

**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**Board of Education Advisor Council on Return to School (BEARS)**  
**Stonington Board of Education – Stonington, Connecticut**  
**District Administration Building**  
**40 Field Street, Pawcatuck, CT**  
**April 20, 2021**  
**6:00 pm**

The special meeting of the Board of Education Advisory Council on Return to School (BEARS) was called to order at 6:01 p.m. on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at the District Administration Building.

**Members Present:**

Gordon Lord, Board of Education Member, Chair of Advisory Council  
Adam Linicus, WVSS Parent  
Erin Janicek, DMS Parent  
Dr. Kate Wagner, SMS Parent  
Heidi Simmons, Board of Education Member  
Bruce Yarnall, SHS Teacher/SEA Representative  
AnneFay Sullivan, WVSS Assistant Principal  
Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent  
Members Absent: Dustin Yaworsky, SHS Parent  
Late Arrival 6:18pm: Dan Kelley, Classified/Paraeducator Representative  
Guests: Mary Day, APRN, Ledge Light Health District  
Allison Van Etten, Director of Special Services, Stonington Public Schools

**Approval of Minutes – March 18, 2021:**

**Motion was made by Bruce Yarnall and seconded by Heidi Simmons:**

**Motion 1: To approve minutes of March 18, 2021 meeting. All: Aye**

**Discussion with Mary Day, APRN, Ledge Light Health District**

Chair Gordon Lord introduced Mary Day, APRN from Ledge Light Health District while noting she would be updating the council members on COVID-19 guidelines and entertaining questions they might have. Ms. Day gave an update on the new guidelines regarding number of days needed for quarantining. She explained that the State issued new guidelines which changed from 14 days to 10 days for quarantining from school but athletes that are quarantining must still finish the full 14 days before returning to a sport. She noted an indoor graduation would be subject to a cap of 100 of people attending. The State is encouraging graduations and proms be held outdoors and combining events as much as possible to reduce the risk of exposure and use masks along with social distancing, and perhaps holding them later in the year closer to June timeframe. Heidi Simmons asked about the social distancing requirements. Ms. Day answered at this time it is still 6ft. per the DPH, but will follow up further on this topic and get more information to the council. Dr. Riley noted that he will invite Mark Friese, SHS Principal to attend the May 18<sup>th</sup> BEARS meeting to speak on graduation and prom plans for the high school. Ms. Day reported that the State will be at full capacity after May 19<sup>th</sup> with exception of mask requirements. Bruce Yarnall had questions regarding if a teacher is fully vaccinated do they need to quarantine if a close contact. Ms. Day noted that if you are fully vaccinated and two weeks past your last shot you do not have to quarantine. She also reported that the Pfizer vaccine is approved for children 16 and older and Ledge Light is working with Hartford Health for administering the shot. Ledge Light will not be administering the shot to school age children but if the council needs more information on this topic she would forward it to the council. Dr. Kate Wagner asked if the district new how many students are getting the vaccine. Chair Gordon Lord noted to his knowledge much of the school soccer team has been vaccinated. Erin Janicek asked will the schools be helping students get the vaccine. Allison Van Etten noted the district is not able to mandate the vaccine but as we receive information we will get that out to families. Chair Gordon Lord asked if the district could survey families. Mrs. Van Etten noted families are making their own personal decisions regarding getting students vaccinated. Chair Gordon Lord thanked Ms. Day for attending and answering the council's questions. Ms. Day asked that anyone having more questions to email her.

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**Review/Discuss Issues of Current Plan to Return:**

Dr. Riley shared a summary from each principal with an update on the current issues regarding students' return to school. Dr. Riley summarized that overall it has been a positive reopening. He will bring an update at future BEARS meetings of each school. He also suggested to have Mark Friese, SHS Principal attend the next meeting to go over their plans for an upcoming prom and graduation ceremony. He reported that some staff were not able to return and are remote. Heidi Simmons voiced she would like to see the elementary students back all days in person, but has recently spoken to teachers in our district and other districts and realizes we are not able to pivot in the last few weeks. She would like to organize something to plan for a full return to school in August. She noted we need to look at the HVAC systems, more sub teachers and separate teachers for both in person and remote learning. Dr. Riley agreed the district will not use the same teacher for both remote and in person learning in the fall. There will be one dedicated teacher for remote learners. He added the State has shared that they are looking to have a remote learning school that all districts will use. Bruce Yarnall agreed the district should be in person five days in the fall. Dr. Kate Wagner asked if the State has made any decisions on the remote school. Dr. Riley reported he will have more information on a regional remote school after his superintendent's meeting. Dan Kelly thanked administration for all they have done to accommodate the staff and reported that the middle school outdoor dining has been going well, student drop off has been going smoothly and staff and students have adjusted well with the return. He also mentioned the need for more subs in the fall. AnneFay Sullivan reported at the elementary school cafeteria space has been an issue, but with the weather getting better they are having lunch outside, and in classrooms when the weather is bad. Staff and students have been returning with a few more students scheduled to return on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. She also voiced concern for the need to look at coverage in classrooms for lunch come the fall. Bruce Yarnall reported on the high school stating that the halls are a bit more crowded but nice to not have students in the lockers. There are not many seniors coming back, but things are going fairly well. He added the prom will be outside on the football field.

**Issues/Discussion Regarding Fall Return:**

Erin Janicek asked about SEL for the fall. Dr. Riley noted the social and emotional needs of students are different than a year ago. He reported that at the middle school meetings with social workers have doubled. Mary Anne Butler is working on this issue with a group of staff. We are looking at using CARES2 funding for additional supports. He added we will have more information by May and June meetings. Dr. Riley commented he has been working together with the COMO, NESS and Human Services for student summer programs in conjunction with our summer school programs. Chair Gordon Lord and Adam Lincus shared that both the number of students joining their soccer and little league programs have increased. Dr. Wagner voiced her concern regarding the low number of high school students returning to school and their emotional needs compared to the elementary level and does not want these students falling through the cracks. Dr. Riley will be sharing the number of students involved in extracurricular activities at the next meeting. He mentioned that even if a student is fully remote they can still participate in extracurricular activities. Mr. Yarnall voiced concern giving students the option to remain full remote in the fall who currently have emotional issues and the need to follow up with these students to see how they are doing. Mr. Lincus requested that staff from SEL come to the next council meeting to speak on the social, emotional piece. Dr. Riley will coordinate with Allison Van Etten for the next meeting.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 6:55p.m.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 18th at Stonington High School Commons**

Minutes Submitted By: Ana de Oliveira, Board of Ed Recording Secretary