

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, October 19, 2020

Via WebEx j.php?MTID=mff4819b43eb1e28aecb15c943fb9effc

Meeting Number (access code): 146 322 5486 Meeting Password: aFA2eJk2Ew2

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the meeting to order (6:18 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 and Ms. Joyce Shavers, Vice Chair.

STAFF: Ms. Christine Syriac, Interim Superintendent and James Crawford, Technology Teacher.

MOTION #1 – EXECUTIVE SESSION

Move that we enter Executive Session. (6:18 PM).

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes

Second by Mr. Cowan

UNANIMOUS

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 and Dr. Jeffrey Townsend (6:28 PM).

STAFF: Ms. Christine Syriac, Interim Superintendent and James Crawford, Technology Teacher.

The Board received an update on cyber safety and security.

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes left the meeting (6:27 PM).

MOTION #2 – PUBLIC SESSION

Move that we return to Public Session (7:00 PM).

Mr. Cowan

Second by Dr. Ross

UNANIMOUS

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the Public Session back to order (7:06 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: 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: Dr. Joseph Erardi, Search Consultant; Sandy Stein, BOS; Joi Prud'homme, PTO; Barbara Ahern, Dan Chase, Larissa Crocco, Kristina Conroy, Kristin DeManche, Christa Demetro, Carson Echeverry, Carrie Fanelli, Lisa Farnen, Kim Franklin, Liz Heagney, Kristen Horvath, Allison Lemieux, Jeanine Lempke, Monique MacDonald, Kathy Marlor, Katie McCollom, Jean Molot, Lori Patrick, Jennifer Naylor, Teresa Nakouzi, Jason Nolan, Livia Olsen, Heather Trofimchik, Tim Rourke, Meghan Saunders, Jackie Scalia, Nancy Smerekanicz, Mary Vincitorio, Michelle Waldron, Sarah Wislocki, Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; Jennifer Cooper, Kit Dunbar, Shari Foldy, Wendy Glynn, Suzanne Sugarmann, CSEA; and Vito Esparro, Facilities Manager; Vicky Burford, Nicole Chick, Pua Ford, Michele Goglia, Joan Grogan, Ruchi Jain, Aimee Meacham, Erin Oleskey, Kate Oliver, Tahera Parvez, Nicole Rizzo, Jane Roddy, Erin Williamson, community.

CORRESPONDENCE – Ms. Genovese noted that the Board received two letters regarding distance learning / flex Fridays as well as a letter regarding the lack of information being disseminated to BRS parents about positive Covid cases within BOWA.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Chair Piascyk noted receipt of a letter signed by 65 BRS faculty and staff members pertaining to the successful reopening of school.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #3 – CONSENT AGENDA

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Mr. Cowan

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

Superintendent Search Update – Dr. Erardi apprised the Board on the focus groups conducted with community as well as staff with approximately 150 individuals participating. As a result of these conversations, an Executive Summary was prepared. Prioritized character traits include

- ❖ *Confidence in the Scope of the Work*
- ❖ *Honest*
- ❖ *Humble*
- ❖ *Intelligent*
- ❖ *Uncompromising Moral Compass*

Approximately 27 applications from 7 different states have been received. The candidate pool consists of several sitting superintendents, assistant superintendents and elementary principals. It is anticipated the Board will commence interviews within the next week.

Ad Hoc SRO Committee – Mr. Cowan noted that this committee, in adherence to the charge issued in June 2020 to recommend to the Board on security personnel needs for the 2020/21 budget, held six meetings between June 9 and October 1. In addition to the current SRO model, the committee reviewed several different concepts and the costs associated with each, inclusive of a 10-month SRO, armed guards, unarmed guards and a “no in-person” model. The Committee identified that the total cost for security in the district should include a more equitable cost share arrangement with the programs using the SRO. There was also agreement that the current SRO was an extremely competent and knowledgeable individual, and therefore, brought a different value and level of expertise. Based on the findings from the Committee, the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation: The 2020 Ad Hoc SRO Committee recommends that the Woodbridge Board of Education fully fund the SRO for the 2021/22 budget; however, the committee recommends that the cost share be allocated so that total cost to the Board of Education be equal to the 10-month cost at 8 hours per day. The cost share should escalate for Summer Enrichment, EDay and Recreation at a rate equal to the total Board of Education cost.

The committee requests that the Board of Education grant one (1) additional year of working time to investigate the questions raised by this committee that remain unanswered and requests that this committee report again at the September 2021 Board meeting the results from this new fact finding mission.

Discussion ensued for whether the committee was able to separate the position from the individual currently performing the functions and whether that garnered assumptions that may not necessarily be true within the other models. It was noted that was not the case. Both the armed guard and unarmed models required additional levels of supervision and training costs, which were not necessary under our current structure. Board members were urged to review the details and specifics in 76 page report that was provided.

PTO Update – Ms. Prud’homme noted that the annual Open House event as well as monthly meetings and guest author readings are being conducted virtually. An outside Picture Day was held on campus with remote students invited to attend after school. The Drive-Thru Halloween Hoot will be held on Saturday, October 24.

Superintendent Report – Interim Superintendent, Christine Syriac extended a sincere thank you to Nursing Supervisor Stacey Katz for her 24 years of service after retiring on October 16 and announced the appointment of Aisling Fagan as the new Nursing Supervisor. She apprised the Board on the meeting held with the Bethany and Woodbridge Superintendents, Chairs and Vice Chairs to discuss shared services, specifically in the areas of special education, the extended school year program, curriculum development and professional learning. Preliminary results were shared from the parent survey still in process. Thus far, in both the in-person and remote learning options, approximately 50% of each group has responded. Overall, in-person learning is achieving greater satisfaction than remote learning for both students and parents. One of the primary factors for dissatisfaction by remote learners is the feeling of disconnection from their peers and the school.

In an effort to reduce the remote class sizes, it is anticipated that at least one teacher per grade level will be requested to teach in-person and remote congruently. This will require some students to switch teachers to achieve reduction in the current remote class sizes. Specialists reassigned to classroom teaching positions will continue in this capacity for the remainder of the 2020/21 school year. In addition, the four long-term substitutes hired until the Thanksgiving Break will be hired for the remainder of the 2020/21 school year. The financial impact on the hiring of the four individuals will be in the range of \$260,000 and is significantly less than the projected eight (8) positions at a cost of \$500,000. To minimize disruption to programming, students and families, these changes are slated for transition at the Thanksgiving Break.

Sentiment was expressed that the only model we should be discussing is Hybrid. Cases will continue to rise in the coming month and all remote classes to be capped at 25 and anything above that point could be taught by an in-person teacher. Remote classes deserve the same equity as in-person instruction. Also, the Town is not receptive to the Board moving forward with a significant deficit in the budget. Questions were raised for how students and teachers would be assigned, the utilization and additional hiring of teacher assistants and strategies to foster the emotional well-being and social connections for remote learning students. It was noted that all assignment decisions will be based on student need and fit. Every effort will be made to minimize financial impact on the current budget. The Town has been fully apprised of the financial impact associated with Covid as there have been numerous discussions and meetings on the topic at both the Finance Committee, Board levels and monthly town meetings.

MOTION #4 – CERTIFIED STAFF LONG-TERM SUBSTITUTES

Move that we authorize the hiring of the current four long-term substitutes as additional certified staff members effective November 25, 2020 and through the end of the 2020/21 school year.

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes

Second by Mr. Hughes

As the four are already part of the current staff in the capacity of substitutes a friendly amendment was suggested to remove the word “additional” to ensure no there was misinterpretation that we were hiring more staff.

MOTION #4A – CERTIFIED STAFF LONG-TERM SUBSTITUTES

Move that we authorize the hiring of the four long-term substitutes as certified staff members effective November 25, 2020 and through the end of the 2020/21 school year.

Ms. Genovese

Second by Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes

IN FAVOR: Mr. Cowan Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes, Ms. Genovese, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross,
Dr. Strambler and Dr. Townsend

AGAINST: Ms. Shavers

MOTION PASSES 8-1-0

BRS Report – Ms. Sherman extended a sincere thank you to the PTO for their support on our annual events and virtual author visits. The school-wide outdoor read was held at BRS with remote learner participation. The Ice Cream Social will be held Friday, October 23 with a focus on kindness and empathy. Students will be able to trade a kindness or empathy paper ice cream scoop for a real scoop of ice cream. Parent / teacher conferences will be held later in the week.

Facilities Committee – Mr. Hughes noted that the building is functioning well and the committee will continue to review and monitor the HVAC plans. The next meeting Friday, November 13 at 7:30 AM.

Finance Committee – Ms. Shavers noted the significant deficit occurring this year as a result of Covid related expenses. With the hiring of the four teachers this evening, the deficit is approximately \$136,000. Further, it is anticipated the Board

may need to subsidize the Cafeteria and EDay programs, both of which are experiencing revenue losses. It was noted that a variety of communications have occurred with the Town regarding the potential deficit. The Town BOS and BOF liaisons have also been involved in various discussions as well as the First Selectman. Decisions are not being made in a vacuum. The next meeting is Monday, November 9 at 6:30 PM.

2021/22 Capital Budget – The 2021/22 Capital Budget request was presented and reviewed. It was noted that the roof replacement project was eligible for grant reimbursement in the range of approximately \$90,000.

MOTION #5 – 2021/22 CAPITAL BUDGET

Move approval of the 2021/22 Capital Budget proposal as presented by administration.

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes

Second by Mr. Cowan

UNANIMOUS

Curriculum Committee – No Report

Policy Committee – No Report. The next meeting will be November 10 at 8:00 AM.

CABE Liaison Report – Ms. Genovese noted the cancellation of the CABE / CAPSS Convention, the virtual CABE Delegate Assembly and several upcoming virtual workshops on various legal topics.

NEW BUSINESS – None

PUBLIC COMMENT – Ms. Stein, BOS Liaison, reminded the Board that the capital budget funding request requires approval through the town referendum process.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (9:38 PM)

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board