presented is good at the moment. Sarah Thrall stated her concerns of reopening, such as, the orientation programs prior to the opening of school; keeping A/B days all A's or all B's for families who have more than one child; and, check-ins for students who are struggling. Brandon Webster inquired about Choice students being on the bus for a long time. Dr. Grossman stated Ms. Parsons has a meeting with the Open Choice Director in the coming weeks to discuss this. Mr. Webster also inquired about Freshman orientation and transitions from school to school and how parents will want to see the plan of what school buildings look like. Dr. Grossman stated, yes, he agrees but this may have to be done virtually.

IV. Approve Minutes from the June 17, 2020 Board of Education Meeting

A motion was made by Melissa Migliaccio and seconded by Brandon Webster that the Granby Board of Education approve the minutes from the June 17, 2020 Board of Education Meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 8:21 p.m.

IV. Executive Session/Non-Meeting

A motion was made by Melissa Migliaccio and seconded by Brandon Webster to enter into an Executive Session to discuss a collective bargaining and a contractual issue. This motion passed unanimously at 8:22 p.m. The Executive Session adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Weber
Board Secretary