

BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
APRIL 29, 2020
MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Brookline School Board was conducted on Wednesday, April 29, 2020 at 5:02 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library.

Kenneth Haag, Chairman, presided:

Board Members Participating: Erin Sarris, Vice Chairman
 Karen Jew, Secretary
 Rebecca Howie
 Alison Marsano

Members of the Board Absent:

Also Participating: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
 Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
 Bob Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
 Dennis Dobe, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy
 Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis, and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically.

Board members and members of the Administration were participating via ZOOM. Each member of the Board was asked to state, for the record, where they were, why their attendance in person was not reasonably practical, who, if anyone, was with them, and whether or not they were able to hear the proceedings.

Vice Chairman Sarris

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Member Jew

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Member Marsano

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Member Howie

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Chairman Haag

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

It was acknowledged all members participating electronically could be heard. The Board was reminded all votes would be taken by Roll Call.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS

Superintendent Corey requested the Board set the date of its next meeting prior to adjourning.

NOMINATIONS/RESIGNATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE

Assistant Superintendent Thompson informed the Board of his nomination of Amanda Morin to the position of Special Education Administrator at a salary of \$84,000/year.

Ms. Morin has served in the capacity of School Psychologist for a number of years, and expressed an interest in the position. A representative group of stakeholders serving on a screening committee screened several applications and interviewed a small number of candidates. Through that process, Amanda emerged as the leading contender with unanimous support of the committee.

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO ACCEPT THE NOMINATION OF AMANDA MORIN FOR THE POSITION OF BROOKLINE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR AT AN ANNUAL SALARY OF EIGHTY FOUR THOUSAND (\$84,000) DOLLARS
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Erin Sarris, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Rebecca Howie, Kenneth Haag
5
Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC INPUT

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Spoke of appreciation for the efforts around remote learning understanding the challenges faced. He commented on the challenges also being faced in the community with a much higher unemployment rate than that which existed two months ago. He asked the Board to consider opportunities for savings in the current school year that could have a positive impact on the tax rate.

Mr. Pauer spoke of the agenda item to authorize the Superintendent to hire, etc. during this time, and questioned why that would be necessary when the Board continues to meet on a regular basis.

Chairman Haag commented on the Board's practice of providing the Superintendent the authority to hire, accept resignations and terminate staff during the summer months when meetings are not conducted as frequently.

He spoke of the sentiment regarding cost savings as one he believes to be appreciated by all.

PRINCIPALS' REPORT

Dennis Dobe, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy (CSDA), spoke of how the educators have transformed learning over the past several weeks in ways that could never have been anticipated. The Administrative Team has conducted ongoing meetings to plan, coordinate, and make the decisions that have resulted in what the remote learning program has come to be. Teachers have been working tirelessly.

Principal Dobe went over the process that was undertaken during the transition to remote learning, the ability to maintain daily routines for students, e.g., morning announcements, Zoom meetings that provide direct instruction (small and large groups), class meetings and office hours. All teachers, specialists and departments maintain remote learning webpages.

Through Google Classroom, teachers are able to electronically assign work, monitor progress in real time, write comments and exchange ideas about the work as it is being created, students can submit the work, and teachers have the opportunity to assess it at the end of the process. Students are doing reports, projects, homework, taking tests, etc. School is as normal and consistent to the regular norms as possible.

Meal programs are ongoing through school lunch services and End Hunger 68.

Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School (RMMS), expressed his gratitude for the phenomenal work being done and for the level of support provided by the families.

Students have submitted materials that will be shared, as part of a virtual talent show, via a link posted to the District's website on Friday evening.

Virtual Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and staff meetings are conducted on a weekly basis.

Progress reports will go out on Tuesday. Student attendance is being tracked as is participation, engagement, and academic progress. Principal Molinari noted Guidance Counselors and Administration are keeping in touch with teachers to identify those students who may need a little push to get going with their work. At RMMS, they have full participation. Principal Dobe commented on his belief there has been a slight drop in participation in student engagement this week, but many of the students are staying right with the program. They have paid a great deal of attention to monitoring attendance and student engagement. Over the course of remote learning, one of their prime goals has been to maintain a connection with their students.

Principal Dobe praised the custodial staff for the efforts undertaken and the work conducted, e.g., washing/sanitizing all hard surfaces, installation of touchless paper towel dispensers and automatic flushers for toilets, painting; hallways, classrooms, bulletin boards. Principal Molinari echoed the remarks regarding the maintenance projects being undertaken. He spoke of some of the projects being completed at CSDA, e.g., painting, floor resurfacing.

Asked about other improvement opportunities the District may look to achieve during this time, Principal Dobe spoke of the level of cleaning that will take place once the school year has truly ended and students and teachers have received their personal belongings. At that point, in addition to addressing classrooms, the custodians will be looking towards projects such as the exterior doors; 20 years old, and in need of repair (corrosion). To the extent they can save the door jams, they will. Some funds have been budgeted for replacement/restoration, as needed. Exterior doors will be painted, and windows washed. The gym bleachers will likely be striped and resurfaced.

Principal Molinari commented on being in the bidding process for some projects. Projects being looked at related to improvements include exterior lighting, window upgrades, air handler replacement and replacement of the last boiler. In addition, bids will be sought for exterior cameras.

DISCUSSION

- Transportation

Superintendent Corey commented on the many developments around the [CARES Act](#). The Business Office is working with legal counsel and the transportation company, Student Transportation of America (STA). STA has provided information on what they have identified as essential components of their business. That information was forwarded to legal counsel, and a conference call is scheduled for Monday.

It is hoped a compensation breakdown will be able to be shared in the coming weeks. There are components that are tied into the contract and those that are calculated on a daily basis. The District does not compensate STA for fuel. Fuel is purchased directly by the District. Current fuel usage is only that associated with regular runs the buses would take during summer months to ensure they are turned on and run periodically. All buses were recently inspected (passed). STA has two full-time employees working at the bus barn to ensure all required activities continue.

Vice Chairman Sarris questioned elements of the CARES Act, and the District's liability with regard to compliance should bus drivers not be needed. Superintendent Corey indicated that is being looked into. He does not believe it will be the case in this situation because of the scope and size of STA; do not believe they qualify under the CARES Act. The big element of the CARES Act, and one that could be a cost to all three districts within the SAU is the potential cost of special education services that we may not be able to deliver. We will work to offset any of those costs. He had a conversation several weeks ago with Brian Rater, Chairman, Brookline Finance Committee and Tad Putney, Town Administrator. They agreed they would look at all purchase orders and components to determine what could be delayed or foregone as there is the need to look at the situation from a budgetary standpoint to determine what can be done to offset next year's tax rate as a means of providing some relief to the taxpayers. The intent is to submit a revenue and expense report for the May meeting to begin outlining those items and give projections of where that work is heading.

- Special Education Update

Assistant Superintendent Thompson thanked the staff for their hard work noting the result to be a continuity of service for the students. The vast majority of students are receiving the same level of services they were when we were in the physical school environment. This is important for the obvious reason of wanting to improve student outcomes and learning, but also given the obligation to provide those services. The more we are able to provide now, the less difficult it will be to catch up on what is owed

when returning to the in-school environment. Students are receiving speech services, O.T. services, specialized reading programs. Those services are being provided through Zoom very effectively both individually and in small groups.

There are challenges to remote learning for both regular education students and those having a disability. Where appropriate, we are able to provide supports to students in addition to what they would be receiving, only in attempts to not have these students regress. He extended his gratitude to all members of Student Services, and in particular recognized the work of the paraeducators who have, in a short amount of time, created a model that provides for individual and small group support. There are a lot of paraeducators who are spending their days hopping from one Zoom meeting to another to support students in this time of remote learning.

The process of planning the Extended School Year (ESY) program is underway. The ESY program is for students with disabilities who have been identified as having possible regression if not provided with support over the summer months. The tentative plan is to run the ESY program from June 29th to August 14th. This is an extension of ESY by two weeks. Under normal circumstances, the ESY Program typically begins 2 weeks after the end of the school year. Research indicates waiting longer than 2 weeks could result in regression. Knowing the start of the next school year is not until September 3rd is why the program is extended at the end as well. The planned timeframe will provide greater opportunities for our students in the progress towards their goals and will help to reduce the obligation that would be owed to them when we exit remote learning and return to the regular school environment.

- Remote Learning Update; Including Curriculum Plan for Fall

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug spoke of the survey that was sent out on the morning of April 2nd and closed on the evening of April 6th (49% participation).

Every comment received was read, and the feedback reviewed with each building Principal. Together they developed specific building implementation plans for addressing the concerns. The plans truly demonstrated a willingness on the part of the teachers and Administrators to receive feedback, grow, learn, and implement. The mindset has been that with every piece of feedback there is an opportunity for professional growth. We have been able to identify specialists within our own teaching faculty and make connections of who can help in the different areas and really improve what we are doing. The feedback since then has been appreciation of the changes that have been implemented. Both RMMS and CSDA have been doing a phenomenal job and have been models for our and other districts.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug remarked now that we are roughly half-way through remote learning, and starting to talk about the end of the school year, it is important to begin the work of curriculum analysis in our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This is something we do every year; think about where we are, where we typically are, what we will cover completely, what we will cover but perhaps with not as much depth, and what curriculum areas are just not going to be addressed this year. Although we do this work every year; we just expect that this year our conversations will be a little different. Time will be given to figure out how do we then implement next year the curriculum that sort of starts from a different place. What is great about most of our standards is that they spiral through. The intention is that you will see concepts year after year, and learn them just a little bit better each time. Rather than saying remember when, it is a little bit different; it's let's introduce a topic based on not the foundation you had maybe in 4th grade, but understanding that maybe that foundation wasn't there in 4th grade, you have to go back to the 3rd grade.

In addition, there will be the process of planning for next year. We are planning for multiple possible scenarios; what does it look like if we return to school under a typical environment, a remote environment, some hybrid model. It was a challenge to leave the classroom, but students knew their teacher and classroom. It would be different to start a school year in a remote environment. Were we to start a school year in a remote environment, the District would dedicate professional development on how to create a community in that environment.

Chairman Haag questioned if consideration has been given to an opportunity for half the class size and social distancing, e.g., one week on/one week off, whether there is data to suggest whether winter months are worse for COVID-19, etc. He questioned what might occur if we were to return to a classroom environment and had to return to remote learning three months in. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug remarked the Administration is working to consider all conceivable scenarios that could play out. We do start the school year much later than many other states. Some states, such as California, that start in the 2nd week of August, are developing procedures and protocols whereby half the class is physically present in school two days a week and participate remotely the other days, lunches are served in classrooms, and other models for delivering services. We are taking information from the CDC in regard to what we need to be doing, but we will also have the luxury of other districts in other states opening up first and being able to learn from what does and does not work for those districts. What is important is consistency; that we continue to be thoughtful about the direction we take so that we can be consistent.

Vice Chairman Sarris spoke of differentiation that occurs in the classroom regularly and commented it will be interesting to see the data and what the outcome will be after this time noting there could be positive outcomes that can inform curriculum. She questioned how that information will be collected and used moving forward.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug commented there is the potential for the need for additional differentiation. There are a lot of different tools that will be used to determine where we are and how to best meet the needs of all of our learners. This time we will go into the process with the expectation we might see a wider range of where students are. An interesting point that was alluded to is that some of our students are thriving in this environment. Some of our older COOP students who just cannot do the school environment, but now that they are on their own time at their own pace, are really just participating at a higher rate. She reiterated in every year there are students who will be exactly where they should be, some who will have regressed and some who will have excelled. Each year there will be some students who will have a year of tremendous growth intellectually; their brain is prime for learning at that time, and there are some who will have physical growth spurts that can take away from intellectual growth spurts, which just happens with typical development. We are always monitoring students and where they are. This year we will just do it a little differently. Principal Molinari has had to figure out what it will look like for kindergarten screening because we are not doing screening in May; how do you get that information as soon as possible but without foregoing that developing of the classroom community in kindergarten when it is potentially their first exposure to the classroom. All of these situations are being thought of and considered. A lot of attention is being paid to these situations.

- School Breakfast Prices FY21

Noted was the increased cost of fruit, which has resulted in the recommendation for an increase to the price of breakfast across the SAU. Recommended is an increase from \$1.50 to \$1.75 effective August 1, 2020.

Superintendent Corey recognized Amy Cassidy, Food Service Director, and the food service workers for the outstanding work they have been doing in providing families with meals. On Mondays, families receive 4 meals, and on Wednesdays 6. End 68, a non-profit organization, and one a Hollis teacher participates in, has been doing incredible work securing goods and services people need for the weekends. A virtual 5K fundraiser is ongoing, and has raised \$3,700, to date, to be donated to End 68.

- Facility/Maintenance Projects Update

Superintendent Corey thanked the Principals and the custodial staff for the work that has been done in the buildings. Projects that desperately need to be done, that we typically do not have time for, are now being addressed. This work is resulting in long-term savings.

- Transition Plans for New Principal of CSDA

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the new Principal of CSDA, Patricia Bouley, will be officially on board July 1st. Ms. Bouley has participated in meetings, via Zoom, with her and Principal Molinari. In addition to her colleagues, a Principal mentor has been arranged so that she has a colleague in a different district with a different perspective that she can bounce ideas off of. As she and the Superintendent do with all Administrators, they will arrange for every other week meetings (sometimes together as a District and sometimes separate). For the first year there is the desire for every other meeting to be individual so that any questions can be answered, and any needed support provided.

- Transition Plans for Step-Up and Movement to New Buildings

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug noted this to be a topic at the weekly leadership meetings. The primary focus has been the graduating seniors. They are looking at what it will look like for a 3rd grade student to go up to CSDA for the first time, and in the absence of a step-up day, what it will look like for the 6th grade students to leave the Brookline School District in this fashion. They are exploring all different possibilities.

For 7th grade there is an optional registration day in August. There has been discussion around the potential of making that team based. Typically the step-up day is done in teams where half the 6th grade class from HUES and half the 6th grade class from CSDA would go up and meet each other and their teachers for the first time. Registration day could be done by teams, which would provide for a much later version of that first meet and greet. Tim Girzone, Principal, Hollis Brookline Middle School, is looking into making the open house for 6th grade parents a remote experience.

Superintendent Corey commented the Administration is considering all possibilities for ways of celebrating milestones. An update should be available in the middle of the month. He spoke of the level of support the communities have expressed. Vice Chairman Sarris suggested a committee be formed inclusive of parent volunteers. Superintendent Corey spoke of his bi-weekly participation in COVID-19 updates, and how things appear to be changing quickly, this time in a positive direction. There is the belief there may be more flexibility around how many students can meet. Were there the opportunity to take advantage of the good deal of property at CSDA and RMMS, there are more than enough volunteers. He is interested in getting to the May 4th deadline as he believes a different update will be provided at that time. With Massachusetts having extended their deadline to May 18th, he would not be surprised to see New Hampshire stay consistent with that just because of the number of families that interact across the border from a work standpoint.

The other questions we need to ask are were we to do something would we be required to take everyone's temperature, would we need to provide PPE for every student, etc. Those are questions that need to be answered. When the Administration reaches the point where there is a comfort level with the available alternatives, a survey or committee would be appropriate to determine what would best serve the needs of the community.

The next meeting date was set as May 13th. The meeting time will be determined and posted.

DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board will take regarding authorizing the Superintendent to hire, accept resignations and terminate staff during the months until returning to in-person school

MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO AUTHORIZE THE SUPERINTENDENT TO HIRE, ACCEPT RESIGNATIONS, AND TERMINATE STAFF DURING THE MONTHS UNTIL RETURNING TO IN-PERSON SCHOOL, AND REQUIRE NOTIFICATION TO THE BOARD OF SUCH ACTIONS

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS

ON THE QUESTION

Superintendent Corey stated the request to be related more to the difficult hiring market than frequency of meetings. He spoke of a situation encountered in Hollis where a candidate needed to know if an offer was being made by Friday or they would be accepting a position elsewhere. The candidate pools of 25-30 applicants are not happening any longer. There are few openings in the District. The process starts with a building committee, which forwards a recommendation to the Assistant Superintendents and Superintendent who conduct a second interview before moving a candidate forward. Past practice has been to inform the Board of new hires. Traditionally, during the summer months, it has been through email. In this fashion, it would be through Zoom.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug spoke of the summer resignation that occurred last year. Without the ability to accept a resignation, you cannot post and advertise for the new position. The authority allows for the process to continue in what has proven to be a challenging hiring environment.

Chairman Haag commented on the fact that through the budgetary cycle and policies, the Board sets what the hiring plan is. He has faith in the Administration to identify the best candidates for the positions. He has always been supportive of this action, and the Administration has always operated within the hiring plan.

Member Marsano stated agreement.

Vice Chairman Sarris spoke of her confidence in the Administration conducting the process in the most efficient way possible, while keeping the Board informed.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag
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Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the last day of the school year

Superintendent Corey stated his recommendation for a tiered approach. The final date would be June 12th. The week of the 8th through the 12th would be for students who need to make up work, remediation, special education services as well as classroom closures. The District will easily exceed the number of hours the State requires, and will meet the number of contractual days for teachers. Through continuing with remote learning during what would have been April vacation (gained back snow days used) and the fact that the District is not doing state assessments this year (gain of instructional hours), the last instructional day is proposed for June 5th.

**MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO SET THE LAST DAY OF THE 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR AS JUNE 12, 2020
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag
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Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

- To see what action the Board will take regarding school breakfast prices for the 2020-2021 school year

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO INCREASE THE PRICE OF SCHOOL BREAKFAST AT THE CAPTAIN SAMUEL DOUGLASS ACADEMY AND THE RICHARD MAGHAKIAN MEMORIAL SCHOOL TO ONE DOLLAR AND SEVENTY FIVE CENTS (\$1.75), EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 2020
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE**

ON THE QUESTION

Asked if there is the need to increase the cost of school lunches at this time, Superintendent Corey commented on the tremendous job Amy Cassidy, Director, Food Services, has done, and stated there to be no need for an increase in the cost of school lunches.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag
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Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY MEMBER HOWIE TO ADJOURN
SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

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Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The April 29, 2020 meeting of the Brookline School Board was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____