

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, November 15, 2021

Via WebEx

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Meeting Number: 2497 574 5070

Meeting Password: 5MfQUhFnP27

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the meeting to order (7:19 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Dr. Jay Dahya; Ms. Sarah Del Prete, Secretary; Ms. Brooke Hopkins; Mr. Jeff Hughes; Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair, Dr. David Ross; Dr. Michael Strambler; and Ms. Erin Williamson.

STAFF: Dr. Jonathan Budd, Superintendent; Richard Huot, Interim Director of Business Services / Operations; Cheryl Kiesel, Special Services Director; Analisa Sherman, Principal; James Sapia, Assistant Principal; and Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

GUESTS: Joi Prud'homme, PTO; Jeffrey Luck, James Turkosz, community.

CORRESPONDENCE – None

PUBLIC COMMENT

James Turkosz spoke regarding the eligibility requirements for Screen & Stay, where parents commit to monitor their child's symptoms for 14 calendar days instead of quarantining, and the shortened length of quarantine. Screen and Stay has additional restrictions that do not appear to make sense and seem to be part of a current trend. In terms of policy guidelines, transparency and rationale builds trust. The quarantine policy seems to be punitive and he is hopeful the Screen and Stay option will be less problematic.

Jeffrey Luck appreciated everything being done to keep kids in school. There is concern for how the transition to the Cafeteria is being done. Only two children at a time are allowed to sit at a table and are not able to talk to each other. These are the same kids who are outdoors playing basketball and are nearly on top of each other. We need to start opening things up a little more quickly and get kids back to a normalcy of being together and not segregated. The masks need to start coming off. We need to take ownership of our kids and the low positivity rate and really try to get things moving a little more rapidly.

Ms. Del Prete switched from telephone to in-person (7:26 PM).

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Dr. Madonick

Second by Ms. Del Prete

UNANIMOUS

REPORTS

Superintendent's Report – Superintendent Budd noted the building substitutes and cafeteria aide vacancies, receipt of \$2,807 for the Nicole Silva memorial sensory pathways / mosaic, and the hiring of a new instrumental music teacher for Grades 4-6.

Staff Survey Results – an average of 71% of staff responded (approximately 85% of certified staff and 52% of non-certified staff). The survey questions were the same as previously administered in the 2018 and 2019 surveys. There was general consensus that the raw data could be helpful in understanding emerging trends, comparison / aggregation of qualitative vs. quantitative data, identification of improvement opportunities, day-to-day activities / challenges as well as provide the Board with crucial staff feedback in advocating support for staff and budget. The climate / morale of staff is important and this information is helpful in making those assessments.

Discussion ensued regarding the professional learning and evaluation process as well as the open-ended questions associated with each. It was questioned whether it is possible to aggregate the data to categorize responses for staff here 1-3 yrs, 3-10, etc. or by grade levels to determine the difference in responses. It was noted that professional development activities last year pertained to COVID to ensure mandated compliance. Topics this year have focused on social / emotional as well as Responsive Classroom objectives. It was noted that some questions may be deemed evaluative which may fall out of the purview of the Board. It was clarified that, as the Superintendent reports to the Board, those questions / responses should be included. It was requested that the full set of questions and all of the responses be shared with the full Board.

MOTION #2 – STAFF PANORAMA SURVEY RESULTS

Move that the Board receive all legally permissible Panorama survey results within a week.

Dr. Madonick

Second by Dr. Ross

It was noted that with the Thanksgiving holiday next week that timeframe may not be possible. It was suggested that the motion be amended to the end of November.

MOTION #2A – STAFF PANORAMA SURVEY RESULTS

Move that the Board receive all legally permissible Panorama survey results by the end of November.

Dr. Madonick

Second by Dr. Ross

UNANIMOUS

Safe Return to School Update – Superintendent Budd noted the various changes that have occurred in recent weeks. Optional in-school screening testing for approximately 100 students began the week of November 1. The quarantine length modification will become effective November 9. A child quarantined for 10 days may return after 7 days with a documented negative test from day 5 or later, assuming the child is asymptomatic. The vaccine for ages 5-11 is now available and QVHD held a clinic on November 14. Screen & Stay is available only to close contacts during the regular school day or on bus transportation; it is not an option for Extended-Day close contacts. Screen & Stay is an option for parents/guardians; they may still choose for their child to quarantine even if eligible for Screen & Stay.

By CSDE guidelines the definition of “close contact” does not change and close contacts who meet certain criteria do not need to quarantine. A “close contact” is someone who has not been within 6 feet, unmasked, indoors, of the COVID-positive individual. There is no need to quarantine if the parent(s)/guardian(s) affirm on a written form that they will monitor the child’s symptoms for 14 calendar days, and keep the child home if symptomatic. This means that in most cases the school-required quarantines will be limited to students who eat snack & lunch in the classroom around the COVID-positive individual on the day(s) of potential exposure. Fully vaccinated students (meaning two weeks after the final vaccine dose) do not need to quarantine in any case, unless symptomatic. It is hoped this approach will result in fewer scenarios where the whole class is required to quarantine.

Screen & Stay Survey results indicated that, of the 239 parent/guardian respondents, 80% would participate in Screen & Stay and would monitor their child’s symptoms for 14 calendar days and keep their child home if symptomatic; 13% would not; and 7% were not sure. On the topic of snack/lunch implementation, some, but not all, close contacts would be able to avoid quarantine, but the others would need to quarantine and participate in remote instruction. The 239 parent/guardian respondents indicated that 73% would support Screen & Stay in this instance; 15% would not; 12% were not sure. Staff and parent/guardian forums are scheduled for November 17. It was noted that, as part of the gradual reopening of the Café, two classes at a time will enter the café for lunch. Students will have assigned seats and screen protectors will be utilized at each table.

It was questioned how we are tracking students not vaccinated and if parents are providing that information. Concerns were expressed for identifying students who are or are not vaccinated and how classroom discussions on the topics are handled to avoid alienating / identifying children. During the contact tracing process, parents are asked to provide proof if their child is vaccinated. Vaccination records are also available in the state-wide database which is monitored by the nursing staff.

BOWA Portrait of the Graduate – Superintendent Budd presented the document developed by the Amity committee. All BOWA boards are receiving this information and have the opportunity to provide feedback. The document creates a cohesive K-12 instructional framework and outlines the academic skills and knowledge a student should have attained by the end of Grade 12. Board members were asked to provide any feedback to Superintendent Budd by the end of the week.

BRS 2022/23 School Calendar – Superintendent Budd presented the draft 2022/23 calendar developed in collaboration with the BOWA districts. It is for information purposes and will not be voted on until the December meeting.

BRS Update – Ms. Sherman noted the Halloween whole-school walk, the November 2 professional development day, around the school-wide goal on literacy objectives as well as social emotional learning opportunities, and the Veterans Day assembly, including the white table set-up in the library and delivery of student cards to the VA Hospital.

PTO – Ms. Prud'homme noted school picture retake day, cancellation of the drive-thru Halloween Hoot, the Charleston Gift Wrap fund-raiser which generated \$1,500 and the Hoot Silent Auction which raised \$11,000. Currently, monetary donations are being collected through the PTO PayPal link for the purchase of Stop and Shop gift cards for families in need. The in-person Scholastic Book Fair will run from November 29 through December 3. Teacher grant submissions are in the review process and the PTO is continuing to look for parent volunteers.

Board of Selectmen Update – Superintendent Budd provided the BOS report written by the Deputy First Selectman. The BOS met on November 10 and details of the Ad Hoc Capital Plan process were shared. The town has a new way of sharing details of the town budget via the Online Budget Book. The link is available on the Town's website.

Upcoming presentations – 2022/23 Operating Budget. Board members were asked to email either Superintendent Budd or Richard Huot with any details they wish to be included in the presentation.

Curriculum Committee – Dr. Strambler noted this committee met on November 4 at 4:00 PM and covered three different topics: school attendance, Grade 6 Pre-Algebra, and ongoing curriculum development. Definition of different types of absences and attendance-related terms were reviewed as well as current absence data. The Grade 6 Pre-Algebra presentation focused on development of foundational skills, applied lessons being taught, and tracking of indicators in the reporting system. Students are becoming more comfortable with being challenged and having to apply themselves differently to accomplish the various tasks. Ongoing curriculum development is engaging teachers in literacy PLC's throughout the school year. Board members were urged to forward future topics of interest to Dr. Strambler.

Facilities Committee – Mr. Hughes indicated this committee will meet on December 7 at 7:30 AM.

Finance Committee – Dr. Dahya reviewed the November 9 meeting and highlighted the current deficit of \$171,380 with several key drivers: Benefits (\$345,356) as a result of a 14% increase in district-wide medical costs, and increases in fuel and electricity (\$32,000) due to a forecasting error. It is possible that in the future a combined school and town committee will be formed to identify other options to mitigate current risks, medical insurance increases, and general liability costs. The Finance Committee will continue to monitor expenditures and the possibility of a budget freeze remains an option. This committee will hold a Special meeting on November 30 at 4:30 for 2022/23 budget development. The next Regular Meeting is December 14 at 4:30 PM.

Policy Committee – Dr. Madonick noted this committee met on November 10 to review the Civility Policy, accepted for 30-day review earlier in the agenda. The Civility Policy was developed to promote a culture of mutual respect and civility and to set an example for K-6 students. The next meeting of this committee is December 14 at 7:00 PM where the committee will revise the Bullying policy to align with recent statutory changes and develop a practical framework for implementing mitigation processes.

Ad Hoc Capital Plan Committee – This committee was established to assess and evaluate BRS building and grounds needs not just for the building we currently have but also for how we can move the building into new directions. It was agreed that a capital item would be defined as having a life expectancy of 10 years or more, being structural not cosmetic in nature, and exceeding a \$25,000 threshold. The board reviewed the 2023-28 capital projects submission to the Town Boards of Selectmen and Finance. Four critical needs were identified: Roof Replacement; Remediating Drainage Issues; Parking Lots and Sidewalks; Potential Building Reorganization, Repurposing and/or Expanding. Each area was discussed in relation to the posted presentation.

The Board entered Executive Session to discuss various topics related to security (10:47 PM).

MOTION #3 – EXECUTIVE SESSION

Move that we enter Executive Session, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes 1-200, to discuss matters related to security strategy and/or devices affecting public security, and invite the Superintendent, the Interim Director of Business Services and Operations, and the Facilities Manager to join the Board.

Ms. Del Prete
Second by Ms. Hopkins
UNANIMOUS

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Dr. Jay Dahya; Ms. Sarah Del Prete, Secretary; Ms. Brooke Hopkins; Mr. Jeff Hughes; Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair, Dr. David R. Ross, Dr. Michael Strambler; and Ms. Erin Williamson.

STAFF: Dr. Jonathan Budd, Superintendent; Richard Huot, Interim Director of Business Operations/Services; and Vito Esparo, Facilities Manager.

The Board discussed security strategies and/or devices affecting public security. Dr. Ross left the meeting (11:01 PM).

MOTION #4 – RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION

Move that we return to Public Session (11:42 PM).

Ms. Hopkins
Second by Ms. Williamson
UNANIMOUS

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Dr. Jay Dahya; Ms. Sarah Del Prete, Secretary; Ms. Brooke Hopkins; Mr. Jeff Hughes; Dr. Maria Madonick, Vice Chair, Dr. Michael Strambler; and Ms. Erin Williamson.

STAFF: Dr. Jonathan Budd, Superintendent; Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board.

MOTION #5 – CAPITAL PLAN MODIFICATION

Move that we change the Capital Plan request and move the flooring replacement (including asbestos abatement - \$141,855) from the Operating Budget and into the Capital Budget under Potential Building Reorganizing, Repurposing and/or Expanding.

Dr. Madonick
Ms. Del Prete
UNANIMOUS

The Board believed it is important to entertain discussions with the Town to consider the opportunity for building of a new school.

MOTION #6 – NEW SCHOOL EXPLORATION

Move that we request that the Town explore the opportunity to build a new school.

Ms. Hopkins
Second by Mr. Hughes
UNANIMOUS

MOTION #7 – 2022/23 CAPITAL BUDGET

Move that we adopt the 2022/23 Capital Budget Proposal as amended and authorize the Superintendent to transmit it to the Town of the Woodbridge in accordance with state statutes and Town Procedures.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Ms. Williamson
UNANIMOUS

Ad Hoc Security Personnel Committee – Superintendent Budd noted that this committee had met and that the minutes reflected those meetings, but all items were discussed in Executive Session.

Ad Hoc Student Culture and Community Committee – Dr. Strambler reviewed the October 25 meeting which included a presentation describing wellness team support for both students and staff with implementation of the social emotional learning program “Choose Love.” The other topic covered was safe school climate and the relevant bullying and disciplinary data collections. Several areas have identified for improvement and a new form for tracking of incidents was developed by Mr. Sapia. The next meeting of this committee is Monday, November 22, at 4:00 PM.

CABE Liaison – Ms. Del Prete noted she attended the Delegate Assembly and invited Board members to attend the New Board Member Orientation on December 8. Both Superintendent Budd and Dr. Dahya attended the CABE / CAPSS Convention.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent Budd presented the 2022/23 meeting dates that had been cross-checked with Amity and the conflicting meeting dates identified.

MOTION #8 – 2022/23 MEETING DATES

Move that we adopt the 2022/23 regular meeting dates as presented.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Mr. Hughes

UNANIMOUS

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (12:06 AM)

Dr. Madonick

Second by Dr. Dahya

UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board