

STONINGTON BOARD OF ED COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES June 24, 2021

Frank Todisco, Board Chairman called the special meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the District Office Board of Education Room. Members present were Heidi Simmons, Board of Ed Secretary, Gordon Lord, Craig Esposito, Jack Morehouse, Farouk Rajab, and Alisa Morrison. Also present were, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent and Mary Anne Butler, Assistant Superintendent.

Music Program Discussion and Direction

Dr. Riley explained that he met with the elementary principals after the last Board meeting to discuss what the music schedule would look like if a half time instrumental teacher were added. He also explained the options of having a half time instrumental teacher or an after school club format. The schedule would be the same for both 5th grades. Jack Morehouse thanked Dr. Riley for setting this idea up. He spoke of the area schools and their current music programs. He also voiced he would like to definitely see a half time position and feels our band program needs this to kick start the program again. Mr. Morehouse feels if other schools can do this so can Stonington. He respectfully asked that we hire a half time instrumental teacher this September. Dr. Riley noted that the teacher is not currently budgeted in the current budget, but is hopeful that there will be funds to cover the position out of the general fund. Dr. Riley also suggested that if we cannot hire a half time teacher that it is possible that staff can be moved around from the high school to cover the instrumental class during the day.

The following motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Jack Morehouse:

Motion 1: To move forward with the 5th grade music lessons and hire a .5 music teacher.

There was further discussion on the motion:

Alisa Morrison voiced she would rather see what other staffing needs there are because there might be other needs. She added that maybe that half time teacher might be best needed for art, math or gym. She asked if no other principal needs any other staffing. Dr. Riley responded that the principals are all set with staffing. Heidi Simmons noted that it is important to listen to Lily Haghpassand former Student Government Representative, she gave importance to the half time teacher and the importance of the music program. Mrs. Simmons believes that a half time teacher should be given priority and is sure we can find monies for it particularly in the relief fund. Gordon Lord asked if we can keep the 5th grade music without hiring, if we can it would be great but if not then we hire the person. Dr. Riley explained one way is to take high school and middle school staff and split them between the elementary schools, or hire a half time teacher or have an after school club. Mr. Lord agreed to the half time teacher in the short term but in the long term we will need to reconsider it down the road. Dr. Riley noted that in December we will have a better idea of what is working and what needs to be changed. Alisa Morrison agreed to wait until December to add the teacher. Mrs. Simmons voiced if we continue to wait we might not have a large pool of teachers to choose from of high quality teachers. She agreed with Mr. Morehouse to do the hiring now. She added the district has two signature programs music and drama. Dr. Riley spoke on the high enrollment numbers in the music program were also attributed to the past Encore classes. He shared his thoughts about options in the community for students surrounding music. Mr. Morehouse spoke that there is a higher interest from students in instrumental music than general music but would like to see both offered.

Alisa Morrison – No

Frank Todisco – Yes

Jack Morehouse – Yes

Heidi Simmons – Yes

Craig Esposito – Yes

Gordon Lord – Yes

Farouk Rajab – Yes

Motion 1: Passes

2021-2022 School Calendar Options and PD Calendar

Dr. Riley shared two draft options of the 2021-22 School Calendar along with the Professional Development calendar. He recommended the Board approve Option A. He explained the rationale for both draft options, the similarities and the differences between each calendar option. Option A would keep with the 182 school days and Option B would have 181 school days. Gordon Lord spoke on the need to front load the professional development days and was surprised not to see more days in September and October. Dr. Riley also noted that there are more professional development days between September to December rather than January to June. Mr. Lord asked how the number of early release days in Draft A and B compare to previous years. Dr. Riley shared a spreadsheet showing the comparisons of other years.