

WEATHERSFIELD SCHOOL BOARD
Board Retreat
AUGUST 11, 2020
Weathersfield School and Google Meetings

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS/PLEDGE

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair, Sean Whalen at 5:37PM. Those present were: Sean Whalen, Kristen Brusco, Robin Tindall, Mark Yuengling, Annemarie Redmond, JeanMarie Oakman, David Baker, Candy Fuller, Kirsten McNamara, Julian Villa, Jennifer Durham, Leanna Robinson, Katie Ahern, SAPA, Jaime Turner, Jessica Kischko, Annette Jennings, Zach Shambo, Kirstine Hughes, Patricia Kelly, Kelly O'Brien, Kate Ryan, Chrisitne Bourne, Barbara Martin, Angela Ladeau, Karli Nissenbaum, Michelle Smith and Becky Chrisinger. The flag was pledged.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes for April and July were tabled till the next meeting for approval.

III. CHANGES/ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Add to Items for Discussion

D. Letter from Town Manager E. Outdoor Classroom

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NONE

V. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Board Retreat - Open Floor

Sean Whalen said at the Board Retreat, the Board steps back from what it is doing and has a look at what is to come. Sean said they would like to hear from the public. Robin Tindall suggested having some discussion around starting the school year remotely to see how everything goes in order to get used to the virtual aspect with the new system in place. Robin felt it would be more beneficial to do this for a few weeks and have teachers meet with small groups of children at the school to get to know them better rather than with a whole class of students. David Baker then gave an update of the plan for the beginning of the school year. David said we had a robust and vibrant task force that developed both the school calendar and the school day. When making the plans, they discussed contact tracing and the length of the day to help develop their plan. School will begin for students on 9/08/20 and will be for three days. On the 11th staff will meet to discuss how the first three days went. Students will arrive between 8-8:30 and do a wellness/health check and will leave between 12-12:30. The high school students will be in school from 8-11 and then have virtual courses in the afternoon starting at 1. Students and staff will be required to wear masks and follow the six feet apart protocol. As much of school that can be outside, will be outside.

There are three options being offered:

1. Hybrid - In person and remote

2. Fully remote system that is SU based
3. Applying for permission to homeschool through the state

They surveyed parents about which option they want their children in and the results out of 196 responses are:

1. Hybrid 138/70%
2. Fully Remote 58/30%
3. Home School 7 out of the 58 fully remote

In January, we will reevaluate where we are. For students to change before January, it would be on a case by case basis.

The custodial staff is working very hard and following all CDC cleaning protocols. We may need to hire another custodian. The negative pressure room is being set up for people to go to that are symptomatic after arriving at school. If the building isn't ready with all protocols in place, we can't open up on the 8th. The nurses in our SU have done heroic work and are putting together a book with CDC protocols.

JeanMarie Oakman said that BJ Esty is a rock star at the school. They have worked hard with the transportation company and other aspects. 65% of families are willing to transport their children to and from school. We need three busses rather than the four we usually have to follow CDC guidelines and protocols for students riding the bus. This is good news as we have three bus drivers. Since there will be fewer families riding the bus, the routes will take less time.

The plan has to be submitted a week from Friday so Board approval is needed. There was more discussion around teachers concerns about school reopening in person.

David Baker asked for questions and comments. Sean Whalen asked if the SU required approval from the Weathersfield Board or just desires support. David said that as far as he understood the approval needs to be from the SU Board and the individual town board's don't need to vote on this approval. David is hoping they can come to the SU Board with a unified decision on the plan. There was discussion around special education staff being SU employees so it is important to have a unified decision across the SU.

There was a question about how remote learning aligns with hybrid learning. The VT Virtual learning is embedded and is all common core based so the initial reactions from staff are that it is aligned but they need to do more research. It is believed that students doing the virtual option will be able to come back to the classroom seamlessly. Some curriculum will not be used this year for math and language arts.

Are there enough teachers for the pods and what are the sizes of the pods?

JeanMarie Oakman said the pods are now smaller due to the families who have chosen all remote learning. Classes will no longer have to move to the gym or all purpose room to have enough space between students.

Pods

K - 10 and 9

1 - 6 and 7

2 - 8 and 7

3 - 8 and 8

4 - 11

5 - 11 and 10 (one class self contained and one in the middle school model)

6 - 19

7 - 13

8- 13

There was a question about how the middle school model will work and students will stay in their assigned classroom and the teachers will move to them.

A paraprofessional will always be in each room.

The special teachers will be in an assigned pod for six weeks but some teachers feel that is too long so this rotation time may be changed.

Will students have the same teachers that they were told they'd have at the end of the school year? Jean Marie said the assigned teachers could change due to some teachers requesting to do the virtual teaching rather than any in person teaching.

If teachers asked to teach remotely they will be teaching with the remote option. For the remote option, the teachers, students and classes have to be loaded in the system.

Will remote students have one teacher? One teacher will manage the learning. They have to look at numbers and need for supporting 7-12 remote learning.

There was a question about the layoff of teachers. JeanMarie said they will need to reassign some teachers to meet the needs but all teachers will be needed. If a teacher leaves mid semester, a protocol would be followed.

There was a question about the teachers negotiation and if they'd been completed. This hasn't been completed but it is hoped to be completed in September.

What are the specifics about the outdoor classrooms/learning? JeanMarie said she has left this up to the teachers but all teachers have been encouraged to do as much outdoor learning as possible. The school looked into buying a tent but they are quite expensive and were also out of stock. There was discussion about poison ivy and trying to get rid of that.

B. Principal Search Update - David Baker

David announced the protocol on May 6, 2020. David said that due to his schedule with all of the planning needed related to COVID and reopening, he has had a hard time getting this in his

schedule. We could start in September and David asked for the Board's feedback. Sean Whalen said due to the importance of this position, he wishes we had started earlier. There was discussion around doing some of the meetings virtually and that we need a high level ZOOM account to accomplish this.

C. .4 French Teacher Position

The school hired Amy Parnell as a .4 French Teacher for the school year but after a lot of thinking, Amy has decided she needs to resign with regrets. Amy feels she needs to be home with her son due to COVID. JeanMarie Oakman asked the Board to accept Amy's resignation with regrets. See Items for Action A.

Next Steps: Sean Whalen suggested due to budget restraints and COVID that we shouldn't try to rehire for this position at this time. See Items for Action A.

D. Letter From Town Manager and Select Board

The Town Manager and the head of the Select Board sent the School Board a letter saying that quite a few people are behind on paying their taxes. Sean Whalen read the letter and said that the school is prepared as a Tax Anticipation Note was approved at the July meeting. There was discussion that there is a statutory separation between the school and town budgets and expenses. We will have to find out our legal obligations. There was more discussion around this issue as well as around COVID funds that haven't come in yet.

E. Outdoor Classroom - Leanna Robinson

Leanna Robinson updated the Board about the outdoor classroom. We need an engineer stamp and approval in order to build the classroom and this is costly. The building will cost an additional \$8,000 than what was being planned according to the engineer. The builder is trying to contact some other engineers and Jim Taft is reaching out to engineers he has worked with. This is needed because it is a public building. There was discussion on how we can keep this project moving forward. It was suggested to ask the Byrne Foundation for money. Some money has already been received from the Byrne Foundation for this project but Robin Tindall thought it might be worthwhile to ask for more. Leanna Robinson agreed to write the letter to the Byrne Foundation requesting more funds for this project so it can be completed. There was also discussion around unused funds from this school year's budget due to changes in staff and positions. See Items for Action B.

VI. PRINCIPAL REPORT - JeanMarie Oakman

JeanMarie said most of what she needed to report on has already been covered but that the 3 tier plan is morphing.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT REPORT - David Baker

David Baker shared that the SE superintendents have been meeting two times a week and this has been a great team to work with. David acknowledges the amount of time that is being given to the various teaching options for this year by the teachers and all the SU staff. David said, "Hats off to the entire SU."

VIII. SETTING THE NEXT AGENDA

- A. Principal Search
- B. Financial Update - Ed Conors
- C. Town Letter Clarification
- D. Athletics
- E. Opening Day of School

IX. ITEMS FOR ACTION

- A. Resignation and Rehiring of .4 French Teacher

Sean Whalen asked for a motion concerning the resignation of Amy Parnell, the .4 French Teacher. Annemarie Redmond made a motion to accept the resignation of Amy Parnell with regrets. Kristen Brusco second this motion. NFD. All in favor. This motion was approved.

Rehiring of .4 Foreign Language Teacher

Sean Whalen asked for a motion concerning the hiring of a .4 Foreign Language Teacher. Annemarie Redmond made a motion to not rehire a .4 Foreign Language Teacher at this time. Kristen Brusco second this motion. NFD. All in favor. This motion was approved.

- B. Outdoor Classroom Funds

Sean Whalen asked for a motion concerning the needed funds for completion of the outdoor classroom. Robin Tindall made a motion to approve the principal disbursing not more than \$8,000 to make up the difference in grants for the outdoor classroom. Sean Whalen second this motion. NFD. All in favor. This motion was approved.

X. TENTATIVE EXECUTIVE SESSION - Title VSAT.11 Section 313 - Personnel

Sean Whalen asked for a motion to go into Executive Session. Robin Tindall made a motion to go into Executive Session. Annemarie Redmond second this motion. NFD. All in favor. This motion was approved. The Board went into Executive Session at 7:40PM. Sean Whalen asked for a motion to come out of Executive Session. Robin Tindall made a motion to come out of Executive Session. Kristen Brusco second this motion. NFD. All in favor. The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:15PM. No action was taken.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Sean Whalen asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Robin Tindall made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mark Yuengling second this motion. NFD. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Becky Chrisinger