

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Monday, October 5, 2020

Via WebEx <https://woodbridgeps.webex.com/woodbridgeps/j.php?MTID=m703b1705371a8c3ea400e6e33754cc15>

Meeting Number (access code): 146 773 8812

Meeting Password: d9zMQJ3viP3

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the meeting to order (7:02 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: Beth Heller, First Selectman; Sandy Stein, BOS; Dr. Tom Hander, BOF; Barbara Ahern, Melissa Caporossi, Dan Chase, Nicole Chick, Jeanne Ciarleglio, Larissa Crocco, Christa Demetro, Taylor DaSilva, Kristen DeManche, Joseph DePalma, Maria DePalma, Carson Echeverry, Madison Eucalitto, Carrie Fanelli, Lisa Farnen, Kim Franklin, Stephanie Goldberg, Taylor Gowisnock, Kris Hart-Rooney, Liz Heagney, Emily Jacober, Monique MacDonald, Kathy Marlor, Aimee Meacham, Heather Minardi, Jean Molot, Jennifer Naylor, Jason Nolan, Lori Patrick, Christina Renzoni, Nicole Rizzo, Elisa Rosner, Tim Rourke, Meghan Saunders, Jackie Scalia, Nancy Smerekanicz, Mary Vincitorio, Michelle Waldron, Sarah Wislocki, Cathy Zdrowski, Teachers; Jennifer Cooper, Kit Dunbar, Shari Foldy, Suzanne Sugarmann, CSEA, Stacey Katz, Nursing Supervisor; Marsha Ackerman, Christine Campbell, Michelle Colonna, Lauren Esposito, Michael Fitzgerald, Robin Froehle, Geldar Family, Michelle Goglia, Ruchi Jain, Kristy Laydon, Erin Olesky, Joi Prud'homme, Whitney Randall, Jane Roddy, Bettina Thiel, Alison Valsamis, community.

Reopening Plan Update

Interim Superintendent Syriac indicated there are three driving factors within the reopening plan update – (1) the current budget did not include the addition of eight (8) remote teachers, (2) remote class sizes and (3) any and all actions / decisions made must maintain the safety of students and staff. Caution needs to be exerted carefully as addressing one area could have a ripple effect and create different issues in other components of the plan. While teachers are prepared to move into hybrid, or all remote, on a given notice, the consequences of this action would impact all students, families and teachers. Presently, neither the budget nor class sizes warrant a move to full hybrid in addressing those concerns. We continue to struggle with staffing options. Meetings have been held with all teachers, the WEA Executive Board as well as the remote teachers to ask questions and share concerns. The frustrations of the remote learning teachers goes beyond class size. Contact has been made with four outside organizations to solicit the hiring of a consultant whose work would be dedicated to supporting the remote teachers. This part-time position would be funded through various grants and the current professional development allocation in the 2020/21 budget. Another option would be to have no remote teachers and have a blend of in person and remote teaching congruently in each classroom by the assigned teacher, although the teachers union is not receptive to that format. This platform is similar to what other districts across the state have implemented and does not further impact the budget.

Presently, four of the eight required teachers have been hired temporarily until the Thanksgiving Break. If the district were able to actually hire the eight (8) teachers necessary to support social distancing in classrooms, the cost would be approximately \$575,000 plus benefits. If we maintain the current four (4), the cost would be approximately \$287,000 plus benefits. As Covid did not exist when the budget was adopted, neither option is included in the current budget so it is imperative that the Town be involved in the necessary discussions to determine funding possibilities. A survey will be sent to all parents to ascertain what is working, what is not and what improvements could be made. Once this feedback has been synthesized, information will be shared accordingly.

It was expressed that there needs to be fundamental equity in the remote learning component that creates an equitable program inclusive of pedagogy, specials, class sizes etc. We need to be better prepared should it become necessary to move to full remote. It was questioned whether TA's could be reassigned and/or strategically deployed to assist remote teachers in facilitating smaller group instruction, etc. to mitigate budget implications. It was noted there are only three general education TA's with the majority assigned to the special education program and assisting students directly. In

addition, curriculum work is directly impacted as several intervention specialists, already on staff and who would normally be designing curriculum, have been reassigned to classroom teaching. While there was general consensus that hiring a consultant to provide additional support for remote teachers would be beneficial, it is important that options selected not be disruptive to the overall process. The Town will also be kept apprised of future developments that could potentially impact the overall budget.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: (7:50 PM)

Dr. Ross

Second by Ms. Ferrante-Fernandes

UNANIMOUS

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board