

WEBSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WEBSTER SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OPEN SESSION MINUTES (M.G.L. C.39) OF Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Date: December 8, 2020

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Remote ZOOM

The meeting was called to order by: Chair Seddiki

The following Committee Members were present

- Member Napierata
- Member Millet
- Member Blythe
- Member Adamopoulos

The following Committee Members were absent:

Chair Seddiki stated as a reminder the changes in Open Meeting Law issued by Governor Baker on March 12, 2020 given the COVID19 outbreak and the Executive Order modifying Open Meetings. The meeting is posted on the district website with the zoom link allowing the public to join in the meeting. As another reminder this meeting is being recorded both audio and video and will be posted on the district website.

I. Call to Order:

II. Approval of November 24, 2020 Minutes

Motion: To approve November 24, 2020 Minutes

The motion was made by Member Millet

The motion was seconded by Member Blythe

The following roll call vote was taken:

5 members having voted in the affirmative

 members having voted in the negative

 members having abstained

The motion: X passed

 Failed

III. Superintendent's Report

A. Superintendent Update/ District Wide Reports / Correspondence

1. Personnel Updates

New Hires: Brian Reilly – Long Term Bloat sub at WMS – starting January 4, 2021

Vacant: LTS Health Teacher at BHS - currently the Long term building sub is covering
Interim Dean of Students at PAE – 2nd interviews scheduled for this week
1.0 ELL at WMS – interviews in process
1.0 Special Education Teacher – in process

Retirement: As of 6/30/2020 Christina Huber Regele – Grade 3 PAE
Carole DeMake – Special Educator at PAE

2. Hybrid Update

For parents and students it's been great. Teachers are happy to see students. But there is increased stress. Our COVID Data Dashboard is going out weekly – we have had 12+ positive cases this week with 12 close contacts. Cases are increasing. We are doing our best with safety guidelines, but numbers are spiking. With increasingly cases it is difficult replacing staff. Webster Middle had to call remote learning three times so far. Things are changing by the hour. Can't thank Jen Sullivan, the COVID Leadership Team, Monique Pierangeli, the school nurses enough.

Jen Sullivan, Webster Board of Health Director spoke about the rising numbers in town. So far we have had over 60 positives cases in the past week. She said the Webster School Team is top notch, the nurses are so knowledgeable. Jen is concerned that Gov. Baker moved Massachusetts back to Phase 3, Step 1. Sports guidance will be effected with this change and I am unable to support at this time. You have a couple clusters in your school – we are watching carefully. Wear your mask, stay safe, and keep your distance from everyone.

Dr. Goguen said we take this very seriously. Currently working with the State Rapid Response Team. Have closed two classrooms – there are many behind the scenes stressors. Seeing a shift of more students going remote – new cohort enrollment numbers were provided in the packet. Staff attendance data along with a snap shot of what we have had to cover is attached for your review. Dr. Goguen said this is not an easy situation and asked for the continued support of the School Committee and parents

Chair Seddiki thanked Dr. Goguen and Ms. Sullivan for her information. Knowing the hard work to keep everyone safe, getting kids back into school is great but it's not that easy.

3. Winter Sports Update

Principal Thomas and Dr. Goguen attended a meeting with other SWCL principals and superintendents. SWCL Principal letter attached for your review. At this time Dr. Goguen said she would like to hold off beginning winter sports until January 4th but proceed with signups, knowing there is a strong likelihood that the winter season will be cancelled. Ms. Sullivan is unable to support at this time. We are being forced to make decisions without the data supporting it. We want normal back, understand the benefits.

Mr. Thomas spoke of all the SWCL meetings he and Athletic Director, Tony Paranto and Dr. Goguen have been attending. He said there is a lot of conflicting guidelines. We have a pod designed that will limit our exposure. Sports are grounding for many students if the numbers (COVID cases) support sports, it would greatly benefit our kids. MIAA said we would start 12/14, there are some district that are pushing that back, but cautious since Fall II starts the end of February.

Dr. Goguen said it was decided that all SWCL would proceed as a group. Mr. Paranto did an amazing job in the fall season.

There was continued discussion among SC members regarding fall sports – cases, quarantine, protocols, and safety measures. Dr. Goguen want to clarify that Webster will be sticking with the other SWCL districts. Member Adamopoulos asked if the SWCL agrees to play what role does the Board of Health have. Dr. Goguen said decisions would be made in conjunction with Webster Board of Heath. Again, she wanted to be crystal clear that we will not made a decision that will isolate Webster. Ms. Sullivan said she is open to revisiting this in January, right now she can't approve based on data. Member Napierata asked for clarification of the approval process. Dr. Goguen said we are doing our best, it is a superintendent decision, we will make a unified decision with other SWCL members and the BOH. Member Blythe asked if this will include middle school students. Mr. Paranto said there will be MS sign ups, but we do not have confirmation other districts will include middle school sports.

4. Other update

- Public Shout Out to the Webster Police and EMS, Oxford Police and State Police for their response to an emergency situation we faced at WMS last week. School Resource Office, Tim Whiting has been working with our students and families.
- The virtual parent/teacher conferences went very well. Reports from some teachers at the high school that there was more participation this way than in years past. May consider continuing conferences this way in the future.
- MSBA Design Selection Meeting occurred on 12/1. Monique Pierangeli, Ted Avlas and Superintendent Goguen participated in the interview process of the top 3 candidates. Dore and Whittier Architects, Flansburg Associates, Inc. and Miller Dyer Spears, Inc. Flansburgh Associates have been selected as our architects for the BHS project. Our OPM, Ken Guyette is in the process of working with them on their fee proposal. The next SBC Meeting is scheduled for 12/17.
- The FY22 Budget calendar is being presented tonight. Individual meetings are in process with each department.
- It starts at Home Organization is supporting 60 students with gifts with year. Due to the COVID pandemic, families have granted permission for this organization to drop off the gifts directly to home.
- Custodian Negotiations are scheduled for December 13.
- PD grids for the December 4th ½ day are attached for your review. Thank you to our Curriculum Director Jill Chapdelaine for her ongoing efforts. December 21-23 PD grid are in process and align with our Sustainable Improvement Plans for WMS and BHS. Topics will include: differentiation in a blended model, using data to inform practices and lesson planning
- We are working round the clock to keep the district safe. We have been approved for the BINOX Now Shout out to Kathy Pepin for taking the lead. Mrs. Pepin gave an update. She said we are hoping to get the tests by the end of this week. The RN's have one more training. This can be given to staff and students that are symptomatic. There are criteria's that must be followed. Dr. Goguen said this is a great advantage for Webster Public Schools
- MCAS Update was given
- This is indeed a stressful time. Staff are working above and beyond. Proud to working this district – reminder to please be kind. Would like to wish everyone a Happy and Safe Holidays.

B. Business Manager Report

1. School Building Committee Update

Mrs. Pierangeli gave an outline of the process of the meeting December 1st in choosing the architect for the Bartlett renovation project. The 13 member panel included Mrs. Pierangeli, Dr. Goguen and Ted Avlas. Flansburgh Associates have been chosen she has full confidence they will do an outstanding job. Once a contract is negotiated the School Building Committee will meet then the recommendation will come to the School Committee.

2. FY21 Budget

The FY21 Budget (as of 12/4/2020) was presented. Seeing a cost savings on substitutes, utility savings at PAE. An explanation of the SPED Tuition (page 18) and Circuit Breaker calculations was given, in the end we are still looking at a \$400,000 surplus given we prepaid from the FY20 budget. Member Adamopoulos asked about a specific line item in BHS English Sub – Mrs. Pierangeli said that is a long term sub. Mrs. Pierangeli pointed out each school's maintenance COVID line - those items can be applied to the CARES act and will be journaled over to the appropriate grant.

3. Transportation Update

Last year when school was closed the state required we pay our transportation company in full even though services were not rendered. Districts made payments at 75% of their contract – that legislative ended on 6/30/2020. We now only have to pay for the days that we attend school and use the busses. Legislative was just extended looking for compensation for the full 180 days (even though we are going 170 days). We're working with local districts, but every school model is different. Recommending to hold off paying to see what the Federal Govt. may be offering in PPP benefits to the transportation companies.

4. Before and After School Program

This program benefits PAE families. This has always been a successful program running with a profit. Last year we ended with \$162,000 in the revolving account - we were looking to pay 0.5FTE custodian from this program. Due to COVID enrollment is down, if this trend continues we will have a \$23,000 deficit. Recommending at this time to only pay 0.1FTE from this revolving account and move 0.4FTE into the LEA budget.

Motion: To move 0.4FTE custodian back to LEA Budget to offset Before and After Care Program revolving account.

The motion was made by Member Blythe

The motion was seconded by Member Millet

The following roll call vote was taken:

5 members having voted in the affirmative

 members having voted in the negative

 members having abstained

The motion: X passed

 Failed

5. Budget Calendar

Typically we begin budget discussions in November, but with COVID we have been preoccupied. The schedule is condensed. We will present a rough draft to the School Committee in January. Usually the Governor comes out with numbers in January. Typically send our budget to the Town Administrator in the end of February. Public Hearing in April and Town Meeting in May. We are planning for 2021-2022 school year to be back 100%

C. Principal Report – Fran Thomas, Bartlett High School

1. Hybrid Update / Cohort Numbers

Mr. Thomas said there has been a shift in cohorts. On 11/13 Cohort was 102 – down to 75. Cohort B was 106 – down to 72. Cohort has increased to 33. Cohort D was 147 on 11/13 and now is 204. We are reviewing student grades and offering students to come in for Cohort C. The next group to invite into Cohort C would be seniors with failing grades. We must review classroom distancing and bus capacity – it is a multi-step process in selecting students.

Member Seddiki commented on the outreach efforts to bring students back.

2. Innovative Pathways Update

Completed Part A of the application. We were invited to complete Part B, it is due in February. Reaching out to our community partners. It was encouraging that we were selected for the next phase.

3. Dell/WPI Pilot Program through Blackstone Valley Educational Foundation

Made connections with Blackstone Valley Educational Foundation – looking for 20-30 sophomores interested in STEM. They will have a virtual tour of Dell, be put in teams to work with Dell engineers on some current problems that Dell is working on. This is a recruiting model, looking for diverse population students. It is a great opportunity and will start in mid-January.

IV. Student Rep Update – Vivian Poplawski

- Winter Athletics season is awaiting approval by the state
- Students are finding that in-person learning has helped to increase their focus and productivity during the school day
- NHS will be posting a video on 12/9 at 6:00 for the virtual induction ceremony
- Bartlett implementing Positive Behavior Intervention System to encourage social distancing – students with tickets drawn at the end of the month will win a prize
- Faculty and students doing an amazing job with hybrid model. All the hard work hasn't gone unnoticed. We appreciate everything that is being done. Very stressful semester.

V. Old Business

VI. New Business

A. Acceptance of donation from Sts. Constantine & Helen Church – Thanksgiving Turkeys

We graciously received 22 turkey baskets and 22 gift cards for PAE and WMS families

Motion: To accept donation of 22 turkey baskets and 22 gift cards from Sts. Constantine & Helen Church

The motion was made by Member Napierata

The motion was seconded by Member Blythe

The following roll call vote was taken:

5 members having voted in the affirmative

 members having voted in the negative

 members having abstained

The motion: X passed

 Failed

Chair Seddiki extended a thank you on behalf of the Committee, their generosity much appreciated

B. Approval of Job Description – Adult Ed – Daytime Instructional Technologist Specialist/Data Specialist

Mrs. Baker said this is a new position. These were two positions that were posted separately since August – we reorganized/combined to make this more attractive for applicants.

Chair Seddiki asked how we are funding this position – Mrs. Pierangeli said it as grant funded.

Motion: To approve the Adult Education – Daytime Instructional Technologist Specialist/Data Specialist Job Description as presented

The motion was made by Member Blythe

The motion was seconded by Member Napierata

The following roll call vote was taken:

5 members having voted in the affirmative

 members having voted in the negative

 members having abstained

The motion: X passed

 Failed

VI. Review / Transfer / Signing of Bills, Payrolls and Vouchers:

There were no questions on the warrant

Member Millet asked Chair Seddiki to acknowledge the letter we received from the teachers with their concerns. Chair Seddiki read a letter. Ms. Jeffers clarified that the letter is not from the WEA, but from individual teachers. Mrs. Sarah Cole spoke on behalf of some teachers that wrote letters addressing their concerns. She feels it is a disservice to our community to have in person instruction. We all want the students in school but it is not worth it – it's not safe. The letter concluded asking School Committee to reconsider in person learning.

There were some parent comments, Chair Seddiki reminded participants that this is a business meeting, and we do not have public comment at this time.

Superintendent Goguen stressed that everyone is feeling stressed – everyone is entitled to their opinions. She has taken nothing more serious than the safety of students and staff. At the current time we have been looking carefully at our data. Every day parents have a decision that they can make to send their student to school – our educators don't have the ability to make that decision. We must be respectful. At any point there could be a shift to remote learning.

Member Millet reiterated Dr. Goguen's comments.

X. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 7:53 PM

The motion was made by Member Adamopoulos

The motion was seconded by Member Blythe

The following roll call vote was taken:

5 members having voted in the affirmative

 members having voted in the negative

 members having abstained

The motion: X passed

 Failed

Respectfully Submitted,

Lori Marrazzo

Documents included in the packet:

- November 24, 2020 Minutes
- Letter from Webster Board of Health re: Winter Sports
- Cohort enrollment data
- SWCL letter re: winter sports
- 12/4/2020 Professional Development Grids
- MSBA Designer Selection
- Staff absences data
- FY21 Budget
- Transportation update
- Before and After School Program data
- FY22 Budget Calendar
- Adult Education – Job Description – Daytime Instructional Technologist Data Specialist
- Warrant