

Regular Board of Education Meeting – Draft Minutes

January 6, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

High School Auditorium

Present Board Members: Jenny Emery (via Zoom), Mark Fiorentino, David Peling, Sarah Thrall, Rosemarie Weber, Brandon Webster, Jack DeGray and Jacob Scotto (Student Representatives)

Absent Board Members: Melissa Migliaccio

Sarah Thrall called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Administrative Reports

II.A. Chairman's Corner

Ms. Thrall shared opening remarks and congratulated Jordan on his first year as Superintendent of Schools. With the change in Board Chairs, Ms. Thrall re-assigned Board members to subcommittees as follows: Ms. Rosemarie Weber was named Chair of the Curriculum Subcommittee; Ms. Migliaccio will join the Finance Subcommittee; and, David Peling will move over to the Curriculum Subcommittee. Additionally, she stated that she and Mark Fiorentino visited schools prior to the break and it was wonderful. She informed the Board to let her know if they would like to join them for future visits.

II.B. Superintendent's Announcements

- Dr. Grossman stated when he joined the Board a year ago, he gave the Board a card and M&M candy stating it would be a “Magical and Memorable” year which it certainly was. This year, he gave the Board a \$100,000 Grand Bar and thanked all of the Board members for their hard work over the past year.
- There will not be a Three-Board Meeting scheduled at this time.
- The virtual discussion of the book, “Waking Up White” by Debby Irving will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 13th from 6-8 p.m.
- The recent PJ Day fundraiser was incredible. Approximately \$4,000 was raised! Additionally, Wells Road collected 157 pairs of pajamas for children in need.
- With regard to the performing arts, congratulations to the High School Drama Club on its performance of *It's a Wonderful Life* as well as to all of the artists who performed for the Coffeehouse prior to the break.
- High school Capstone projects are being presented this week. Dr. Grossman stated he and Ms. Parsons attended some presentations today which were held virtually as well as in-person.
- CIAC and DPH are currently meeting regarding winter athletics and what it may look like. Brian Maltese will attend the next meeting on January 20th to provide an update to the Board.
- Building Committee continues to meet. Anna Robbins will provide an update later on this evening.
- The new vestibule project at the middle school over the past couple of weeks is going well and looks terrific. Dr. Grossman thanked Anna Robbins and Shannon Sullivan for their work.
- There will be an early release on Monday, January 11th for school-based professional development.
- There will be no school on January 18th in observance of the holiday.
- The next Board Meeting will be held on January 20th.

II.C. Assistant Superintendent's Report

Ms. Jennifer Parsons, Assistant Superintendent, also informed the Board about the Debby Irving, “Waking Up White” virtual discussion and stated the event is open to the public from 6-8 p.m. on January 13th and there are still a few seats left. She also provided an update on COVID stating students and teachers are happy to be back. The district is upholding the 14-day quarantine in the school-base setting. The District has seen some cases coming off of the break and families are using the screening tool and keeping students home when necessary. She will continue to communicate these cases as they come up. She stated the metrics have changed and have been modified to be more of a continuum of in-person learning to more remote learning. We are being advised to do a daily assessment of our schools to determine if there is a need to change models. Two questions need to be asked: 1) Is there enough staff to safely open schools, and, 2) Are the cases of COVID-19 impacting schools. In moving forward in 2021, educators will move closer to a vaccine and teachers may be in Phase 1B. Additionally, Ms.

Parsons informed the Board that a committee for the Vision of the Graduate will meet 3 times in January and February. With regard to curriculum, working on Math, Music and Capstone as it is related to the Vision of the Graduate.

II.D. Student Representative Report

- Jack DeGray stated NHS filled 50 stockings for the holiday.
- NHS is holding tutoring sessions every day for underclassmen prior to midterms. Between 1-3 NHS members host a Google Meet that students can join for an hour and ask questions.
- The CIAC/DPH/Board of Control will be meeting later this week to decide on the winter sport season and how it will affect football, basketball, wrestling, and cheerleading.
- Jacob Scotto stated the Drama Program performed their version of *It's a Wonderful Life* prior to the break. It was a huge success and was streamed virtually for all to watch it.
- The Coffeehouse performance was broadcast the same way with approximately 200 viewers watched live as well.
- The Choir Program is in the process of creating their virtual performance now and also exploring digital options to continue the "Singing Valentines" tradition.
- Many quarantined students are excited to be back learning physically instead of virtually.

Ms. Thrall inquired if the play and coffeehouse can still be viewed and Jacob stated, yes, he believes they can still be viewed. Mr. Fiorentino inquired about the lunch program and both Jack and Jacob stated the food is very good and there are many more options than last year.

I.E. Business Manager's Report

Ms. Anna Robbins, Business Manager, presented the November statement of accounts stating it reflects the cost of reopening schools during the current pandemic. The forecast also projects the receipt of the Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund as well as the Coronavirus Relief Fund. The general fund forecast is negative \$180K. Special education is over \$205K and regular education is better than budgeted by \$25K. Line items that contribute to the over-budget conditions are Custodial & Maintenance Salaries, Bus Monitors, Statutory Unemployment Contributions, and Special Education Out-of-District Tuition. Administration is working closely with our food service vendor, Fresh Picks Café, to manage our food service during the pandemic. The program is projected to run at a loss this year due to the implementation of additional health and safety measures. The balance of the Q&D Fund is forecasted to be higher than budgeted by \$49K and expenses are projected to be lower at \$115K lower due to restrictions resulting from the pandemic, such as, summer school, afterschool activities, and a reduction in PreK enrollment. Revenue to the town is unfavorable by \$67K. The forecast for the Excess Cost Grant is better than projected last month by \$28K but continues to fluctuate. Jenny Emery stated the Finance Subcommittee reviewed this statement prior to the holiday. She stated over \$750K was spent during this budget year for unbudgeted items related to COVID and thanks to the good work of Anna Robbins and Dr. Grossman in securing grants, the District has been able to offset the COVID expenses in the general fund and that the overage is all due to special education expenses. Brandon Webster inquired if only special education offerings for summer school will be offered this year. Ms. Parsons stated the District is looking to bring back all of the offerings and she hopes to know by April if this can be done in-person or if it needs to be virtual.

II. Public Comment

There were no public comments this evening.

III. Consent Agenda

III.A. Minutes

A motion was made by Brandon Webster and seconded by Rosemarie Weber that the Granby Board of Education adopt the consent agenda. This motion passed unanimously at 7:23 p.m.

IV. Old Business

IV.A. High School Building Committee Update

Ms. Anna Robbins, Business Manager, provided an update on the work of the High School Building Committee to the Board. Architects and administrators at the town and the schools have been meeting on a regular basis. The middle school roof is close to completion and the high school stairwell and science classrooms are through the design process and tentatively scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2021. This month, the cafeteria, music space and technology education space are the focus. The grant will be submitted in June 2021 for these projects. The high school roof replacement process will begin in November 2021 with the actual replacement tentative scheduled for the Summer of 2022.

IV.B. Food Service Program Update

Dr. Jordan Grossman and Ms. Anna Robbins discussed an opportunity to expand our Food Service Program to the East Granby Public School. East Granby does not have a food service program at this time. Dr. Grossman stated one of the goals of the Board is to form cooperative relationships with other towns. The timing is appropriate because all breakfasts and lunches are free for the remainder of the school year. The District will get reimbursed for every meal made. Dr. Grossman stated this has tremendous support from Fresh Picks and can be accomplished with current staffing. He has reached out to our attorneys to draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which is in the final stages and is still in conversations with East Granby. He stated if Granby needs to pull out due to financial risk, this will be delineated in the MOU and East Granby has agreed to this as well. Lunches would be made and brought over to East Granby. It is a win/win for both towns to pilot this program and it does not lock the Granby Public Schools into the 2021-22 school year to provide lunches. Again, this is something the BOE has been looking at for several years--to collaborate with other districts. Mark Fiorentino thanked Ms. Robbins and Dr. Grossman for their work on this and stated food service is very difficult to manage to provide healthy lunches to our students and be financially viable. He stated he asked some pretty tough questions and stated he is thankful that answers were received. David Peling inquired if Dr. Grossman is hopeful that the lunch situation with East Granby will continue. Dr. Grossman stated it is something the District will really look at to see if it is beneficial to both towns. Jenny Emery stated the lunch program is volume driven and it works only if enough of our students buy lunch. She stated she is hopeful it will prove to be viable even beyond the national program.

V. New Business

V.A. FY22 Plus One Budget

Ms. Thrall stated this is the Board's first look at this budget and that the Board will have an opportunity to ask questions at the next Board Meeting. Dr. Jordan Grossman presented the FY22 Plus One Budget and thanked his administrative team for being present this evening and for all of their work in putting the budget together. He also thanked Anna Robbins and Linda Powell for putting the document together. Dr. Grossman stated this is not the final budget and the number we are currently at may not be the number presented on March 3rd. He stated he would like Board members to send any questions to him, Anna Robbins and Linda Powell by next Wednesday, January 13th. He explained how the Plus One Budget is comprised of small capital, large capital as well as new personnel and program items. Dr. Grossman reviewed the new Board Goals which are used to develop the budget. He informed the Board that the BOF unapproved budget guideline is 1.5% and reviewed other driving factors for the budget, such as, transportation costs, retirements, salaries, utilities, special education, and enrollment. He also explained OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits). The budget is currently at 3.71% without OPEB and 4.5% with OPEB. Dr. Grossman described a standing still number without adding anything new which includes salaries, transportation, health and benefits, fuel, and contracted services. With just those items, there would be an increase of 2.24% and when Q&D and special education is added in, the increase would be 3.24%. Additionally, Dr. Grossman explained there are pandemic-related expenses which are not included in this budget: \$60K for additional cleaning supplies and \$285,250 for additional custodial staff.

Dr. Grossman reviewed some of the items in the FY22 budget as follows: Grade 2 Teacher at Kelly Lane to meet the needs of current class size and sections for Grade 1; two Kindergarten teaching assistants will be moved from Q&D to the operating budget; K-5 Special Education Instructional Coach for Kelly/Wells to assist with the increase caseload of special education students; expansion of the

Strings Program to Grade 5; the reduction of a 1.0 FTE at the middle school due to the implementation of a new schedule; 0.5 FTE Social Worker at the middle school and high school; Teaching Assistants at Kelly Lane/Middle School/High School; 0.25 FTE Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant; and, a Wilson Reading Tutor. Some notable items for the FY22 Plus One Budget include an Elementary Content Area Specialist at Kelly Lane; School Improvement Teams at Kelly Lane and Wells Road to identify the school efforts to improve student performance; Social/emotional learning (SEL) at Kelly Lane to continue the SEL work at the school level; PSAT testing at the middle school to Grade 8 students; funding for the seventh year of football; and, a Minority Teacher Recruitment Program to increase minority staff members by participating in the CREC Minority Teacher in Residence Program.

Brandon Webster inquired about sections for the upcoming Kindergarten class. Dr. Grossman stated there will be 7 sections in Kindergarten. Mark Fiorentino inquired about the Minority Teacher Recruitment Program in the out years and if all are in the Q&D budget. Dr. Grossman stated another teacher will be brought in the second year and another in the third year. He stated the training will be in Q&D and the job opening will be taken from the operating budget. Mr. Fiorentino inquired if the GEF has been approached on this. Dr. Grossman stated, no, not yet. David Peling inquired if there is an obligation on OPEB that if we don't pay now we will pay later. Dr. Grossman stated, yes, that is correct. Mr. Peling also inquired exactly what is OPEB. Anna Robbins stated OPEB is a requirement to provide health insurance on an ongoing basis for our retirees. They do pay into the fund; however, there is a cost. OPEB insures we do not run out of money. Mr. Peling also inquired if herd immunity is achieved in August can we expect to be in-school without remote learning or is it too early to decide. Dr. Grossman stated it depends on what the State of Connecticut decides to do; however, at this time, he has no idea what the SDE is going to say about the fall. Jenny Emery inquired about the two figures given for potential COVID expenses and if they would be needed again to open up schools again in the fall. Dr. Grossman stated, yes, this is correct and those funds would be needed again. Brandon Webster inquired if the OPEB cost can be deferred. Anna Robbins stated she would need to defer to the BOF and town for this question. Mark Fiorentino stated there is some flexibility as to how we fund it and that it was advisable for Dr. Grossman to call it out separately as the BOE works with the BOF and BOS.

Dr. Grossman reviewed the small capital requests for the FY22 school year and thanked Shannon Sullivan for helping to put this together. The small capital funds are broken down between Furniture Fixture and Equipment (\$52,378), Maintenance (\$382,264), Technology \$266,753), and Transportation (\$271,388). He also reviewed some unfunded items in personnel and programs (\$232,872) as well as some furniture, fixtures and equipment (\$37,600). Dr. Grossman reminded Board members to send any questions to Linda, Anna and himself by next Wednesday. Sarah Thrall thanked Dr. Grossman, Anna Robbins and the administration for all of their work on the budget.

VI. Miscellaneous

VI.A. Board Standing Committee Reports

VI.A.1. Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communication

This subcommittee met tonight. Ms. Parsons provided her monthly report: Nearing completion of discussion on the scheduling at the middle school and will have a pilot in the near future; testing for 2021 including SBAC – it appears the state will proceed with this testing; a team formed for the Vision of the Graduate; budget work; Equity Team is continuing their work and will provide an update to the Board this spring. Also received an update on curriculum. Jennifer Parsons is reviewing the curriculum cycle including Capstone and will provide a proposal of what this will look like going forward.

VI.A.2. Finance/Personnel/Facilities

Jenny reported that everything discussed at the meeting was touched upon this evening.

VI.B. Other Board-Related Reports

VI.B.1. CREC/CABE

Mark Fiorentino stated CREC held a teleconference which focused on their legislative priorities but he was not able to attend. He gave a flyer to Dr. Grossman who can send it on to the Board.

VI.B.2. Granby Education Foundation

Jenny Emery stated she had no update but there is a meeting this coming Monday evening.

VI.C. Calendar of Events

Sarah Thrall stated that high school mid-term exams are coming up.

VI.D. Board Member Announcements

There were no Board announcements.

VI.E. Action Items

1) Board questions to Anna Robbins, Linda Powell and Dr. Grossman.

VII. Executive Session/Non-Meeting

There was no need for an Executive Session this evening. A motion was made by David Peling and seconded by Brandon Webster to adjourn the meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Weber
Board Secretary