

# MINUTES OF THE REMOTE REGULAR WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, October 19, 2021

Via WebEx

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Meeting Number: 2482 509 9524

Meeting Password: G2PtP6MMiS3

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the meeting to order (7:05 PM).

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Lynn Piascyk, Chair; Dr. Jay Dahya; Ms. Sarah Del Prete, Secretary; Ms. Brooke Hopkins; Mr. Jeff Hughes; Ms. 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:** Dr. Shannon Martinello, District Medical Advisor; Judith Wilson, Consultant; Joi Prud'homme, PTO; Josh Gelder, community.

**CORRESPONDENCE** – Ms. Del Prete noted the Board had received communication from a parent and the document was available in BoardBook under the Correspondence tab.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – Josh Gelder thanked administration for providing opt-in forms that give parents the power to make important medical decisions for their children as this is how it should be done. All medical decisions, including masking, should be made by the parent. Still no survey has been sent to parents even though it has been requested. Connecticut is consistently leading the country with the lowest number of positive cases. While there have been positive cases at BRS, in each case there has been 100% recovery. It is time to define a path to lead the way out of these restrictions. He is requesting once again that parents be surveyed asking if they feel their child should still be forced to wear a mask to school every day given the extraordinarily low positivity rate and 100% recovery rate. As a Board you are elected to serve the community and identify what metrics will be used to decide when to end these restrictions. While it is understood the Board takes directives and guidance from the state and QVHD, that does not mean that they are not able to come up with their own criteria for the BRS community to meet these requirements so that children can go back to a normal school environment. Once the metrics are identified, they should be put into policy and the policy shared with other towns to show that BRS is a forward-thinking group that can do more than just take orders and directives from the State. Woodbridge has always been a state leader and he hopes that will continue.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### **MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA**

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Ms. Madonick

Second by Dr. Dahya

**UNANIMOUS**

## **REPORTS**

***Superintendent's Report*** – Superintendent Budd recognized Bus Driver Appreciation Week, the 30<sup>th</sup> school day of the year, upcoming professional development activities, and anticipation of a staff survey being conducted in the coming weeks. Also noted was the addition of a Grade 4 special education teacher, the community “Woodbridge Like Me” event, enrollment updates, the recent installation of bike racks, and participation of approximately 100 families in the voluntary Covid testing program. Superintendent Budd acknowledged receipt earlier today of the retirement of Music Teacher, Bill Letsch, after 25 years of incredible service. Mr. Letsch started the band program inclusive of Jazz Ensemble, Percussion Ensemble, Advanced Band, String Ensemble, Beginning Band and Colorguard. During his tenure, BRS students achieved the highest honors, winning numerous awards at Music Adjudications across the state, Middle School Regionals and New England Open Championships. He has been an outstanding educator who modeled professionalism and passion for his discipline and he had an enormous impact on Beecher. Questions arose regarding the impact of Covid testing / swabbing

on instruction, the staff survey - timing / administration, and whether the Board will receive raw or synthesized result data.

*Safe Return to School Update* – Superintendent Budd noted the staff forum scheduled later this week and the parent forum on Thursday evening. To date BRS has experienced 11 quarantines, with no confirmed cases of in-school transmissions. Approximately 95% of BRS staff are vaccinated. It was noted the mask mandate has been extended to mid-February and applies to all students, staff and visitors. It is anticipated that in the coming weeks the Cafeteria will be opened gradually for in-person eating and Grade 6 classes will begin transitioning from room-to-room, maintaining physical distancing.

Dr. Martinello emphasized that there is no cookie cutter approach to Covid. Every case is a different scenario and there is no concrete answer. BRS has done an excellent job of maintaining mitigation strategies and masking, as these are the best preventative measures until this age group has a vaccine option. Currently, approximately 20-30% of all Covid cases are in pediatrics. While this was not the case a year ago, the Delta variant is more contagious and a game changer. Symptoms do not need to be severe for it to be Covid; symptoms can be overlapping and there is a wide range of possibilities. We are navigating 850 students with different families and aspects. This virus is not going away, information is changing daily, and ultimately we will all be exposed. Anything and everything we are able to do to keep kids in school is going to reap huge benefits for children.

Questions were raised regarding the potential for increased absences in colder weather, the percentage of children who experience long-term effects, the wearing of masks outside, why we are quarantining classes and other districts are not, when it may be possible to reconsider and/or relax protocol procedures, field trips, the nursing supervisor vacancy, online instruction / support for quarantined students, student behaviors, and whether remote learning would occur following the holidays similar to last year. It was clarified that students are not required to wear masks outdoors unless they are playing a game of close contact. Depending upon daily schedules and weather, outdoor time could include recess, snack time, lunch, reading, and movement breaks. In order to ensure the safety of students, field trips are not a reasonable option at this point in time as too many uncontrollable variables exist and not every school is utilizing the same approach and strategies as BRS. With regard to quarantine procedures it was noted that BRS adheres and follows the protocol outlined in [Addendum 5](#) of the Governor's Executive Order 14.

The Board recognized the efforts of BRS staff for the amazing work they do on a daily basis and especially those of Ms. Sherman to go above and beyond.

*Strategic Planning* – Ms. Wilson outlined her approach for development of the next strategic plan. The plan will be an inclusive model predicated on future centered thinking and leadership with participation from all stakeholder groups – staff, parents, community and former graduates. Schooling has changed and it is important to see the work we want to accomplish through a different lens. It is anticipated the process will take approximately five (5) months from beginning to end. The plan will be developed based on a 3-5 year range with 3-4 identified goals and actions plans to launch on July 1. The process will review the current mission, value, and beliefs statement with anonymous surveys conducted with all representative groups inclusive of open-ended questions. This process is about starting from where we are now and determining and defining the direction we should proceed in to outline what makes sense for the next steps. It is not about identifying gaps.

*Special Education Update* – Ms. Kiesel provided an overview on the Special Education Program inclusive of the IEP / PPT process, eligibility criteria, internal referral process, out-of-district servicing requirements, related services, TAG, and staffing. Over the last five years, the student population has continued to increase with the projection rising to 12.8% in the 2022/23 school year. This has a direct impact on classroom spacing, budget, and staffing needs.

*BRS Update* – Ms. Sherman noted the upcoming professional development days, the Safe School Climate Committee, the annual fire truck visit from the Woodbridge Fire Department, and anticipated changes to the identification requirements associated with the drop-off and pick-up process.

*Upcoming presentations* – Capital Plan. It is anticipated the presentation will be similar to prior years.

*PTO* – Ms. Prud'homme noted bus driver appreciation week with each bus driver receiving a special token of appreciation, the Charleston Wrap fund-raising drive, the annual harvest hike, author visits, and the drive-thru Creepy Crawling Halloween Hoot on October 30 from 5:30 – 7:30 PM.

Board of Selectmen – No Report

Curriculum Committee – Dr. Strambler apprised the Board that this committee has not yet met, but will meet on November 4 at 4:00 PM.

Facilities Committee – Mr. Hughes reviewed the October 5 meeting. The Capital Plan Committee will meet on October 14 to review the plan for capital projects inclusive of the HVAC system, K-wing roof replacement, A-wing drainage issues and dual temperature loops. It was also noted that the monthly facilities report is included in BoardBook. The next meeting of this committee is December 7 at 7:30 AM.

Finance Committee – Dr. Dahya reviewed the October 12 meeting which included monthly financials, students with financial needs, Eday, and discussion of the 2% budget threshold. There was general agreement that, in accordance with past practice, any remaining surplus of funds at the end of year should continue to be remitted back to the Town. The next meeting of this committee is November 9 at 4:30 PM.

Policy Committee – Ms. Madonick apprised the Board that this committee met on October 11 and discussed each of the policies being brought to board this evening and recommended adoption of each. In addition the Board reviewed a policy on civility and will hold a special policy committee meeting on November 10 to further review that policy. The next regular meeting of the committee is December 14 at 7:00 PM. Superintendent Budd highlighted the recommended changes for each policy.

**MOTION #2 – POLICY ADOPTION 4118.238 / 4218.238 / 5141.81**

Move that we adopt Policies 4118.238 / 4218.238 / 5141.81 (*Travel and Self-Quarantine During the Covid 19 Pandemic*).

Ms. Madonick

Second by Ms. Williamson

**UNANIMOUS**

**MOTION #3 – POLICY ADOPTION 0521, 2111, 4118.11/4218.11, 5145.4**

Move that we adopt Policies 0521, (*Nondiscrimination*), 2111 (*Equal Employment Opportunity*), 4118.11/4218.11 (*Nondiscrimination*), 5145.4 (*Nondiscrimination*).

Ms. Madonick

Second by Ms. Del Prete

**UNANIMOUS**

**MOTION #4 – POLICY ADOPTION 4131**

Move that we adopt Policy 4131 (*Professional Development*) as revised.

Ms. Madonick

Second by Dr. Dahya

**UNANIMOUS**

**MOTION #5 – POLICY ADOPTION 4212.42**

Move that we adopt Policy 4212.42 (*Drug and Alcohol Testing and Required Training for School Bus Drivers*) as revised.

Ms. Madonick

Second by Ms. Del Prete

**UNANIMOUS**

**MOTION #6 – POLICY ADOPTION 6161.51**

Move that we adopt Policy 6161.51 (*Surveys and Screening of Students*) as revised.

Ms. Madonick

Second by Dr. Dahya

**UNANIMOUS**

Ad Hoc Capital Plan Committee – The Board representatives on this committee are Mr. Hughes and Dr. Dayha. The Committee was scheduled to meet on October 14; however, that did not occur. It is anticipated this meeting will be rescheduled shortly.

Ad Hoc Security Personnel Committee – This Committee has not yet met. The Board representatives will be Ms. Madonick and Ms. Hopkins.

Ad Hoc Student Culture – Dr. Strambler reviewed the September 27 meeting which covered a few different topics, professional development in the summer which focused on the program “Choose Love,” meet and greets held prior to the start of the school year to transition remote learners, and the student / family survey results. The next meeting of this committee is October 25 at 4:00 PM.

CABE Liaison Report – Ms. Madonick noted several members of the Board would be attending the legal issues workshop in Rocky Hill on October 27, the registration limitations / closure of the CABE / CAPSS Convention on November 12, and the Delegate Assembly on November 11 from 3-6 PM. Any Board member interested in being a delegate should notify either Maria or Sarah Beth.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **MOTION #7 – MODIFY AGENDA**

Move that we modify tonight’s agenda and add under New Business - acceptance of certified staff retirement.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Ms. Madonick

**UNANIMOUS**

Superintendent Budd presented the 2022/23 meeting dates. It was suggested that, prior to adoption, dates be cross-checked with Amity to ensure meetings did not conflict.

### **MOTION #8 – 2022/23 MEETING DATES TABLED**

Move that we table action on the 2022/23 regular meeting dates.

Ms. Del Prete

Second by Ms. Hopkins

**UNANIMOUS**

The Board extended a sincere thank you to Mr. Letsch for his years of service as an instrumental music teacher. The children of Beecher benefitted greatly from his expertise and talents.

### **MOTION #9 – CERTIFIED STAFF RETIREMENT**

Move that we accept the retirement of William Letsch, effective October 31, 2021, with much regret.

Ms. Piascyk

Second by Dr. Dahya

**UNANIMOUS**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Josh Gelder has spent about 15 years working in the medical field and the cornerstone of the medical field is “do no harm.” It is almost inevitable that in the near future parents will come to a crossroad and have to decide if they want to inject their children with a vaccine from the pharmaceutical industry that stands to make billions and billions of dollars. We have zero data on long-term effects that in adult form has breakthrough cases galore happening all over the globe or choose to just let their natural immunity do its job, considering that, with no available vaccine yet for our children, their natural immunity by itself has led to a 99.98% survival rate for those children who were unfortunate enough to catch Covid. Thankfully, we know our rate for our student community was 100%. He noted the 99.98% figure is from data released October 14 from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Of these two choices, the one that has a far greater chance of actually causing harm to our children would be the vaccine, and hopes this will be taken into consideration when the Board adopts a vaccine policy in the future.

The Board entered Executive Session (10:41 PM).

**MOTION #10 – EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Move that we enter Executive Session, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes 1-200, to discuss negotiations with respect to collective bargaining, as well as to discuss pending claims and litigation, and invite the Superintendent to join the Board.

Ms. Del Prete  
Second by Dr. Strambler  
**UNANIMOUS**

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

**STAFF:** Dr. Jonathan Budd, Superintendent

The Board discussed negotiations with respect to collective bargaining, as well as pending claims and litigation.

**MOTION #11 – RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION**

Move that we return to Public Session (11:31 PM).

Ms. Del Prete  
Second by Ms. Hopkins  
**UNANIMOUS**

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

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

**MOTION TO ADJOURN: (11:31 PM)**

Ms. Williamson  
Second by Mr. Hughes  
**UNANIMOUS**

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board