

## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, August 24, 2020

Via WebEx <https://woodbridgeps.webex.com/woodbridgeps/j.php?MTID=m01051a18fb1c24859675dc5d021093c9>

Meeting Number (access code): 146 968 6493

Meeting password: pfCpjuxW385

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Piascyk, Vice Chair called the meeting to order (7:36 PM).

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Mr. Dan Cowan, Ms. Lor Ferrante-Fernandes, Ms. Maegan Genovese, Secretary; Mr. Jeff Hughes, Dr. David Ross, Ms. Joyce Shavers, Vice Chair, Dr. Michael Strambler and Dr. Jeffrey Townsend.

**STAFF:** Mr. Robert Gilbert, Superintendent; Ms. Christine Syriac, Interim Superintendent; Cheryl Mammen, Special Services Director; Al Pullo, Director of Business Operations/Services; Analisa Sherman, Principal; Doreen Merrill, Assistant Principal; and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** Beth Heller, First Selectman; Sandy Stein, BOS; Joi Prud'homme, PTO; Linda Acheson, Melissa Caporossi, Nicole Chick, Jeannie Ciarleglio, Megan Cofrancesco, Kristina Conroy, Larissa Crocco, Kristin DeManche, Jeanne Dempsey, Joseph DePalma, Maria DePalma, Carrie Fanelli, Kim Franklin, Louise Golden, Kris Hart-Rooney, Liz Heagney, Kristen Horvath, John Hutchinson, Emily Jacober, Elena Lavigne, Janine Lempke, Aimee Meacham, Katie McCollom, Monique MacDonald, Heather Minardi, Jean Molot, Jason Nolan, Teresa Nakouzi, Visna Ngov, Lori Patrick, Christine Renzoni, Nicole Rizzo, Elisa Rosner, Tim Rourke, Meghan Saunders, Jackie Scalia, Michelle Shepard, Nancy Smerekanicz, Christina Thompson, Nin Triplett, Mary Vincitorio, Michelle Waldron, and Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; Jennifer Cooper, Shari Foldy, Wendy Glynn, CSEA; Vito Esparo, Facilities Manager; Marsha Ackerman, Erin Angelucci, Jen Bayer, Melissa Blackwell, Margaret Backus, Emily Banach, Robin Froehle, Michelle Goglia, Kelly Halsted, Ruchi Jain, Kristy Laydon, Aubrey Meyenburg, John Mills, Erin Oleskey, Jane Roddy, Kate Rozen, community.

Chair Piascyk reviewed WEA contract language outlining the process for leave of absence requests. Requests for full year leaves were recently received from three members of the WEA. Since each position was a classroom teacher, it would be necessary to find replacements, which could directly impact the start of the school year.

Discussion ensued for adherence to timelines, the position of the WEA membership at large on returning to in-person instruction and suggested alternative options from the WEA. A sentiment existed for the lack of details and accuracy portrayed in the reopening plan as it was obvious that teachers were expressing a clear unified voice of dissent. Several Board members preferred to have more information provided directly from the WEA and that these requests not be placed under consideration until all information is known. A deeper discussion is necessary as there would be financial implications, the quality of instruction could be affected and the overall morale and safety of staff was at stake. It was questioned why these teachers could not be assigned to remote learning and why the only option presented is a leave of absence.

It was also noted that delaying the vote on these requests could cause undue hardship on administration in filling these positions as well as keeping the staff members in limbo. It is highly unlikely that by waiting two days, these teachers are going to change their position. Further, they have had ample opportunity to make their decision and have been emphatic in their position. The Board received the plan as well as presentations several times. While the Board may not agree with what was shared or heard, to say that the Board was not provided the plan is an overstatement. Based on feedback from parents, 79% of parents will be sending their children to BRS. We need staff who desire to be in school, who are willing to be a positive example and who truly want to teach our children.

Interim Superintendent Syriac clarified that there is an in-person component and a remote component, each with a finite number of positions. There are specific protocols that must be adhered to before granting an individual request. Numerous individuals did not have their request for remote learning honored because the request did not fit the specified criteria.

**MOTION #1 – DEFER ACTION CERTIFIED LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

Move that we defer the vote on the three leave of absence requests to Wednesday, August 26 until the WEA has had the opportunity to fully disclose their plan to the Board and the Board has heard directly from teachers on how they can ensure the safety of teachers.

Ms. Shavers  
Second by Dr. Ross

IN FAVOR: Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes, Ms. Genovese, Ms. Shavers, Drs. Ross, Stramber and Townsend  
AGAINST: Messrs. Cowan, Hughes and Ms. Piascyk

***MOTION PASSES 6-3-0***

As has been done in the past and in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, anytime there is a change in superintendent leadership, the Board authorizes the Superintendent to hire staff.

**MOTION #2 – AUTHORIZATION TO HIRE (SYRIAC)**

Move to we authorize the Superintendent to hire staff in accordance with Connecticut General Statute 10-151(b) effective August 13, 2020.

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandez  
Second by Mr. Cowan  
**UNANIMOUS**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN:** (8:22 PM)  
Dr. Ross  
Second by Dr. Townsend  
**UNANIMOUS**

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board