



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES September 1, 2020

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	September 1, 2020
Location:	Via Webex
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Sarah Wolf, Chairperson Shannon Erdmann, Vice Chairperson Ken Warnock Ann Cameron Eric Bourke Theresa Whitman Matt Harrington
Absent:	
Guests:	Julie Riley, Director of Curriculum & Instructional Technology, Allison Collins, Director of Student Services, Jennifer Roberts, Principal EES, Joanne Maino, Principal MERMS, John Willis, Principal Memorial School, Patricia Puglisi, Principal MERHS, Jason Waldron, Facilities Manager and Jordan Edgett, Athletic Director
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

AGENDA

A. Call to Order – Ms. Wolf called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Public Comment –

Phil Furse, Manchester read a letter signed by 181 residents of Manchester and Essex in support of MIAA’s recommendation and of students “right to opt into school sports.” Mr. Furse said the psychological benefits of sports is essential and warned that as the school year progresses and the days grow shorter students will be more vulnerable to depression and anxiety. Mr. Furse said sports participation is shown to stem these and pressed the Committee not to limit participation.

Karen Carroll, Essex, a Public Health Director encouraged the Committee to reopen schools as quickly as possible stating the risks to children are documented and there have been no recent community transmissions of Covid-19.

2) Chairman’s Report –

Ms. Wolf welcomed everyone to the meeting. Ms. Wolf took a few minutes to review the process the School Committee has taken in planning to reopen for School Year 2020-2021. At the end of June, the District was asked to develop a feasibility study around three models for returning to school: in person, hybrid or fully remote.

The School Committee requested presentations from Principals and Administrators around each of the models. It was concluded the District could not return in person because of the School Committee’s vote to require 6 feet of social distancing. The Hybrid and Remote model presentations were reviewed and due to the possibility of staffing shortages, impact on the program and financial implications the decision was made to proceed with the Remote model. Ms. Wolf concluded it will not be perfect. The School Committee is committed to monitoring and adjusting and to supporting children as we set our course and move forward. It is our hope we can work together.

3) Consent Agenda

- Minutes – 8.11.2020 and 8.18.2020

Ms. Cameron moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Cameron indicated she understood the District’s expenditure on solar panels meant the District would receive money back and would not be paying for electricity. Mr. Urbas stated the installation of the solar panels agreement meant the company making the installation would become the District’s power company. The electric service is provided at a fixed rate, the District will experience no escalation in rates as rates go up. The District made no investment in the construction of the solar panels. The cost of the solar panels was assumed by the company who now provides approximately 25% of the District’s electrical service.

4) Sub-Committee Reports

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – No Report
- Finance Committee (Anne Cameron/Shannon Erdmann)

Ms. Cameron reported the Finance Committee met with the Collaboration Group (Town Administrators and Town Representatives from BOS and Finance Committee), the Collaboration Group meets approximately every 6 weeks. The most recent meeting focused on the District's Remote Learning Plan. Town members of the Collaboration Group are in support of the School Committee's decisions in part due to budget implications.

The Group approved a one-year extension of the lease agreement between the Town of Essex and the District. Ms. Zubricki, is following up on possibilities for Regionalization between the Towns and District and will report at the next Collaboration Group meeting. Superintendent Beaudoin mentioned there is a possibility of an increase in enrollment due to a planned development in Manchester.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Theresa Whitman)

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the Committee usually completes two reads of a policy prior to formalizing a new policy. Superintendent Beaudoin is recommending suspending the second read and formalizing the new Mask Policy this evening with a single read.

The MERSD Mask Policy is a blend of the MASC policy with local adaptations, specifically around mask requirement for all grades K-12. Dr. Collins and staff agreed to exceptions for students with documented medical, behavioral and other documented challenges. Additionally, the Mask Policy defines an appropriate mask as one that has two layers, covers the nose and fits snugly under the chin. The district is requesting parents provide two or more masks each day for students. The Policy allows for mask breaks, no masks while eating and drinking and during physical education class with social distancing. If a student has compliance problems with mask wearing the student will be removed from in person learning. Superintendent Beaudoin stated staff and Legal Counsel have weighed in on the policy.

Ms. Whitman asked for clarification of the policy approval process. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the second read usually allows for the School Committee to weigh in and discuss substantive language changes. This second read practice was established prior to the development of School Committee Sub-Committees.

Ms. Cameron moved to accept the Mask Policy, Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Warnock stated as things change the policy may change. He is fine approving the Mask Policy. Ms. Whitman stated she was comfortable with the level of detail she saw while participating in the process and the comments Dr. Collins brought forward during discussions and approves the Mask Policy.

- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – Memorandum of Agreement with META.

Mr. Warnock described the process. The Sub-Committee and Administration spent many hours discussing the Agreement. Everyone involved was candid, open, thoughtful and fair. Discussions

ranged from 30K feet to the nuts and bolts. Mr. Warnock is confident that everyone working on the Agreement put students first. Ms. Wolf stated she echoed everything Mr. Warnock said, and added it was great to be part of the process where children were first in everyone's mind.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the Agreement is in place through October when it can be renewed. The District is working out health and safety standards for the buildings around HVAC and ventilation. The District is on the way to having the recommended check list complete.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated there are differentiations among staff and working conditions with some staff returning to school in person on September 16, 2020. Working conditions differ for in-person and remote. The District is working with teachers around FMLA, ADA and the Child Care Covid-19 rules for FMLA, 20% of the staff qualify for leaves requested and meet the Federal Standards.

All teachers who are available to start work from their classrooms will work 3-days a week from their classroom, moving up to 4-days a week. Ms. Wolf stated the 5th day buildings will be closed for deep cleaning. Mr. Warnock believes there are new norms for staff and students and the staff is up for the challenge.

Mr. Warnock moved to accept the MOA, Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5) Continued Business

- Memorandum of Agreement with Manchester Essex Teachers Association
- Reopening Updates
 - Principals Maino, Puglisi, Roberts and Willis – September In-Person Gatherings

Principal Roberts expressed her thanks and stated everyone at Essex Elementary is excited to get going and get back in the building. Principal Roberts outlined the preliminary schedule for EES.

- September 10, 2020 – Kindergarten orientation will take place at 3:30 p.m.
- September 11, 2020 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. teachers will be zooming with parents and childcare providers as a group to explain remote learning formats and to help parents understand what Remote Learning will look like for their child.
- September 14 and 15, 2020 – Kindergarten screening will take place outside under canopies. The process will be fairly typical with students being assessed. Kindergarten students will also meet their teachers in person and pick up materials.
- September 14, 2020 all classes will be set up outside. Teachers will schedule and bring in 2-3 students at a time over the course of the day and spend 30 minutes with team building exercises prior to the students picking up their supplies.
- September 15, 2020 teachers will schedule individual meetings with families on either Zoom or phone. It is expected these call will take 15 to 20 minutes and allow teachers to gather information about their students.
- Principal Roberts stated some teachers have already started contacting families.

Ms. Whitman asked on behalf of parents and caregivers what the day would look like specifically around screen time and scheduled breaks. She indicated parents want to know when the breaks will be scheduled. Principal Roberts stated she was not sure teachers could define the day to that level. Superintendent Beaudoin shared she had watched a parent training video and understands that each class is part of a block schedule and there is not a fixed amount of screen time. Screen time is ever evolving during the class.

Principal Roberts said teachers professional development includes remote learning pedagogy and direct instruction will vary for students and the type of lesson the teacher is presenting. Ms. Whitman stated that was different from what she had anticipated. Ms. Wolf confirmed with Principal Roberts that children will not be staring at a screen all day they will work with paper, pencils and crayons and in break out rooms with other students.

Principal Willis recapped what has been happening at Memorial School indicating an introductory email had been sent to all Memorial School families.

Teachers have started communicating with families what the day and weeks will look like. All students will be in class from 8:25 a.m. to 2:55 p.m. Students will do independent and group work in Zoom rooms and there are times when screens will be turned off.

- September 16 and 17 2020 – Kindergarten screening will take place. Students will come to Memorial School 2 at a time, in person and will meet outdoors.
- Principal Willis is developing a parent video series to let parents know what to expect.
- There is a parent tutorial for K-2 parents on See Saw available for parents.
- September 11th, 14th and 15th there will be three outdoor classrooms set up for teachers and families. One classroom will be opposite Principal Willis' office, another located in the reading garden and one on the tennis courts. Teachers are free to schedule time in one of the three areas and to invite groups of 3 to 5 students to join them. The students will get to know their teacher and met a few of their classmates while meeting in a circle and social distancing. Students will leave with their totes filled with materials for the new year.
- Under development outreach for new students, in person orientation for K students and in person RTI screening. Principal Willis and faculty are working out the logistics and will reach out with additional information.

Principal Maino asked the School Committee if they receive questions about Middle School from the community to please forward those questions to her. She is more than happy to respond to all questions from the community. Principal Maino outlined the beginning of school for 6th to 8th graders.

- September 11, 2020 6th graders (all 108) will be coming into school with clearly defined traffic patterns and dispersed among ten stations. There will be music playing, welcome signs and excitement generated about starting the new school year. Teachers will introduce class content and engage the students in a SEL activity at the end of their presentations. Teachers will move from station to station. At the end of the event students

will pick up their materials. A similar format will be followed for the 120 7th graders and 130 8th graders.

- September 10, 2020 and email will be forwarded to students introducing a new 15-minute Advisory Block for all students led by faculty and administrators. The mixed group will be between 10 and 13 students. The Advisory Block is an opportunity for advisors to model critical thinking and problem solving.
- Schedules will be available for all students prior to the beginning of the school year; for 6th graders schedules can be overwhelming. Additional time and practice is provided for 6th grade students as they become more familiar with the Middle School schedule.

Principal Maino reflected on Principal Willis' statement that this is a first year for everyone and it is not going to be perfect out of the gate, she encouraged everyone to remain flexible and responsive. Principal Maino concluded by stating teachers are extremely excited to be back in the classroom

Principal Puglisi stated orientation emails have been forwarded to Freshmen and peer mentors assigned. All students will participate in a virtual welcome orientation hosted by Class Officers, Administration and Teachers. Principal Puglisi encouraged parents and students to reach out to guidance counselors with any questions.

The High School will sponsor a day similar to the Middle School for students to come in and meet their teachers and pick up materials including chrome books, textbooks, art and science supplies and more. Students are encouraged to bring a backpack and /or additional bags there are lots of materials for them to bring home.

Principal Puglisi stated the school day is 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and all students are expected to attend classes.

Ms. Erdmann asked about new students in each school. Principal Willis estimated new students at between 20 to 25 but it was difficult to keep an accurate count given the fluidity of students unenrolling to attend private school and home school.

Principal Maine indicated there are 8 new students in the Middle School which is about average with some students transferring to private schools. Principal Puglisi stated there are a higher number of students enrolling at Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School with the expectation 15 students will withdraw from MERHS to enroll at ENSATS.

Principal Roberts stated there were 7 new move-in students with some parents opting to home school and move to private school. Ms. Cameron asked for an enrollment count for the next School Committee meeting.

Ms. Cameron indicated parents should address their questions to the classroom teacher and then move up to the principal. Principal Maino stated she is developing a flow chart for parents around who to communicate with and around what purpose. Ms. Cameron thanked all the Principals for their work.

Principal Roberts wanted parents to know that material pick ups will happen throughout the school year. The materials are still being developed, ordered and received for distribution.

Mr. Warnock thank the Principals for their work and recognized that everyone has lots of learning to do as we enter this new back to school year. He reminded the Principals that parents want to help.

- Director of Student Services, Dr. Collins – Special Education Planning Update

Dr. Collins provided a quick check in around the process of prioritizing students for in person classes. A small number of students have been invited to come in from SWING, K-12 and EARL, 2-6. Staffing issues for Special Education have been particularly challenging around planning for opening in person on September 16, 2020.

At this time there is uncertainty for some programs which cannot be fully staffed. Dr. Collins is recruiting for Teacher Assistants and asked the School Committee to help spread the word. Some teachers have pre-existing conditions, childcare and other issues that means they cannot accept in person assignments.

Dr. Collins states there are 11 teachers in process of qualifying and 3 teachers not able to take on the positions. If this is an indication it is a concern for the District's ability to fully manage the programs. She will be in touch with families if the District cannot open on time and in person.

Ms. Cameron expressed her concern and asked if there was a possibility of pulling skilled staff to support the programs. Dr. Collins indicated she is working day and night to resolve the issues and speaking with TA's and teachers.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated if the District moves teachers from one program to support Special Education it may be setting up a domino effect when the Hybrid program begins. Currently the District will need to add staff to support the Hybrid program with 27% of staff qualifying for leave. Ms. Cameron indicated this creates financial uncertainty around the District budget.

Ms. Erdmann asked if the District is having trouble finding candidate it must be true for everyone else. Dr. Collins stated there are other Districts who approved opening programs but cannot staff the programs. MERSD is not alone.

- Director of Curriculum & Instructional Technology, Dr. Riley – Overview Teacher Training

Dr. Riley prepared an update on Professional Development taking place over the 10 days prior to opening the new school year. There are seven areas of professional development:

FOCUS AREA I – Learning Management Systems –

How materials connect laptops, cameras, learning See Saw and Google Classroom, understanding the platform

Expectations for Community Practices for Classroom Settings

FOCUS AREA II ZOOM – Skills and strategies for working with whole group and small group instruction in Zoom. Example features polling, breakout rooms, raising hand and sharing.

FOCUS AREA III – Google Suite Tools and Pear Deck

FOCUS AREA IV – Building Community in the Classroom & SEL Support

FOCUS AREA V – Develop Student Engagement using Content and Communication Technologies

FOCUS AREA VI – Assessment Building Formative and Summative Assessments

FOCUS AREA VII – Build Student and Parent Meeting Time

Additionally, there is a staff support and additional tools for teaching with technology for Middle and High School teachers.

Jenna Seymour (K-5) and Matt Tangney (Grades 6-12) have developed tutorials to support technologies for teachers and a place for teachers to review, practice and answer questions after training. And address how does this fit into the structure of the day?

Ms. Cameron asked how the District will know if families are ready for technology on September 16th asking if families are connected and is the student online. Dr. Riley and Mr. Urbas are working on a help desk for parents. And teachers are ready to walk through the process with students.

Ms. Cameron asked if time was built in to redirect students and figure out what is not working. Dr. Riley stated tickets from the help desk will help us figure out what the problems are and how to fix the issues.

Ms. Cameron also asked about instruction and if the lesson was working and aligning with curriculum. Superintendent Beaudoin answered that type of assessment happens daily with teachers and mor formally in District wide meetings.

Ms. Whitman asked if iPads came fully loaded. Dr. Riley replied the District purchased software for the iPads.

- Finance Director Urbas and Facilities Manager, Mr. Waldron – HVAC & Safety Preparations

HVAC Guidance is Being Met

- Maximizing fresh air intake
- Upgrading filters and frequency of replacement
- Contrast with 3rd party HVAC engineers to ensure adherence to guidance and compliance with AHRAE industry standards.

HVAC Layout

- High School/Middle School equipment and building automated system installed 2010.
- Essex Elementary School – building automated system installed in half of classrooms and gymnasium in 2018. The rest of the building is controlled by manual pneumatic thermostats.
- Memorial Elementary School – HVAC equipment and building automated systems installed in 2020 in new classroom wing. Old Memorial equipment controlled by pneumatic thermostats.
- DESE Guidelines – HVAC Engineer Checklist
Perform preventative maintenance and adjustments for HVAC systems, including boiler, chillers, exhaust fans – 5 step process
Conduct preventative maintenance on building automated system to verify outdoor air damper operation; economizer operation, heating and cooling valve operation and disable CO2 control
Prevent or minimize air recirculation

District is following all recommendations

- Clean Ventilation System
- Take Airflow reading using Airflow measurements stations and compare to design airflows for Supply Air, Return Air and Outside Air
- Perform a building flush out, operating HVAC systems in occupied mode for 24/7 a minimum of one week prior to school building reopening.
- Maintain ventilation for longer hours
- Consider upgrading filters and increase filter change and inspections.
- Ventilate with Outdoor Air, Increase Filter Efficiency, Supplement with Air Purifier (ordered for EES and Memorial)
- HVAC Conclusion – Once all HVAC checklist items are completed school buildings will be in full compliance.

Cleaning Protocols

- All custodial staff have been trained on cleaning protocols and will be provided appropriate PPE according to CDC and EPA.
- MERSD will use disinfectants and cleaners that are registered by the EPA.
- All appropriate PPE items for staff/students set forth by DESE and CDC has been ordered.
- Touchless flushometers, no splash lids, 250 hands free soap and sanitizer dispensers, 5 electrostatic sprayers, and each class will be provided hand sanitizers, wipes and paper towels

- Cleaning schedules – custodial staff cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched areas 3-4 time a day, bathrooms 3-4 times a day and cleaning log will be maintained.

Ms. Cameron asked about the custodial staff at each of the schools. Mr. Waldron indicated there were 3 staff members at Memorial, 2 at EES and 6 at the HSMS. He indicated that would change when the number of teachers and students increased in each of the buildings. Ms. Cameron also asked about air exchange at EES. Mr. Waldron stated there was a possibility the Town of Essex would allow the District to use their Green Grant funding to expand the fully automated system at EES this year. The decision is still being considered.

Ms. Cameron stated for those who have criticized the School Committee for not going fully Hybrid; the work that has been done getting the buildings ready cannot be done quickly. She thanked Mr. Waldron for all the work he and the staff have done to get the buildings ready and to assure the teachers the buildings have met all protocols.

- Fall Athletics Planning Update – Principal Puglisi & Athletic Director Mr. Edgett

MIAA Fall Sports Structure –

- Sports offered – cross country, field hockey, golf and soccer
- Football and Cheer moved to Fall II 2/22 to 4/25
- Regular Season September 18, 2020 to November 1, 2020
- Post Season first two weeks in November
- No out of league games, matches or meets
- Schedule was made, as best as possible to play the same school for each spot in the same week.

Highlights

- Cape Ann League School Principals and Athletic Directors meeting regularly to discuss
- Goal is for CAL schools to have unified decision
- CAL will strictly adhere to DESE and MIAA guidelines with modifications specific to CAL schools.

Scenarios under Consideration

- All sports and all levels of play compete with CAL
- Varsity only competitions with sub-varsity instructional programs
- Golf, cross country fall season with soccer and field hockey play during Fall II
- Move all sports to Fall II, implement instruction and skills program during fall season

Challenges and Questions

- Rules modifications and Practice Requirements
- Fall II – weather challenges
- Available Field Space, Cross Country Courses and Golf Courses

- Fans vs No Fans
- Venue Protocols
- Transportation Budget

Ms. Cameron asked about training for coaches and mentioned a picture she saw on the front page of the *Cricket* with young athletes hi-fiving each other, not wearing masks and with no social distancing. Principal Puglisi stated all coaches are District employees and will follow the protocols and safety standards set by the District.

Ms. Erdmann asked about transportation mentioning that last year there were times when buses were not available to take students to events. Ms. Edgett does not believe that will be a problem with most schools starting remote.

Principal Puglisi would like the extra curricula activities discussion to include arts, drama and robotics and other activities to help increase interactions with students.

Ms. Whitman asked if all sports activities can be staffed. Mr. Edgett believes that is possible although two employees are concerned about travelling on the bus but that will be covered by assistants.

Ms. Cameron asked about seniors who rely on sports success to get into colleges. Principal Puglisi said that is something student athletes across the country are facing and kids are struggling about playing or not playing. Mr. Edgett stated that was a tough questions to answer and one faced by college coaches. No one has the right answer.

Superintendent Beaudoin concluded if Cape Ann League goes forward the School Committee will review the designated remote information at the next Committee meeting on September 15, 2020 and decide.

6) Superintendent's Report –

- Reopening Planning Report and Next Steps

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District is investigating independent remote models for families interested in a more independent remote opportunity. The asynchronous model allows students to work at their own pace and to design their own schedule. Families interested should reach out to Dr. Riley to talk the option through. This option allows students to receive MERSD credit and to rejoin the class in school year 2021-2022.

Remote only option gives students school-based opportunities while remaining at home for the full school year. Home school option is an independent opportunity, or a family can join a home school group. The family writes their own educational plan and documents it with the District. Families have been home schooling for years for part or whole of the educational experience. Dr. Riley is the point person for home schooling.

Superintendent Beaudoin encourages families to watch the training videos the videos provide an excellent introduction into the remote learning platforms. Superintendent Beaudoin wants to

thank the teachers for the phenomenal job they are doing developing structure and workflow for the students.

Lunch will be available for students details are no final, however distribution will be on site. The Y childcare program has 40 plus students enrolled starting at EES with a secondary site at the High School. When the District goes Hybrid changes will need to be made to site in Beverly or Ipswich.

Indicators for moving to Hybrid Model: Introduced 9/1, Finalized 9/15 and First Review 10/2

- Health and Safety
- Program
- Staffing
- Financial Considerations

Superintendent Beaudoin stated science will drive health and safety concerns. Program is the heart of discussions with consideration for cohort expansion. Hamilton and Wenham reviewed the Hybrid Model and concluded the average amount of time spent on topic per week per subject was 90 minutes. When the District moves to Hybrid the District will need to staff up and that depends on the availability of teachers, nurses and bus monitors.

Ms. Cameron stated she believes the indicators require additional definition and would like to see a column added with costs. Ms. Cameron proposed the Finance Sub Committee work on the developing additional indicators and defining costs. Superintendent Beaudoin asked which indicators would supersede financial? Ms. Whitman replied program should be the primary focus.

Ms. Erdmann believes indicators need to be standard for all phases with the exception of cohort. Ms. Wolf suggested developing smaller more manageable pieces suggesting K-2. It is easier to consider bringing back a small group and slowly work through the grade levels.

The Finance Sub Committee will work on further defining the indicator chart and Committee members will provide feedback to Superintendent Beaudoin. Ms. Whitman reiterated her desire to feel confident requires looking at program first and assuring the program can be staffed.

7) School Committee Comment –

8) Adjourn

Ms. Erdmann moved the meeting adjourn, Ms. Cameron seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.