



Weymouth

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Weymouth School Committee

[ZOOM Meeting](#)

January 7, 2020

MEETING MINUTES

(approved 1/21/21)

Members In Attendance: Lisa Belmarsh, Chair; John Sullivan, Secretary; Kathy Curran; Rebecca Sherlock-Shangraw; Carrie Palazzo; Mayor Hedlund

Members Absent: Tracey Nardone, Vice-Chair

Also Present: Jennifer Curtis-Whipple, Superintendent; Brian Smith, Assistant Superintendent; Robert Wargo, Assistant Superintendent.

The Meeting Came to Order At 7:04pm.

Zoom protocol and professional behavior during public comment was reiterated. Members of the public who inappropriately unmuted themselves or showed inappropriate behavior on camera would be removed from the meeting.

Chair Belmarsh led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Consent Agenda:

The Consent agenda included:

- Warrant 28-2021 in the amount of \$1,150,766.01. Dated January 11, 2021
- Regular Minutes: 12/10/20, 12/15/20
- Executive Session Minutes: 12/10/20, 12/23/20
- Budget Sub Minutes: 12/16/20

Motion by Dr. Sullivan to accept the consent agenda. Seconded by Mrs. Curran. Roll Call vote. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment

In accordance with Policy BED

-Emily Jackson Derosa, 20 Jackson St.

Expressed her concern of increasing the return to school hybrid days and her worry for the community and the spread of Covid19.

-Lisa Dembowski, 80 Heather Lane

Expressed her support for increasing the number of return to school hybrid days. She also noted that her prior support of returning to more in school days was with safety always at the forefront. Ms. Dembowski acknowledged and praised teachers and staff for going above and beyond while also implementing mask wearing and social distancing into their teaching. She further stated the emotional and mental harm of students not being in school caused by Covid 19.

-Josephine Burke, 65 Broad St.

As a sophomore at the WHS expressed her support of increasing the number of return to school hybrid days. She also shared her and sisters' experience and the emotional toll remote learning has taken.

-Lauren Spellman, WHS Teacher

As a long time resident, former Weymouth student and current Teacher expressed her concern for increasing the number of return to school hybrid days. She stated the Weymouth case numbers are 11.82% and in the red zone. Ms. Spellman emphasized that space at the high school to accommodate students is different than other schools. She reiterated her concern for doubling cohorts and expressed her opinion of not moving forward at this time to continue to protect students and staff.

-Jennifer Lombardi, 80 Old Stone Way

Expressed her opinion that now is not the time to increase the number of return to school hybrid days.

-Christin McCabe,

Expressed her opinion of waiting a couple of weeks before making changes to the return to school hybrid days.

-Val Giannandrea,

Expressed her support for increasing the number of return to school hybrid days. As an employee working at the high school and mother of 2 students, 7th and 10th grade shared her opinion that schools are one of the safest places to be. Ms. Giannandrea also conveyed concern for the mental and emotional toll caused by remote learning.

-Mike Murphy, 425 Front St.

Echoed Ms. Spellman who spoke earlier and expressed concern for increasing return to school days in light of holiday surge numbers. Mr. Murphy shared results of a union membership survey that was sent out regarding increased cohort days. 81.63% members answered that they are not comfortable and 18.4% replied they were. 75.7% of staff felt the district should be fully remote and 23.3% disagreed. There were approximately 500 respondents to the survey. Weymouth Covid case numbers at the time the survey was sent were at 9.32%. Chair Belmarsh requested that the survey and results be shared with the Superintendent.

-Beth Morse, 73 Endicott St.

Expressed her appreciation for the focus in getting students back in school and also her opinion that schools are safe. Ms. Morse expressed her support for increasing the number of return to school hybrid days. She also shared her concern for the long term mental and social emotional effects of remote learning.

-Philip Daley, 70 Newbert Ave.

Expressed his support for increasing the number of return to school hybrid days, emphasizing that kids belong in school full time. Mr. Daley also brought attention to mental health impacts of remote learning.

-Lisa Wiklund, Library ESP, Murphy School

As a resident and employee expressed her concern for the rise in numbers and for the increase in return to school hybrid days at this time which could result in district shutdown due to staffing issues. She echoed Ms. Spellman's thoughts and supports delaying the increase in return to school hybrid days. Mental and physical well being of staff was also mentioned. Ms. Wiklund conveyed her appreciation to parents and the school system in keeping kids safe.

-Jonathan Horne, Whitman St.

Summarized an email he sent to the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Principal Guilfooy regarding commingling cohorts due to the 'gym program' (remote learning program) ending and requested clarification.

-Chantelle Regan, 40 Evans St.

Echoed Mr. Thorne's thoughts on commingling and inquired how certain children were invited to participate and reiterated that families have the option to be remote.

-Deirdre Savage, Grampian Way

Commended high school teachers for the communication and handling of the events in Washington DC with students. Ms. Savage shared her support for increasing the return to school hybrid days advising that the academic responsiveness is much improved during in school building days. She also reminded that health and safety be exercised outside of the school building as well. Ms. Savage inquired if previous union member surveys have been reported out.

-Kelly Cassier,

As a mom of a student at JECC and Pingree echoed the thoughts of Ms. Giannandrea and applauded Ms. Burke for sharing her student voice. Ms. Cassier shared her support for increasing the number of return to school hybrid days especially for younger learners and expressed that if some students attend for 4 days then all students should be able to. She also expressed concern for social emotional student needs.

-Scott Wegrzyn, 7 Doris Dr.

Inquired if there is enough space to allow for distancing at WHS to accommodate double cohorts and also if other challenges have been considered if hybrid is canceled

-Carrie Laewe, 891 Front St.

Expressed her support for the increasing the return to school hybrid days.

-Yvonne Howard,

Expressed her thanks and appreciation for the School Committee, administrators, teachers and staff, bus and van drivers. Ms. Howard shared her support for increasing the number of return to school hybrid days at parents discretion.

-Katie Keefe

As a mother of a kindergarten students expressed her worry and nervousness or remoteness learning and shared her supported for increased return to school hybrid days.

Mark Ricci, 25 Roberts Dr.

Expressed his thoughts on the union returning January 4 and their use of negotiation tactics. Mr. Ricci also shared his opinion that with the safety protocols and measures being implemented that schools are safe.

-Lynn Poirier,

Shared her support for increasing the number of return to school hybrid days and getting students back in the building. Ms. Poirier expressed her feelings that families should've been offered the choice of full in person just like parents were able to choose full remote.

-Tara Coleson, 30 Fairmont

Ms. Pitts read a statement on behalf of Ms. Coleson, whose audio was not working. She suggested to stay home for 2 weeks and reassess then.

Report of the Superintendent

The Superintendent reported on the following:

Mike LeTorney on behalf of Horace Mann donated \$1K to WPS for Personal Protection Equipment. The Superintendent expressed her appreciation and thanks.

Resource links were emailed out to help support families with addressing the event that happened in Washington, DC. with their children. Superintendent Curtis-Whipple advised that if there are families in need of support to reach out to building administrators.

VIP-Volunteers in practice program at the high school is starting a mentoring program. The Superintendent expressed her appreciation and thanks to Mr. Galusha and the students.

Dr. Curtis-Whipple thanked Dr. Marcultis for hosting the literacy event and the information and support it provided.

Testing for MCAS for students in grades 3-8 has been reduced. For graduating 2021 seniors, determination has been waived and students will be allowed to pass an ELA course in lieu of a passing score. The high school will provide more information.

Dr. Curtis-Whipple clarified that the claim of 40 cases Covid positive cases at the high school made during public comment is inaccurate and that in discussion with Elaine Lane, the department of Health's Dan McCormack and Julie Long accurate numbers were discussed. During the return to school plan, more information will be forthcoming.

Dr. Curtis-Whipple has spoken with Interim Superintendent Smith and the transition has commenced. The Superintendent welcomed Ms. Smith to the wonderful Weymouth team.

Superintendent Curtis-Whipple recognized and expressed her thanks to the maintenance, facilities and custodial staff for all of their hard work over vacation washing and waxing floors, disinfecting classrooms and common areas, and changing out filters in addition to beginning preparations for more students in buildings.

Academy will begin a virtual partnership with Norfolk RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteers in Practice)

The Nash School collected numerous boxes of items for donation through the Aspire Health Alliance. The Superintendent shared her thanks to students and for the program.

The Tech team installed cameras in the WHS gym to enable access to watch athletic events.

WPS raised \$16,500 for the Weymouth Food Pantry. For every \$1 raised, \$7 of food can be provided. Superintendent Curtis-Whipple shared her thanks and appreciation.

Motion by Dr. Sullivan to take out of order the Return to School Plan. Seconded by Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw. Roll call vote. Passed unanimously.

Return to School Plan

I. Review updated metric

Ii. Staffing update

Iii. Hybrid Learning update

- a. Grade K, 4 day return 1/12/21 with remote staying as an option (action requested)
- b. Grade 1, 4 day return 1/26/21 with remote staying as an option (action requested)
- c. Grades 8-12, 2 day return 1/19/21 with remote staying as an option (action requested)

Superintendent Curtis-Whipple gave an overview of the return to school target dates for grades K-1 and 8-12. The Superintendent emphasized that plans are a snapshot in time based on discussions with health officials and data and asked for understanding and flexibility.

Students	Hybrid Phase 5	Hybrid Phase 6
Weymouth HS (Gr 8-12): 2 Days per week Cohorts 1&2 (Tues/Wed) Cohorts 3&4 (Thurs/Fri)	Target Date 1/19/21	
ELL Levels 1 & 2 (Gr 8-12): 4 days, (Tues-Fri)	Target Date 1/19/21	
Kindergarten: 4 Days per week (Tues-Fri)		Target Date 1/12/21
Grade 1: 4 Days per week (Tues-Fri)		Target Date 1/26/21

Assistant Superintendent Smith shared that the advisory team of Chair Belmarsh, The Superintendent, Elaine Lane, Dan McCormack, Matt Brennan, A. Delaney, Julie Long, Councilor Hough and himself meet on Thursdays to discuss metric updates. He thanked Melanie Curtin, Dennis Jones and Myra Jones for the website and dashboard updates.

Community Spread remains in the red at 80.6 cases, 11.82%. Staffing is in the yellow and PPE supply remains in the green. In collaboration with South Shore Hospital there is a Covid testing site at WHS. State and local health results remain in the red.

Elaine Lane gave an overview of the school community metric update emphasizing that students are safe in school and transmission is extremely low at 2 cases. Total number of positive cases is 29. Transmission is community and sport related. Ms. Lane thanked the maintenance and custodial staff for sanitizing so quickly.

Number of Newly Confirmed Positive COVID-19 Cases in Each School Community

Johnson Early Childhood Center	0
Academy Primary School	2
Hamilton Primary School	5
Murphy Primary School	4
Nash Primary School	0
Pingree Primary School	3
Seach Primary School	4
Talbot Primary School	0
Wessagusset Primary School	3
Adams Middle School	6
Weymouth High School	22
WPS District Employees	3

The Superintendent advised that building administrators and teachers made recommendations for which students could be in the remote learning program. The class cohort consists of smaller cohorts so there will not be a comingling of cohorts with the increased return to school days. Dr, Curtis-Whipple expressed her concern for mental health and social emotional well being as remote learning is not the best format for learning.

Quarantine numbers and number of staff was summarized. The numbers of cases (2) are very low based on the number of school students and staff of approximately 7282.

HR Director Foley advised that the Emergency Sick Leave and Family Medical Leave (FFCRA) expired on December 31, 2020 so there has been an improvement in staffing numbers. The cost is now estimated at \$1.5M.

Dr. Curtis-Whipple gave a summary of the dashboard:

Data for week ending: 1/7/2021

Total Number of Students	5,870
Number of Confirmed In-Person Learning Students Positive COVID-19 Cases this week	41
Number of Confirmed Remote Learning Students Positive COVID-19 Cases this week	11
Number of In-Person Learning Students beginning quarantine this week	128
Number of Students beginning quarantine due to School exposure	0
Number of Students beginning quarantine due to Non-School Exposure	128
Total Number of Staff	1,412
Number of Staff Newly Reported this week with a Positive COVID-19 Status	11
Number of Staff beginning quarantine due to School exposure	0
Number of Staff beginning quarantine due to Non-School Exposure	33
Number of students currently enrolled in Full Remote Learning	1,674

Dr. Curtis-Whipple expressed her appreciation for the teachers doing a phenomenal job of teaching in both in person and remote formats simultaneously and stressed her care for both student and staff safety. She further stated that the Weymouth health Department supports the return to school plan.

Dr. Sullivan expressed her concern for community spread numbers and shared his understanding for staff safety. He conveyed his trust in the administration and stressed the low level of cases for the size of the school population. The fact that students and teachers are less likely to contract COVID in school than almost anywhere else is a case for expanding in-person learning.

Mrs. Curran shared her support for getting students back in the schools.

Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw inquired about the benchmarks considered to move in and out of phases. She also shared that parents would require as much notice as possible for planning purposes. She remarked that members of the town health department being present at school committee meetings might be beneficial.

The Superintendent advised the advisory group which includes health officials meets on Thursdays where crucial dialogue with open and transparent conversations is had on next steps. Fully remote learning is a last case scenario.

Ms. Palazzo inquired if the testing site at WHS is a positive factor in moving forward. Dr. Curtis-Whipple affirmed it was as well as the preparations by building administrators and staff and the protocols Elaine Lane is administering.

Mayor Hedlund added his appreciation and thanks for all the work being done and advised that there haven't been any documented Covid positive cases from town hall.

The Chair thanked the Superintendent and team for the comprehensive specifics and the amazing amount of thought that went into the presentation.

Target dates and metrics review were discussed,

Motion by Dr. Sullivan to authorize the Superintendent to expand hybrid learning no later than 1/26/21 for the following students

- Kindergarten students return to in-person learning 4 days per week
- ELL Levels 1 and 2 return to in-person learning 4 days per week
- Weymouth High School Students grades 8-12 return to in-person learning 2 days per week
- Grade 1 students return to in-person learning 4 days per week

We further authorize the superintendent to use her discretion to pull back or postpone these expansions of in-person learning if health and or staffing data indicate that caution is warranted.

Seconded by Mayor Hedlund. Roll call vote. Passed unanimously.

New Business

a. Approval of contract for Kathleen Smith, Interim Superintendent of Schools (action requested)

Motion by Dr. Sullivan to accept the contract with Interim Superintendent Kathleen Smith, the duration of which shall be from January 11, 2021 through July 11, 2021 at a salary of \$102,400. Seconded by Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw. Roll call vote. Passed unanimously.

b. Introduction of Kathleen Smith, Interim Superintendent of Schools

The Chair shared that Ms. Smith is coming to Weymouth with a long record of success and experience serving the Brockton community for 42 years, 6 in the role of Superintendent. Most recently Ms. Smith served as interim Superintendent in the city of Salem, MA.

Ms. Smith conveyed her enthusiasm and excitement and stated that she is looking forward to meeting and working with stakeholders, teachers/staff & administrators as well as the Mayor and the community. She commented on the great work done by Dr. Curtis-Whipple and shared that she is looking forward to continuing that work.

c. Primary School Improvement Plan: Primary Principals

d. Weymouth High School Program of Studies: Alan Strauss , Karen Monahan, Rebecca Paulhus-First Reading

Motion by Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw to table the Primary School Improvement plan and the High School Program of studies. Seconded by Dr. Sullivan. Roll call vote. Passed unanimously.

The Superintendent noted that presentations were ready to be presented in November and wanted to ensure that work continued for the pathways program. Without voting, the committee nonetheless conveyed general support for the pathways as presented at the last meeting. A formal vote will be forthcoming.

e. Report of the Budget Sub-Committee, 12/16/20 (action requested)

Dr. Sullivan read the report of the budget sub committee into the record.

Motion by Mrs. Curran to accept the budget subcommittee report. Seconded by Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw. Roll call vote. Passed unanimously.

f. Ratification of BCBA Memorandum of Agreement (action requested)

The newest bargaining unit will be Unit C for BCBA's which is 5 members strong. Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw thanked the members of committee for their partnership in negotiations, especially Allyson Bell , Director of Special Education for her involvement and support. There will be a MOA attached with Unit A acknowledging that Unit C will have access to tuition

reimbursement and sick bank. Wage increase for year 1 will be 0% and 2.5 for subsequent year 2 and 3.

Motion by Dr. Sullivan to ratify the inaugural contract with new Weymouth Educators' Association Unit C, Board Certified Behavioral Analysts along with the related MOA with Unit A. Seconded by Ms. Palazzo. Roll Call Vote: Pass Unanimously

OLD BUSINESS

A.Review of Superintendent Search with Collins Center

- i. Introduction of Collins Center Search Firm
- ii. Review of Superintendent job description (action requested
- iii. Review notice of Intent for Preliminary Screening Committee
- iv. Discussion of focus groups, online survey
- v. Overview of timeline for search process

The Chair introduced John Brackett from the Collins Center that will be assisting in the permanent Superintendent Search.

Mr. Brackett gave a summary of the services that will be provided as well as a timeline. The Collins Center conducts 2-4 Superintendent searches per year and is committed to giving full attention to Weymouth's search. There are currently 8 open Superintendent positions in Massachusetts. Mr. Brackett emphasized what a great position that the district is in to attract candidates and shared that he has worked with Interim Superintendent Smith in the past. There will be focus groups and surveys of different stakeholders; community members, staff(from all departments)/unions & students/family members, as well as town employees (Mayor agreed). Townwide parent councils, SEPAC, and racial equity return to school sub committee will also be included. A screening committee will review candidates to be forwarded to the school committee. The screening committee will meet in executive session and the school committee will meet in open session.

The timeline dates were summarized, and are attached to these minutes.

The Superintendent of School job posting was reviewed. Preferred and required qualifications were discussed.

An alert now will be sent out asking for volunteers to serve on a superintendent candidate screening committee.

Motion by Dr. Sullivan to accept the Superintendent of Schools Job listing as proposed by Dr. Brackett. Seconded by Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw. Roll call vote. Passed unanimously.

C. Capital Plan (action requested)

Motion by Dr. Sullivan to table the Capital Plan. Seconded by Ms. Palazzo. Roll call vote. Passed unanimously.

D. Review of status of the Joint Committee on Host Agreement between Weymouth and Algonquin Gas Transmission regarding North Weymouth Compressor Station

The Chair advised that a letter has been sent to MEMA and currently awaiting response.

E. Chapman School Building Update, Adams renovation and Transportation Building Update (Town Measure 20 072 - Amend Measure 190 17)

The next school building committee meeting will be on February 2, 2021.

Mrs. Curran stated that some complaints of working past dark, and dust barriers have been made by neighbors close to the Chapman project.

Mayor Hedlund advised that complaints should be filed through the Mayor's office so that they can be handled expeditiously.

Announcements:

Math Night-January 13, 2021 at 6:30pm

SEPAC-January 19, 2021 virtual presentation by Federation for Children with Special Needs
Weymouth Market-February 3, 2021-NEW time-3:30pm-WHS Gold Cafeteria in a drive thru manner

Next School Committee Meeting:

Potentially, Thursday, January 14, 2021

Regular Meeting: Thursday, January 21, 2021 - 7:00pm

The Meeting adjourned at 10:36pm on the motion of Dr. Sullivan, seconded by Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw. Roll call vote - passed unanimously.

Documents Attached to These Minutes:

- Return to School Plan
- Budget Subcommittee report
- Collins Center Search

Respectfully Submitted,



John Sullivan
Secretary

BUDGET REPORT

The budget Sub-Committee met on December 16 of 2020 and opened with an update of the current budget (that is to say FY 2021). Due to the current crisis, revenues so far for this fiscal year were down 5% from the previous year. We discussed Chapter 70 aid, which will remain flat from FY20 to FY21. The gap between what we are assessed for our charter school students and what the state is supposed to reimburse by statute continues to grow.

We received \$17,821 in a new COVID relief school meal grant, which is helping to fund staffing. The federal extension of the so called summer model of providing meals to families continues.

We also discussed federal stimulus proposals working their way through the congress, but the bill has since been passed by the Congress with slightly different details, so I won't recount that update here.

Mr. Smith kept the committee apprised of the upcoming contract process for transportation. The contract with First Student is ending and we will be seeking to once again have the Town Council permit us to enter into a five year contract with whatever candidate is awarded that contract, so as to give us the most favorable possible negotiating position. We also reviewed user fees for pay ridership on transportation. A final decision on any alterations will be made in the spring when, hopefully, the future of school transportation will be a bit more clear than it is today.

Assistant Superintendent Wargo and Melanie Curtin presented to the committee on the need for money to keep curriculum materials current, and the desire to build a regular cycle of replacement into the operating budget.

The committee heard a proposal for fee increases to Extended School Year hourly rates. The most notable of the changes would be to raise the salary of ESPs to \$18 per hour, a one dollar increase. This puts summer ESPs more in line with school year ESP pay.

We also discussed post-graduate tuition fees for our vocational programs. They are according to the data we saw during the meeting, quite a bit below the market rate, but final decisions on any alterations of that fee will occur during the comprehensive consideration of fees across the district which will come up for a vote in the spring.