

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

**Madison Public Schools
Board of Education Regular Meeting
February 9, 2021
7:30 PM
Remote**

MEETING MINUTES

Full documentation of these proceedings can be found through on demand video located in the Meetings/Minutes section of the district website

1. Call to Order / Attendance

The public meeting of the Madison Board of Education was called to order by Chair Galen Cawley at 7:32 p.m. Mr. Cawley led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Galen Cawley, Greg DeSantis, Diane Infantine-Vyce, Violet McNerney, Cathy Miller, Tom Pellegrino, Emily Rosenthal, Katie Stein.

Also present: Craig Cooke, Ph.D., Superintendent; Gail Dahling-Hench, Assistant Superintendent; Liz Battaglia, Sped Director, Stacy Nobitz, Finance Director, T. J. Salutari, DHHS Principal, Melanie Whitcher, DHHS Assistant Principal, Kathryn Hart, Polson Principal, Zoe Roos, Communications Specialist, Sherry Farmer, Jeffrey Special Education Teacher, Scott Murphy, Board of Selectman.

Various members of the public via Zoom.

2. School / Community Session - 7:30 p.m.

3. Board of Education Student Representative Report Isabelle Vagell and Eric Dillner

Isabelle spoke about the positive student feedback regarding a speaker during Wellness Wednesdays, author Adam Greenberg, who presented to a portion of the junior and senior class in January and will present to the remainder tomorrow. Isabelle also reported a plan is currently in development for Trimester 2 testing.

Eric reported winter games are starting tomorrow and can be watched live on the NFHS network. CIAC sportsmanship conference occurs tomorrow during the school day.

Both Isabelle and Eric commented they are happy with the distance learning/snow day arrangement.

4. Superintendent's Report Craig A. Cooke, Ph.D.

4.1. Hartford Foundation of Public Giving Grant – Sherry Farmer, Jeffrey Sped Teacher

Gail Dahling-Hench introduced Sherry Farmer, Jeffrey Special Education Teacher who is in the process of obtaining her administrative certification at UCONN. Sherry provided background information regarding the 092 Change Project, a team of representatives from schools across the

district was formed to begin looking at data and ways that we could support parents and students in the new COVID world of learning. From the data collected, the team identified the six most needed topics to address during the first trimester of the school year which were prioritized and presented in six live webinars throughout September, October and November. A follow-up parent survey indicated a positive response to the webinars; however, some parents felt they were too broad and wanted a more in depth focus on specific topics or specific groups of students. The largest two groups that responded were parents of high school juniors and seniors and kindergarten parents. High school parents indicated they need more support in understanding the many different aspects with preparing students for life after graduation. Kindergarten parents expressed needing more support in helping their children develop foundational literacy skills. With assistance from the Guidance Department, we identified three areas of focus at the high school level: Naviance, How to Pay for College and the College Selection process. We hope to gather a group of parents and students who have graduated to share their experiences. An eNotify will be sent to parents asking for specific questions. At the Kindergarten level, 4 instructional videos will be created via Google Classroom by reading coaches and kindergarten teachers with fun activities to reinforce classroom learning. Weekly packets will be shared with parents, as well as a book to help with the topic of the week. Online library access to all recommended books will also be available. The grant received will be used to purchase the books at the Kindergarten level, as well as to purchase \$50 gift cards to R. J. Julia for use by the high school participants.

Dr. Cooke reported on the grant for interactive boards. The review committee formed by Art Sickie comprised of teachers, technology staff, and administrators, has completed that work and has given a survey to the participants. Information will be available soon to share; we are hoping to install boards for that grant at Polson & Brown during April break.

The district received word early this morning that we are able to put staff 65 and older into the VAMS system which has already been done. We are looking into a site in Town that can be utilized for vaccination purposes.

Dr. Cooke addressed the subject of snow days, noting that decisions need to be made by 5 a.m. We try to keep students in school, but safety is the priority. Indications today were snow and freezing rain impacting both the arrival to and departure from school. Dr. Cooke noted that districts from Guilford to Waterford, as well as northern border towns made that decision as well.

4.2. Hand Report

Dr. Cooke stated the preference for Daniel Hand is full attendance and the goal is to eventually have all students physically back in the building, but we are not there at this point. Numbers in Madison have improved but we are still in the red (over 25 positive cases per 100,000) and the State has indicated if that occurs, we should limit the number of students in a building. The situation is beginning to improve and the Town is doing a great job practicing social distancing. Dr. Cooke referenced a memo sent to the board with the following: 25% have opted for remote learning, Cohort A – 332 in person, Cohort B – 274 in person, and 112 attend every day. The alternative Wednesday attendance is unique to Madison. The administrative team discusses contact tracing regularly. Doubling students and more staff members which would create crowded hallways & classrooms can put us at risk for more cases. The way in which Mr. Salutari has accommodated lunch is unique and while eating outside works for the warmer months, this presents a problem during the colder months. It is difficult to establish a target date, but we are potentially looking at after April break. Updates are provided from the Town and the Health Department regularly.

Dr. Cooke also addressed the question of cohorting by grade level, noting several classes would have 24 students in class on a certain day and on other days, there would be no students in the classroom.

4.3. Potential Building Project Update

Dr. Cooke reported a full enrollment report has been commissioned (2 weeks ago) with a 4-6 week turnaround. Education specs are currently being reviewed. Mr. McMinn, Dr. Cooke and Colliers meet regularly.

- 5. Board Member Comments – no comments
- 6. Audience Response to Information Presented (Ref. Bylaw #9540.10)

Cathy Ferrante

Dr. Cooke, you mention that State guidelines have changed since the time of the re-opening of schools. What has actually changed?

Dr. Cooke: In August, we started school in hybrid mode and the numbers were better than in November or December. We have learned there is no clear transmission in the school buildings and mask wearing is effective. Dr. Cooke noted the red category has remained the same and further noted sports were delayed until October. Dr. Battaglia noted that the State established those guidelines prior to the return to school. When a positive case arises, we contact trace & quarantine immediately. Mitigation strategies are in place. Also, the Department of Health has stated there is minimal school to school transmission, even in light of the new variants.

Tina Phelan
75 Bradley Corners

Tina expressed her appreciation for the shortened virtual days and thanked Dr Cooke for attending the PTO meeting at Brown this morning.

- 7. Consent Agenda (Ref. Bylaw #9540.2 and #9540.8)
 - 7.1. Line Item Transfers - none
 - 7.2. Budget Expenditure Report as of February 9, 2021

MOTION: by DeSantis, seconded by Stein to approve the Consent Agenda.
AYES: Cawley, DeSantis, Infantine-Vyce, McNerney, Miller, Pellegrino, Rosenthal, Stein
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None
MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

- 8. Board Committees / Liaison Updates (Ref. Bylaw #9450)
 - 8.1. Curriculum and Student Development
 - Members: Diane Infantine-Vyce, Chair; Greg DeSantis, Catherine Miller
 - No report
 - 8.2. Communications Committee
 - Members: Tom Pellegrino, Chair; Diane Infantine-Vyce, Greg DeSantis

No report

8.3. Facilities Committee

Members: Emily Rosenthal, Chair, Happy Marino, Katie Stein

The Facilities Committee met February 2, 2021 and opened with a discussion regarding the facilities building project. In order to move ahead, the priorities are to select a referendum date, review and update the budget as necessary, and get an updated full-scale enrollment report. We are currently looking at a November 2021 referendum date, pending town approval, with a goal to apply for the state grant for June 2021.

Colliers will work with Mr. McMinn to update the budget, and the enrollment report has been commissioned. Dr. Cooke received a recommendation to meet with the state building commission in anticipation of a referendum, and South Windsor has again offered a site visit if the Board is interested. The current state reimbursement for Madison would be 18.36% for new construction (this reimbursement is a formula based on town wealth, and varies town by town).

In order to move this process along in a timely and organized manner, the committee requested that Mr. McMinn provide an updated timeline and GANT chart like last time, which will be reviewed at the next committee meeting in March. Mr. McMinn reminded the committee there will be additional factors to consider this time around related to the town facilities study, the development of a town shelter, and possible land acquisition. We can also look back at the work of the tri-board working group, as they reviewed dozens of possible options for school configurations and buildings.

The facilities committee also discussed security funds, and planned for a Board executive session in March with Dr. Cooke and Mr. McMinn to review how the funds will be spent.

Dr. Cooke provided a brief update on enrollment and birth rates, in advance of the new report that has been commissioned. A larger kindergarten class is expected next year, and will likely need to add a class. The rate of births to residents in town has increased over the last few years, from 80-90 births per year to residents prior to 2017, to 166 births per year in 2018 and 118 in 2019. Birth rates are projected to stay above 100 births to residents per year looking ahead. This growth is in addition to new people moving to town with young children, often right before or around kindergarten age. These trends will be important to keep in mind as we plan for new buildings.

The meeting concluded with general facility updates from Mr. McMinn, who reported that the facilities focus this year is on daily operations and maintaining clean and safe schools. While there is normally more time for future planning and projects, this unique school year requires prioritizing daily operations and school maintenance, with heating, ventilation and the optimization of fresh air critical areas of focus.

Summer projects will include technology and security measures. The new grant-supported water bottle filling stations will be installed as soon as they arrive, but during non-school hours to limit disruptions during learning time, (February, March or April breaks). A question was also raised about keeping up with air flow and heating with increased ventilation, and Mr. McMinn reported that because we have doubled the amount of outside air in classrooms, heating costs will be higher during the cold weather.

The Facilities Committee meets next on March 2.

8.4. Finance Committee

Members: Katie Stein, Chair, Happy Marino, Tom Pellegrino

The committee met this evening and was joined by Art Sickle who provided an update on the status of the Food Services program. The program is currently running at a deficit projected to be approximately \$475,000 by year end, primarily due to increased costs and lower population in the buildings. State funding does not cover revenue loss. The district received a grant in the amount of \$344,794 from the Coronavirus Response & Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act with a generous utilization timeline of September 2023. The grant is also flexible regarding the ways in which we use the funds; school health & safety needs, social/emotional needs, remote learning and classroom intervention and strategies, to name a few. The committee discussed potentially using a portion of the funds to augment budget requests. Dr. Cooke provided an update on non-resident tuition revenue which has accrued approximately \$40,000. Dr. Cooke and administrative team working on budget presentation to Boards of Selectmen & Finance. Next meeting – March 16.

8.5. Personnel Committee

Members: Violet McNerney, Chair, Diane Infantine-Vyce, Catherine Miller

No report

8.6. Policy Committee

Members: Happy Marino, Chair; Violet McNerney, Emily Rosenthal

Dr. McNerney reported in Mrs. Marino's absence. The committee met this evening and began with a follow-up discussion on two policies - #5131.911 – Bullying Prevention and Intervention and #5131.914 – Safe School Climate, noting language clarification from Shipman & Goodwin regarding teen dating violence. The committee discussed the Series 2000 audit where Shipman has suggested eliminating and replacing a number of policies. The committee indicated their preference to maintain and update Policy #2110 – Administration Management Positions, as this policy has been referenced in the past and asked Dr. Cooke to review and suggest language regarding the Board's ability to discuss the number of staff in relation to enrollment and other factors. The committee suggested dividing the 2000 Series list into two groups for review at subsequent meetings. The committee voted to move policies presented this evening to the March 2 Board meeting for a first reading:

- #1380: Sexual Offenders on School Property
(formerly #2270 Sex Offender Notification)
- #2240: Retention of Electronic Records and Information
(formerly Education Data/Records Retention)
- #2280: Uniform Treatment of Recruiters
- #2300: Holds on the Destruction of Electronic Information and Paper Records

8.7. LEARN Liaison

Katie Stein

No report.

8.8. Board of Selectmen Liaison

Scott Murphy

In Mr. Murphy's absence, Mr. Cawley reported the Board of Selectmen budget workshops begin this Thursday.

9. Action Item: Motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2021 Board of Education Meeting (Ref. Bylaw #9540.9)

MOTION: by Infantine-Vyce, seconded by McNerney to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2021 Board of Education meeting.

AYES: Cawley, DeSantis, Infantine-Vyce, McNerney, Miller, Pellegrino, Rosenthal, Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

10. Old Business

11. Future Agenda Items

12. Meetings/Dates of Importance

13. Adjourn

MOTION: by Stein, seconded by DeSantis to adjourn the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

AYES: Cawley, DeSantis, Infantine-Vyce, McNerney, Miller, Pellegrino, Rosenthal, Stein

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

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