

Minutes
Special Meeting of the Board of Education

Wednesday, November 11, 2020 @ 6:00 p.m.

****Virtually via Zoom Meeting****

<https://zoom.us/j/94678264562>

Meeting ID: 946 7826 4562

Phone: 646-558-8656

Present:

George Bauer, Chairperson
Pam Zmek, Vice Chairperson
Janet Morgan
Carol Ann Brown
Michael Devine
Jonathan Kapstein
Tikva Rose
Jim Crocker

Also Present:

Dr. Joseph Olzacki, Superintendent
Mark Harutunian, Covid 19 Liaison
Neal Lustig, Pomeraug Director of Health
Patrick DiSarro, Communications Specialist
Patricia Paige, Recording Secretary

1. Call to Order

The Board Chairman, Mr. George Bauer, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. Covid 19 Discussions

The meeting was convened to discuss the rapid changes in Covid conditions and the potential actions that may follow within the school district. Dr. Olzacki provided a summary of Covid related events that have been occurring in the district. He also shared the rising numbers in staff absences and the lack of substitutes needed to cover those positions. Holiday gatherings, travel plans and college students returning home were additional concerns as all have the potential to add to the transmission of Covid.

Neal Lustig, Pomperaug Health Director, validated the superintendent's concerns by noting the surge in Covid diagnoses due to wide-spread community transmissions occurring throughout all facets of populations. Over 1500 cases per day are being reported throughout the state and there will continue to be Covid outbreaks until most people become resistant. The vaccine is anticipated to become available, but Mr. Lustig was unclear of the supply numbers and initial distribution groups.

Although not a proponent of distance learning and all being well, the plan for the school district, as outlined by the superintendent, is to have school remain in session until the Thanksgiving holiday break after which, students and faculty would return to school in a remote synchronous learning environment. This would remain in effect until January 19, 2021. Given the holiday concerns for both Thanksgiving and Christmas, coupled with the uptick in Covid numbers, a 14 day self-quarantine cycle for each holiday recess was determined to be the best course of action to keep the number of Covid diagnoses stable and students and faculty safe and healthy. Classroom teachers will be issued new laptops and provided time during the week to prepare for the transition.

Discussions ensued regarding the potential hardship on families this scenario would impose, the social and emotional well-being of students, the structure of synchronous learning and athletics.

The best scenario, if it can be done safely, would be to keep students in school until the natural break of the Thanksgiving holiday. This would give families more time to plan for the transition. Further discussions are scheduled for the regular meeting of the board scheduled for Tuesday, November 17th.

3. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Jonathan Kapstein; seconded by Ms. Tikva Rose; all in favor; none opposed; motion carried unanimously; the meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



*Patricia Paige
Board Clerk*

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval by: Patricia Paige, Board Clerk