

Mount Ascutney School Board
Draft Minutes
May 11, 2020

Present: Elizabeth Burrows; Amy McMullen, Bill Yates, Nancy Pedrick, Beth Carter, Kris Garnjost, Tiffany Riley, Dave Baker, Angie Ladeau

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM.

Additions/Corrections: Add resignation

Public Comments: None

Announcements and Celebratory Comments from Board Members: Elizabeth Burrows mentioned since the last meeting there was teacher appreciation week, and that teachers have been doing a fantastic job; we have also had principals appreciation day, administrative assistants day, and school nurses day. All of these are people we can and do rely on, because we can.

Discussion Items:

David Baker said everyone has been doing a great job with the food distribution, sending out 750 or more lunches a day. Craig Locarno is doing great, will figure out how to keep food going over the summer, looking for waivers from the FDA and AOE.

The focus right now is on the year-end school closure, summer school, and the start of the next year. Area superintendents are in agreement about winding down the year. Seniors would end May 28, final exams would be waived, and the week after would be used for fix and finish. K-11 would end June 5 if students met standards. Soft ending would be June 12, with the last date being June 18. Angie Ladeau and Larry Dougher would send out a link to a survey regarding summer school and year ending.

Bill Yates mentioned there was no guidance on the AOE on shortening the school year from 175 days. David does not have a waiver. Basically, there is no waiver that would account for that amount of time, and 50% must be in attendance for it to count as a day, with the 175 days still required. Why call it closing the schools? Students and parents will emotionally close out; teachers will have even more trouble getting attendance, much less getting students to participate. It also does not present as if what we are doing isn't good.

Tiffany Riley mentioned high school and middle school their last week of school is typically an exam week and not required to go all five days if in session.

David Baker mentioned maybe "new instruction" stops then. Dave mentioned he is worried about the warmer days. The last week is typically used for field day and fun things. We are not

intending that school ends on June 5. Angie Ladeau mentioned looking at the text of the letter it says the last day will be on June 5 and next week students can complete work. The letter should state an academic deadline. Elizabeth Burrows mentioned her objection was setting a precedent of ending the school year early two weeks early with no board knowledge or discussion about it.

Summer school: all agreed that in-person instruction is not applicable at this time; there are some distance programs that could work, but not inside the building. Amy mentioned that summer school and summer camps are not the same thing; where would students go in case of rain? Etc.

Elizabeth Burrows mentioned she had watched a video conference, part two, of financial implications for the ed fund of COVID-19. There is a \$50 million shortfall in tax revenues thanks to the dearth of restaurant and hotel revenues, as well as non-filers of property taxes. Worst case scenario is 23-25¢/\$100 for shortfall alone.

Elizabeth Burrows asked how equipped are teachers and staff, district wide, to start the school year online and should we, as a board, require teacher expertise in online instructions, and should it be included in our hiring practices? Beth Carter feels we should find a way to ensure teachers know how to engage students online. Amy McMullen said she sits on the professional standards board, which voted to relax the requirement, but added that she will bring it up at the next standards board meeting.

Angie Ladeau mentioned Vermont Virtual Learning partners with schools and the AOE. Twelve teachers participated in best teaching practices. Kindergarten-5 teachers is a project-based approach; would increase the rigor of what is being offered.

David Baker voiced frustration regarding the lack of direction from the AOE, adding that policy makers are not planning ahead but instead politicking.

Ed Connors presented his summary for Q3, not counting any CARES funding. State may only reimburse transportation until March 18. Expenditures include back-pay of 2017 Woodstock tuition for \$103,000, which was not billed correctly. Sending towns owed money; do we pay it? If we do not, we will be involved in a discussion with the state. Elizabeth Burrows mentioned it isn't really fair to ask Windsor to chip in since it was not part of the district at the time, but also, the services were rendered. Ed Connors feels to keep peace the bill should be paid. Dave Baker mentioned if you apply it any year this is the year. After much discussions, the board felt it should not be paid. Elizabeth Burrows did not want a motion made tonight as feels the board should think about it. Dave Baker will discuss with legal counsel and have a conversation with Woodstock.

Ed Connors suggests the board keep a line of credit open for \$1.5 million for Mount Ascutney. We pay back as we have money in the account. Mount Ascutney is a new entity and with pandemic not sure how they will approach this.

To date have spent 95% of expenditures. Amount encumbered is \$1.855 million and includes wages to the end of the year. It was voted to put \$89,504 to the food program but do not know what will be in the end. To date you are \$184,000 in the black.

General fund is \$1.228 million. Enrichment is a \$9,000 deficit but money on the way and will decrease to \$5,000. At the beginning of the year there were donations from the community. In January the Adventure Club in West Windsor became part of community enrichment. Most of the deficit is the Adventure Club. Craig Locarno applied for an equipment grant for a milk dispenser at Windsor and was received. The fresh fruits and vegetables is a deficit as reimbursement is lagging. Medicaid IEP is money given back based on nursing services and reimbursed by federal Medicaid. The money in there is what was remaining in West Windsor. Deficit of \$1800 is grant written for Windsor but check written to SU and needs to be transferred from the SU to Windsor. The balance is \$319,000.

The food program bought a van for \$21,000, which could be taken out of the general fund or capital reserve, which does not draw down surplus. Amy McMullen moved to pay for the van through the general fund; seconded by Bill Yates; motion passed.

Ed Connors mentioned will look at fund balances and, if in red at the end of year, practice has been to use a transfer from general fund to zero those out. The general fund has to pay off any negative fund.

Inter-district Student Transfer Protocol: The board agreed that it would be most sensible to stick with the SU's policy for now, until the exploratory planning team is settled on how we are going to move forward with any changes to be made. The board passed the SU policy, all in agreement with one abstention.

Exploratory Planning Team: Had a brief call with Jan Willey, who agreed to facilitate. Will do a blend of distance and local meetings.

Resignations/Retirement: Karen Townsend, Patrick Gordon, and MaryKay Cronin. Elizabeth Burrows asked for a motion to accept the resignations and retirements. Nancy Pedrick moved with regret; seconded by Kris Garnjost; motion passed.

Principals Report:

Elizabeth Burrows asked for a motion to approve the Principals Reports and Minutes. Nancy Pedrick moved; seconded by Kris Garnjost; Nancy asked for some clarification on the previous minutes. Motion passed after clarification.

Old Business:

Elizabeth Burrows mentioned Portrait of Graduate is starting up again on Wednesday. The board dropped the student board member and should not lose track of this item.

Agenda: June 8

Student Board Member

Portrait of Graduate

Exploratory Team

Economic Status/Budget Discussion

Updates: COVID 19 & Legislative

Executive Session: 8:55

Elizabeth Burrows asked for a motion to enter executive session for the purpose of Title 1, Section 313. Bill Yates moved; seconded by Nancy Pedrick; motion passed. Entered into executive session at 8:55 PM.

Adjournment:

Elizabeth Burrows asked for a motion to exit executive session and adjourn the meeting. Bill Yates moved; seconded by Beth Carter; motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Tessier, Board Secretary