

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at 7:00 PM remotely.

Board members present: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino

Board members absent: Mr. Roraback

Administration present: Dr. Serino, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education special session meeting - July 29, 2020

Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the minutes from the July 29, 2020 special session meeting, as presented.

In favor of approving the minutes of the July 29, 2020 special session meeting, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried, with Mrs. Caramanello abstaining.

Next Board Meeting - August 19, 2020 at 7:00 PM

Hybrid Reopening Plan

Dr. Serino explained that Dolphin Days currently has 20 students who will potentially be enrolled at Brewster, but they could accommodate up to 42 students in three classrooms as long as those rooms are approved. The YMCA has reached out to Dr. Serino and she has spoken to Michele Rulnick, a District 13 former parent and director of the Y in Middletown, about what would be necessary to have a childcare setting set up by the YMCA in the district. Candace Crane explained that the district could oversee the setting until the YMCA can get fully licensed and they have done that before in other districts. The YMCA would provide a certificate of insurance and a contract would be signed. Ms. Crane spoke to the Office of Early Childhood today about licensing and noted that they are bombarded with new districts

trying to get licensed and others trying to add space. They thought that it might be possible to be licensed by mid-October, but it may be closer to the end of the year. It will cost around \$1,500 to no more than \$2,000 to get a site licensed.

Dr. Serino reported recent information from Commissioner Cardona about municipalities not having to be licensed. Ms. Crane stated that that is true and municipalities and school districts are license exempt. They would still do everything the same as it is the right way to do things. Dr. Serino stated that unless the board has any objections, she will continue to work on options with the Y. They surveyed staff and currently have approximately six staff members who would be interested. School-aged children will also be able to get some support with distance learning. Ms. Crane explained that, to cover their costs, they would need 20 kids enrolled per day, ages three to 12 or 13. She also explained that the YMCA offered emergency childcare for children of emergency responders from March through June and provided support with distance learning. Ms. Crane also explained that their fees are based on a sliding scale, with financial assistance provided for families making up to \$80,000 per year. They also help families apply for and receive state-funded Care for Kids. The federal government will now allow Care for Kids money to be used for full daycare.

Dr. Serino felt that childcare has been one of the most important issues across the state and the hybrid model just exacerbates that. Mr. Moore asked what the cost is per student and Ms. Crane explained that a full day would be approximately \$45 per student, per day. There had been some philanthropic money donated to help with childcare for emergency workers in the spring, but she was not sure that that would be available once again. The Y is working to advocate for support for parents.

Dr. Serino also reported that the administrative team met today and Mr. Ford updated everyone that the Lyman playscape equipment will be delivered and installed on August 24th. Mrs. Stone was selecting the items for Memorial today, paying special attention to various ADA equipment. Dr. Serino also noted that they will be meeting tomorrow afternoon for the third time with the teachers' union and they had a second meeting with the support staff union about their MOA.

The district just found out today that the CIAC plans to continue with the fall schedule for athletics. Mr. Yamartino mentioned that he just saw an alert that the Big East athletic conference has canceled all fall sports and may run them in the spring. Dr. Serino reviewed the memo that she received from the CIAC that states that the health data continues to support fall sports, including football beginning in August 17th. Dr. Serino knew that both Mrs. Booth and Dr. Taylor wanted to talk about this issue.

Mrs. Booth had expressed her concerns earlier, particularly about football regarding bringing three schools together in the co-op. She felt that the district should be concentrating on education right now and not put undue stress on the system. She has also had some parents reach out to her specifically about middle school supports and how their children would get to practice on the days they are not attending school.

Dr. Serino stated that middle school sport would be intramurals, rather than inter-scholastic. Kids would be grouped by cohort and intramurals would happen on the days they are present in school. Mrs. Booth felt that was a much better plan.

Dr. Taylor agreed with Mrs. Booth with regard to contact sports in the fall. One concern he had is the incongruity of cohorting and a mask policy and how contact sports would violate those policies. He did not see how they could allow a portion of the schools to not be in alignment with the policies. Dr. Taylor

had a lot of safety concerns because of the contact nature of football and the fact that it is a co-op. He had hoped that the CIAC would delay sports until the spring. As a physician, he finds it hard to support any contact sport at this time. Dr. Taylor asked the board to move forward with delaying contact sports until the springtime and to reassess at that time.

Dr. Serino reached out to the district's legal counsel to see if the board had the right to cancel or delay athletics and the answer was yes. She did ask if there were CIAC sanctions and if they were changed in the concept of COVID. She also asked if there were any Title IX ramifications with a change in one sport as opposed to another.

Mrs. Caramanello agreed and would want to be very cautious about picking one or two sports over others. She requested that if this decision were to be made, that it would be for all sports. She agreed with the concerns about having kids from other towns come to play football and is equally concerned about volleyball where other kids will come into our schools to play.

Mrs. Geraci felt that it is about safety and, as much as everyone would like to see everything go back to normal, this will not be a particular popular decision, but would need to be made to keep all of the kids safe.

Mrs. Petrella asked what happens with intramurals in the middle schools if they decide to hold fall sports until the spring. Dr. Serino felt that they could still happen. Mrs. Petrella was concerned about outsiders coming into the schools as they are working so hard to keep cohorts together. Dr. Serino did explain that the district can prohibit fans and spectators from attending games.

Dr. Friedrich does not feel it would be wise to engage in sports activities that compromise the cohort system. He does not believe that the board should go with the CIAC recommendations and would make a motion to that effect. Mrs. Booth asked if the board was allowed to vote if it was not on the agenda. Dr. Serino suggested the board wait until next week for a little more guidance, but Mrs. Booth noted that football is supposed to start on Sunday.

Mr. Yamartino reminded everyone that the district would not have the option of delaying until the spring as that would require all of the other schools to delay as well. He felt it was either a cancel or move forward decision, not a delay decision. Mr. Yamartino was not sure he could make a decision right now until the board discusses the face mask policy and he would also like to understand what would happen if a member of a team gets COVID and if a member of another team that our district played comes down with COVID, do our teams have to be quarantined as well. Mr. Yamartino does not understand how the district will handle the situation when and if one of the students gets COVID and he does not believe a decision can be made about sports without knowing that. He also shares the concern about introducing players from outside the district on a daily basis to practice. Mr. Yamartino asked if the district has reached out to the other Boards of Education about their feelings on this. Regarding cancelling all fall sports, the CIAC guidelines specifically list each sport by risk category and football is the only fall sport listed in the high-risk category.

Dr. Serino explained that there is a meeting on Monday afternoon with the other superintendents, athletic directors and principals from the Shoreline Conference. They also just received guidelines on how to respond when someone has symptoms with and without close contact to someone with COVID, and an individual with no symptoms who has had close contact. Close contact is defined as being within six feet of another person for 15 minutes or longer or being exposed to droplets.

Mr. Yamartino felt it gets dicey when you think about a member of the football team from another district coming into contact with someone with COVID and wondered if that meant the whole team would need to quarantine. Dr. Serino summarized that Mr. Yamartino was talking about risk and whether the potential risk is worth the potential benefit. She believes everyone understands the importance of athletics for students, but this is an entirely different backdrop.

Mr. Yamartino then brought up the music program and if all instruments would be allowed. Dr. Serino explained that more specific guidelines on masks, band and chorus are anticipated on Friday. Dr. Friedrich noted that the latest guidelines from the CDC do not deal with what happens if a team member becomes positive.

Mr. Moore suggested that the board vote on this issue next week, after getting more information. Mr. Hicks noted that this will be a topic of conversation at the CABA meeting tomorrow.

Dr. Taylor didn't understand how the board would not have the authority to be able to determine whether the students can play sports or not, particularly when health and safety is concerned. Dr. Taylor does not care what other districts are doing or what the state says. Mr. Moore understood, but felt they needed more answers as well. Dr. Serino stated that she is not looking to see what everybody else is doing and gets the sense from the board that they feel football is dangerous and not worth the risk. She will share that sentiment with the other Shoreline schools on Monday. Mr. Yamartino added that he would like to know how other boards are viewing other fall sports as well.

Going back to the decision to go to the hybrid model, they received addendum 4 which looked at the leading and secondary indicators by county. The governor and the commissioner believe that statewide data favors and supports in-person full return to school. They did have to look at physical space, overall population, cohorting, self-screening and ventilation as well as cleaning and disinfecting. Dr. Serino felt that part of the reason for moving to hybrid had to do with physical space and furniture. She also noted that, as of today, the district has been out of school for 151 days and in 23 days, the doors will open. Bringing back 50 percent of the students at a time allows for greater attention from the adults in the building to the students, better student support and will help everyone to gain confidence.

Dr. Serino then reviewed the cohorts and schedules. Staff has received a document outlining what the expectations are and parents were given an overview yesterday.

Dr. Serino went on to review addendum 5 that provided guidelines on how to deal with various scenarios. She will meet with the school nurses on Friday afternoon where they will talk about these areas. They have also received a frequently asked question document that does speak to mask requirements and there will be very few exceptions, including lacerations or burns, COPD, emphysema and extreme respiratory issues. An epidemiologist explained that he felt that the best mask is a mask that the child will keep on for the longest period of time without fidgeting. He also added that if you can blow a candle out through your mask, the mask is too thin. Pre-K students are exempt from wearing masks.

The district will receive more guidance when they decide to shift from hybrid to a full reopening as well as using county rather than town data for health metrics. The district does have an obligation to support its students in distance learning and added that student assessments will not be delayed. Dr. Serino added that they just received addendum 6 about reopening guidelines for educating students with disabilities and she will share that with the board.

Mr. Yamartino asked how symptoms will be differentiated between COVID, flu or allergies. Dr. Serino explained that the COVID Planning team actually discussed that on Tuesday and the district will err on the side of caution. Those decisions will be the responsibility of the nurses. Mr. Yamartino felt that that may cause quite a large number of absences and if those statistics go into county statistics, they may have to move to remote learning pretty quickly.

Dr. Taylor asked if information was available as to absences last year and Dr. Serino stated that they have attendance data, but not what those absences were due to.

Mrs. Booth confirmed that if a child is home, they can participate in distance learning and that would not be considered an absence. She also asked if the YMCA daycare could be opened up to employees of Durham and Middlefield in order to get enough children enrolled. Mrs. Booth also asked if the first two days of school will be full days and Dr. Serino confirmed that they will be. She would like to see students in school as much as possible and will ask, at next week's meeting, for the board to vote on having on school on September 25th this year. Mrs. Booth hopes that at least the younger kids and kids that receive special services can get back to school full-time by the beginning of October or sooner. If that is not the case and the district stays hybrid, Mrs. Booth asked if professional development days could be rescheduled to Wednesdays when the kids are home. Dr. Serino explained that they have looked at doing that. She also added that some special needs students will be coming to school four days a week.

Mr. Yamartino asked if the board should be looking to add additional teachers to the schools to cover absences and/or having additional classes once the district goes back to full in-person learning. Dr. Serino stated that they have looked at bringing in college students for support and have posted anticipated openings.

Mr. Moore mentioned that the Town of Durham has asked if the district could provide before and after daycare for their employees. He also asked to schedule a vote on the athletics next week.

Possible vote on school reopening model

Mr. Moore explained that most of the board chairs across the state are voting to endorse the superintendent's and administration's plan for reopening. This will hopefully reduce the number of times the board needs to vote on changes in the future.

Dr. Taylor stated that he supports moving to the hybrid model to start, but wasn't sure he could support whatever decisions come after that. He also didn't feel that the board necessarily needed to vote and that the state has said it should be a superintendent's decision.

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Dr. Taylor, to endorse the superintendent's hybrid model plan for school reopening as presented this evening and any amendments that might occur between now and the opening.

In favor of endorsing the superintendent's hybrid model plan for school reopening as presented this evening and any amendments that might occur between now and the opening: Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried, with Mrs. Booth abstaining.

Committee Reports**A. Policy Committee****1. First read on CABE Mask Policy**

Mr. Hicks reported that the Policy Committee did not meet last week, but he has received some comments about the CABE mask policy. He would like to have a Policy Committee meeting next Wednesday at 5:00 PM to talk about those changes as well as a couple of other items. Mrs. Geraci will not be able to attend the Policy committee meeting and asked if they could get some better direction for mask wearing for kids with disabilities. Mr. Yamartino asked if that could possibly be included in an IEP and Dr. Serino will look for guidance on that.

B. Student Achievement Meeting - July 20, 2020

Mrs. Petrella explained that Mrs. DiMaggio had asked for three textbooks to be approved and reviewed those books for the board.

1. Vote to approve the following textbooks: Latin for grades 7 and 8, Algebra I Honors for grades 8 and 9 and Algebra II Honors for grades 10 and 11

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the textbooks for Latin for grades 7 and 8, Algebra I Honors for grades 8 and 9 and Algebra II Honors for grades 10 and 11.

In favor of approving the textbooks for Latin for grades 7 and 8, Algebra I Honors for grades 8 and 9 and Algebra II Honors for grades 10 and 11: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

Communications

Mr. Moore had received a letter from David Booth about intramural sports and eliminating competitive sports in the middle school. He also received a letter from Sharon Davis about before and after school care with Dolphin Days. Nick Faiella had a question for the Utilization Committee in terms of space at the high school and Korn School.

Mr. Hicks mentioned that graduation was nothing short of spectacular under the circumstances. He felt it was very moving and incredibly respectful. Mrs. Petrella noted that she saw pictures on Facebook by Jennifer Schulten and you could feel the emotion of the evening. Dr. Serino added that she received an email from Tim Fisher this morning saying how thrilled he was to be able to be at graduation and to be recognized by the students and staff.

Director of Finance's Report

Mrs. Neubig reported that the governor announced \$150 million in additional funding for schools, however it will be based on the competitive grant process and will be based on need. The district will apply for it, but Mrs. Neubig is not sure how much funds they will receive.

The end-of-year surplus remains at about \$791,000 and the preliminary audit work is being done. More field work will be done in October. The district currently is at 96 percent expended and 99 percent of revenue has been received. The financials that were included in tonight's packet include the 13th period which are expenses that were incurred in June, but not paid until July.

The current budget is now 6.7 percent expended in the month of July and includes salaries, benefits and purchased services. The Coginchaug basketball and tennis courts have been repaired at about \$77,000 and some lease payments were also made. Property insurance of \$110,000 was paid in July, supplies were purchased and software renewals were completed. Some membership payments were made and a debt payment was made. A fire panel went down at Brewster and has been fixed, for approximately \$10,000. Mrs. Neubig will look into a potential insurance claim for that as it may have been a lightning strike. Shelter expenses will be handled through the town with FEMA, however the district does have some trees down and she will look into insurance claims for that as well.

Public Comment

Oanh Stephan, from Durham, on behalf of the parents of the Class of 2020, extended their deepest gratitude to Mr. Falcone, Mrs. Melillo, Mr. Petronio and others for a truly wonderful experience for their graduates.

Candice Burritt, from Durham, asked if the survey results will come out as to what everybody chose. She felt that a lot of other towns have shared their results and she would like to see what percentage of parents wanted what type of schooling. She also felt that the hybrid model will cause more cohorts. Dolphin Days currently has six first graders with different last names that have been together since March and will now be in class with different cohorts, but back together again on Wednesdays. Mrs. Burritt's twins are already scheduled for different teachers. She asked how the hybrid model is the best way to minimize cohorts. Dr. Serino stated that she would call Mrs. Burritt tomorrow, but added that the survey was not a vote as to what people wanted. Mrs. Burritt felt that that was a miscommunication because the entire town thought they were voting on it. Dr. Serino explained that it was really more about parents' intentions to send their child and she will hopefully clarify that in the next parent communication. Mrs. Burritt felt that that should have been made clear before the decision to go to the hybrid model was announced and a lot of parents are upset about it.

Adjournment

Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Booth, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Dr. Taylor and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First