

**Revised**

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at 7:00 PM remotely.

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

Board members absent: Dr. Taylor

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**

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

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

**Public Comment**

None.

**CRHS Reporters - Jaden Astle, Cadence Hurlbert, Noelle Sorensen**

Mr. Falcone introduced the reporters to the board.

Jaden Astle explained that he is a senior this year and is captain of the boys' cross country team and is a member of the National Honor Society. He reviewed that one of the main concerns last spring was the prominent disconnect between the students and staff. He felt that many students lacked motivation. They have now been in the hybrid model which has helped. He was overjoyed to see his peers and learn from the teachers face-to-face. It also helped the students to get used to all of the new regulations. The school opened to full in-person learning this week and two lunch waves have been added to reduce the numbers. Large classes have been moved to larger classrooms as well. Jaden believes that students and staff will remain safe, however the future is unknown.

Cady Hurlbert noted that she is on the track teams and is a member of the Spanish and National Honor Societies and she participates in band. She stated that it's been amazing to get back to band classes and feels that it is a safe way to relieve stress and anxiety. She agreed with Jaden that the reconnection has been awesome. They are spaced out throughout the auditorium and wear instrument masks as well. Cady added that the students miss Mr. Fisher a lot, but Mrs. Pryor is amazing. She also reviewed some of the pieces the band is working on. Cady thanked everyone for their support of the music department.

Noelle Sorensen was having Wi-Fi problems, so Mr. Falcone updated everyone on the athletic program. They have now begun the boys' and girls' soccer seasons as well as volleyball. Noelle

Sorensen was able to get back on and explained that she is captain of the soccer team and also participates in indoor and outdoor track. The team began to meet back in July and they have now had four games. Sports has given the students some sort of normalcy. They remain in cohorts during practice and they socially distance during breaks. They are now allowed up to 150 people at an outside event which means that two members of each home team family is allowed to attend, after filling out the health form and obtaining a pass. A YouTube channel has also been live streaming all sports games for those unable to attend, but 1,000 subscribers are necessary to be able to live stream. Noelle thanked everyone for their support of athletics.

Mrs. Booth asked if they have considered using Facebook Live instead of YouTube and Noelle said they have considered that. All of the students said they were happy to be back in school and the best part is the interaction.

### **Approval of Minutes**

#### **A. Board of Education regular session meeting - September 9, 2020**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education regular session meeting held on September 9, 2020, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education regular session meeting held on September 9, 2020, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

#### **B. Board of Education special session meeting - September 30, 2020**

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education special session meeting held on September 30, 2020, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education special session meeting held on September 30, 2020, as presented: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanello, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried, with Mr. Hicks abstaining.*

### **Next Board Meeting - November 11, 2020 at 7:00 PM**

#### **Strategic Coherence Plan 2020-2021**

Dr. Serino reported that the administrative team meets next Friday to work on the Strategic Coherence Plan. She explained that the plan has always included leading and lagging indicators, but they have not been identified as such in the past. For tonight's presentation she has identified them with color coding. She then went on to review lagging indicators that are identified through the state's Next Generation Accountability index and noted that the Student Achievement committee will talk about the indicators for this year in depth next week.

Strategic planning starts with knowing the current state of the district. Dr. Serino went through a number of items that they look at when doing strategic planning. In terms of student achievement, lagging indicators really center around grades, PSATs, SATs and SBAC. Dr. Serino reviewed that students had inconsistent and interrupted learning, so predictors may be off. She noted that academic stamina can be closely connected to engagement and interest and this is an area that the district will consistently focus

on. Curricular units will have performance tasks within them and the instructional rounds process will begin again. She also noted that remote learning has provided an expansion of learning and they would like to continue to improve upon that. Phase 2 of the Portrait of the Citizen will begin as well.

In the area of well-being, they realize that anxiety, uncertainty, anger and depression are present for many people in the distinct adults and children alike. They will re-administer a modified school climate survey to parents, staff and students and then create measurable outcomes. The district will continue the partnership with CCSU and will continue to focus on mitigation strategies and health initiatives.

Dr. Serino feels that engagement is an area of special importance, particularly in the area of budgeting. Racial equity work will continue and phase 2 of Portrait of the Citizen will continue as well as expansion of MTA marketing. Transition planning for district-wide grade reconfiguration needs to continue and they will also work to develop a budget that meets the designated criteria as well as redesign, communicate and implement the budget engagement process.

Dr. Serino will speak at a state school climate and social-emotional learning collaborative tomorrow to share feedback and possibly offer some research-based ideas to other schools throughout the state. Dr. Serino believes that well-being needs to be the foundation upon which academic growth and growth as a district are built. She also commended the board for being the only board she is aware of that has a well-being committee and has consistently supported that.

Mr. Moore asked Dr. Serino to send her summary out to the board members for review. Mr. Moore also mentioned that he has seen a survey with results about well-being from students around the country and he felt it was a pretty sad document. There is a great deal of stress and anxiety among both students and teachers throughout the country. Dr. Serino reminded everyone that all staff in all schools have different roles and responsibilities and the stress level is enormous.

## **Committee Reports**

### **A. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - September 23, 2020**

Mrs. Petrella reported that four teachers reported about the hybrid model and they had a discussion about full in-person learning considerations. They also talked about the accounting textbook that needed to be approved. Mrs. Petrella felt it was very eye-opening to hearing how everything was going.

Dr. Friedrich added that the remote learning and hybrid models have worked well for some students, but not so much for other students. This has been a great driver for bringing all of the students back.

Dr. Serino also reported that there has been a decrease in the numbers of elementary students choosing fully remote learning and more students in the middle and high schools have chosen fully in-person rather than hybrid. She reviewed that the remote learners have a dedicated team of teachers and coaches and have been getting a vigorous learning experience. She did mention that they need the coaches back in their intended responsibilities and they will discuss that at the next student achievement meeting on October 21, 2020.

### **B. Policy Committee Meeting - September 23, 2020**

Possible vote on the following policies:

#### **1. Personnel - Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**

2. **Students - Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**
3. **Policy Concerning Use of Face Coverings in School**

Mr. Hicks reviewed that it is time to get moving on the three policies listed above. Mr. Yamartino mentioned that gaiters are precluded from the face covering policy.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Yamartino, to approve the Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment policies for personnel and students as well as the Policy Concerning the Use of Face Coverings in School.*

*In favor of approving the Sex Discrimination and Harassment policies for personnel and students as well as the Policy Concerning the Use of Face Coverings in School: Mrs. Booth, Mrs. Caramanella, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

### **C. Well-Being Committee Meeting - October 6, 2020**

Mr. Moore reported that two students talked about how they were feeling coming back to school. They both expressed anxiety and had very big concerns about the amount of homework they are receiving. Mrs. Schaefer also talked about her role as a teacher and her concerns about being in the building as well. They all felt it was important to be back at school and were happy to see their friends. One of the students is planning a Spirit Week in October and they are looking to do that across the district. Dr. Serino stated that the kids feel that every day feels like Groundhog Day, so the idea of a district-wide spirit week will be fun. Dr. Serino also mentioned that the Well-Being Committee has board member, parent, student, teacher and administrator representation.

Mr. Roraback noted that he has spoken to many students and the teachers are being reasonable with extending homework deadlines. He added that many high school students are working to help support their families.

### **Communications**

Mr. Moore was grateful to see the principals' reports back. He also announced that there will be a parade for Dr. Serino's retirement on November 13, 2020, starting around 2:15 PM in front of the auditorium. Mrs. Geraci added that it will be an early birthday parade as well.

Mr. Moore also noted that Mrs. Murray has announced that there will be a virtual concert at Brewster School tomorrow at 10:00 AM. Mrs. Booth asked for that concert to be recorded and Dr. Serino stated that it will be.

Mr. Moore stated that Mr. Petronio sent out a video of the senior athletes in all sports.

Mr. Moore also received a letter from Mrs. Zettergren who is concerned about not being able to go to volleyball games. The games are being recorded and live-streamed, but no fans are allowed. Mr. Moore noted that all Shoreline schools are doing that except North Branford.

Mr. Moore also reported that there are two new community members on the Finance committee, with Teresa Opalacz being re-elected and Jason Stone elected to replace Chuck Stengel. Vacancies remain for two board appointments and a town resident on that committee.

Mr. Hicks reported that ACES has been working on their goals as well, with student growth at the top of the list. They have opened a daycare center for employees which is working well. Mr. Hicks also reported that Thomas Edison Middle School will not exist next year as Meriden is taking the building back to be used as a third middle school for the town. The question now is what to do with the current students and ACES has been looking into starting a STEM middle school to mirror TEMS. They have been looking at real estate and found Chase Collegiate School in Waterbury. He also mentioned that ACES is trying to hold tuition down for this year.

Mr. Yamartino has received an article from Nick Faiella about artificial turf vs. grass which he will forward to the other board members. He also reported that Middlefield's Board of Selectmen met and two separate organizations approached them about race and equity, asking for outreach in the town. They discussed that District 13 has been very active in this area and a suggestion was made to have a town wide book read. Mr. Moore suggested that the two groups come to a Well-Being Committee meeting. Mr. Moore also noted that CCM is holding a virtual race and equity forum next week and he will forward the invitation.

### **Superintendent's Report**

- A. In-Person Model Update**
- B. Social Emotional Climate Update**

Dr. Serino felt that she covered everything in the Strategic Coherence Plan Update other than to review the summary of leading and secondary indicators on COVID. She added that the Health Director is coming to the district tomorrow and will do a walk-through of all of the school buildings.

Dr. Serino also reported that the kids are just so happy to be back together again as are many of the teachers though many remain concerned and nervous. Drop-off and pick-up is a little more congested, but they are working out the kinks. They are also looking at bus capacity and they are working to arrange assigned seating on all buses which will help with contact tracing.

### **Director of Finance's Report**

Mrs. Neubig reported that MTA is 9 percent expended and 2 percent revenue received. The General Fund is 20 percent expended and 25 percent revenue received. The month of September included the first full payroll of the year and some leases were paid. Septic and chiller repairs were also made in September. The district spent an additional \$29,000 on PPE, including walkie-talkies, disposable gloves, disinfectant wipes, voice amplifiers as well as the PPE for the music department.

The Lyman playground equipment was paid for (\$50,000) and the Memorial playscape excavation work has begun. The conversion at the tennis courts has also begun and is nearing completion.

Mrs. Neubig reported that MBR was discussed at the legislature and an exemption was added for additional appropriations due to COVID, but she does not feel that will have any impact on District 13. She also explained that bus schedules are being worked on and they are still trying to figure out exactly who is riding the buses. Guidelines for reopening state that buses can operate at full capacity as long as the district is in the low range. They are attempting to socially distance as much as possible. Right now, Coginchaug and Strong have heavy bus ridership and they are looking at ways to alleviate that.

To date, the district has spent \$212,000 on PPE, with \$67,000 of that from last year's budget. That includes tent rentals as well. She added that the \$150,000 that had been allocated to the district has been spent in its entirety and any further expenditures could have to come out of the budget. However, the state has said that there may be an ability to transfer and reallocate funds. Those funds, however, will need to be paid by December 31, 2020.

The district has received SSER (secondary school education relief) funds through the CARES act of \$43,000 today. Mrs. Neubig did submit the application to FEMA in the amount of \$127,000 and hope to have 75 percent reimbursed which would leave a \$32,000 loss in food service.

The auditors were out the week before last and followed all safety protocols. Field work has been completed and Mrs. Neubig should receive some preliminary reports later this week. They would like to come to the ERC meeting in February rather than December.

The end-of-year surplus was right in line with what had been anticipated, with about an \$800,000 surplus. Of that, \$615,000 was used to balance this year's budget. Once everything is finalized, she will ask the board about reallocating some of those funds.

Mrs. Geraci felt that February would be too late for the auditors to come to the ERC meeting and would like them to come in December.

#### **Public Comment**

None.

#### **Adjournment**

*Dr. Friedrich made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Geraci, 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, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion carried.*

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First