

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

**Monday, November 16, 2020**

**Via WebEx <https://woodbridgeps.webex.com/woodbridgeps/j.php?MTID=mc85a361901fad89d1d56048b570296c7>**

**Meeting Number (access code): 146 060 9627**

**Meeting Password: Sqd2Y3gMet4**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the meeting to order (6:36 PM).

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Mr. Daniel 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 and Al Pullo, Director of Business Operations/Services.

The Board entered Executive Session to review voluntary early retirement proposals for various unions.

**MOTION #1 – EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Move that we enter Executive Session (4:32 PM).

Mr. Cowan

Second by Dr. Ross

**UNANIMOUS**

The Board reviewed each of voluntary early retirement proposals for the various unions.

**MOTION #2 – PUBLIC SESSION**

Move that we return to Public Session (7:04 PM).

Mr. Cowan

Second by Ms. Genovese

**UNANIMOUS**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the Public Session back to order (7:08 PM).

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Mr. Daniel 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. Jonathan S. Budd, Incoming Superintendent; Beth Heller, First Selectman; Sandy Stein, BOS; Dr. Tom Hander, BOF; Linda Acheson, Barbara Ahern, Sylvia Antonellis, Melissa Caporossi, Dan Chase, Nicole Chick, Megan Cofrancesco, Kristen DeManche, Christa Demetro, Joseph DePalma, Maria DePalma, Madison Eucalitto, Carrie Fanelli, Lisa Farnen, Kim Franklin, Jeanette Glennon, Stephanie Goldberg, Taylor Gowisnock, Peter Halsey, Liz Heagney, Kristen Horvath, Emily Jacober, Allison Lemieux, Elena Lavigne, Monique MacDonald, Kathy Marlor, Jean Molot, Teresa Nakouzi, Jennifer Naylor, Visna Ngov, Jason Nolan, Livia Olsen, Lori Patrick, Rose Piscatelli, Christina Renzoni, Nicole Rizzo, Tim Rourke, Meghan Saunders, Jackie Scalia, Michelle Shepard, Nancy Smerekanicz, Christina Thompson, Heather Trofimchik, Harley Ventura, Mary Vincitorio, Michelle Waldron, Sarah Wislocki, Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; Jennifer Cooper, Janet Criscuolo, Kit Dunbar, Shari Foldy, Wendy Glynn, Debbie Laydon, Laura Sexton, Nicole Silva, Suzanne Sugarmann, CSEA, Lola Johnson, CILU; Aisling Fagan, Nursing Supervisor; Vito Esparo, Facilities Manager; DA, Patricia Alonso, Chrissy Anton, Adrienne Betz, Sebastian Buisine, Christine Campbell, Micaela Cardozo, Angela Chen, Jay Dahya, Daryl, Eric Erkenbrack, Ryan Errico, Michael Fitzgerald, Pua Ford, Robin Froehle, GM, Michelle Goglia, Melanie Gregory, Joan Grogan, Angela Incassati, Jared Krinsky, MK, Ruchi Jain, Lisa LaMonico, Terry Landau, Kristy Laydon, Alexis Loss, GM, Aubrey Meyenburg, Smith Mowry, Erin Olesky, Katie Oliver, Tahera Parvez, Jacqueline Pilar, Joi Prud'homme, MR, Jane Roddy, RR2383, RQ Sarah, Cara Rosner, Lisa Smith, Kristen Turkosz, NT, Alison Valsamis, Erin Williamson, Edward Whitbread, Call-In Users 1-15, 12037, community.

**CORRESPONDENCE** – Ms. Genovese noted that the Board received three letters, (one representing 11 families), all in support of maintaining in-person instruction. It was questioned how many BRS teachers vs other staff members signed the staff letter as it appeared to be mostly TA signatures. It was noted that out of the 35 signatures, 5 were teachers. In addition Board members received several emails from individual parents.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kirsten Turkosz – presented a letter on behalf of 19 parents expressing gratitude to the BRS staff and Board of Education for safe and successful school opening. The parents submitting the letter believed it was in the best interest of children to remain at BRS and continue with full-time in-person learning for the duration of the school year. It was noted that the rise in outbreaks was occurring outside in the community and not within the school environment. Also, hybrid learning does not have less risk than in-person learning. The social emotional well-being of children, especially at the elementary level, is crucial to their overall development. Elementary students benefit from being with their peers in their natural learning environment with their teacher providing in-person instruction.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**MOTION #3 – CONSENT AGENDA**

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Ms. Shavers

Second by Mr. Cowan

Mr. Cowan requested extraction of the four policies for discussion under Policy Committee.

**UNANIMOUS**

**PTO Update** – Ms. Prud’homme noted virtual guest author readings, the virtual Halloween Hoot, November 20 Picture Retake Day, grade level socials virtual game nights, the interactive Book Fair and the Thanksgiving Food Drive.

**Interim Superintendent Report** – Interim Superintendent Syriac apprised the Board on two recent BRS Covid cases. The cases were not related to each other nor did they occur within the confines of BRS. The first case resulted in the quarantine of 6 staff members and 34 students and the second case 3 staff members and 20 students. The BOWA districts are all in agreement, that given the propensity for travel during the Thanksgiving holiday, the week of November 30 – December 4 would be all remote with a return to in-person instruction slated for December 7. Prior to the return on December 7, and in consultation with QVHD and the Department of Health, data will be reviewed to determine whether we should continue with all remote, hybrid or return to in-person instruction. In addition, to alleviate increases in remote class sizes from this point forward, any students shifting from in-person instruction to remote will remain with their current teacher. This will allow for continuity within each of the learning models and minimize the need for hiring additional staff. The remote learning coach has held several individual meetings with each teacher to provide guidance on curriculum, visual success, goal teaching, time management, effective stress reduction strategies as well as share resources and research. It is anticipated this support will continue for the next 8-10 weeks. In the meantime, we will continue to assess data daily to keep students and staff safe.

With 80% of our student population attending in-person, it is evident that our protocols and mitigation strategies are working with the district fully engaged in embracing social emotional learning for students. Sentiment existed for equitable educational experiences with more transparency and better support for remote teachers. With the gradual increase of cases, we should be moving to a safer educational model for staff who do not have the option staying home. Since these types of decisions are community-based, what should the criteria be for changing to a model that keeps staff safe.

**2021/22 Calendar** – Interim Superintendent Syriac presented a draft of the proposed calendar developed in collaboration with BOWA. Slight variations involve professional development activities, i.e., November 23 with Orange and Bethany in session while Woodbridge has to adhere to the WEA Contract. Each of the BOWA boards will be asked to adopt their respective calendars at their regular December meeting.

**BRS Report** – Ms. Sherman noted the Halloween meet and greet day with staff and children dressed in costumes, Election Day professional development activities, the live-streamed Veterans Day celebration, the virtual scholastic book fair and a new initiative in collaboration with the Town Library to build diverse classroom libraries.

Facilities Committee – Mr. Cowan reviewed the November 13 meeting inclusive of PA system improvements, lighting and filter replacements, installation of an additional water filling station, Kindergarten roofing repairs, shifting various infrastructure mechanics to the microturbine and review of the Town request to use BRS as a shelter. It was noted that in designating a school as a shelter changes building / construction requirements for the school require incurring additional expenditures, i.e. supporting structures, electrical conduits, roofing requirements, heating/cooling etc. The next committee meeting is December 11 at 7:30 AM.

**MOTION #4 – EMERGENCY SHELTER**

Move that we authorize the use of Beecher Road School as a Town Emergency Shelter during a disaster.

Ms. Joyce Shavers  
Second by Ms. Genovese  
**UNANIMOUS**

Finance Committee – Ms. Shavers reviewed the November 9 meeting apprising the Board of the current deficit in the range of \$104,000 - \$120,000 with Covid expenses currently totaling \$400,000. Also noted were the deficits in both the Cafeteria and Eday programs although the Board is only obligated to subsidize the Cafeteria. The Eday is a self-sustaining program fully funded by parents and operations will cease at the Thanksgiving holiday for the remainder of the 2020/21 school year. The committee also reviewed the measurement and verification report from ESG, which determines cost saving measures as part of the 2016 building renovation program. The cost to continue this analysis for an additional year is approximately \$11,000 and is not allocated in the current budget.

**MOTION #5 – MEASUREMENT AND VERIFICATION REPORT**

Move that we continue the Measurement and Verification report with ESG for one more year.

Ms. Joyce Shavers  
Second by Ms. Genovese  
**UNANIMOUS**

Curriculum Committee – No Report. This Committee is currently slated to meet on December 17 at 4:30 PM to discuss remote instruction.

Policy Committee – Ms. Genovese presented the four policies reviewed by the committee at their November 10 meeting. Minor language modifications to both the staff and student masks policies were the result of legislative changes. The changes provide clear rationale and guidance as well as an implementation structure for the district to follow. The Title IX policies for both staff and students were new. It was noted that in Title IX, the Board would need to select either or “Preponderance of Evidence” under *Standard of Evidence and Written Determination* as recommended by Board Counsel or “Clear and Convincing Evidence”.

It was noted that the “mask” documents should not be policies and should be rules included in a handbook. These policies are fundamentality flawed, based on opinion and/or supporting opinions and could potentially be used against the Board legally. In both of the Title IX policies, Board members were urged to adopt “Clear and Convincing Evidence” as the standard since it was regarded as a “higher bar” and could prevent frivolous lawsuits. There was general consensus to adhere to the recommendation of Board Counsel in selecting “Preponderance of Evidence” under *Standard of Evidence and Written Determination*.

**MOTION #6 – ACCEPT POLICIES 30-DAY REVIEW**

➤ Move that we accept Policies 4118.237 (Masks – Staff), 5114.8 (Masks – Students), 4000.1 (Title IX - Staff) and 5145.44 (Title IX – Students) for 30-day review.

Ms. Genovese  
Second by Dr. Townsend

**IN FAVOR:** Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes, Ms. Genovese, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross,  
Ms. Shavers, Dr. Stambler and Dr. Townsend

**AGAINST:** Mr. Cowan

***MOTION PASSES 8-1-0***

CABE Liaison Report – Ms. Genovese noted the availability of multiple Covid related resources on the CABE web site as well as free Covid testing at Amity High School.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Voluntary Early Retirement Plan**

Interim Superintendent Syriac presented the Voluntary Early Retirement Plans reviewed during Executive Session. Each of the plans are similar to prior years.

**MOTION #7 – VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENT PLANS**

Move that we authorize the Superintendent to offer the 2020/21 Early Retirement Incentive Plans as presented to the respective WASA, WEA, CSEA and CILU union memberships.

Ms. Joyce Shavers  
Second by Mr. Cowan  
**UNANIMOUS**

**Authorized Signer**

As required, when a change in leadership occurs, the incoming superintendent is designated as an authorized signer.

**MOTION #6 – AUTHORIZED SIGNER**

Move that we approve Dr. Jonathan S. Budd as an authorized signature and representative for the Woodbridge School District, effective December 14, 2020.

Ms. Joyce Shavers  
Second by Dr. Townsend  
**UNANIMOUS**

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – None

**MOTION TO ADJOURN:** (9:29 PM)

Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes  
Second by Dr. Ross  
**UNANIMOUS**

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board