

**MARION SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
Marion, Massachusetts**

**February 8, 2021**

**BY: ZOOM LINK**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Special meeting of the Marion School Committee was held on Monday – February 8, 2021 and called to order by Chairperson Michelle Smith at 6:31pm.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Smith, Chairperson; April Rios, Vice-Chair; Jody Dickerson; Mary Beauregard; and Nichole Daniel**

**OTHERS PRESENT: Michael S. Nelson, Superintendent of Schools; Jannell Pearson-Campbell – Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning; Craig Davidson, Director of Student Services; Howard Barber – Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations; Marla Sirois, Principal, Sippican School; Sean Persico, Assistant Principal, Sippican School, teachers; staff; parents; members of the press and public; and, Toni Bailey, Recording Secretary**

**Chairperson, Michelle Smith, stated in accordance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the Agenda has been set, the meeting is being video-taped, and unless there are any emergencies that need to be added, the Agenda will be followed as outlined.**

**MEETING TO ORDER**

**IV. General**

**A. Reopening Update/K-2 Reopening Plan**

**Recommendation:**

**That the School Committee hear an update from administration.**

**Superintendent Michael Nelson asked Chairperson Smith that Principal Sirois and Lori Desmarais, Marion Town Nurse, be able to join him in presenting this agenda item this evening. Chairperson Smith responded, yes.**

**Mr. Nelson continued stating the following:**

*Hello everyone – we are excited to continue our conversation tonight regarding a Kindergarten through second grade pivot from hybrid learning to full in-person learning.*

*At our last school committee meeting – we discussed an action plan on how we would prepare Sippican School to accommodate such a pivot – this committee voted, in approval with the administration, to move forward with preparing the school building to pivot at a date to be determined.*

*As a result, many individuals have worked very hard to put our school in a position to return our students in these lower grade levels full-time – while maintaining our safety protocols. These safety protocols include maintaining at least six feet, mask wearing, increased hand-washing/sanitizing and others.*

*Lori Desmarais, Marion’s Town Nurse, is here tonight to offer her support for this Plan. I want to thank her for her ongoing support this school year. Lori has been tremendous*

*answering the call every day and she has been a tremendous help to Nurse Meg and others as we navigate this pandemic.*

Lori Desmarais, Marion Town Nurse, stated everyone has been great and Nurse Meg has been a great support for her as well as her supporting Nurse Meg. Ms. Desmarais stated with the Board of Health, we are in support of bringing back K-2, and we are in agreement with keeping the 6-feet distance. Ms. Desmarais stated we have seen cases where children in that age group have had COVID-19, but we have seen the transmission is more in the households and not in the schools.

*Mr. Nelson continued:*

*I want to thank the teachers, paraprofessionals, facilities, administration, parents, and the students for their ability to continue to be flexible problem solvers during this unprecedented school year. There are no simple answers this school year – I recognize this – we recognize this as a school administration.*

*I am proud to announce that Sippican School is ready to pivot – classrooms have been transformed to accommodate full in-person learning, including moving classrooms as needed and presented in our last school committee meeting. Our food service team is ready; we have updated transportation routes in anticipation of the pivot; and, we have truly tried to think of as many things as possible to make this pivot go smoothly.*

*I would now like to ask Principal Sirois to update the committee on the work that has been done from her perspective since the last time we met.*

Principal Sirois extended a “thank-you” to Assistant Principal, Sean Persico and Gilly Leonardo and can’t thank them enough for their efforts in managing the pivot; the teachers, paraprofessionals and all of the staff has done a phenomenal job in supporting each other, our students and our families. Ms. Sirois stated the time, effort and overall brainstorming it has taken to prepare for this pivot has been a joint effort.

Ms. Sirois stated she would also like to thank Nicole Boussy for her countless hours in supporting her personally, as well as supporting the teachers through all of this.

Ms. Sirois presented “Sippican School – Full In-Person Pivot Plan: K, 1, 2” as follows:

Data Points to consider:

Total number of hybrid students in grades K-2: 125

Total number of remote students in grades K-2: 26 (fully remote)

Quarantine in grades K-2 since the start of school: Approximately 30

We have not had any K-2 students move from remote to hybrid

Ms. Sirois stated she has had calls from parents whose children are attending remotely now, wondering what will happen with their children – Ms. Sirois stated we will also continue with a remote learning model.

**Kindergarten:**

The three Kindergarten classrooms are ready to go (they did not have to move) and the teachers have successfully maintained welcoming learning environments that maintain safety protocols – (six-foot distancing).

**First Grade:**

Both of the Grade 1 classrooms have been moved – one classroom will be in the library and the other classroom has moved to the band room (technology is in place in both of these rooms).

## **Second Grade:**

All three of Grade 2 classrooms were moved. Two of the classrooms were moved to classrooms that had a partition wall that could be moved (allowing proper distance spacing), and the third classroom was moved to a space next to the project grow room.

### **Phases/Timelines:**

#### **Phase 1: COMPLETE**

- Assess needs for space, moves, and tech/staffing needs
- Order supplemental tech

#### **Phase 2: COMPLETE**

- Move lab space and YMCA before/aftercare

#### **Phase 3: COMPLETE**

- Convert library

#### **Phase 4: COMPLETE**

- Prepare rooms with partitions for the move

#### **Phase 5: COMPLETE**

- Relocate Title 1 room
- Prepare band room
- Add desks to K classes

#### **Phase 6:**

- Move teacher/student materials to larger classroom spaces: **COMPLETE**
- Adjust tables in cafeteria (to be done over February vacation)
- Set up desks in cafeteria to allow for a meeting space (to be done over February vacation)
- Parent informational and Q&A Session

Ms. Sirois stated depending on the school committee's decision tonight, a parent Q&A session could be held as early as Wednesday evening. Ms. Sirois stated safety remains top priority and teachers have asked for cones to help delineate spaces; spots (lily pad type) to quarantine off areas for students to place personal items; and, floor markings continue to be placed in the school to illuminate around the building.

Ms. Sirois noted the two options that were discussed at the last meeting:

#### **Option 1:**

**5 Days:**

**Pros:**

- Students would be here daily
- Regular/predictable schedule

**Cons:**

- Limit ability to tape lessons for quarantined students and remote learning model
- Decrease to grade level collaboration between learning models

#### **Option 2:**

**4 Days: (keeping Mondays remote)**

**Pros:**

- Teachers would have the ability to tape lessons for quarantined and remote learning students (approximately 60 students to date)
- Increase grade level collaboration between in person/remote learning models

**Cons:**

- **Student would be in school one less day (Grades 1 and 2 would still have increased SLT per state regulations)**

**Ms. Sirois stated returning back to school four (4) days a week – keeping Mondays remote – allows teachers to collaborate to make sure instructional planning is consistent across all learning models as well as allowing teachers time to tape lessons so they are able to do read-out-louds without masks on, as well as share instructional pieces with families who are in quarantine, to continue with our remote learning plan to support these teachers.**

**Ms. Sirois stated returning back to school five (5) days a week – would have students at school every day, with a predictable schedule, but it would have less meeting time for teachers on Mondays.**

**Ms. Smith thanked Principal Sirois, Nicole Boussy, the teachers and staff at Sippican School and stated it takes a village and we definitely have that at Sippican School. Ms. Smith stated she is grateful for how quickly and efficiently everything has been done.**

**Mr. Nelson stated the pictures do not do it justice for all the work that has been done in such a small amount of time. Mr. Nelson stated the work, time, effort and care that a teacher gives in setting up their classroom at the beginning of the year, never mind being asked of them to do it again in such short notice.**

**Mr. Nelson stated when he walked through the school the attitudes of all staff at Sippican School was truly awesome to see how much everyone cares.**

**Mr. Nelson reiterated to the school committee members that what we are looking for tonight is to approve the pivot of grades K-2 from the hybrid learning model to a full, in-person learning model. Mr. Nelson stated ideally we would be looking for a start date after February vacation, and as Principal Sirois mentioned, Parents/Guardians who have opted for full remote learning, that option will still continue at this time.**

**Questions/Comments from the School Committee:**

**Michelle Smith:**

**Ms. Smith stated in the original Plan it was mentioned we would bring back students a week earlier (having them become familiar with their new classrooms, etc.) before bringing back all of the students together.**

**Question: Is this still going to happen?**

**Mr. Nelson stated the teachers were asked for their feedback regarding how they would like to have students return, and they stated to have them all back at once – this will allow Cohort A and Cohort B to be in their new learning spaces at the same time.**

**Mary Beauregard:**

**Question: Do the teachers have a preference as to the four (4) or five (5) day teaching model?**

**Ms. Beauregard stated it seems like the four (4) day model would be easier for them to keep up.**

**Ms. Sirois stated she has never seen a group of people work so collaboratively by grade levels. Ms. Sirois stated we will know our strengths and gaps for every child next year because of the time teachers will have in making sure each model has consistent curriculum rolled out. Ms. Sirois stated it would be more difficult returning back five days.**

**Ms. Sirois stated some adjustments will have to be made to the remote learning model if it is voted to come back to full, in-person learning five (5) days a week, since teachers will have less time to collaborate.**

**Nichole Daniel stated she has spoken with K-2 teachers in Mattapoisett and Rochester (both towns are back 5 days), and the teachers she has spoken to in both of those school's love having the students back five days, teaching the students in school.**

**April Rios:**

**Question: Have families who are currently in the hybrid model reached out to Principal Sirois saying they don't want this – they want to go remote – if we do go this route?**

**Principal Sirois stated no and that what she has been asked by parents is if the remote model is still going to continue – which Ms. Sirois stated it is.**

**Ms. Smith stated this is a decision that we have done on our own timeline, and it is a big toss-up between four and five days.**

**Mr. Nelson stated Marion waited until after the holiday break to see the current data on COVID-19, and to see if there was a “surge”. Mr. Nelson stated as of tonight, we do not have an active case of COVID-19 at Sippican School; there are four (4) individuals in quarantine and one student displaying symptoms and awaiting testing. Mr. Nelson stated the data is in a place where we feel comfortable to pivot.**

**Ms. Smith stated this entire process has been tough but with a return to five (5) days a week, trusts Principal Sirois and the administration that they will continue to work collaboratively with the school committee members to make this pivot as easy as it can be.**

**MOTION: by Jody Dickerson to accept the five (day) pivot Plan as discussed  
SECONDED: Nichole Daniel  
OPPOSED: None  
MOTION PASSED – 5:0**

**Role Call: Michelle Smith – Yes; April Rios – Yes; Jody Dickerson – Yes; Mary Beauregard– Yes; Nichole Daniel – Yes**

**MOTION: by Michelle Smith to begin K-2 full in-person learning beginning February 22, 2021.  
SO MOVED: Nichole Daniel  
SECONDED: April Rios  
OPPOSED: None  
MOTION PASSED – 5:0**

**Role Call: Michelle Smith – Yes; April Rios – Yes; Jody Dickerson – Yes; Mary Beauregard– Yes; Nichole Daniel – Yes**

**Ms. Smith stated she hopes everyone is excited about this pivot – the school committee is. Ms. Smith noted we know people are nervous, but with the collaboration and the way it has been rolled out, she feels as though it will be very successful for our students and staff, and we will keep the communication open.**

Mr. Nelson stated we will continue to make sure we consider all the available data points and key indicators, and if we ever felt this committee needs to discuss the Plan we would bring it back to the table for discussion and consideration.

Mr. Nelson stated this is the third of the elementary districts to move in this direction, and he is confident the Plan in place is thoughtful and that the building administration, teachers and staff members will be there on the 22<sup>nd</sup> to make sure we are in a good place.

Mr. Nelson concluded he looks forward to welcoming and greeting the students back to school on that day!

## **B. FY22 Draft Budget**

### **Recommendation:**

That the School Committee and administration discuss the FY22 draft budget

Mr. Nelson stated the FY22 draft budget is in full swing and we have had a number of meetings thus far with Michelle Smith and Jody Dickerson who are serving as liaisons. Mr. Nelson stated we are working with the building administration and the department heads in terms of putting forth a responsible budget in light of the situation that all the departments in towns are facing. Mr. Nelson stated there are financial stressors we are all feeling and this sub-committee has been focused on looking what our needs are and moving forward with a draft FY22 budget that our committee feels confident in bringing to the committee at large.

Ms. Smith stated due to budget constraints in the town, we were asked to look at our budget and make a decrease. Ms. Smith noted originally the draft budget was a 3.5% increase, and we have been able to make adjustments to a 2.4% increase. Ms. Smith believes this budget will allow us to still be able to provide what we need to the teachers as well as support professional development that are needed. Ms. Smith stated we are comfortable with the budget we have come up with at this time.

Mr. Dickerson stated the town has asked all departments to level services and that it is a tough situation the town is in. Mr. Dickerson stated it is not only Marion but towns throughout the Commonwealth as well. Mr. Dickerson noted local receipts are coming in slow and we are not sure what we are going to receive in funds from the state. Mr. Dickerson stated we are being conservative on the town's budget and the school administration is doing that as well. Mr. Dickerson stated we believe the budget is fair, no staff is being cut and services will continue as is.

Mr. Barber stated we have had collaborative discussions with members of the town's financial offices and presented to them a modified, zero-based budget plan, knowing we have kept things consistent (level serviced/level funded). Mr. Barber stated we will be able to provide an overall presentation at the February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting and have the ability of the school committee to approve the Superintendent's proposed budget at that time - and then go before the town at the special town meeting.

Ms. Smith concluded she is pleased with the budget presented before the town and is happy to announce that the budget was handed to the town ahead of the deadline. Ms. Smith thanked everyone for all their hard work.

## **IX. Future Business**

### **A. Timeline**

The next meeting(s) of Committee will be held as follows:

**Marion School Committee**

February 24, 2021 @ 6:30pm

Via zoom

**Joint School Committee**

March 11, 2020 @ 6:30pm

Via zoom

## **B. Future Agenda Items**

- **School Improvement Plan (February)**
- **Re-opening Update - Continuation (February)**
- **Budget Public Hearing (April)**
- **Budget Approval (April)**
- **School Committee Goals - assess progress and set goals for following year (May)**
- **School Committee Reorganization (May/June - depending on election date)**
- **School Choice Public Hearing (May)**
- **Administrator Contracts (May)**
- **School Improvement Plan Approval (May/June)**
- **Approval of Leases (June)**
- **Approval of School Committee Goals for the following year (June)**

## **X. Open Comments**

Chairperson, Michelle Smith, stated at this time the meeting will begin with Open Comments, and instructed the committee members, administration, parents, members of the public and press how the Open Comments will be run. Ms. Smith stated that per MGL for a public meeting the following is stated: No person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the chair be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting of a public body.

Ms. Smith stated the following rules will be followed:

Public Comment shall be for a period of 20 minutes. The Committee reserves the right to rearrange its agenda to accommodate scheduled presenters.

Any citizen wishing to speak before the Committee shall identify themselves by name and address and shall speak for no longer than 3 minutes. No citizen may speak more than once without permission of the Chair. All citizens shall speak to the full Committee through the Chair and shall not address individual members or administrators.

Individuals may address topics on the agenda, items specified for public comment, or items within the scope of responsibility of the School Committee. The Chair shall rule out of order any individual who fails to honor the guidelines or who addresses a matter inappropriate for public comment.

Any Committee member may direct questions to the speaker through the Chair in order to clarify comments of the speaker.

Ms. Bailey will call their name, state their address, and each person will have 3 minutes to speak. Ms. Smith explained that when the speaker has one minute remaining, Ms. Bailey will hold up a "1-minute remaining" sign.

### **OPEN COMMENTS:**

**Nicole Gotthold - Ryder Lane**

**Question: How will the new model affect playtime?**

Ms. Sirois stated from a recess perspective, the children will maintain the 6-foot distance outside and facemask breaks will be available for larger classroom sizes in the multi-purpose room and the cafeteria. Ms. Sirois stated there is a large tent that will also be set-up outside on the grounds to assist in outside time for the students. Ms. Sirois stated Grades 1 and 2 would have their snack breaks at their seats.

**Question: Will kids still be able to play with all of the same grade?**

Ms. Sirois stated the students would continue to be by "class" in order to keep track of where everyone is.

**Tangi Thomas – Wareham Road**

**Question: When students go away on February vacation, when they come back - what happens?**

**Ms. Sirois stated we have been through a holiday break already and we ask parents/guardians to let us know if they are traveling. Many parents are very responsible and do let us know, at which time Nurse Meg reaches out to the family and discusses the protocols of returning back to school.**

**April Rios requested that Ms. Sirois post the travel guidance guidelines again, so that families can view them again should they go away on vacation.**

**Ginger Larsen – Olde Knoll Road**

**Question: Is there any consideration in pivoting Grades 3-6 to more “in-person” learning later during this academic year?**

**Ms. Sirois stated we are always thinking about that – wondering what the next steps could be. Ms. Sirois stated Mr. Davidson has counted out (in our larger spaces – cafeteria and multi-purpose room) how many students would actually fit in those spaces to accommodate larger groups of students. Ms. Sirois stated the gym is being used for school equipment (items that could not be in the classrooms) and we have to be mindful that PE needs a space for those classes. Ms. Sirois concluded that it is not off the table however.**

**Mr. Nelson stated there is nothing off the table this year (with a smile) and he does anticipate receiving from the Department of Education updated transportation guidelines, as well as an update on possible social distancing guidelines. Mr. Nelson stated these new guidelines might give us some flexibility and give us key puzzle pieces of what other possible in-person learning could look like in this school year.**

**Mr. Dickerson asked Mr. Nelson if we have looked into storage containers to possibly store the equipment that is in the gym, so that we could actually utilize the gym for other classes as well?**

**Mr. Nelson stated we have always known that would not be a barrier if it made the most sense to get some storage pods and we have priced them out. Mr. Nelson stated if that were the only barrier to create more opportunities for in-person learning, we would do it.**

**Christine Marcolini – Brook Haven Lane**

**Question: With just K-2 coming into the building on Mondays was there any consideration given to maybe doing a delayed start on those Monday to allow for some collaboration for the teachers?**

**Mr. Nelson stated it was not considered and it was not part of the discussion. Mr. Nelson stated we plan on operating in a traditional school day as we would Tuesday through Friday.**

**John Miller – Fieldstone Lane**

**Mr. Miller thanked everyone for their hard work this year and their resilience in being able to get to where we are.**

**Question: Where do we currently stand with filling the vacancy of the Speech/Language pathologist, and how will we meet the IEP requirements for K-2 students who will be returning to school without this position filled?**

Mr. Nelson stated he executed a contract with a Speech/Language pathologist today at 3:15pm and she will be starting full-time on March 8, 2021. Mr. Nelson stated she will move forward with any services needed and provide services that were missed previously.

**XI. Information Items**

**LIST OF DOCUMENTS USED AT THE MEETING**

**Marion School Committee Meeting Agenda –February 8, 2021**

**XII. Executive Session**

**Recommendation:**

**That the School Committee enter into Executive Session for purposes of exception #3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.**

**Meeting of the Special Marion School Committee meeting ended at 7:07pm**

**Chairperson Smith requested at 7:07pm a Motion to go in to Executive Session for the Purpose of #3 – to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.**

**MOTION: by April Rios to go in to Executive Session for the Purpose of #3 – to return only to adjourn**  
**SECONDED: Nichole Daniel**  
**IN FAVOR: All**  
**OPPOSED: None**  
**MOTION PASSED – 5:0**

**Role Call: Michelle Smith – Yes; April Rios – Yes; Jody Dickerson – Yes; Mary Beauregard– Yes; Nichole Daniel – Yes**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Toni M. Bailey, Recording Secretary**