



Monthly Meeting
Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury Road, Avon, Connecticut

Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity, and social responsibility.

Tuesday, August 18, 2020, 7:00 pm

via Remote Meeting

Avon Board of Education
34 Simsbury, Avon, Connecticut 06001
Via Zoom

Minutes

Attendance

Members Present: Jackie Blea; David Cavanaugh; Board Chair, Debra Chute; Board Secretary, Jeffrey S. Fleischman; Bogdan Oprica; Lisa Seminara; Board Vice Chair, Jay Spivak; Laura Young

Members Absent: Jason Indomenico

Administration Present: Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Roberto Medic, Director of Human Resources; Heather Michaud, Director of Fiscal Affairs; Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Superintendent

- I. Call to Order
Deb Chute, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
After the Pledge of Allegiance, Chair Chute read the District's Mission Statement. Ms. Chute also explained that after much discussion, including with legal counsel, it was decided to continue the Board meetings virtually to allow more of the community to attend rather than restrict the number attending due to Coved restrictions. All Board meetings will be held virtually until there is a change in Executive Orders. A roll call of Board members was also taken.
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Board of Education Special Meeting, July 22, 2020
Jackie Blea moved to approve the Minutes of the Board of Education Special Meeting of June 16, 2020. David Cavanaugh seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous consent.
- IV. Communication from Public
There was no communication from the Public

- V. Items of Information and Proposals
 - A. Student Representative Report – Alvin Guo, AHS Student Representative
Alvin Guo, while present, had nothing to report.

- VI. Committees & Liaison Reports
 - A. Committee Reports
 - 1. Curriculum & Professional Practices – Jackie Blea, Chair
Ms. Blea reported that while the date is yet to be determined there will be a meeting in September,
 - 2. Finance – Jay Spivak, Chair
Mr. Spivak announced that the Finance Committee did not meet and did not have anything to report.
 - 3. Negotiations – Jason Indomenico, Chair
In Mr. Indomenico’s absence, Chair Chute reported that progress is being made with the negotiations with administrators as well as with the secretaries union; things are on hold with Nutrition Services workers.
 - 4. Policy – Laura Young, Chair
Ms. Young reminded the Board that there are temporary policies to be approved at tonight’s meeting having to do with Covid-19.
 - B. Liaison Report
 - 1. Board Representative to Capital Region Education Council – Jackie Blea, Board Rep.
Ms. Blea stated that at the recent CREC meetings they discussed the changes due to Covid, reviewing policy, procedures, schedules, etc.

- VII. Chair’s Report – Debra Chute, Board Chair
 - A. Board Chair Update
On behalf of the entire Board, Chair Chute thanked the administrators and entire staff for the tireless work done all summer to prepare for the new school year.

- VIII. Superintendent’s Report – Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla

Dr. Carnemolla expressed her gratitude and acknowledged the work of administrators during the summer as well as the faculty and staff (coordinators; department/team leaders; paras; nurses; food service workers; secretaries; custodians/maintainers; teachers; everyone) who came in during their summer to help plan and prepare the schools during this unusual time.

 - A. Hiring Report
Dr. Carnemolla reviewed the hiring report and explained some of the new hires were due to resignations and retirements. The Superintendent also recognized the new Interim Director of Pupil Services, Tiffany Fox, Interim Supervisor of Special Education, Lori Arnold and Interim Assistant Principal at Thompson Brook School, Jessica Buckle.
 - B. Enrollment Report
The Superintendent stated that the enrollment report showed the District down 30 students from last year, but also stated that there are many new registrations still being processed. Dr. Carnemolla also informed the Board of an increase in withdrawals due to homeschooling which will also impact enrollment numbers.
 - C. Strategic Plan Update
The Superintendent reported that all recent planning has been geared toward the reopening of schools and will return to the broader plans of the Strategic Plan once the school year has restarted.
 - D. Updates

Dr. Carnemolla spoke of the staffing issues which included the need of more custodians, bus monitors, and teachers for the students learning remotely. Mr. Medic added that substitute coverage was being reviewed and each building will now have two permanent substitutes until the start of winter recess in addition to the other subs needed to cover absences. There have also been a number of staff members approved for a leave of absence or accommodations of remote work which the District is now looking to replace with long term subs. Custodial changes were also made to ensure there are adequate numbers of custodians during the day to meet the requirements of enhanced cleaning in the buildings while making certain there were still enough staff to manage the work during the later shift after school. A swing shift is being created to help with the extra cleaning needed and working on filling several vacancies, some due to medical leave. Twenty-three bus monitors to help with the loading and unloading of students on buses as well as ensure social distancing and wearing of face masks is maintained and eight part time lunch aid positions to help with supervision, monitor safety protocols and assist with the cleaning in lunch areas have also been posted. Filling the need for bus monitors has proven difficult as both AM and PM monitors are needed.

Dr. Carnemolla addressed Board questions regarding the difference between a student being withdrawn from Avon Public Schools to be homeschooled and a student enrolled in the Avon Public Schools and choosing to remote learn full time at home. The Superintendent will provide an update on the number of homeschool students at the next meeting while there are approximately 510 students who opted for remote learning. Students are distributed through the five schools, actual counts by grade will be forwarded to the Board.

There was also a Board question regarding bus monitors and whether buses would run with or without the monitors, to which Dr. Carnemolla replied she needed to see how many bus monitors were already hired.

IX. Consent Calendar

A. 20-21/22 Approval of the Appointment for Interim Director of Pupil Services

David Cavanaugh moved to approve Item 20-21/22 on the Consent Calendar as presented, Jay Spivak seconded the motion.

The motion carried by unanimous consent.

X. Old Business

A. 20-21/20 Avon Public Schools Blueprint for Reopening Update

Dr. Carnemolla reviewed with the Board some of the information that is available on the District website regarding the reopening of schools which includes:

- Superintendent Communications which includes all the Superintendent's messages to families
- Reopening Documents which includes the District's Blueprint for Reopening
- School Schedules provides the five schools' schedules that will be utilized for the various learning models
- Technology and Instructional Resources which was designed to help families with online resources and platforms associated with Google Chrome as well as lists of all the various resources used in the classrooms
- COVID-19 Resources which includes tips on how to talk to children about the virus; how to prevent illness during COVID, and social stories that can be used for younger students
- Community Resources which lists various community supports specific to COVID-19 that are available for Avon families and residents

The Superintendent apprised the Board of the decision to move forward with the hybrid model for reopening after all the area superintendents met with the Farmington Valley Health Department (FVHD) after the State changed the requirements and left the decision up to the individual districts and local health departments. Dr. Carnemolla shared that the hybrid model with having 50% of the students in school and the gradual full return of students will alleviate the difficulties of transitioning 1000s of people back into the buildings given the tremendous changes with safety protocols and mitigation strategies. This will also be helpful to the FVHD which will continue to advise all the school districts and manage all the tracing should someone come down with COVID. Grades K-6 will be the first grades to fully return to school as this is what the State has asked of Districts and will also help with potential childcare issues. The middle grades, 5-8, will return the following week given that TBS and AMS now run on the same schedule and share bus runs. The high school grades will be the last to return to schools. The health department has endorsed the hybrid model with a staggered return from the onset though the State was recommended students returned fully initially. The Superintendent added that the final piece that is still being worked on is the schedule for the students who opt out of returning choosing to remote learn at home due to the exact number of students, grades and teachers needed to assist the remote learners has not yet been determined.

The Superintendent addressed some Board questions. Remote learners in grades K-6 will still be assigned to a classroom teacher but will also be assigned a remote teacher to assist in their learning; the remote teachers will be aligned with the classroom teachers. Regarding addressing the specific needs of high school students, Dr. Carnemolla replied that various email communications were sent out to students and their families from the high school. Juniors and seniors get priority for course selections especially in requirements of classes needed for graduation and AP courses. High school students are also able to join in their classes should their schedule have them remote at home. Time was also built in schedules at the high school to allow extra time for students to connect with teachers while in class or remotely if needed. Students will also continue to meet with their counselors.

Dr. Nestler-Rusack explained the various technology and instructional resources available for students and families on the website. She also shared that when teacher return, time will be spent on training teachers on Google Classroom so there is consistency and uniformity between teachers to help avoid confusion for families. Teachers will also be trained on utilizing other technology for more effective teaching for remote learning.

B. 20-21/21 Revision to School Year Calendar

The Superintendent brought to the Board's attention that revisions needed to be made to the recently approved school year calendar.

Jay Spivak moved to approve the Revision to the School Year Calendar as presented, Jeffrey S. Fleischman seconded the motion.

The motion carried by unanimous consent.

XI. New Business

A. 20-21/23 Board Committee Dates

Ms. Michaud explained the need to have the Finance Committee meeting the third week of April to allow the time needed to prepare for the meeting.

Jeffrey S. Fleischman moved to approve the Board Committee Dates as presented, Jay Spivak seconded the motion.

The motion carried by unanimous consent.

B. 20-21/24 Discussion regarding Fall Athletics

Dr. Carnemolla explained that the CIAC and the public health department have put a pause on making a decision on Fall sports. Regarding whether or not students opting out of returning to school can participate in sports, students are allowed to participate since they are still our students and we should not deny them access to District programs. While in the hybrid model, if a student's schedule had them remote learning at home, if there were a practice, the student would need to provide their own transportation to get to the activity.

The Board members expressed appreciation of everyone, including the Director of Athletics, for staying on top of the circumstances and continued the discussion regarding Fall sports including the importance of exercise, the experience it provides for students and if there was any opportunity for the public to share these thoughts with those at the State who will ultimately make the decision. Dr. Carnemolla agreed that sports add to a well-rounded educational experience for students but clarified that area superintendents were not in support of a full roster of Fall sports, especially full contact sports, due to the mitigation strategies that are necessary for students and staff to return safely. To have student participating in all sports afterschool seemed contradictory. Dr. Carnemolla reminded everyone that we need to believe the CIAC is taking into consideration the thoughts of the students/parents and weighing what is of the best interest for everyone in their decision making. The Superintendent also shared that she has heard both sides where some families are relieved that sports are on hold but admits that data has not been collected as a District in regards to sports. Dr. Carnemolla also felt there is nothing the District or the Board needs to do at the moment. It was stated that nothing is there to prevent families from contacting the CIAC directly. As far as non-athletic extra-curricular activities, the Superintendent explained that activities that can be run will be run virtually. Activities that are not suitable to be run virtually will be discussed with the staff to see what can be held and how.

C. 20-21/25 Discussion and Possible Action on Temporary COVID-19 Policies

Laura Young, Chair of the Policy Committee, explained that under normal circumstances, a first and second read of policies would be utilized to have the Board adopt policies. The Superintendent has worked with legal counsel regarding the policies recommended. Dr. Carnemolla explained the policies are temporary policies recommended by Board legal council, Shipman and Goodwin, who prepared them for all the districts they serve. The need to establish the policies is to keep the District in compliance with the current laws, requirements from the State Dept. of Education and Executive Orders related to COVID-19. The changes due to the policies are minimal and small amendments to existing policies. Adopting the policies will allow them to be enforced until June 20, 2021 at the latest if needed but can be repealed sooner as well.

Laura Young moved that given the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 health crisis and the critical need for temporary policies to ensure the health and safety of our staff and students as we plan for school to reopen, that the Board adopt the proposed temporary policies related to the COVID-19 health crisis as prepared by Board council, Shipman & Goodwin. Jackie Blea seconded the motion.

The motion carried by unanimous consent.

XII. Communication from Avon Board of Education Members

There were no additional comments from the Board.

XIII. Adjournment

David Cavanaugh moved to adjourn, Jay Spivak seconded the motion.

The motion carried by unanimous consent and the meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Minutes prepared by Shirley Moy, Board Recording Secretary

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary

Jeffrey S. Fleischman, September 9, 2020

Board minutes are approved at the next regular monthly Board meeting, and any corrections to the minutes, if needed, will be made at that time.