

Special Meeting Minutes
Board of Education Advisory Council on Return to School (BEARS)
Stonington Board of Education – Stonington, Connecticut
Stonington High School Commons
176 South Broad Street, Pawcatuck, CT
June 1, 2021
6:00 pm

The special meeting of the Board of Education Advisory Council on Return to School (BEARS) was called to order at 6:03 p.m. on Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at Stonington High School Commons.

Members Present:

Gordon Lord, Board of Education Member, Chair of Advisory Council
Heidi Simmons, Board of Education Member
Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent
Erin Janicek, DMS Parent
Bruce Yarnall, SHS Teacher/SEA Representative
AnneFay Sullivan, WVSS Assistant Principal
Dustin Yaworsky, SHS Parent
Dan Kelley, Classified/Paraeducator Representative
Members Absent: Dr. Kate Wagner, SMS Parent, Adam Linicus, WVSS Parent

Approval of Minutes – May 18, 2021:

Motion was made by Bruce Yarnall and seconded by Erin Janicek:

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

Proposal for American Recovery Plan (ARP) Funding

Dr. Riley reviewed the attached list of proposed items that would be funded through the ARP funds. He noted these are positions that will be hired for the upcoming school year. These positions will help students academically and with social and emotional issues. He also reviewed the proposal of ARP funds of \$1,384,000 for infrastructure needs. Dr. Riley prioritized the funding by needs at the high school, middle school and district office. He shared that the ARP plan is due to the state by June 23rd and suggested the council meet on June 16th at 6pm at the District Office to review the final plan and will have available all the public comments from the community to share with the council. Dr. Riley noted there will be a Family Advisory Committee meeting on June 8th and will open that up to public comment also. On June 10th at the Regular Board of Education meeting we will also have an open session for comments regarding the use of funding. There will be a climate survey sent out the week of June 7th. Gordon Lord, Chair noted that there will still be a July BEARS meeting as previously scheduled. Erin Janicek asked if there are certain stipulations or conditions that need to be followed to get the funding. Dr. Riley explained the only stipulation is a written response. Heidi Simmons asked if the ESSERII funds can only be used for infrastructure or can they be used for SEL and academic needs if needed. Dr. Riley explained the difference between each type of funding and what they can be used for. Bruce Yarnall asked how the funding will be split among the schools. Dr. Riley will share the breakdown at the next council meeting. Dustin Yaworsky asked if any of the positions were new positions and if there are job descriptions for them. Dr. Riley explained which were new and which are replacements and will share the job descriptions to all council members. Dr. Riley added these positions came identified by the school administrators. Heidi Simmons noted it would be a good idea to send out a public reminder of when the next meetings are. Erin Janicek asked if the district has a sustainable plan for after the 2022-23 school year, for the number of added positions we are adding. Dr. Riley noted that some of these positions might change based on needs and noted this funding will go away. We will be doing on going assessments on the needs of each position. Chair Gordon Lord voiced that as we look at the math scores, this might be an area where we could use the funding for more math interventionists. He asked even knowing we earmarked funding for other expenditures can we use it for these types of positions. Dr. Riley said yes.

Tory Gimple a paraprofessional at the middle school commented to the council regarding the use of technology by paraprofessionals at the middle school. (comment attached) She spoke that the paraprofessionals currently use old chromebooks and voiced these do not always have the full capability that they often need to print and assist students with work. She would like to see some of the funding be used to purchase new laptops for each paraprofessional. Heidi Simmons asked would this mean each paraprofessional would have their own device and how would they be distributed. AnneFay Sullivan commented it would not make sense to have only one device in the classroom since paras travel to other classrooms. Dr. Riley will share this request with the Director of Finance and Director of Technology. Erin Janicek asked how many paras are in the district. Dan Kelly responded about 100 in the district.

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Dan Kelley commented it would be good to have a vaccine clinic at the middle school. Dr. Riley agreed and commented we have opened our doors in the past and stand ready to do that again.

Chair Gordon Lord reminded everyone of the June 16th meeting at 6pm at the District Office and asked the council members to spread the word. He asked if the council had items for the next agenda to let him know. He thanked everyone for their part in the council and looks forward to having five days back in school. Erin Janicek ask if there will be more information regarding the June 8th Family Advisory Committee meeting. Dr. Riley will send out a message to the council with information on the meeting.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Dan Kelley and seconded by Bruce Yarnall:

Motion 2 – To adjourn at 6:44p.m. All: Aye

Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 16th at 6pm in the District Office Board Room

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

DRAFT

Proposal for American Recovery Plan (ARP) Funding

Background: During the 2021-2022 school year, the District will use ESSER II funds to focus on the academic and social/emotional needs of all students. To that end, the District will provide the following supports for students and teachers for 2021-22 from ESSER II funds.

1) Elementary Level

- a. Academic Interventionists/Coaches – 3
- b. Numeracy/Literacy Tutor – 3
- c. STEM Teacher Specialist – 1
- d. Additional Grade Level Teacher – 2
- e. Mental Health Staff – 1
- f. Behavior Technician – 1

2) Middle School Level

- a. Academic Interventionist – 1
- b. SEL Teacher/Coordinator – 1
- c. Para Support Positions – 1
- d. Math Tutor – 1

3) High School Level

- a. Para Support Positions – 3
- b. Learning Hub/Math Teacher – 1
- c. Academy Teacher – 2

4) Summer School

- a. General Summer School for All Students
- b. Transportation
- c. Teachers
- d. Para Support

American Recovery Plan Proposal

Stonington Public Schools will receive \$2,584,000 in federal ARP funding. The proposal for use of these funds is divided into two sections.

The first section is based on the goal of returning all students to in-school instruction beginning in fall 2021. ARP funds will be used in 2022-2023 to mirror the above academic and social/emotional supports offered in 2021-2022. These supports may be modified based on the needs of students in 2022-2023. The proposal is to designate \$1,200,000 of the ARP funds for these ongoing student supports.

The **second section** of the ARP proposal is to designate the balance of funds (\$1,384,000) for infrastructure needs. The priorities for use of these funds is as follows:

- 1) **Stonington High School HVAC** – Stonington High School is in need of replacement of several of the HVAC coils and other parts. These upgrades will increase air quality and temperature. The estimate for this project is \$669,965 plus a 15% reserve for a total of \$770,460. The District will cover as much of this as possible through the general operating budget.
- 2) **Stonington Middle School** – It has been a goal of the District for many years to install an air conditioning and purification system at SMS. Providing adequate ventilation and AC is important for students and staff members. The estimate for this project is \$2.5M plus \$300K reserve for a total of \$2.8M. The District will need to work with the Town and the Board of Finance for the additional funding to complete this project.
- 3) **Board Room AC** – The third priority for infrastructure is to provide air conditioning for the District Office Board Room. This room is utilized by several community and Town groups for a variety of meetings. There is currently no AC in the room. The estimate for this project is \$110,000.

Dear Board of Education Advisory Council on Return to School (BEARS),

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that technology is an essential part of education. This year with the hybrid format the impact of the para-educators was greatly expanded by access to the technology (i.e.: school issued Chromebook). For the first time, the shared access to the google suite of programs including email, classroom and meet functions allowed for co-education by teachers, case managers and para-educators. As a team, we worked together, even when apart, to tackle the challenges of the 2020-21 school year. The Chromebook ensured constant communication between the administration, teachers, staff and students. We provided educational support for our special education students in real time, helped them to stay focused and on task, and monitored student progress on assignments. We hosted "check in" sessions, extra help break out sessions in addition to proctoring testing and helping substitute teachers with meet access. The 100% digital classroom has had a bright side, no more lost papers, packets or worksheets lost in lockers, on the bus or left at home. It provided a "digital locker" where the work done yesterday was easily located the next day so learning could continue. The executive functioning skills of using the computer to organize things every day is something that will be useful well into the future!

Up to date technology is a necessary part of the educational toolbox. All teachers and administrators have powerful apple MacBooks and every student at the middle school level received a brand-new Chromebook this fall. However, the Chromebooks that were issued to the para-educators were the "left overs" from the computer carts from around the district. They were outdated, underpowered and had inadequate processing power to handle the tasks required for simultaneously teaching students in person and remote such as being in a meet and having multiple student's documents open. They would rapidly get overwhelmed, bogged down and then go offline. In addition, the batteries would not hold their charge so they had to remain plugged in, not easy with minimal outlets available. We understand that the last year was unprecedented and no one could have seen this coming, the school system did the best they could with what they had. We made it work and in a couple of weeks we can say "WE DID IT".

In the fall, we all hope that learning will "get back to normal", but it will not return to pen and paper. Pre-pandemic, the middle school curriculum was already computer dependent, our responsibilities as para-educators may not have changed; they have evolved to include digital learning. Therefore, the para-educators of Stonington Middle School request that a small part of the funds from the American Recovery Plan Funding be used to purchase new lap top computers for our use so that we can continue to provide the services to our special education students.

Thank you for your consideration,

Elizabeth King
Kathy M. [unclear]
May [unclear]
Susan M. [unclear]
David [unclear]
Jim Harris
D. Valley
M. [unclear]
En Tussee

Donna [unclear]
Janet [unclear]
K. [unclear]
June 3 [unclear]
Michelle Swelholm
K. [unclear]
Myra [unclear]
[unclear]