



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES November 17, 2020

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	November 17, 2020
Location:	Via Webex
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Sarah Wolf, Chairperson Shannon Erdmann, Vice Chairperson Ken Warnock Ann Cameron Eric Bourke Theresa Whitman Matt Harrington
Absent:	Avi Urbas, Director of Finance
Guests:	Jordan Edgett, Athletic Director, Jason Waldron, Facilities Manager
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

AGENDA

A. Call to Order – Ms. Wolf called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Public Comment –

Ms. Wolf stated School Committee meetings are not open for public discussion. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees states: “A School Committee meeting is a meeting of a government body at which members of the body deliberate over public business. We welcome the attendance of members of the school district community to view your School

Committee as it conducts its regular business meeting, but these meetings are not designed to be an opportunity for dialogue.” With that understanding she opened the meeting for public comment.

Karin Carroll, 124 Eastern Ave. – Ms. Carroll asked with urgency that the District bring MHS students into the schools for in person instruction. She stated in school instruction matters for both physical health and mental health issues. She urged the School Committee to follow the science indicating two months was too long for students to be home alone. The proposed reopening date will occur at the peak of flu season. Ms. Carroll fears the reopening will be delayed, meaning MHS students would not have been in school for a full year. She asked the School Committee to prioritize our kids and stated the Committee has the authority to make in school learning happen.

Peggy Hegarty-Steck – Ms. Hegarty-Steck stated as a HS parent she recognizes her child will be part of the Covid learning generation which will have an impact for years. She acknowledged that remote learning had become more structured since the spring but endless hours online and in Zoom is not adequate. She indicated kids and families are struggling. She is concerned about college readiness and students disconnected from in school support systems. She encouraged the School Committee to hasten their process and bring students back into their classrooms as soon as possible.

Jeff Carovillano, 64 Pine Street – Mr. Carovillano is a School Administrator who moved to Manchester for the quality of the School District. He is disappointed and discouraged by the current remote learning model for the District. Mr. Carovillano would give the current model a vote of no confidence. The District is in an area for low risk for transmission of the virus. School has been proven to be a safe place for students and faculty. He does not understand why the District is not opening and encourages the District to open the MHS on December 1, 2020.

Eric Tolo, 49 Market Street – Dr. Tolo stated he echoes the sentiments of the previous parents and encourages the District to get kids back sooner than planned. He mentioned a Ted Talk which indicated learning requires relationships and human connections in order to be effective. Students are suffering from the isolation of remote learning. According to an article in the *New York Times* 25% of all remote learners do not feel connected, 61% are lonely and 70% are depressed. Isolation is worsening the effects on the mental health of students. He believes current positivity rates of the virus do not pose a threat and teachers and students will be safe with a return to school.

Michael and Heather Richard – Mr. Richard echoed the comments of the previous parents. He indicated the past months of remote learning have not been beneficial for the students. He indicated other Districts have figured out how to reopen and encouraged the District to reopen sooner. Ms. Richard stated her support of all teachers for what they have accomplished during the time of remote learning. She supports the previous parents and expressed the need for students to get back in the classroom. She stated kids need social interaction and time to work together. Ms. Richard encouraged the School Committee to bring the students back sooner.

Kim Gendron – Ms. Gendron appreciates all who spoke and indicated there were children in the MHS albeit not the children of the parents who spoke. She requested clarification about the YMCA program and asked if there was a contractual agreement with the Y.

Jen Tolo – Ms. Tolo indicated she is an educator specializing in Social Emotional Health and the priority the District places on rigor in the educational program focuses on a limited number of students leaving 80% of the student population struggling. Ms. Tolo is concerned about the disconnect and feelings of some students that they are not being supported. She indicated these students are vulnerable to high risk behaviors and encourages the School Committee to get the kids back in as soon as possible.

Cheryl Mulvey – Ms. Mulvey wanted to inform parents there is a SEPAC Meeting scheduled for Thursday, November 19, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

2) Chairman’s Report –

Ms. Wolf concluded the public comment by stating if you have a child who is experiencing mental health challenges to please reach out to the District’s guidance counselors. Ms. Wolf understands not all parents agree with the decisions of the School Committee around educational delivery, but all members of the School Committee are also parents of school aged children and understand the impact of remote learning.

3) Student Report – Lukas Shan

Lukas stated everything is going well for him. The first quarter just finished and the transition time between quarters gives students an opportunity to reflect and reset for the next quarter. Lukas stated his teachers were positive and doing a good job with keeping the program rigorous. Lukas indicated he has not experienced the negatives outlined in public comment.

4) Consent Agenda

- Minutes – 10.20.2020
- Acceptance of Warrants

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

5) Sub-Committee Reports

- Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann) – Report

Ms. Cameron reported the Memorial School Building project remained on time and on budget. At this time there is nothing to report. The Committee will be reviewing the budget, and all is well with the project. Ms. Erdmann stated the drone video following the steel delivery and placement was awesome. Superintendent Beaudoin stated she would put the video on the Building project website.

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

Ms. Cameron reported there is nothing new to report all has been quiet. Ms. Wolf stated Committee members shadowing the budget process had been decided, Ms. Whitman and Mr. Harrington will be participating in Collaborative Group and budget meetings.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/Theresa Whitman) – No Report
- Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) – No Report

6) Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Beaudoin replied to parents who had made a public comment, we hear you and are empathetic. The District is working to bring students back midyear. Our plan was submitted and approved by the Department of Education that does not mean the plan cannot be changed. We will evaluate where we are given the timeline.

Superintendent Beaudoin cautioned comparisons with other Districts stating there are as many forms of Hybrid Programs as there are Districts and priorities vary from the number of instructional hours, to half days, lunch no lunch and more. All Districts are working together to learn from one another.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated if your student is struggling at home the District is bringing students into school. She encouraged parents to reach out to Principals and Counselors for support. The social emotional health of our students is important to us.

Principal Puglisi and Principal Maino will be at the December 1, 2020 School Committee meeting to discuss why previously it was decided to begin the Hybrid Model in the MHS at semester break. It has to do with staff, schedules and cohorts. Students have been asked to share information before and after participating in on site activities. The District has gathered data from students, it will be interesting to see their perspective during the next meeting.

Clarifying the YMCA program, the Y will move when the Hybrid Model is implemented at the MHS. They are currently identifying a new location for their program. The change of site will likely be disruptive for parents with younger children.

At the next School Committee meeting Superintendent Beaudoin stated the Hybrid Model for MHS will be reviewed. However, screen time will continue to be a key component of the program. Students in the classroom will be working with a teacher and students using the remote platform.

Staffing remains a challenge and Principal Puglisi and Principal Maino will provide an update on how the District is managing personnel. In the MHS 16+ staff members have requested leave or an accommodation. This will have an impact on program. One teacher teaches 5 sections, that impacts 100 students and if 7 High School teachers are out it will be difficult to replace their technical skill level. If AP teachers are not available, the course may not be available, or the District may go with a third party resource for AP classes.

Ms. Erdmann asked if the District were to accelerate implementation of the Hybrid Model would it be possible to implement after Christmas. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that would need to be answered by the MHS Principals. Ms. Wolf asked if this could be presented as part of the MHS Principals presentation.

Mr. Harrington stated a buffer around the Holidays has been suggested for school districts. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that could be included as a line of discussion for the Advisory Group which includes parents and staff from all schools along with Town BOH representatives.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated in the elementary schools consistency and continuity over the past 4 weeks (although not perfect) has resulted in building and achieving gains in the classroom.

Mr. Warnock thanked Superintendent for the update and stated it was worth noting concerns on the police Facebook pages that some parents and students are not following safety protocols and that is a concern in negotiations and a deterrent to feeling safe. He thought it was almost necessary to have a behavioral metric.

Ms. Whitman asked when there would be an update on elementary schools and the Hybrid Model. Superintendent Beaudoin stated Dr. Riley will be part of the December 1, 2020 meeting and could provide a general update on curriculum instruction.

7) Continued Business

- Winter Athletics Briefing – *Jordan Edgett, Athletic Director*

Mr. Edgett stated his presentation would be brief. The MIA has not yet provided Athletic Directors with guidance for winter sports, however they met today, and information will be received on Friday, November 20, 2020. The start date for winter sports is November 30, 2020 although the date may be pushed to December 14, 2020. Mr. Edgett anticipates a structure similar to fall.

Ms. Wolf asked if the District was playing in the Cape Ann League, Ms. Edgett stated that was correct. Ms. Cameron stated it is going to be difficult playing sports indoors when we are limited to 10 people in a room eating Thanksgiving dinner. Ms. Wolf asked if testing protocols would be in place with rapid testing before games. Mr. Edgett said that had not been decided.

- Hybrid Indicators: COVID Stoplight Map Reorganization

Revisions to City and Town Metrics – Essex and Manchester have populations under 10K

Grey – Less than or equal to 10 total cases

Green – Less than or equal to 15 total cases

Yellow – Less than or equal to 25 cases

Red – More than 25 cases

Key Changes Address

- Institutional Clusters: Hot spots in prisons, colleges, nursing facilities put communities in red.
- Small Towns: Under previous formula towns with small population could reach red with only 8 cases of Covid per 100K residents.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked if the Committee had concerns about the current indicators and was it important to dive into the new indicators.

Ms. Cameron stated she believes the new map is fine and managing cases as they arise and understanding where cases are located matters. Plus, Superintendent Beaudoin has discretion to make decisions in school. Ms. Erdmann agreed stating working with the BOH we know what to look for. Ms. Cameron is concerned about stories of large gatherings of people in communities and that will determine what happens. People should not be having kid parties.

Mr. Harrington thought it important to look at underlying case count and the trend in case count is more important than color.

Snow Days: Inclement weather days will be remote unless there is a power or technical outage that does not allow for online classes to be held. Typical announcements will go out via Connect-Ed.

Travel Advisory: families traveling out of state during the holidays must adhere to the Massachusetts guidelines for travel to and from restricted areas. This includes testing and quarantining before returning to school.

- Info @ <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order#lower-risk-states->
- Questions: Please contact school nurse.

- Essex Elementary Playground – Vote to Proceed

Superintendent stated Mr. Urbas was not able to be at the meeting this evening but Mr. Waldron was available to answer questions. Mr. Jordan stated with the Committee's approval to place the equipment order for the new Essex Elementary Playground the equipment would likely arrive in April with construction completed in early May.

Ms. Cameron asked when the purchase order would go into Kompan. Mr. Waldron stated it was scheduled to go forward on December 1, 2020. Ms. Cameron requested the purchase order to go in tomorrow (November 18, 2020) to assure there was a time buffer. Ms. Cameron also confirmed the price was firm and there would be no storage costs for the equipment. Mr. Waldron stated he would submit the purchase order on November 18, 2020, that the price was firm and there would be no storage costs incurred.

Ms. Cameron moved to approve the Kompan purchase order in the amount of \$299,986.21 for the purchase of equipment for the new Eagle's Nest Playground, Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- Budget
 - FY21 COVID Expenses Update

Superintendent Beaudoin stated an additional order had been placed for PPE. To assure the District was on solid footing for spring and the second semester. Additionally, discussions will continue with Essex Town Manager regarding CARES shared funding.

- FY22 Budget Preparations

FY22 budget preparations have begun with a goal to complete the budget for the December 1, 2020 School Committee Meeting. The FY22 Operational Budget will come in at a projected 3 ½% to 4% increase over FY21.

8) School Committee Comment –

9) Adjourn –

Ms. Cameron moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.