

# LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

*Regional School District #18*

*A Private School Experience*



*in a Public School Setting*

## **Regular Board of Education Meeting**

November 4, 2020

*Board Present:* Diane Linderman, Chair; Martha Shoemaker, Vice Chair; Jean Wilczynski, Treasurer; Steven Wilson, Secretary; Rick Goulding; Stacey Leonardo

*Present Via Telephone:* Jennifer Miller; Mary Powell St. Louis; Suzanne Thompson

*Administration Present:* Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; James Cavalieri, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; James Wygonik, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School

*Others Present:* Isabella Hine and Ellery Zrenda, High School Student Representatives; two community members from LOL

### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairwoman Linderman. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **II. Approval of Minutes**

MOTION: Dr. Goulding made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Wilczynski, to approve the minutes of Regular Meeting of October 7, 2020 as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

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### III. Visitors

#### 1. Report from Student Representatives

Isabella Hine and Ellery Zrenda reported on the following activities taking place at the schools:

*At LOLHS:* Last Friday marked the end of the first quarter. The high school's traditional Report Card Night has been replaced with parent conferences via Zoom on November 23 and 24. Next week parents will be receiving an email from Mr. Wygonik with links to sign up for conferences. On October 23, the freshmen class held an outdoor movie night on the baseball field. The seniors are putting the finishing touches on the college application process. All fall sports teams are having successful seasons and are thankful for the ability to compete. The National Honor Society has kicked off the annual Thanksgiving food drive.

*At LOLMS:* The middle school had a successful month of October. The first quarter ends tomorrow, November 5, and digital report cards will go out next week. Thanks were extended to the COVID mitigation strategies as classes, clubs and activities continue to meet. Fall sports, including cross country and boys and girls soccer, are concluding this week with preparation being made for the winter sports season. Both students and parents are extremely appreciative of the opportunity to participate in these sports. In collaboration with LYSB, Trooper Kate Cummings presented virtually to the middle school parents and each grade about the precautions, dangers and strategies that social media use requires. As we approach the winter season, we are constantly reminding students about proper hygiene and physical distancing practices.

*At Lyme Consolidated School:* Orange and Black Day occurred on October 30. All the students participated in Lyme School's first "virtual" Town Meeting. It started by the fifth grade leading the Pledge of Allegiance followed by each class giving a shout out hello. All of the students sang their Lyme School song. Funny Halloween riddles were read by Mr. Ferguson and Ms. Gardner. Mrs. McNamara read *Ghoulish* which was an interactive story that all of the students loved. To close out the Town Meeting, the 5th grade led a school wide Monster Mash dance, which was a huge hit. The students are all looking forward to the next Virtual Town Meeting. The Scholastic Virtual Bookfair will run from November 9 through the 22; all orders will be done on-line. The next PTO meeting will be on November 18 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Report cards will be sent home on November 20. Virtual Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled for November 23 and 24, which are both half days for students.

*At Mile Creek School:* On October 12, students in grades 2-5 enjoyed an author visit from Tom Watson, author of the Stick Dog series. He shared his journey to becoming an author with the students and taught them to draw the characters from his books. Mile Creek School completed the collection of socks for The Madonna Place, collecting 1,393 pairs of socks, 350 more pairs than were collected last year. Mile Creek students enjoyed a spirit day on October 30. All students wore orange and black, and the fifth grade also celebrated a Harvest Hoedown Day that ended with line dancing. Special harvest and fall activities were celebrated in all of the classrooms. Last week all classrooms walked to the firehouse to practice gathering at the rally point. The children have been taught that the rally point is the Cross Lane firehouse if our school is unsafe for any reason. Last week we also began the free breakfast program. By the end of the week, we had more than 45 students grabbing breakfast each day. This month, parent teacher conferences will be held on the 23rd and 24th via Zoom. Mile Creek School will begin a Trex Challenge on

November 15, collecting plastic items for recycling. We will also begin collecting monetary and gift card donations for the annual holiday giving program.

*In the Preschool Program:* The preschool had an unexpected surprise during the month of October thanks to retired teacher Diane Bates. PreK has hatched six monarch butterflies from caterpillars. Their timing was perfect as they arrived on October 30, just in time for Black and Orange Day in PreK. During the month of November, the students will be busy learning about the letters D, E and F, the color yellow and the shape of a square. Math lessons will focus on counting, shapes and patterns. Students will be discussing thankfulness and reading *Today is Monday* and *Stone Soup*. Exercise and nutrition through healthy food choices is a part of their monthly theme. Preschool encourages you all to enjoy your celebrations this month and to take a walk in the crisp fall weather.

## 2. Public Comment

There was no comment from the public.

## IV. Administrative Reports

### 1. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Neviasher reviewed the November personnel report which reflected several new hires. Mr. Neviasher discussed the struggle that many districts experience finding qualified instructional assistants and substitute teachers. He also reported that there is a payroll clerk vacancy in the Business Office.

Mr. Neviasher reviewed the November enrollment report. Currently, there are 1,280 students enrolled in-house, a decrease of three students than last month this time.

Mr. Neviasher reported that the fall edition of the *Focus on Education* newsletter is expected to be out soon as an insert in the *Lyme Times*.

Mr. Neviasher reported that campus security staff member Ray Belval has coordinated a donation from Bikes for Kids in Essex. Students from the district who ride their bikes to school were each given a light for their bikes. Mr. Belval was commended for this initiative.

Mr. Neviasher reported that LOLHS was awarded the Great Schools 2020 College Success Award. According to GreatSchools.org, "Award winners are determined by calculating a school-level score and applying a threshold to delineate which schools receive an award and which do not. This school-level score is comprised of three components:

- College Preparation, which includes the percentage of students from a four-year cohort who graduate from high school as well as measures of College Entrance Exam (ACT or SAT) performance.
- College Enrollment, which includes school-level metrics that vary by state. Some states report this data as "Percent Enrolled in any Postsecondary Institution Within 12 Months After Graduation," others as "Percent Enrolled in any Institution of Higher Learning in the Last 0-16 Months."

- College Performance, which includes remediation and persistence metrics, which also vary in availability by state. The remediation metrics capture the percentage of students needing remediation for college either for two-year or four-year institutions. Measures of college persistence are for the percentage of students returning for a second year at both two-year and four-year institutions.

Mr. Neviaser introduced Renee Molnar, Guidance Counselor at LOLMS, and her dog named Blue who were in attendance at the meeting. Mrs. Molnar and Blue were involved in the therapy dog training initiative, which is part of Project Paws.

Mr. Neviaser reported that snow days that occur this year will be handled as snow day cancellations that occurred in previous years. There will be no school for students and instructional staff, and the day will be made up at the end of the school year. Mr. Neviaser explained his reasoning behind this decision (vs. reverting to a remote learning day) citing the social/emotional health for students and the joy for students to have a day off and his concern over having teachers told at 5:00 a.m. that they have to switch to remote learning.

Mr. Neviaser shared additional financial information that had been requested after the artificial playing surface forum. He reviewed the following data on grass field construction costs, which reflected a higher cost to install a grass field (\$2.6 million) vs. an artificial playing surface (\$2.1 million). In addition, the grass surface does not resolve weather and overuse problems.

*Reconstructed Grass Field Construction Breakdown of Total Cost of \$2.6 Million:*

*General Conditions (bonding, site preparation, site removals, erosion control, contingency) = \$308,000.*

*Irrigation System Installation = \$210,000*

*Earthwork and Field Drainage = \$1,075,000*

*Cumulative Annual Maintenance Costs = \$550,500*

*Cumulative Purchased Water for Irrigation = \$480,000*

The Board discussed this at great length. Topics addressed included: current maintenance of the practice field (site of proposed artificial playing surface); maintenance costs of turf field (limited); lifespan of artificial surface and replacement costs; recyclable material of artificial surface; effect of animal (geese) waste; inexpensive solutions for geese waste; impact of grass field runoff on the pond; cost of reseeded a grass field.; usage of turf field in inclement weather; alleviation of heavy usage of other campus fields; offering status quo as another option; and possible revenue making options for the artificial field.

Dr. Goulding, Chair of the Facilities Committee, addressed the need for more fields and the correlation between field usage and the needed field space. He also noted the lack of town fields that are used by the community at large.

Mr. Neviaser gave an update on the progress towards the district goals.

*Curriculum. Provide a rigorous educational experience for students, in all modes of instruction (remote or in-person), that is in alignment with the high standards and expectations of the communities we serve.*

Finalizing plans for remote learning should this be required and aligning with regular school schedule.

Completed K-2 reading and math screeners and formative assessments.

Professional Development Day on November 3 – teams and departments planning and adjusting based on data (internal assessments).

Human Resources. *Provide additional support for staff to ensure existing and new employees have the resources necessary to perform the duties of their jobs at the highest level possible.*

Providing the necessary tools for teachers to be effective as possible.

Donation from parent (employee of Pfizer) of \$10,000 to be spent on the needs of the high school staff.

Community. *Support the social emotional needs of students and staff, with emphasis on self-care and community responsibility during this time of uncertainty.*

Notification out to parents re: uncertainty of pandemic and associated stressors.

Making sure students/staff have resources they need.

Free breakfasts and lunches for all students; district gets money back from each meal served. Encourage students to utilize these free meals.

Facilities. *Monitor and evaluate five-year facility, safety, and technology plans to ensure appropriate improvements and maintenance of buildings, grounds, and infrastructure in line with recommendations from the DPH and the CSDE.*

Facilities Meeting held earlier in evening; reviewed the five-year facilities plan.

Artificial playing surface forum held.

Glitch in completion of the Lyme School gym floor; sub-contractor's staff did not follow COVID-19 protocol.

Board of Education. *Provide resources to support students and staff through a variety of different means during this time of uncertainty.*

Thanks to Board for support of all new initiatives.

Mrs. Miller extended congratulations to the girls soccer team and their coach who were recently showcased on Channel 8.

Dr. Goulding commended the Lyme-Old Lyme staff for their engagement to go above and beyond what is expected of them to benefit the district and community.

## 2. Business Manager's Report

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Executive Budget Summary as of October 31, 2020. Fluctuations of note:

- Spending year to date is on track with last year to date.
- Special education is down year over year due to reduced tuition costs.
- Transportation is down due to credits for collapsed/reduced routes due to driver shortage and reduced ridership.
- Debt Service is due to refunding from January 2020 and payment moved to August.

## Year To Date Revenue Report

	2019-2020 Received	2020-2021 Received YTD
Town of Old Lyme	\$27,556,679	\$8,546,811
Town of Lyme	\$6,579,421	\$1,977,583

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Contingency Maintenance Report. There is \$5,975 in new spending for a natural gas heater in the maintenance garage and \$3,000 estimated for the grinder pump backup issues. The balance of this account is \$170,723.

Mrs. McCalla also reported that the district is still awaiting final FEMA approval. It appears they are not reimbursing for any PPE. At this point, the district's claim has been reduced from approximately \$20,000 to about \$6,000, of which the district will receive 75% or \$4,500. This assumes there will be no further reductions; however, it is not known when payment will be issued; therefore, further reductions or complete elimination is always a possibility. This claim is for costs incurred from March 1-June 30, 2020.

The district has submitted its final Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) reallocation request in order to expend the \$329,000 it was granted by the state. These funds will be used to offset costs of PPE, cleaners/disinfectants and additional staffing (building substitute and Center School nurse) needed to reduce/eliminate coronavirus spread that have been incurred from July 1 through December 30, 2020.

Mrs. McCalla reported that the USDA has granted a waiver allowing school districts to provide free breakfast and lunch at all schools to all students. Due to this, the district is now offering breakfast at all schools, with the Pre-K program logistics still to be determined. The more meals the district can give, the better for the program. At this point, the district is forecasting an \$80,000 deficit in the program, which will need to be covered by the operating budget, and every meal the district can give away results in a reimbursement of \$1.89/breakfast and \$3.58 for lunch. Mrs. McCalla noted that the district expects the deficit projection to decline as participation and word of the program spreads.

Follow-up discussion centered on ways to spread the word on the free breakfast and lunch initiative that is available to all students (not based on need).

Mrs. Shoemaker asked Mrs. McCalla to highlight the new expenditures that appear on the monthly Contingency Maintenance Report.

## V. Educational Presentation

### 1. School Updates

The administration from the five buildings gave an update on the reopening of schools:

James Wygonik, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School: discussed the various ways that the high school students/staff are normalizing this school year: many clubs meeting at night over Zoom; teachers are giving up family time to provide opportunities for students; outdoor movie night and band and chorus concert open to the entire community; instructional practices and technology usage improving daily; math

instruction initiatives; new schedule allowing for more time for discussion; adding social and emotional wellness into the classrooms; improvement to delivering online learning; usage of outdoor space for lunches and some classes; and fall play (DOA remake) being filmed and will be shown on YouTube. Mr. Wygonik stressed how proud he was of the high school staff and students who want to be in school and are doing what is needed to remain there.

Mr. Wygonik and Mrs. Dean, Director of Curriculum, also explained the procedures in place for those students who have not “checked in” to school this year and the strategies they are using to get them reengaged in academics.

Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School, cited the following initiatives currently underway at the Middle School: social and emotional check-in of students/staff; weekly extended homeroom to provide academic support and advisory; supporting community building; partnering with LYSB for supplemental counseling; the feeling of “normalcy” at the school despite the pandemic; lunch groups; mentoring program up and running; clubs and sports are underway; Trooper Kate Cummings, DARE Coordinator, holding a virtual workshop on social media safety protocols; screen free weekends; and inclusion of therapy dogs for emotional support for students.

James Cavaleri, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School and Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School, reported on elementary initiatives: outstanding student adjustment to physical environment; kudos to custodial staff for cleanliness of buildings; arrival and dismissal time running smoothly; staff making sure remote learners are engaged with the teacher and other students (“Roomies and Zoomies” - the nicknames for those students in school and those who are remote learners); use of breakout rooms in Zoom which will be in place should they have to go to full remote learning; stabilization of remote learners (14 at Mile and 22 at Lyme); mastering of new technology with great professional development from the tech staff; emphasis on social and emotional learning; implementation of Second Step program; maintaining spirit days and spirit of giving initiative; the success of virtual town meetings and virtual lunches with remote learners; visit by Tom Watts, author of the Stick Dog series; appointment of staff members Kelly Guyer and Mary Dargie as liaisons for remote learning, which frees up teachers to teach.

Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School, gave the update for the Center School preschool program: young students have adjusted to wearing masks and eating lunch in the classroom, etc., due to teachers creating a warm and inviting classroom environment; students showing more independence – using hand sanitizer, washing hands and exchanging dirty masks for clean ones; teachers are mindful of social and emotional health of students; and mask breaks creating more opportunities for outdoor activities.

## **VI. Chairman & Board Report**

Mrs. Linderman reported that negotiations between the Board and the AFT union will begin in December; she asked for Board volunteers to serve on the Human Resources Committee. Mrs. Shoemaker volunteered to serve.

## **VII. New Business**

### **1. Setting of Graduation Date for the Class of 2021**

Mr. Neviasser explained that the earlier the Board sets a firm graduation date, the earlier the Safe Grad Committee can reserve a spot for their program. The recommendation was to set graduation for June 11, 2021, the last Friday of the school year.

MOTION: Mrs. Leonardo made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Shoemaker, to approve setting the date of June 11, 2021 for the Lyme-Old Lyme High School graduation.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

### **2. Course Proposals at LOLHS – Applied Physics and AP Computer Science A**

LOLHS is recommending the addition of two new courses. Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum, and Dawn Kelley, Science Teacher at LOLHS, gave a presentation to add two new science courses: Applied Physics (one-half credit) based on NGSS testing, which showed a lack of physical science courses offered and AP Computer Science (full-credit), which will allow students to expand their knowledge base at the college level. The textbook for this course will be available for Board review.

MOTION: Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Wilczynski, to approve the course additions of Applied Physics and AP Computer Science A at LOLHS as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

## **VIII. Old Business**

### **1. Closing of LOLHS Project**

The district is still waiting for the final change order from the State so there is no action required on this agenda item.

### **2. Report of Committees:**

- a. *Facilities*. Dr. Goulding reported on the committee meeting that took place earlier in the evening. The tennis courts have been completed and there was discussion on the artificial playing surface proposal. The condition of the high school facility was also discussed and the outstanding issues that need addressing are the current sound-field system and additional cameras to improve blind spots. Dr. Goulding commended the facility improvements that have been done throughout the district with very little impact to the mill rate.

Mrs. Linderman asked if there were any outstanding questions/concerns Board members had on the artificial playing surface proposal. The Board discussed the importance of addressing the community concerns (environmental, health, etc.); the various venues for communicating information and how best to do so; getting citizens who feel left out of the discussion more involved; not pushing this project through until concerns are addressed; having the Communications Committee more involved; and possibly holding another public forum.



Dr. Goulding recommended that Board members seek out Superintendent Neviaser and Director of Facilities Ron Turner for quick and informative responses to their concerns.

- b. *Finance*. No report.
- c. *Communications*. No report.
- d. *Policy*. No report.
- e. *LEARN*. Mrs. Linderman reported that she is on the LEARN teacher contract committee.
- f. *LOL Prevention Coalition*. Mrs. Shoemaker reported on the success of the October 24 drug take back event when over 150 pounds of medications were dropped off in a four-hour period. She also reported on an upcoming virtual event on vaping trends.
- g. *Sustainability*. Mrs. Miller reported on the kickoff of the 4R (refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle) campaign noting that information on this campaign will be shared at the November staff meetings at all schools. She also reported on the Trex Challenge that will run from November 15 through April 15. This is a plastic film recycling challenge where collection boxes will be placed in all schools and around the community.

**IX. Correspondence**

Mrs. Linderman reported on the receipt of an email complimenting the district on how well the schools are running during the pandemic. Another email was received on the artificial playing surface, and this will be forwarded to the superintendent.

**X. Executive Session**

Upon motion by Dr. Goulding and seconded by Mrs. Leonardo, the Board voted unanimously to move into executive session for the purpose of discussing the Administrators' Contract for 2021-2024. Mr. Neviaser was invited to attend the executive session.

**XI. Adjournment**

The regular meeting adjourned at 9:41 p.m. upon a motion by Dr. Goulding and a second by Mrs. Leonardo.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Wilson, Secretary