

Marion – Mattapoisett – Rochester, Massachusetts
August 10, 2020
MINUTES

Special meeting of the Old Rochester Regional District School Committee, held on Tuesday, August 10, 2020, at 5:00 p.m. Please note this meeting was held remotely via zoom.

PRESENT: Cary Humphrey, Chairperson; Heather Burke, Vice-Chairperson, Michelle Smith, James Muse, Suzanne Tseki, Frances Kearns, Margaret McSweeny, Joe Pires and Tina Rood.

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: NONE.

ALSO PRESENT: Michael S. Nelson, Superintendent, Michael Devoll, High School Principal, Silas Coellner, Jr. High School Principal, Diana Russo, secretary to the Superintendent, members of the administrative team, parents, staff members and members of the press.

MEETING TO ORDER: Chair Humphrey opened the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

Mr. Nelson asked Chairperson Humphrey if Mr. Devoll could address the school committee. Mr. Devoll expressed to the school committee that he had sad news to report. Mr. Devoll reported that ORR community just heard that Sam Ellis an ORR 2018 graduate passed away over the weekend. Mr. Devoll expressed the Sam was a beloved member of the class of 2018, Mr. Devoll expressed that Sam had many friends at ORR and he asked for a moment of silence for Sam Ellis.

IV. General

A. Approval of 20-21 Reopening Schools Plan

Mr. Nelson expressed that he was happy to report that the elementary school committees had all approved and adopted the current back to school plan. The Superintendent thanked all tri-town stakeholders for their support and patience throughout these unprecedented times and expressed his gratitude to everyone who has been working on the reopening plans. He expressed that it is an honor for him to work in towns that are so involved in their school community. Mr. Nelson asked that Chairperson Humphrey to allow Principals from our Tri-Town Schools to participate in the presentation. Chairperson Humphrey allowed the principals to participate.

Superintendent Nelson, Principal Devoll, Principal Coellner and Principal Sirois presented the draft plan to the school committee (please see attached). The Superintendent's recommendation is that the school committee approve a hybrid plan to start the 2020-2021 school year. The superintendent reminded the school committee that this plan is very fluid and could change at any time. The superintendent also mentioned that guidance has come from DESE requiring districts to have 10 training days for staff before students start the school year, therefore Mr. Nelson explained that the school calendar would be reviewed for those changes at a Joint School Committee Meeting on August 12th.

Ms. Burke asked about the remote learning model schedule and if that model would be the same if the whole school went into remote learning again like we did in the spring.

Mr. Nelson expressed that if the whole school into a remote learning schedule again as we did in the spring we would have to look at the schedule again and there might be changes due to staffing.

Ms. Tseki asked about the students who are moving from class to class, will those students be staying with the same group of students or will they be interacting with different groups of students.

Mr. Nelson expressed that it depends on the grade level, he stated that at the elementary and the Junior High level it's a little easier, however at the High School level it does become a little more complex, and he asked Mr. Devoll to elaborate. Mr. Devoll expressed that his taskforce explored many different options but unfortunately they didn't work for the high school. He expressed that in order for the high school to provide a strong academic experience which included, multi-level electives they needed to have students in different cohorts, Mr. Devoll did explain that they are giving students more time to pass in between classes to remain safe.

Mr. Humphrey asked Mr. Nelson to elaborate about the teaching expectations for the teaching staff, more importantly where would they be teaching from.

Mr. Nelson expressed that all of those specifics would be discussed in negotiations, however if allowed the district would want as many teachers in our buildings as possible in both hybrid and remote learning models, although Mr. Nelson understands that each teacher may have a different scenario that may fall into a protected category and we would need to work with our human resources department to make sure that we are putting everyone in the best possible situation.

Ms. McSweeny expressed that she appreciates all the work that's gone into this plan, and she asked about the mental health needs and how students would be supported in the social emotional aspect.

Mr. Nelson expressed that we continue to be committed to our Responsive Classroom approach whether it's in-person or remote, he expressed that staff have been received training for many, many years, and he believes they can make it applicable. Mr. Nelson also expressed that our school psychologists and school adjustment counselors will be working with students and families about how schools will be looking drastically different this year, and as well as supporting our teachers as staff who are navigating a new reality as well.

Ms. Kearns expressed she's thankful for all the work that went into the plan and that given the circumstances it was well put together and very detailed. She expressed she had questions, Ms. Kearns asked how much it would cost for the increased cleaning schedule and how it would affect the budget.

Mr. Nelson expressed that the district will be working with the three towns to access the CARES funds through Plymouth County to help secure funds for extra costs that come from COVID related needs, such as PPE and cleaning supplies. Mr. Nelson expressed that the towns have been very supportive. Mr. Nelson also stated that in some districts they will use their own staff to do the extra cleaning and in others they will use contracted services.

Ms. Kearns asked about what discipline measures related to ensuring that staff and students maintain discipline required to adhere to masking and hygiene policies.

Mr. Nelson stated that the most important measure will be to provide training for our staff and students, Mr. Nelson also mentioned that tomorrow, August 11th the Policy committee will be reviewing a face covering policy that will drive procedures as well as a remote learning policy, Mr. Nelson expressed that the strategy will be policy, procedure, training and implementation. Mr. Nelson expressed that discipline is the least desired path, but accountability and making sure everyone understands why it's so important to have full compliance around these social distancing measures.

Ms. Burke asked if we would be able to access CARES funding for technology as well.

Mr. Nelson expressed that the first round of CARES funding we were able to secure PPE, Mr. Nelson expressed that the second piece was a competitive summer grant which we applied and received \$12,000 per district we also applied for a competitive technology grant and received \$160,000 throughout the four districts. Mr. Nelson expressed that once we have more concrete information from parents around who will be remote and who will be hybrid we will have more details about the technology plan and needs.

Ms. Smith expressed that for some members this the second viewing of the plan and she's very thankful for all the work and thoughtfulness that went into this plan. She believes it's a well detailed plan.

Mr. Humphrey thanked Mr. Nelson for his leadership and all his work on this plan. Mr. Humphrey expressed that he understands this is a fluid situation but he wanted to thank the administrative team for a job well done.

Mr. Nelson thanked Mr. Humphrey for his praise and also thanked all the teachers, staff and families of the Tri-Town for their support and work on this plan. Mr. Nelson expressed he is extremely proud to serve the Tri-Town districts, and also stated that he is empathic in knowing that this plan might not meet the needs of all families, however he's doing his best to meet the needs of all families while keeping everyone safe.

Ms. Burke wanted to expressed her gratitude to the High School taskforce, she thought it was such a productive working group and their innovative and creative ideas that came from the group was the most innovative plan that she had seen, she believes all voices were heard so that the best learning outcomes will be had. She expressed that it was exciting to be part of that team.

MOTION: by Ms. Smith to approve the reopening plan as presented with the understanding that it might change

SECOND: Mr. Muse

ROLL CALL VOTE: 9:0 (Humphrey: YES, Kearns: YES, Burke: YES, McSweeny: YES, Tseki: YES, Muse: YES, Smith: YES, Rood: YES, Pires: YES)

B. Health & Safety (ORPEA)

Mr. Nelson expressed that Dr. Everett has asked to be added to the agenda to discuss Health and Safety items. Mr. Nelson thanked the Association, Dr. Everett and Mr. McEvoy for having open lines of communication with administration and the school committee

Dr. Everett thanked Mr. Nelson and Mr. Humphrey and he echoed Mr. Nelson's sentiments. Dr. Everett expressed that the educators at ORR miss their students and they are eager for the resumption of school, he expressed that like everyone we want a safe learning environment. Dr. Everett expressed that ORPEA developed these benchmarks, they brainstormed, they researched, Dr. Everett explained that as you look these over some of them are done, some are in process and some we may need to develop a plan for.

Dr. Colin Everett, President of the ORPEA stated the following health and safety benchmarks:
ORR Reopening Health and Safety Benchmarks

- *Clearly delineated public health standards for moving through the stages (remote, hybrid, in-person) of reopening and how we should react to potential COVID-19 cases at ORR.*
- *Safe Ventilation*
- *Independent evaluation of the HVAC System.¹*
- *Increased maintenance and filter replacement during the COVID-19 pandemic (MERV 13 filters, Bipolar ionization, ultraviolet energy (UV-C).²*
- *Available and effective personal protective equipment*
- *District-provided personal protective equipment (PPE) and materials (disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer) available to all persons inside the schools. ³*
- *Clear and enforced standards for acceptable PPE use and compliance.*
- *No use of windowless classrooms or offices.⁴*
- *Nurse's office upgraded to DESE/State standards⁵*
- *Isolation Room separate from nurse's office.*
- *Protocols for dealing with confirmed cases.*
- *Bathrooms/handwashing*
- *Sufficient handwashing sinks.*
- *Soap in no-touch dispensers and running water in all sinks.⁶*
- *Protocols for shared devices/materials*
- *Plexiglass barrier to public offices/desks*
- *Regular disinfection of learning and work spaces.⁷*
- *Develop a plan consistent with CDC guidelines, maintain a cleaning log, utilize the best technologies, implement routine (touch point and deep) cleaning and disinfecting, follow CDC and EPA guidance for cleaning hard and porous surfaces, maintain and revise the plan when needed, disinfect safely.*
- *Each room and office is supplied with a stock of cleaning supplies.*
- *District compliance with Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA) and the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (ESPSLA)*

¹ Riley, Jeffrey J. "Assessments of School Building Facilities, HVAC Systems, and More:." *Commissioner's Weekly Update* . Accessed August 3, 2020.

<https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/commissioners-weekly-update-8-3-20-additional-reopening-guidance-history-teacher-of-the-year-learnlaunch-partnership?e=583fc2bc03>.

² ASHRAE. "Filtration/Disinfection." *American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers*. Accessed August 6, 2020. <https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/filtration-disinfection>.

³ Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Act. *Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19* . Accessed August 7, 2020. <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>.

⁴ Center for Disease Control. "COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings." *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Accessed August 9, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html>.

⁵ Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Jeffery Riley, comp. *Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance* . Accessed August 7, 2020. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dese-fall-reopening-guidance/download>.

⁶ Center for Disease Control. "Operational Considerations for Schools." *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Accessed August 9, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/global-covid-19/schools.html>.

⁷ Environmental Protection Agency and Center for Disease Control. "Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public

Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes." *Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public*

*Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes. Accessed August 8, 2020.
<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/guidance-cleaning-and-disinfecting-public-spacesworkplaces-businesses-schools-and-homes>.*

Mr. Humphrey thanked Dr. Everett for his report and concerns and asked if the school committee had any questions or comments.

Ms. McSweeney asked if we could use outdoor space at the Jr. High/High School complex for classroom settings and if that had been discussed.

Mr. Nelson expressed that yes we will be using outdoor spaces as weather permits, Mr. Nelson also stated that outdoor spaces would be used for mask breaks. Mr. Nelson also expressed that the district will look at rooms that don't have windows and possibly moving them, Mr. Nelson stated that all possibilities are open at this point. Mr. Nelson thanked Dr. Everett for the information he shared, he expressed it's not the first time he's seen this, he mentioned he's had on-going conversations, Mr. Nelson expressed that he appreciates the transparencies on both sides and that he will continue to work with Dr. Everett and the ORPEA on these very important issues.

Mr. Muse thanked Dr. Everett, he expressed that all his thoughts were very thoughtful and considerate of every person who will be entering into our building, he expressed it was good to hear these thoughts so we can take whatever action needs to be taken to make sure everyone is safe.

Mr. Pires commended thanked everyone for their work and commended the district for a very detailed plan, Mr. Pires expressed that he's proud that ORR is moving forward. Mr. Pires asked if masks would be supplied to students.

Mr. Nelson expressed that the guidance allows for students and staff to supply their own masks, Mr. Nelson expressed explained that there will be scenarios that the district will have to provide masks, and we took that very seriously, Mr. Nelson expressed that he feels the districts are in a very good position stating that they have ordered a variety of different masks, disposable ones, reusable ones and believes they will have enough masks for a sustainable amount of time.

Ms. Burke asked that Mr. Nelson direct a question to DESE about the scenario of opening a window or a door and how that may affect our safety measures.

Mr. Nelson thanked Ms. Burke for her comment and assured her that those conversations are on-going with DESE as they continue to discuss outdoor classroom possibilities such as tents and mask breaks.

Ms. Kearns asked if there was a schedule for the HVAC system to be reviewed. Mr. Nelson expressed that some of that work has already been started and that he anticipates it will be completed when Mr. Barber, the new Asst. Supt. of Finance and Planning starts on Monday.

Ms. Burke expressed that while this is a little off topic it's also related, she expressed that the Joint School Committee will be looking at the school calendar on August 12th and she encouraged the

ORR School Committee as they look at the calendar to look at it for the whole year and to possibly look at the February break and that it may not make sense in this new world, she expressed that she will also bring it up on Wednesday but she wanted to bring it up to this committee first.

Mr. Humphrey reported they have received a Demand to Bargain from the ORPEA and that he would like a member from each town to represent the school committee, Mr. Humphrey asked anyone who was interested to email him that night, he expressed he is looking for a team of three.

Mr. Humphrey reported that Mr. Nelson is in the process of working with the technology team to see how we can move forward to start to meet in person in a hybrid format, while still having the public joining us through zoom.

OPEN COMMENTS:

Ms. Sara Jacobsen spoke as a parent of a rising 9th grader and recent graduated senior at ORR, Ms. Jacobsen expressed that she felt this meeting needed to have some kind of notice of how extraordinary the graduation ceremony had been that past Saturday, she expressed that as a parent of a senior she was grateful for the opportunity to celebrate, and she expressed that if the way that was planned and executed has any indication of how the fall was going then she believes there's a lot of cause for optimism, she expressed the celebration was as safe as it could be while still being celebratory and as celebratory while still being safe, she expressed it was an extraordinary day and she's grateful.

Mr. Humphrey agreed 100% and also thought it was an awesome day.

Chris Welch, Marion Resident- Mr. Welch thanked the Chairperson for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Welch stated that is a parent with children in the tri-town and has not received any notifications, i.e. surveys or otherwise from the district. Mr. Welch asked, other than governor Baker telling you, you can get kids back to school full time, what will it take to get students back to school full-time in person. Mr. Welch stated that he has 5 children, 3 at Sippican and 2 at the High School, he expressed that the remote learning was a total failure for the elementary students due to immaturity, unable to maintain focus and discipline and my wife both work full time, he expressed they didn't have much success and he's not foreseeing any success in round 2 remote learning. Mr. Welch expressed that the death rates are very low and it seems like COVID 19 is not as horrific as the news media makes it out to be.

Mr. Nelson thanked Mr. Welch for sharing his perspective and asked that Mr. Welch enter put his contact information in the zoom chat so that his family can start receiving information/communication from the school. Mr. Nelson expressed that in-person (full-time) is what we all want, how to get there is the key, Mr. Nelson expressed that he is working closely with the board of health of all three towns making sure they are supportive of the direction that we are going in, Mr. Nelson expressed that currently this is the plan for now, but he hopes that will change for the future, he expressed that he continuously consults with our school physicians, Mr. Nelson mentioned that the main limitation is the social distancing recommendations of 3 to 6 feet and also the transportation limitations in terms of how many students can we safely get onto a school bus at this time, Mr. Nelson expressed that there are a ton of moving pieces and in an ideal world we

would have all of students back to full time in-person and as soon as we are able to do that safely that is our intent of the school district.

Mr. Welch thanked Mr. Nelson for his response and expressed that he will enter his information.

Randy Allain, an English teacher at ORR asked about PPE disbursement and also about the quality of the masks.

Mr. Nelson expressed that procedures would be put in place for disbursement of PPE as needed and he also explained that the district had ordered both cloth reusable masks as well as disposable ones from certified providers.

Mr. Allain thanked Mr. Nelson for his answer and expressed that everyone is hopeful that everything goes well as schools open up, and he also expressed that these hard questions need to be asked to make sure we are not sugar coating anything. He thanked everyone for their hard work and for giving him a few minutes to speak.

Kimberly Ward, expressed her concern for the lack of communication with students, she expressed that no communication has been sent home about a suicide hotline number, or the national association of mental health number, she expressed she's concerned about our kids and our parents, she explained that she's in a multi-generational family, therefore if COVID comes to her household her mother is likely to die, and she expressed that affects her mental health as well as her daughter's mental health. She expressed that the district has older staff and asked how are we going to handle when someone from our ORR community dies? She expressed that with this hybrid approach we are offering limited instruction and still have a risk, she applauded Mr. Allain for asking some hard questions, she expressed there are more hard questions.

Mr. Nelson thanked Ms. Ward for her feedback, and expressed that in the spring we did reach out to students that we in need of social and emotional support and they will continue to do that, Mr. Nelson reassured Ms. Ward that her message was heard loud and clear and expressed that efforts would be made to continue to reach out to students that need social emotional support, he expressed he believes this is extremely important. Mr. Nelson made it very clear that the planning doesn't stop tonight, the planning will continue for months to come as we try to figure out the best way to educate our students, therefore he appreciates all the feedback and he takes it very seriously, and he expressed that his goal is to make this plan stronger and stronger each day and plan for as many scenarios as possible.

Mr. Humphrey addressed all the speakers who spoke during the open comments and expressed that the school committee are the accountability partners for the schools and we all have a different point view but we come together to make the best decision we can. Mr. Humphrey expressed that they are all concerned about safety, not just for the students but also for the staff as well as the families and the extended families, we understand it, we've seen how it works. Mr. Humphrey assured the speakers that the school committee are very in tune with all the questions being asked tonight and we appreciate all the feedback.

Ms. McSweeney expressed that it's important to mention that we are all going through this pandemic together and it's affecting us in various different ways, and it's really important as representatives of our communities that we honor all the emotions that are being felt, to listen, to learn, and to step up to help us to work through it to the best of our ability. Ms. McSweeney expressed that we have a really solid team who's working really hard, but she encouraged everyone in the community, if they have an opinion please communicate with us, as Mr. Humphrey said, she expressed it's the school committee's job to represent the community. She expressed that in this fearful time the only thing to do is move forward and plan for the best, we can't stand still.

Mr. Muse expressed that the school committee as a whole is also concerned about the community, the three towns, the students, staff, residents. Mr. Muse expressed that as we move forward with the reopening we have to remain vigilant, thoughtful and considerate of others and make sure we continue to follow social distancing guidelines and safety protocols to keep everyone safe.

MOTION: by Ms. Smith to adjourn at 6:24 p.m.

SECOND: Mr. Muse

ROLL CALL VOTE: 9:0 (Humphrey: YES, Kearns: YES, Burke: YES, McSweeney: YES, Tseki: YES, Muse: YES, Smith: YES, Rood: YES, Pires: YES)