

# MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, August 17, 2020

Via WebEx Meeting Number: 146 339 1461

Meeting Password: vJ3D4AmBCm2

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the meeting to order (7:03 PM).

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Mr. Dan Cowan, 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, Megan Cofrancesco, Kristina Conroy, Larissa Crocco, Kristin DeManche, Jeanne Dempsey, Joseph DePalma, Carson Echeverry, Aisling Fagan, Carrie Fanelli, Kim Franklin, Stephanie Goldberg, Peter Halsey, Kris Hart-Rooney, Liz Heagney, Kristen Horvath, Emily Jacober, Elena Lavigne, Monique MacDonald, Katie McCollom, Aimee Meacham, Jean Molot, Teresa and Ellie Nakouzi, Visa Ngov, Jason Nolan, Lori Patrick, Christine Renzoni, Nicole Rizzo, Elisa Rosner, Tim Rourke, Meghan Saunders, Michelle Shepard, Nancy Smerekanicz, Christina Thompson, Mary Vincitorio, Michelle Waldron, Sarah Wislocki, Shannon Wyman, Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; Jennifer Cooper, Shari Foldy, Laura Sexton, Karen Zelem, CSEA; and Vito Esparo, Facilities Manager; Marsha Ackerman, Patricia Alonso, Crystal Anderson, Julie Baldwin, Emily Banach, Jen Bayer, Lauren Betlinski, Christine Bindow, Sharon Brostrom, Paulo Campos, Angela Chen, Anthony Chick, Linda Christy, Beth Cohen, Sabrina Coppola, Nancy Corvigno, Orgu Dalgic, Shruti DeSai, Kris Edwards, Eric Erkenbrach, Ryan Errico, Dawn Ferullo, Pua Ford, Robin Froehle, Aneta Gelder, Margaret Gilshannon, Michele Goglia, Kathy Griffiths, Joan Grogan, Kelly Halstead, Rebecca Holcombe, Stephanie Jacobson, Ruchi Jain, Stacey Katz, Michelle Kline, Jared Krinsky, Kristy Laydon, Stefan and Tamara Lyhne, Lana Marcucio, Dr. Shannon Martinello, Aubrey Meyenburg, Scott Miller, Erin Oleskey, Kate Oliver, Bethany Park, Whitney Randall, Lauren Reichart, K Osborne Roberts, Jane Roddy, Johana Rodriguez, Bina Roginsky, Cara Rosner, Allison Schaefer, Cynthia Schmidt, Simpsons, Micah Smith, Dena Springer, Bettina Thiel, Alison Valsamis, Saurabh Vilekar, community.

**CORRESPONDENCE** – None

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – The Board acknowledged receipt of public comment statements from: Michelle Cubanski, Robin Froehle, Barbara Ahern, Julio and Johana Rodriguez, Kate Oliver, Monika Kaczmarczyk, Salem Vouras and Whitney Randall all pertaining to the Reopening. Ms. Smerekanicz urged Board members to read the letter sent to all Board members from the WEA membership regarding the reopening.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### **MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA**

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes

Second by Mr. Cowan

**UNANIMOUS**

## **REPORTS**

**PTO Update** – Ms. Prud'homme noted the PTO is exploring virtual enrichment opportunities and passive fund raising possibilities in anticipation for what the coming school year may be. Teacher grants have been awarded and the PTO is waiving the \$10 fee for the student directory.

**Superintendent Report** – The Board welcomed the Interim Superintendent, Christine Syriac. Ms. Syriac spent the majority of her career with the Seymour Public Schools and recently served as an Interim Superintendent with Region 14.

Beecher Road School Update – Ms. Sherman highlighted the results of the parent / staff survey conducted recently. Administration is working diligently on finalizing staffing assignments and professional development schedules. Kindergarten Orientation will be conducted virtually.

2020/21 Calendar – As a result of the recent storm and the lack of internet services for nearly a week as well as the recommendation from the CSDE to add additional professional development training days for staff, administration was recommending adjustments to the 2020/21 calendar.

- Reduction of student instruction days to 177 as allowed by the CSDE at the start of the school year.
- Allocate three additional staff professional development days for protocol / safety training for a total of six PD days.
- Defer the start of school to September 8 with each day during that week being a minimum day. On the first day, students with last names of L-Z would attend, the next day A-K and the remaining two all students would attend.
- Adjust the October Parent/Teacher conference days from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- The last day of school moves to June 16<sup>th</sup>.

### **MOTION #2 – 2020/21 CALENDAR**

Move approval of the revised 2020/21 calendar as presented by administration.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Dr. Townsend

**UNANIMOUS**

Upcoming Meeting Presentations – The annual Wellness report will be presented at the September 21 meeting.

Finance Committee – Ms. Shavers noted that PPE purchases to date are approximately \$70,000. The Board is looking to explore possible cost saving options, staff sharing possibilities as well as identification of potential revenue streams with Bethany. It was agreed a letter would be drafted by the Board Chair and Vice Chair on behalf of the Board and sent to the Chair of the Bethany Board of Education inviting this discussion.

CABE Liaison Report – Ms. Genovese noted links to CSDE web sites containing all school district reopening plans and the upcoming August 25 webinar on social emotional learning.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

WASA Contract – Administration presented the recently negotiated contract with the administrators union for ratification by the Board. This union represents the Principal, Assistant Principal and Special Services Director.

### **MOTION #3 – WASA CONTRACT**

Move that we ratify the contract agreement with the Woodbridge Association of School Administrators effective July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024.

Mr. Cowan

Second by Dr. Townsend

**UNANIMOUS**

Certified Staff Leave of Absence Request – Administration presented a request for a child-rearing leave of absence from Amada Esparó. Ms. Esparó is a Grade 2 teacher and has been with the district for several years.

### **MOTION #4 – CERTIFIED STAFF LEAVE OF ABSENCE (ESPARO)**

Move that we grant a child-rearing leave of absence to Amanda Esparó for the 2020/21 school year.

Mr. Cowan

Second by Dr. Townsend

**UNANIMOUS**

Mr. Cowan inquired whether it was necessary for policies to have a 30-day review. It was noted that the 30-day review complies with CT general statute.

Interim Superintendent Syriac noted that a meeting was scheduled this week with the WEA to review the concerns addressed in their August 14 letter to the Board.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Joi Prud'homme hoped the Board would consider a trial run before bringing 800 students and staff back into the building. There have been numerous letters and comments and parents should have to opportunity to know exactly what they are signing up for. Given the level of parent feedback in the survey, students will not be riding the bus and it is incomprehensible for what traffic jams may be like with the majority of parents providing individual transportation. This situation is very emotional and parents are worried about the psychological impact on their children. Teachers have been very vocal that they are uncomfortable coming back yet administration continues to push for the in-person model of instruction. It is hoped that teachers will be listened to as they are the ones who have to make learning happen. We are running out of time and if teachers are more comfortable with delivering instruction remotely listen to that and rethink the current plan.

Cathy Zdrowski – WEA President inquired whether disposable masks will be provided to teachers as the state has promised funding.

Kris Edwards – Shared concerns on the lack of detail provided in the hybrid model and why distance learning was not being phased in. Teachers should be supported and it is evident by the letter submitted that their concerns have not been addressed.

Nancy Corvigno – Fully supported in-person learning and did not believe the spring session was educationally beneficial for children. There was a lack of interaction between student and teacher with little or no educational feedback delivered. There are many essential workers in this community and it is simply not feasible for parents to be home during the day nor to provide daily virtual instruction. Children need to be in a safe environment with in-person sessions.

Nicole Chick – Noted the adaptability of teachers and the heightened anxiety associated with policing children to be social distant, monitoring handwashing, wearing masks, not touching etc. The safest option for teachers is to start the school year remotely and there are many school districts who have chosen this option. Teachers can do amazing things with remote learning if they have time to plan.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN: (8:19 PM)**

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes

Second by Dr. Ross

**UNANIMOUS**

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board