

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Thursday, August 6, 2020

Via WebEx <https://woodbridgeps.webex.com/woodbridgeps/j.php?MTID=md26c7fffbcd55334b2364becad24bc72>

Meeting Number (access code): 146 273 1648

Meeting password: PSxupXtp7232

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Piascyk, Vice Chair called the meeting to order (7:01 PM).

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Vice Chair; Mr. Dan Cowan, Ms. Maegan Genovese, Secretary; Mr. Jeff Hughes, Dr. David Ross, Ms. Joyce Shavers and Dr. Jeffrey Townsend.

STAFF: Mr. Robert Gilbert, 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: Christine Syriac, Interim Superintendent; Beth Heller, First Selectman; Sandy Stein, BOS; Joi Prud'homme, PTO; Dan Chase, Nicole Chick, Carson Echeverry, Carrie Fanelli, Kim Franklin, Peter Halsey, Liz Heagney, Kristen Horvath, Elena Lavigne, Aimee Meacham, Jean Molot, Lanna Moore, Teresa Nakouzi, Robin Querker, Christine Renzoni, Nicole Rizzo, Tim Rourke, Meghan Saunders, Nancy Smerekanicz, Sarah Wislocki, Mary Vincitorio, and Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; Jennifer Cooper, Shari Foldy, Suzanne Sugarmann, CSEA; Pilar and Angel Abuin, Marsha Ackerman, Chrissy Anton, Robert and Lauren Betlinski, Sharon Brostrom, Paolo Campos, Heather Church, Zachary Corbin, Orgu Dalgic, Eric Erkenbrack, Pua Ford, Sara Steinberg Forman, Margaret Gilshannon, McKenzie Grenada, Brian Goffe, Joan Grogan, Kevin and Laura Hall, Rebecca Holcombe, Robert and Brooke Hopkins, Stephanie Jacobson, Ruchi Jain, Kristy Laydon, Tamara Lyhne, Pedro Martinez, Dena Mortensen, Bethany Park, Erin Oleskey, Kate Oliver, Amy Raymond, Whitney Randall, Dr. Mohini Ranganathan, Jane Roddy, Bria Roginsley and Dr. Shari Storeyguard, community.

Ms. Piascyk introduced Christine Syriac as the Interim Superintendent for the 2020/21 school year.

MOTION #1 – APPOINTMENT INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT

Move that we appoint Christine Syriac as Interim Superintendent effective August 10, 2020 at a per diem rate of \$800 per day.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Dr. Townsend
UNANIMOUS

As the Board was successful in their search for an Interim Superintendent earlier than anticipated, it was agreed that the effective date of Superintendent Gilbert's retirement would be adjusted.

MOTION #2 – RETIREMENT DATE MODIFICATION

Move that the effective retirement date of Superintendent Robert Gilbert be changed to August 31, 2020.

Ms. Piascyk
Second by Mr. Cowan
UNANIMOUS

Superintendent Gilbert presented policies recently reviewed by the Policy Committee at their July 30, 2020 meeting. These policies are necessary as the result of the pandemic and in response to Executive Orders from the Governor. In addition further edits were made as a result of recent Executive Order changes.

A request was made to postpone action on the policies due to a lack of preparation time for development of defending arguments on the merit of these policies. These policies are in response to an Executive Order and should be in the handbook not the policy manual. These policies are fundamentally flawed and create hardships for parents and staff. There is nothing that would prevent them from being used as guidance instead of policy and they should be sent back to committee. It was noted that it was important these policies be in place prior to the start of school and since all policies are required to sit for 30-day review prior to action, time was of the essence.

MOTION #3 – ACCEPT POLICIES 30-DAY REVIEW

Move that we accept Policy 6114.81 Emergency Suspension of Policy During Pandemic for 30-day review and table Policies 4118.237 (Masks – Staff), 5114.8 (Masks – Students), 4118.238 (Self-Quarantine (Staff), 5141.81 (Self-Quarantine – students).

Mr. Cowan

Second by Ms. Piascyk

IN FAVOR:

Mr. Cowan and Mr. Hughes

AGAINST:

Ms. Genovese, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross, Ms. Shavers and Dr. Townsend

MOTION FAILS 2-5-0

It was requested that each paired policy (staff/students) be discussed and voted on separately.

The board reviewed the changes to Policies 4118.237 (Masks – Staff) and 5114.8 (Masks – Students). It was noted that there was not termination within the context of the policy for when masks would no longer be necessary. It was also suggested that the policies be linked to the CDC website as an objective metric.

MOTION #4 – ACCEPT POLICIES 30-DAY REVIEW

Move that we accept Policies 4118.237 (Masks – Staff) and 5114.8 (Masks – Students) for 30-day review.

Ms. Genovese

Second by Dr. Townsend

IN FAVOR:

Mr. Cowan and

AGAINST:

Ms. Genovese, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross, Ms. Shavers and Dr. Townsend

MOTION PASSES 6-1-0

The Board review Policies 4118.238 (Self-Quarantine (Staff) and 5141.81 (Self-Quarantine – Students). A sentiment existed that these policies were arduous, over burdensome, created family hardships and went beyond the Executive Orders. There are essential workers that need flexibility to perform their job responsibilities and this policy would effectively tie their hands.

MOTION #5 – RETURN POLICIES TO COMMITTEE

Move that we return Policies 4118.238 (Self-Quarantine (Staff), 5141.81 (Self-Quarantine – Students) back to the Policy Committee for further review.

Mr. Cowan

As there was no second for this motion, it was withdrawn.

WITHDRAWN

It was noted that everyone needs to be protected, visitors, students and staff. It is important that we protect as many people as possible and these policies address that. Should it be necessary, modifying policies is easily achieved.

MOTION #6 – ACCEPT POLICIES 30-DAY REVIEW

Move that we accept Policies 4118.238 (Self-Quarantine (Staff), 5141.81 (Self-Quarantine – Students) for 30-day review.

Dr. Townsend

Second by Ms. Genovese

IN FAVOR:

Mr. Cowan and

AGAINST:

Ms. Genovese, Mr. Hughes, Ms. Piascyk, Dr. Ross, Ms. Shavers and Dr. Townsend

MOTION PASSES 6-1-0

MOTION #7 – ACCEPT POLICY 30-DAY REVIEW

Move that we accept Policy 6114.81 Emergency Suspension of Policy During Pandemic for 30-day review.

Mr. Cowan

Second by Ms. Genovese

UNANIMOUS

The Board received an update on the Reopening Plan and Remote Learning Option. Ms. Sherman, Ms. Merrill and Ms. Mammen provided updates on each of the working committees. Remote Learning expectations have been clearly outlined and the template reorganized by day rather than content area. New pacing guides are being developed as well as prioritization of standards. It was noted that we are staffing for two different programs – in-person instruction and remote learning and complete integration of each to ensure that we are able to switch from one to the other at a moment’s notice. A list of FAQ’s has been compiled and will be shared with parents in the next day or so as well as a survey asking parents whether they will be sending their child(ren) back to BRS. In order to staff appropriately, it is paramount that we know how many students will be returning. Further, the state is reducing student instruction days to 177 and allowing districts to change their calendars to allow for a total of six (6) professional development days at the start of the year to provide additional training in protocols, procedures etc. related to covid.

It was requested that administration hold a town-wide livestream with parents to address concerns and answer questions. Several board members believed more information was necessary than just a “yes” or “no” answer to “will your child will be returning to BRS” and that the nuances associated with the response were important to know. It was noted that a more robust plan for in-person instruction should be shared with parents as well as details for which staff will be conducting remote learning and options associated with a hybrid model. It is crucial that all instruction models are differentiated to provide the highest level of learning. It was noted that staff would not be expected to teach remotely and in-person simultaneously. Teachers will also have the flexibility to determine outdoor space utilization as part of daily lessons.

MOTION #7 – ADDITIONAL SURVEY QUESTION

Move that an additional question on flexibility be added to the parent / staff survey on the return to school.

Mr. Hughes
Second by Dr. Ross
UNANIMOUS

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (9:33 PM)
Dr. Ross
Second by Ms. Genovese
UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board