

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY JULY 14, 2020 AT 7:00 PM**

Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Kathryn Hallen-Secretary; Faith Ham, Anne Harrigan, Andrew Martelli, Timothy White

Board Members Absent: None.

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer

Public access made available through live streaming the Cheshire Public School's YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/channel/UCULDbVCqppiY_3egBVDA-mw . Public comments were accepted at CPSCovid19@chshire.k12.ct.us .
--

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:30 P.M.

- A. Roll for Quorum. The roll was called and a quorum determined.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.
Mr. Perugini led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Hallen reported there are two letters to read, both letters are on file. The first, from parent, Teresa Commune, is in support of Chairman Perugini. The second was from the Executive Board of the Republican Town Committee regarding a letter in support of Chairman Rob Oris and condemning negative comments against anyone in our community.

3. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. Update on Fall Opening

Superintendent Solan said that tonight's meeting is in regard to the opening of school in the fall. He thanked the 100 or more people who have emailed him questions. He is answering those emails, but stressed that information is evolving very quickly. He reviewed the presentation that he sent home to parents.

The Superintendent reviewed the back to school plan (on file). The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged our schools and community in unprecedented ways. As circumstances around the virus change, we will continue to adapt to provide the best possible conditions for our community to access education and help our students succeed. He reported from their initial survey, 88% of parents who responded stated they would send their children to school. There will be two options offered, in-person learning and remote learning.

For those students attending in person:

- Masks will be required for all people in the building.
- Social Distancing will be maximized to the greatest extent possible.
- Additional time and resources will be provided for self-protective measures.
- Enhanced cleaning protocols will be employed.
- Lunch protocols will be changed adding additional lunch waves; in class and outdoor dining as well as grab and go bagged lunches.
- Modified health service protocols will be employed
- Cohorting of groups will be balanced against educational needs. Cohorting is the strategy of limiting interactions between individuals to mitigate the spread of the virus and aid in contact tracing if indeed there is a positive individual. State of Connecticut guidance recognizes the balance between cohorting and providing an educational experience that more closely resembles typical education at each developmental level. As such, elementary students who will likely have more difficulty complying with mask requirements will see the strictest cohorting within their class of approximately 20 students. Middle school students will be cohorted within their team of approximately 100 students. We are still working on world language and unified arts options to limit engagement with students who are not on their team. High School students will not be cohorted so that they can engage in their full complement of classes. Masks and social distancing will be strictly enforced at all grade, but most critically at the high school level.
- Transportation: Masks will be required. Dr. Solan explained they intend to use bus aides and volunteers for the first two weeks. Parents are encouraged to drive their children to and from school when possible. We will be working with the Cheshire Police Department to develop a safe and modified drop-off and pick-up.
- Health Protocols: We will be providing families with free thermometers to conduct temperature checks at home. These “smart thermometers” upload anonymous data to the state allowing monitoring to determine how much non-fever versus feverish individuals there are of our community. This data supports the health department in taking proactive steps to contain the virus. He noted the number one rule is to stay home if you are feeling sick. We do not have definitive guidance yet to tell us how we deal with a student or teacher who tests positive. If someone tests positive, others in the building will be notified.
- Before and After Care options are available by the YMCA: Right now, the state is not requiring students in daycare and camp to wear face masks.

The Superintendent said they are planning an orientation schedule that will provide for reduced numbers of students in the buildings over the first few days of school to provide the opportunity to build relationships between students and teachers. We will take advantage of these days to also provide tours of buildings and orient students to their new reality in a safe and intimate manner. He noted the State reduced the number of school days required to 177, so we will be using those extra 3 days for professional development.

For those students engaging in remote learning, there will be both synchronous and asynchronous learning. All students will be provided a device. In order to provide synchronous, live learning, the district is purchasing technology to maximize the at-home experience. Asynchronous learning will be offered for classes such as physical education utilizing software such as Screencastify, YouTube and Google Meet.

Dr. Solan said he recognizes that a significant percentage of our student population who receive special education services are also immunocompromised. We aspire to provide the same level of service to students who are unable to attend school in-person. These students and their families have the added concern that an immunocompromised situation adds, so it is imperative that we address not only educational, but also health and safety concerns. These needs will be addressed on an individualized basis through our Special Education Services Department.

The Superintendent said COVID-19 has taught us that we have to be able to adapt on a moment's notice. We had to transition from a half school day on Friday, March 13th, to remote learning on Wednesday, March 18th. There is a chance in looking at the data from the rest of the country, that a similar shift may be necessary in the future. While we are planning for the full time back to school model outlined in this document, we are simultaneously planning for a hybrid model that may include part-time schooling if the health circumstances warrant. Moreover, we are improving our full remote learning capacity in the worst case event that school attendance isn't at all possible.

Dr. Solan said they are currently developing a hybrid model with some of our neighboring towns should the State allow it. The model provides for in-person live instruction for half of our students on Monday and Tuesday, the other half home. All students would be home on Wednesday for cleaning purposes and then the other group of students who were home on Monday and Tuesday would be in-person on Thursday and Friday.

He said he understands there are many unanswered questions and the situation is constantly evolving. We will not look for people to commit to a plan until the middle of August.

Mr. White asked if there is a significant number of teachers who do not want to come back. Dr. Solan said they started surveying teachers today. The leadership at Central Office is meeting with various bargaining groups to get their feedback.

Mr. Grippo asked about our attendance policy and whether the Governor's Orders address that for students who may need to quarantine for 14 days. Dr. Solan answered that the Orders do not address that, but we have the authority to address the issue in our organization. He said students may be home a great deal this time, not only because they are sick. For this reason they want to provide the best remote learning program possible. He said they purchased the technology for the 56 classrooms as an investment. The cost per classroom is about \$3,200, totaling about \$180,000. In order to really expand remote learning we would have to add another 60 rooms. If it comes to the point where we need to do that, we will have to speak with the Town Council. Mr. Grippo asked what happens if a teacher or student becomes ill with the virus. Does the entire cohort have to be quarantined for 14 days? Dr. Solan said this is why rapid testing is so important. Right now, we just don't have it, and it is taking up to two-weeks to get results back. He said they are working with the local health officials regarding this serious issue of testing. Mr. Grippo asked if someone wants to switch between in person and remote learning, what the time frame to do this would be. Dr. Solan said they are hoping a day or two.

Ms. Silano discussed the Cares Act Funds explaining that the funds need to be shared with the local private schools. We are waiting for the calculation to come back with that amount. She said they are putting in for reimbursement for iPads for Kindergarten students Chromebooks for Grade One students.

Mr. Grippo asked where the technology for the synchronous remote learning will be installed. Dr. Solan answered one in every grade level, K-6 in each of the elementary schools; one on each team and a few World Language classes in the middle school; and three from each core content areas of Math, Science, Social Studies, English, three World Language plus two more. They will work with the principals to determine which teachers will facilitate these classes.

Mr. Grippo noted, with the electives at the high school, it will be complicated. Dr. Solan said they would like to pursue more installations, but would like to be judicious with installations and have them tested before they install more units.

B. [Audience via CPSCOV19@cheshire.k12.ct.us](mailto:CPSCOV19@cheshire.k12.ct.us)

The Superintendent responded to numerous emails that were received during the meeting. Mr. Perugini requested that common questions be added to an FAQ page on the website. Some of the questions received are listed below.

Why are Board meetings still virtual when we are talking about sending our kids back to school?

We are under executive orders that no more than 25 people can meet in person. Hopefully by August, things will improve to the point that the Board can meet in person again.

Security vs. Propping Doors Open

Doors will be propped to minimize touching of door handles. Propping doors open to the exterior of a building will be done only if the entrance is supervised.

Can parents donate cleaning supplies?

We are trying to be meticulous about cleaning and sanitizing products. If parents want to donate they can contact Mr. Masciana.

Desk Cleaning?

Nightly desk sanitizing will be done. During day, wipes will be supplied for students to use. We will continuously remind students and staff to wipe down high traffic areas during the day as needed.

Will attendance be taken for remote learners?

Yes, teachers will be taking attendance, although we will be sensitive to absenteeism.

How will you keep students safe traveling between high school classes?

We are still working towards a solution. There is not a perfect answer to that yet, possibly one-direction hallways.

If we institute the hybrid option – can we have siblings attend on the same day?

Yes, absolutely, we will work to have that happen.

Why don't we have a no-mask option?

State guidance is clear that we have to wear masks.

What are we doing to support instructional consistency?

Instructional consistency is something we always something we strive for. Remote learning has shown us where we have gaps. It is a clear focus of the Curriculum Department this year.

Who will teach the kids if a teacher is out?

If a teacher is home and able, we would prefer they engage remotely.

If there is quarantining by cohort because a student is sick, who will have to be quarantined – bus, team, class?

No, it will be evaluated as to with whom they have come in close contact. The district will be working with public health directors.

Why are some N95 masks not permitted?

The masks that come with an exterior vent will not be permitted as some are not filtered, and we will not have the time to evaluate them individually.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Chairperson's Update

Mr. Perugini said he would like for the Board to go back to in-person Board meetings. We will be polling Board Members for their input. He also announced that they are starting contract negotiations with administrators and teachers unions.

5. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Ms. Ham, and seconded by Mr. Grippo, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Perugini, Board Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: _____.