

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

**Monday, September 20, 2021**

**Via WebEx**

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**Meeting Number: 2497 607 3899**

**Meeting Password: aMaDjRcW832**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Piascyk, Chair called the meeting to order (7:01 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:** Sheila McCreven, BOS Liaison; Joi Prud'homme, PTO; Daniel Cowan, Josh Gelder, Kristen Turkosz and Alison Valsamis, community.

**CORRESPONDENCE** – Ms. Piascyk noted the Board had received communication from a parent regarding mask mandates and that Dr. Budd has responded to the parent inquiry.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dan Cowan noted that call-in users may not know how to unmute themselves and suggested that the Board explain the process. He urged the Board to seek out information from parents and to conduct a survey as the Board is unable to make good informed decisions if they do not have the information. He also inquired what the total amount / magnitude of state funding is.

Alison Valsamis felt that surveying parents regarding mask wearing is irrelevant as they are not doctors. We are in a public health emergency and personal opinion is immaterial. Currently, children make up 25% of all new Covid cases. Numerous studies have been conducted on the efficacy of mask wearing. We should follow the science to help reduce the spread, especially since remote learning is not an option and this age group is not yet eligible for vaccination.

Josh Gelder while not against the wearing of masks is against mandating masks on children. Parents should have the right to make that decision regarding their children. The only time many of these children are being forced to wear masks is in school. The mental impact on 5 year olds remains unknown and the wearing of masks is taking a toll on the mental health of children. The Board should be providing metrics to assist parents in navigating their way out of this situation as they should be the ones to make these types of decisions. Protecting children from Covid is murky at best. We as adults are able to go into supermarkets, restaurants, sporting events, music venues unmasked, while children who have the lowest risk are still forced to wear masks. He urged to Board to have this as an agenda item at their next meeting and to conduct a parent survey on this topic.

Kristen Turkosz noted the many sporting activities that children are participating in while unmasked, sweating and expelling droplets. Mandates need to stop and children need to return to normal. She cited several hallway conversations among teachers regarding vaccinations (religious objections, vaccination status and follow-up requests). Children should not be exposed to these types of conversations nor should they be addressed in hallways within hearing range of children. There are families who choose not to vaccinate for whatever reason and that should remain their choice.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**MOTION #1 – CONSENT AGENDA**

Move that we approve the consent agenda as presented.

Ms. Madonick

Second by Ms. Hopkins

**UNANIMOUS**

## **REPORTS**

**Board Member Recognition (Joyce Shavers)** – Superintendent Budd and Chair Piascyk acknowledged the volunteer service of Joyce, who served on the Board from October 10, 2018 through July 19, 2021. Ms. Shavers served on the Curriculum and Finance Committees and most recently as Vice Chair. A token of appreciation was sent to Ms. Shavers on behalf of the Board.

**Superintendent's Report** – Superintendent Budd noted the safe return to in-person learning in collaboration with QVHD and under mandates by the current Executive Order from Governor Lamont. It was noted that recent BRS positive cases were not related to each other with actual transmission occurring outside of Beecher. While there are a limited number of families that have chosen alternate educational opportunities or home schooling, the vast majority of our students have returned to in-person instruction. He, Ms. Sherman and Ms. Kiesel acknowledged new staff members as well as a general increase in enrollment of approximately 21 students over the most recent projections.

**BRS Update** – Ms. Sherman highlighted the school-wide read aloud, virtual open houses, the “welcome to kindergarten” event, the meet and greets for those students returning from remote instruction, and the efforts to create a warm and welcoming environment for all students on the first day.

**District and School Goals** – Superintendent Budd reviewed the spring 2021 standardized testing results, noting that it has been two years since assessments have given. Approximately 90% of our student population was tested and results do not include students who instructed remotely. As some districts were fully remote, hybrid or in-person last year, the CSDE did not generate their typical district comparative results. Scores in Literacy for students who Met or Exceeded the Grade Level Standard Grade 3 – 71.3%, Grade 4 – 77.1%, Grade 5 – 86.4% and Grade 6 – 81.1%. Scores in Mathematics for students who Met or Exceeded the Grade Level Standard Grade 3 – 66.1%, Grade 4 – 69.7%, Grade 5 – 73.8% and Grade 6 – 73.6%. The Grade 5 Science score was 81.3%.

Ms. Sherman summarized the spring 2021 panorama survey results. It was noted that surveys were not conducted in the spring of 2020 as a result of the pandemic. Overall, improved results were experienced in all areas of the student and family surveys.

Superintendent Budd and Ms. Sherman outlined the District and School Goals for the 2021/22 school year. It is anticipated that a new five year Strategic Plan will be developed with the formation of a new committee.

- ❖ *District Goal 1: The WSD will engage in a comprehensive strategic planning process to review and update mission, guiding principles and goals to guide the district from 2022-2027.*
- ❖ *District Goals 2: The WSD will begin a process of assessing climate related to diversity, equity and inclusion and implementing policy and program to address any unmet needs.*
- ❖ *District Goal 3: The WSD will continue to implement enhanced protocols and procedures related to human resources.*
- ❖ *District Goal 4: The WSD will update and revise its capital plan with transparency and feedback from Town leaders and community constituents.*
- ❖ *District Goal 5: The WSD will review and update protocols and procedures for assessing the academic, social and emotional achievement and growth of students with identified special needs, including enhanced communication of assessment results with families.*
- ❖ *District Goal 6: The Board of Education of the WSD will effectively engage in professional development necessary for its effective functioning to achieve Board of Education roles and responsibilities.*
  - *School Goal 1 – BRS will assess and address effectively the social and emotional needs of all students, including those returning from fully remote learning.*
  - *School Goal 2 – BRS will expand and develop best practices for teaching and learning literacy.*

- *School Goal 3 – BRS will expand and develop best practices for culturally responsive teaching and learning, including in the social studies.*
- *School Goal 4 – BRS will expand best practices for using technology to enhance teaching and learning and to strengthen student engagement.*
- *School Goal 5 – BRS will expand professional sharing of best instructional practices and data-based decision-making, linked to improved student outcomes.*
- *School Goal 6 – BRS will expand and develop best practices for effective engagement of and communication with families.*

Discussion ensued for what the student performance measurements are (especially for those on both ends of the spectrum), linking student performance to the strategic plan, and how we compare to other districts. Questions were raised relative to the types of professional development workshops attended by teachers and the teacher evaluation process. It was noted that historically we have had a low response rate from families and perhaps consideration could be given to offer incentives to increase the response rate. It was also suggested that surveys be conducted earlier in the school year for utilization of that data in “real” time.

*Board Committee Membership* – Chair Piascyk reviewed the membership of each Board committee and noted the various meeting dates and times. Committee chairs will announce their next meeting date at each regular Board and committee meeting to ensure the public is aware and the information is also available on the district website.

*Curriculum Committee* – Dr. Strambler noted this committee has not met since the last Board meeting and will hold their next meeting on November 4 at 4:00 PM.

*Facilities Committee* – Mr. Hughes apprised the Board of his visit and walk through of the building on the Friday before the opening of school as well as the following week. The next meeting of this committee will be October 5 at 7:30 AM.

*Finance Committee* – Dr. Dahya reviewed the September 14 Finance Committee meeting. The 2020/21 budget reconciliation returned \$64,029 to the Town. Review of the 2021/22 budget financials included the addition of a Grade 4 teacher. Consideration was urged for the possibility of applying ESSER funding to offset the personal funding by teachers for the purchase of snacks, water bottles, yoga mats, etc. for their individual classrooms.

*Policy Committee* – Ms. Madonick indicated this committee has not met yet and will generally meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM. The next meeting is set for Tuesday, October 12 at 7:00 PM.

*Ad Hoc Student Culture & Community* – Dr. Strambler noted this committee has not met since August and is scheduled to meet on Monday, September 27 at 4:00 PM.

*CABE Liaison* – Chair Piascyk indicated that Ms. Madonick and Ms. Del Prete will share the responsibility in serving as the liaison. Board members were encouraged to attend the November 12 CABE Conference at the Mystic Marriott. Highlighted was the September 9 Board Leadership Conference in response to mitigating board meeting disruptions, parliamentary procedures, and conducting board of education business.

*PTO Report* – Ms. Prud’homme recounted the meet and greets held for incoming Kindergarten students as well as those returning from remote learning, creation of a “room parent” program, dissemination of the PTO Directory, hosting of the staff luncheon, and the first PTO meeting held on September 13. The Executive Board includes Joi as President, Vice President - Cara Rosner, Co-Treasurers - Maria Madonick and Sumithra Sudhir, Recording Secretary - Alexandria Sanchez, Community Support - Allison Valsamis, Communications Co-Chairs – Hillary Drumm and Jennifer Gelband, Funding Raising Co-Chair Kristy Laydon (and someone to be determined), Community Service Co-Chairs Erin Olesky and Stephanie Jacobson. Upcoming events include school pictures on September 27 and 28, the Annual Harvest Hike on October 6 at 4:00 PM from Alice Newton Park, and the drive though Halloween Hoot on October 30.

*Board of Selectmen* – Ms. McCreven apprised the Board on the presentations from Arbor Haven (9/29) and Eclipse (10/13) regarding proposed development of the Woodbridge Country Club property and the potential impact on housing

demographics. Community members were encouraged to complete the housing survey being conducted by the Town on the Town website. The budget process this year will include utilization of a new software program, “ClearGov,” to assist and engage the public in understanding and dissecting the budget process.

Upcoming Meeting Presentations – Chair Piascyk indicated the 2021/22 schedule of monthly presentations is available in Boardbook as well as the district website. October will feature two presentations – one on strategic planning 2022-2027 and the other on special education. It was noted the presentation should include special education enrollment projections and the associated resources that should be incorporated into developing the budget, differentiation of instruction for all students, and identification and creation of opportunities for the various stakeholder groups in the budget process.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Nicole Silva Memorial**

Superintendent Budd apprised the Board on the work of a committee formed to recognize teacher assistant, Nicole Silva, who passed away in June. In accordance with Board Policy 3280, the Board is required to approve contributions in excess of \$1,000. It was the recommendation of this committee that one or more sensory pathways be created as well as an accompanying mosaic.

### **MOTION #2 – NICOLE SILVA MEMORIAL**

Move that we approve the contributions of gifts in memory of Teachers’ Assistant Nicole Silva to support the installation of one or more sensory pathways at Beecher Road School, with an accompanying mosaic, as presented.

Dr. Dahya

Second by Ms. Del Prete

**UNANIMOUS**

Capital Plan Committee – Superintendent Budd outlined his request to review and reprioritize the needs of BRS inclusive of telephones, water/drainage issues around the grounds, carpeting/asbestos, humidity concerns, and system functionality within the building. ESSER funding will be utilized to assess and develop creative and innovative ways to improve the facility. It is anticipated this committee will meet frequently between now and the winter to develop a capital plan proposal. At the November Board meeting, the Board will receive a preliminary report with the final report expected at the February 2022 Board meeting. Questions were raised relative to the potential impact future development could have on the building capacity, classrooms and physical structure. It is one thing to develop a plan assuming enrollment numbers will remain the same and quite a different approach to make decisions based on an unknown future and at what point do we plan for possible expansion. It is important that we identify education priorities and learning standards and develop a plan in support of those objectives.

### **MOTION #3 – AD HOC CAPITAL PLAN**

Move that we establish an Ad Hoc Capital Plan Committee to assess and evaluate building and grounds needs at Beecher Road School, including review and potential revision of the District’s Capital Plan. Committee membership will include the Superintendent, the Director of Business Services & Operations, the Facilities Manager, the Information Technology Manager, 2 Board of Education members, 1 representative of the Town of Woodbridge, 1 teacher representative, and 2 parents or community members selected for their expertise in areas related to the Committee’s work. The committee will meet regularly and make a preliminary report to the full Board at its November 2021 meeting and a final report to the full Board at its February 2022 meeting.

Ms. Madonick

Second by Dr. Dahya

**UNANIMOUS**

It was suggested the Board have an open dialogue on Covid and that this topic be added to the Board agenda to allow open and transparent discussion among Board members as well as community members. Covid is a recurring theme and it is important that the Board hear from all interested parties.

### **MOTION #4 – ADDING DISCUSSION OF COVID-19 AS AN AGENDA ITEM**

Move that we add a discussion on Covid 19 to tonight’s agenda and to next month’s agenda.

Mr. Hughes

Second by Ms. Hopkins

Discussion ensued for how this conversation should be structured with specific topics for discussion purposes, i.e., why we do not have field trips, live performances, etc. and that adding this topic to tonight's agenda would not allow for sufficient notification to the public. Woodbridge is an educated community with parents well versed in their opinions and the Board has a responsibility to listen to all perspectives. If the Board were to engage in a discussion this evening, without proper notification provided to parents and/or the community, it could escalate frustration from all parties. It was agreed the original motion would be amended to include this as a monthly discussion topic at future regular monthly meetings.

**MOTION #4A – ADDING DISCUSSION OF COVID-19 AS AN AGENDA ITEM**

Move that we add a Covid 19 update to our regular monthly board meeting.

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

It was agreed that focused topics for inclusion on the monthly agenda would be forwarded to Chair Piascyk and/or Superintendent Budd.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dan Cowan noted a prior comment made regarding it being an unacceptable risk that children could get Covid. Anyone who thinks they could not contract this disease does not understand the science nor the nature of this disease. Following medical, legal, and/or engineering experts is not the job of the Board. Board members are politicians. As politicians their job is to listen to those people, hear the voices of their constituents, and make the hard decisions that serve the needs of the constituents and make the best choice. It is not always just following the advice of a medical expert. Generally, a medical expert will give the most conservative medical advice. So the Board's job is not to just listen to medical experts, but to make the hard choices as politicians.

**MOTION #5 – EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Move that we enter Executive Session to discuss matters concerning security strategy, the deployment of security personnel, and/or devices affecting public security, and to discuss negotiations with respect to collective bargaining, and invite the Superintendent to join the Board for both topics and the Interim Director of Business Services and Operations to join the Board for the first topic (10:10 PM).

Ms. Madonick  
Second by Ms. Del Prete  
**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. David Ross; Dr. Michael Strambler; and Ms. Erin Williamson.

**STAFF:** Dr. Jonathan Budd, Superintendent and Richard Huot, Interim Director of Business Services and Operations. The Board was apprised of recent changes regarding the current security system. The Board received a negotiations update on a collective bargaining agreement.

Mr. Huot left the meeting (10:25 PM), Dr. Ross left the meeting (10:27 PM).

**MOTION #6 – PUBLIC SESSION**

Move that we return to Public Session (10:44 PM)

Ms. Madonick  
Second by Dr. Strambler  
**UNANIMOUS**

**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. Michael Strambler; and Ms. Erin Williamson.

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

**MOTION #7 – AD HOC SECURITY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Move that we establish an Ad Hoc Security Personnel Committee to assess and evaluate the deployment of security personnel at Beecher Road School. Committee membership will include the Superintendent, 2 Board of Education members, the Woodbridge Chief of Police, and 1 representative of the Town of Woodbridge. The Committee will meet regularly and make a report to the full Board at its January 2022 meeting.

Ms. Madonick

Second by Dr. Dahya

**UNANIMOUS**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN: (10:46 PM)**

Ms. Madonick

Second by Ms. Hopkins

**UNANIMOUS**

Recorded by Marsha DeGennaro, Clerk of the Board