



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES July 7, 2020

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| Meeting: | School Committee |
| Date: | July 7, 2020 |
| Location: | Via Webex |
| Attendees: | Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Sarah Wolf Ken Warnock Ann Cameron Eric Bourke Theresa Whitman Matt Harrington |
| Absent: | |
| Guests: | Julie Riley, Director Curriculum and Instructional Technology, Jennifer Roberts, Principal EES, Tricia Puglisi, Principal HS |
| Recorded by: | Gail Hunter |

AGENDA

A. Call to Order – Ms. Erdmann called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Public Comment –

Ms. Koch-Sundquist, Essex – Ms. Koch-Sundquist stated she was joining the meeting to share a letter regarding the long overdue conversation on anti-racism. Ms. Koch-Sundquist read her

letter in support of the MASC Anti-Racism Resolution and requesting a review of the District curriculum for bias. Ms. Koch-Sundquist gathered more than 300 signatures from students and parents in support of age appropriate anti-racist curriculum in the District. Ms. Koch-Sundquist would like to see the communities support the MASC Anti-Racism Resolution and review of the curriculum to take place and for our children to be engaged in the process.

Ms. Erdmann stated she and the Committee were 100% in agreement with Ms. Koch-Sundquist. Ms. Erdmann thanked Ms. Koch Sundquist for her phenomenal letter and assured her it was not falling on deaf ears.

Mr. Foster, Essex – Mr. Foster read a letter supporting parental involvement in curriculum planning for school year 2020-2021. Mr. Foster understands the District's need to focus on health and safety, but he is concerned about the 'new' school experience and the impact of the experience on student's mental health. He mentioned remote learning and the strong emphasis on literacy and mathematics. He believes the role of education is to help students engage in social studies and science which too are literacy based. He encourages planning this summer to put everything in place and to engage parents in the process beyond surveys.

Ms. Erdmann thanked Mr. Foster and stated the District values input from parents. The District is working toward developing focus groups and asking parents to participate. Superintendent Beaudoin stated when school closed in March the District was on the verge of holding a forum with parents on the Vision of the Graduate. The goal of the forum was to build curriculum and course work to support the District's vision, work toward that goal will begin in October. It is needed work and the Administration is looking forward to doing the work alongside parents.

2) Reorganization –

The Committee reorganization will be postponed to the next School Committee meeting following Mr. Harrington's swearing in.

3) Chairperson's Report –

Ms. Erdmann welcomed the newly elected School Committee members, Ms. Whitman from Essex and Mr. Harrington from Manchester.

4) Student Report –

Our student representative is taking the summer off. We look forward to Lukas rejoining us in September.

5) Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Warrants –
- Minutes – 6.16.2020

Ms. Cameron moved to accept the Consent Agenda, Ms. Wolf seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Whitman abstaining from approving the Minutes of 6.16.2020.

6) Sub-Committee Reports

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Caroline Weld/Ann Cameron) – Report

Ms. Weld has agreed to serve on the Memorial School Building Committee through the summer. The project remains on budget and on time. There is a drone view of the inside of the building the link will be shared with the Committee. Ms. Erdmann will sit in on the meetings until there is a new member appointed.

- Finance Committee (Anne Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – Report

Ms. Erdmann reported both Towns passed the District FY21 Budget. Collaboration meetings with Towns will continue through the summer.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/to be named) – No Report

Ms. Erdmann indicated the Policy Committee will have a lot coming forward over the summer and into the fall. Policies will need to be realigned with curriculum and new policies defined and approved by the Committee.

- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – No Report

7) Superintendent's Report –

- Fall 2020 Reopening Update & Planning Report

The Department of Education has defined guidance and directives. All medical requirements are non-negotiable directives in order to return to school. Attendance is compulsory what level of choice families will have is unknown. The District is preparing to open in compliance with health and safety guidelines.

Guidelines include:

- ✓ 6 feet apart is optimal, but students must be at least 3 feet apart.
- ✓ Desks facing forward
- ✓ Students in grades 2 – 12 must wear masks
- ✓ K – 2
- ✓ Minimize movement in the elementary and middle schools.
- ✓ Students will be assigned to one classroom with lunch brought in.
- ✓ Outdoor or gym breaks are limited.
- ✓ Specialists may rotate into the contained class including music, art and gym.
- ✓ High School teams in room lunch
- ✓ High risk activities like band and chorus are not allowed.
- ✓ All staff will wear masks or face shields. It is believed face shields are better for teaching.

Elementary Schools:

Mr. Waldron working with Principal Willis and Principal Roberts have determined that at EES and Memorial children can be in the classroom with 4.5 feet of social distancing and with a teacher and support staff. At Memorial, the K room will be converted to grade 5 allowing for additional space.

At Essex, the art room and library are larger rooms and will be reorganized into classrooms. All elementary classes can return with 4.5 feet of social distancing. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District will not be able to accept School Choice students for the 2020-2021 school year.

The Middle School has a space problem and adding teachers is not possible due to lack of space. In the Middle School grade 6 could be divided into 5 sections of 22 students and in class with 3 feet of social distancing, grade 7 could be farmed out throughout the building and grade 8 does not fit. Superintendent Beaudoin does not believe 3 feet separating students is workable at the Middle School level.

Assuming 22 students in a Middle School Class, group A = 11 and group B = 11 to get to 4.5 feet of social distancing Group A can be in the classroom and Group B in the gym, cafeteria or a modular classroom with live stream lessons to the remote class. This option would require hiring an additional 15 teachers. Superintendent Beaudoin concluded by stating the Middle School presents challenges.

The High School presents the greatest challenge. In High School students intermingle throughout the day and at this point it is unlikely that we can get there with all kids back in the school. Some consideration was given to defining mixed groups by eliminating leveling and specialized courses and maybe allowing more teachers to move from class to class. Grades 11 and 12 are the greatest concern. The high school program cannot be delivered under current constraints.

Elementary instruction is quite different and works with physical restrictions and masks. Middle School program will be impacted and require some type of hybrid with financial ramifications. High School at least grades 11 and 12 will require external hybrid.

Initial Cost Estimates:

- PPE for the year \$350K
- Technology \$75K
- Video Technology \$35K to \$70K
- Staffing \$300K
- Transportation unknown
- Storage unknown

Superintendent Beaudoin stated there is no clear-cut winner we will be teaching in person at some level, but it is a heavy lift. The health and safety of adults and students is important. It is believed younger students are not super carriers.

Additional study is needed for the Middle and High Schools. There maybe space in the elementary schools for 6th graders. Or is there a benefit to considering a hybrid remote program for the upper grades.

Policy questions: looking at data for 4.5 feet of social distancing; is that a District minimum standard everyone has to have 4.5 feet. This needs to pass to the Policy Sub Committee. Should we be using plastic barriers or corrals around desks. Is that helpful or hurtful?

Should the District consider two different models for elementary schools and secondary level? With elementary level in person at 4.5 feet of social distancing and secondary hybrid day to day or week to week, another question for the Policy Sub Committee.

Large groups, athletics if someone gets Covid-19 what happens? Transportation requirements 24 students on a bus is a non-starter. Over the next 2 weeks these questions need to be studied and resolved. The District would like to expand the Task Force to include local Board of Health, META Co-Presidents and School Council members. The Task Force needs to discuss issues, brainstorm and define solutions.

The District needs a revised plan by the end of July. Returning to school plan must be wrapped up by August 8, 2020. It is frustrating but the District is tethered to the State. MERSD is running similar to other schools few are ready to make final recommendations.

Mr. Erdmann thanked Superintendent Beaudoin, the Principals and Mr. Waldron for their hard work. She stated it was just awful trying to figure out who can fit were. Ms. Erdmann asked what the plan was for students with 504 Plans and IEP's. Superintendent Beaudoin stated we are not at that level of detail; specialized programs and inclusion models are next to be evaluated.

Initial goal is to start the Task Force and schedule 5 or 6 meetings over the summer. Additionally, identify a focus group for second round of surveys. Ms. Erdmann stated it is important to review remote learning and develop improvements in the District remote learning program.

Ms. Cameron asked if the District goes to the State and argues for a hybrid program and makes the case the District does not have space what could we do physically that has not already been considered? That is a question for the Task Force.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated as educators we are being asked to develop a program backwards. It is good sensible guidance to return to in person but how it that going to happen in areas of the country where Covid-19 is in a resurgence.

Ms. Wolf apologized for the noisy chickens in the background (really). She stated imagining the "new" classrooms is totally depressing. She did not like remote learning but in the fall, it would be different with teachers having access to classrooms and material but sitting in a classroom in rows wearing masks! Ms. Wolf guesses we need to take a deep breath and keep an open mind.

Ms. Whitman asked if the District had been in communication with anyone from Public Online School Providers to learn about best practices for remote learning. Superintendent Beaudoin stated there will be new information around remote learning and the District's need to follow the Department of Education's guidance discussed in future meetings.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked the Committee how they felt about a dual structure. Mr. Warnock stated he was fine with that and believes there are a lot of variations and each district will decide what is best for them. Principal Puglisi stated all AP classes are conducive to online with an opportunity for in person connections.

Dr. Riley indicated students need to complete lab work and how are we going to make those components available. Ms. Cameron asked if in the lecture tutorial model would it be possible for the District to collaborate with other schools and to look at small groups of kids collaborating it is very 21st Century and happens in the workplace and in study groups. See a glimmer of that here. Principal Puglisi stated kids are learning to collaborate and the District can collaborate with programs from other schools.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked if the Committee would support the dual model?

Mr. Warnock moved to approve a dual model with the elementary schools returning in a person to person model and the secondary model to alternate in a hybrid model, Ms. Cameron seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Beaudoin pointed out with the adoption of this model the Committee adopted the standard of 4.5 feet. Ms. Seaman, Co-President of META does not support anything under 6 feet of social distancing. Ms. Seaman has expressed concern, however the State has indicated 3 feet to 6 feet is safe social distancing in schools.

Superintendent Beaudoin and the Administration will explore alternatives for the Middle and High Schools due to the District's inability to fit all students in school at the same time with safe distancing.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated personal feelings do not play a role in complying with the guidance. It is compulsory that the District have 180 days of school. Following lengthy conversation, the District will decide around staff availability to work and hire new staff and substitutes if necessary.

Ms. Wolf is less concerned about the issue of 4.5 feet or 6 feet and more concerned about children sitting in rows and the detrimental impact of that on program. Ms. Wolf believes online learning could be a positive option with teachers in their classrooms and people coming in by appointment. The District could have a fabulous program with teachers in the building and at the same time meet special education needs. Superintendent reiterated the goal is to return children to in school learning.

Ms. Erdmann asked if the Committee does not support 2 different models and the Committee is not comfortable with 4.5 feet of social distancing what are the options. Superintendent Beaudoin

stated MASC educators prefer not to do that. It is our duty given the guidance to return children to school, it is not a choice. Ms. Erdmann concluded the Committee will leave the decision as proposed. Middle and High Schools with sketch out the hybrid program and we will review what the Elementary program will look like.

- Remote Learning Survey Feedback

Superintendent Beaudoin discussed the remote learning surveys. Teacher Survey, Parent Survey and High School Student survey conducted by Principal Puglisi. It is clear remote learning is not the preferred model. There was not a high level of satisfaction with remote learning. Kids were in different places, inconsistency among staff, time of day and general frustration were all cited as concerns. The general feeling among all groups is we can do better, and we need more structure.

Overall, the positive was more time with families. The weak points need improvement for fall.

8) Continued Business

- Curriculum Update – Julie Riley, Director of Curriculum & Instructional Technology
 - Literacy Program updated all components for grade K-5 and 5-8 including instruction in reading, writing, phonics and vocabulary. The District Literacy Team interviewed teachers and administrators and identified an online course for teachers. Additionally, a Summer Literacy Camp with the “Y” has been created for rising 2nd and 3rd graders. The Team has reviewed two core curriculum components to develop a comparison. Working on reviews and collecting feed back information will define the status. This is a yearlong process.
 - Summer Professional Development includes courses for remote learning. The courses were developed for teachers and parents and include google classroom, sea-saw training and an update to google classroom to collect feedback from students for additional accountability.
 - Live stream classroom instructions with teachers working in a different remote setting are being developed.
 - Zoom will be utilized in many ways with large groups and break out sessions.
 - Update curriculum to be fully remote or a mix hybrid
 - With a grant from the Department of Education the District is building a program to have kids engaged, identify digital literacy and create a robust system around digital literacy.
 - Cultural efficiencies review history and build capital. Look at role shift for what a school should be doing in 2020 prior to Covid-19. The Leadership Team lead cultural programs are slowly making progress, but this was not a first priority during the pandemic.
 - Bias training with North Shore leadership group is comprised of Principals and Directors and has been working on more equitable school environments for over ten years. To that end the District has worked with the Anti-Defamation League, Student Action and GSA. The Deans are working toward progressive discipline with restorative justice.

How to be an Anti-Racist vs. Against Racism will require a deeper understanding of work. Superintendent Beaudoin recommends a 3rd Party Program Review to address the resolution, policy, and work on goals and objectives like expanding hiring practices and more formalized training moving forward. Ms. Erdmann stated we need to define where we are and where we are going.

Ms. Cameron stated there is a resolution, but we have no answers right now. Ms. Wolf stated there are resources available and we need to schedule time to talk about what the work is we need to do suggesting a review of policies for biases. The Committee will need a working session to define what work we needs to be done.

- MASC Resolutions
 - Covid-19

RESOLUTION: COVID-19 STATE FUNDING

Whereas if schools are to reopen this fall in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is the responsibility of each school district to do so safely and responsibly; and

Whereas it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that each school district is able to pay for the enormous additional staffing, transportation and material expenses required to do this; and

Whereas the state cannot expect mandatory COVID-19 safety guidelines to be followed without also ensuring that each school district has the funds required to implement these guidelines; therefore, let it be

RESOLED: that the state must guarantee every school district full reimbursement for whatever COVID-19 expenses are required to follow state mandates.

We must ensure a statewide school re-opening that is safe, responsible and equitable.

THERE CAN BE NO UNFUNDED MANDATES FOR COVID-19

- Anti-Racism

SCHOOL COMMITTEE ANTI-RACISM RESOLUTION

Whereas schools have the responsibility to equip students with the civil right of obtaining a free and appropriate public education, it is the responsibility of each school to ensure we create a welcoming community for ALL students; and

Whereas it is the responsibility that every district provide to all district staff, including School Committee members annual professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion; and

Whereas every district will commit to recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce; and

Whereas every district will examine their policies for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change with sustainable policies that are evidence based; and

Whereas every district will incorporate into their curriculum the history of racial oppression and works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives; and

Whereas we as school district leaders can no longer remain silent to the issues of racism and hate that continue to plague our public and private institutions.

Resolved: the Manchester Essex Regional School District and all the school districts in the Commonwealth must guarantee that racist practices are eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff.

We must ensure our own school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist, that acknowledges that all lives cannot matter until black lives matter.

Ms. Wolf moved to approve two MASC resolutions: the School Committee Anti-Racism Resolution and the Covid-19 State Funding Resolution Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Cameron asked Mr. Urbas if there is was a code in the accounting system dedicated to Covid-19 expenses. Mr. Urbas stated the District had not set up a separated code but is considering a revolving fund for PPE orders, cleaning and equipment. All expenses will be kept clearly in a separate bucket, FEMA grant funds are labeled. Ms. Cameron stated money for PPE was in the warrant and she wanted to be reassured expenses are being monitored. Ms. Erdmann agreed, and Ms. Cameron stated the Town want to know the costs of reopening the schools.

Ms. Cameron stated the Committee's commitment to the Anti-Racism Resolution will involve a lot of hard work. As a School Committee we are committing to the hard work and our commitment needs to be part of our 2020-2021 School Committee goals. Ms. Cameron stated she has every confidence in the District to meet the challenge. It is important to develop a working plan to assure we do this well.

Ms. Cameron asked what it meant to develop an anti-racist curriculum vs. an equity curriculum. Superintendent stated the first step is to frame our understanding and define through self-discovery our readiness and personal interest to change. The District has been engaged in the process for ten years. In 2011 we started the process of inclusive practices in educating and in 2016-2017 the District worked with SEL practices looking at our role as teachers. It is a slow process. Superintendent Beaudoin thanked Ms. Cameron for her confidence and understanding in the District we can do this work.

Dr. Riley agrees with self-reflection we acknowledge where our knowledge lies and commit to doing better. Ms. Erdmann stated this is a long game and the conversations are starting and we are beginning to lay groundwork. We are open to listening to one another.

Ms. Whitman asked how often MASC presents resolutions for the School Committees to approve. Superintendent Beaudoin stated she believes the last resolution had to do with Charter Schools. Ms. Whitman indicated that adds to the weight of these resolutions. Ms. Erdmann stated she is enthusiastic about starting this work especially in light of the number of people who signed Ms. Koch-Sundqvist's letter.

Ms. Cameron stated there are no answers right now. It is time to talk about what the work is and what we need to do. Ms. Cameron recommended reviewing current policies for biases and recommended a working session for the Committee.

Superintendent Beaudoin believes training is needed. There is a significant amount of literature through ECLC to help the Committee develop a pathway forward. Ms. Erdmann agreed stating she would like to see an audit to help us define where we want to go and how to get there. Ms. Cameron believes the Committee would benefit from a 3rd party review and asked what the Committee can do in the short term. Ms. Wolf would like to see the Committee begin the process by choosing a book to read and discuss and will make a recommendation at the next meeting.

Principal Roberts stated Essex held a grass roots meeting and teacher leaders are empowered and ready to start work. Principal Roberts is not opposed to an audit, but she would like to tap into small groups and share resources. Dr. Riley thought that was a great point. The District has people on staff who are passionate about this issue. Dr. Riley indicated the Anti-Defamation League is active in the Middle and High Schools and it is important to develop a connection with the Elementary Schools.

Ms. Whitman asked if the elementary book group included both EES and Memorial staff. Dr. Riley reminded the Committee the first step in the process is soul searching and self-assessment. Any book group will involve the full staff. She suggested colleagues who would like to do something immediately could share a list of children's literature. Ms. Erdmann stated it is important to have a vertical alignment of curriculum with equitable programming in all schools.

Dr. Riley indicated there will be professional development for teachers and families with anti-racism training this summer. The District will build out training and models on a webinar around social justice and social bias.

- MERSD Lease Agreement Renewals

According to Superintendent Beaudoin the lease agreement is a discussion needing to take place between the two Towns. Ms. Erdmann stated the lease agreement was on the agenda for the Collaboration Group. Superintendent Beaudoin is asking for a motion to approve a one-year lease agreement.

Ms. Cameron moved the School Committee approve a one-year lease agreement in order for Manchester and Essex to review and discuss the impact of the agreement moving forward, Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

9) School Committee Comment –

10) Adjourn

Ms. Wolf moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.