

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, January 10, 2022

The meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held virtually, via Zoom, on Monday, January 10, 2022.

Present: Marjorie McBride, Chairperson; Tara Thibaudeau, Vice Chair, Victor Cabral, Secretary; Nicky Piper, Carly Reich, Erin Schofield, and Karen Cabral; Ana C. Riley, Superintendent of Schools; Diane Sanna, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent; Anthony Ferrucci, Chief Financial Office; Thomas Wood, Director of Facilities; Rose Muller, Director of Technology; Mary Ann Carroll, Esq., District Solicitor; Diana Campbell, Recording Secretary.

I. OPEN SESSION

Chairperson Marjorie McBride, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m.

II. OPENING BUSINESS

Chairperson McBride invited all present to join in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson McBride announced that when meetings are held virtually, the public will be required to submit requests to make a public comment to the School Committee Secretary, Diane Campbell, Diane.Campbell@bwrsd.org, by 5:30pm on the date of the meeting. She asked that requests include the speaker's name and the subject of the comment.

Chairperson McBride called upon Dave Scarpino to speak. Mr. Scarpino was having technical issues and was not able to make his comment. Chairperson stated that she will allow Mr. Scarpino to speak once he resolves his technical issues.

Chairperson McBride then called Peter Hewett to make his comment. Mr. Hewett asked if he would be allowed to speak on COVID later in the meeting. He was advised that he would only be allowed to comment on COVID as it relates to the presentation.

Mr. Hewett then spoke of his concerns with a focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) in the schools. He stated that he disagreed that it should be a part of the curriculum, noting that teachers are not trained to be social workers. He believes that focus on SEL for the students who need that support diverts attention from better behaved students.

IV. PRESENTATION

A. Update on COVID-19 Protocols

Superintendent Riley presented an update on the COVID-19 Protocols and their impact on the schools of Bristol Warren. Her presentation covered the same information that was sent to parents. Key points of her presentation:

- The District's goal is to keep healthy children in school by adopting the RIDOH

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and CDC guidelines. The District has adjusted its protocols for quarantine and isolation so that only positive cases will need to be isolated, increased its capacity for in-school screening, referred to as *Monitor to Stay*, and in-school testing for athletes, referred to as *Test to Play*.

- Data shows that schools are the safest place for students. The District continues to show low transmission rates in school. There is proper ventilation and cleaning and students are masked and maintain at least 3 feet of spacing wherever possible.
- Isolation for Positive Cases: Positive cases will be asked to stay home and isolate for 5 days. Those with no symptoms or symptoms that resolve after 5 days, may leave isolation, but should continue to wear a mask around others for 5 days. If fever is present, the individual should continue to isolate at home until the fever resolves.
- Monitor to Stay: Close contacts that are not fully vaccinated can remain in school and monitor their symptoms, as long as they consistently and correctly wear a mask. They are eligible to participate in Monitor to Stay if the close contact occurred under ALL of the following conditions:
 - Contact occurred during the school day
 - Both the contact and the COVID-19 case were consistently masked during exposure
 - If outdoors at school, both individuals were masked
 - Close contact remains asymptomatic
- Test to Play: All student athletes and coaches who are unvaccinated are required to participate in weekly BINAX (antigen) testing. Athletes and coaches participating in high-risk sports including hockey and wrestling must test two times per week. She noted that the District will not test any student who does not have a consent form on file.
- Quarantine for Close Contacts Outside of School:
 - Vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine, should wear a mask around others for 10 days, should test on Day 5, if possible, and should stay home and get a test if symptoms develop.
 - Unvaccinated individuals must quarantine for 5 days, returning to school on Day 6, should continue to wear a mask for an additional 5 days after quarantine, should test on Day 5, if possible, and should stay home and get a test if symptoms develop. Household contacts can separate from a positive family member - quarantine for 5 days. If household contact cannot separate from a positive family member, they should quarantine 5 days while the family member is isolating and then an additional 5 days for their own quarantine.
- Why Guidelines are different for Vaccinated vs. Unvaccinated:
 - Isolation: Regardless of vaccination status, majority of COVID-19 transmission occurs early in the course of the illness
 - Quarantine: Data consistently shows that people who are boosted or less than 6 months out from their vaccinations have a higher level of

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- protection; vaccine effectiveness after a booster dose increases up to 75%
- Why Vaccination is Important: Vaccination remains the most powerful strategy to keep children and families healthy and student learning and involved in extracurricular activities.

Superintendent Riley strongly encouraged eligible students, staff and families to get vaccinated and boosted. She noted that since the start of school, 91% of the students with COVID-19 infection were unvaccinated. Vaccination remains the best strategy to keep children in school.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Thibaudeau asked if a student that tested positive within the last 90 days is immune and doesn't need to be tested. Superintendent Riley answered that was correct.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked if students who take the Rapid Test at home need to upload the results to the State Portal. Superintendent Riley answered that yes, the tests should be uploaded to the portal.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked if students who are in quarantine will be able to participate in school through distance learning. Superintendent Riley answered that those students are considered sick and should follow the same procedure that they would if they were sick for another reason.

Ms. Reich asked for clarification on whether students who are symptomatic at school can get tested in school. The answer was yes, as long as there is a consent form on file.

Ms. Piper stated that she appreciates that the District is following a data-driven approach. She asked what data the District will be watching. Superintendent Riley answered that the protocols will be in place until RIDOH instructs us that we have an unsafe situation. She acknowledged that cases are on the rise, but that this was to be expected. She expects the rise to continue until the end of January. She noted that the nurses are testing close contacts in the classroom immediately after a student from that classroom is identified as positive. She noted that the children have adopted very well to the masks and to distancing guidelines.

Ms. Piper asked about absenteeism of staff and students. Superintendent Riley answered that we are at our highest rate this year, but compared to last year, day to day, the current rates are less than last year. Even at the District's highest rate, principals have been able to maintain programs.

Ms. Reich asked about the number of students who have Permission to Test forms on file. She suggested that the District send out paper copies of the form for parents to sign and send in. Assistant Superintendent Sanna noted that the schools will send out Google forms and will make paper copies available for parents.

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Ms. Schofield asked about the protocol for excused vs. unexcused absences. Superintendent Riley stated that she is looking at the # of unexcused absences to make sure they are being recorded correctly. She explained that an unexcused absence is due to a student being out sick, but without a doctor's note. She stated that it's ok to have less than 10% unexcused absences to avoid truancy. She stated that a positive test result is considered an excused absence.

Ms Schofield asked if a student is absent because they are symptomatic, is it helpful for the nurses to be given a copy of the test results. Superintendent Riley answered, "Yes."

Ms. Thibaudeau asked if a child is a close contact out of school and is asymptomatic, do they need to quarantine. Superintendent Riley answered that if a close contact is vaccinated, no quarantine is necessary; if unvaccinated, quarantine is necessary.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked if distance learning is possible. Superintendent Riley is working on addressing this issue. She noted that it's easier to implement at the elementary level, than at the middle and high school levels, because the teacher sees the same student all day. A distance learning option is not yet available.

Ms. Piper asked if pre-screening is still happening each day. Superintendent Riley answered that the District is asking parents to self-monitor their children, but there is no formal form or procedure for this.

Chairperson McBride called on Mr. Hewett to make his comment, provided that his comments are relevant to the presentation. Mr. Hewett responded that he did not hear the full presentation, so he's not sure if his comments are relevant. He then stated that the science behind the guidelines have been politicized and began to provide his own statistics. Attorney Carroll interrupted to declare that Mr. Hewett's comments were not relevant to the presentation. Chairperson McBride allowed Mr. Hewett to continue his remarks on the statistics and the politics of the pandemic.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION: Ms. Reich made a motion to approve the items listed under the Consent Agenda; 2nd by Ms. Piper:

- A. Minutes of the November 8, 2021, November 22, 2021, and December 13, 2021 School Committee meetings
- B. Corrected 2022 School Committee Meeting schedule
- C. Property Disposal Lists for historical books, donated to the Warren Preservation Society, Bristol Historical Preservation Society, and RI State Archives, and End of Life Technology
- D. Three (3) Homeschool Requests
- E. Purchase Orders over \$5000

VOTE: The motion was approved unanimously.

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Ms. Thibaudeau asked that for future Agendas, Purchase Orders over \$5000 be listed out with their amount along with the budget accounts from which they will be drawn.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

- A. Approve the return of the Oliver Building to the Town of Bristol, based on the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion that the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee return the Oliver Building located at 151 State Street in Bristol, Rhode Island to the Town of Bristol and in addition relinquish any and all rights to lease the property - the motion shall be in effect upon passage; 2nd by Ms. Piper.

VOTE: The motion was approved unanimously.

- B. Approve Policy AB - Title IX and Exhibit A, Second Reading, as recommended by the Policy & Curriculum Subcommittee.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to approve Policy AB as a Second Reading; 2nd by Ms. Piper.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Schofield stated that she was not going to vote in favor of this motion. She stated that she disagrees with the changes that came from the Federal Government that she believes provide for more protection for the perpetrators than for the victim.

VOTE: The motion was approved with a vote of 6-1, Ms. Schofield voted in dissent.

- C. Approve Policy CN - School Improvement Team, First Reading, as recommended by Policy & Curriculum Subcommittee

Ms. Reich stated that this policy is based on requirements from the State. Attorney Carroll added that the policy falls in line with the Educational Accountability Act.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to approve Policy CN as a First Reading; 2nd by Ms. Reich.

VOTE: The motion was approved unanimously.

- D. Approve the removal of Policy GBO- Sexual Harassment and Policy GBOA Harassment Policy, as they have been replaced by Policy AC - Anti-Discrimination/ Anti-Harassment Policy and Grievance Procedure, as recommended by the Policy & Curriculum Subcommittee

Ms. Reich stated that since Policy AC was approved in February 2019, Policies GBO and GBOA are redundant and can be removed.

MOTION: Ms Cabral made a motion to approve the removal of Policy GBO and Policy GBOA; 2nd by Ms. Reich.

VOTE: The motion was approved unanimously.

- E. Approve the Revised FY22 Budget, as recommended by the Budget Facilities Subcommittee

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Mr. Ferrucci stated that he presented his year-end projection of the FY 2022 Budget at the December 8, 2021 Budget and Facilities Subcommittee meeting . He explained that the budget is showing favorable numbers for salary, which are offset somewhat by additional expenses. The net result is that Expenses are now projected to be \$54,829,774 and Revenues are projected to be \$54,829,774, with a reduced amount of \$498, 908 needed from Fund Balance. The Original Fund Balance projection was \$1,037,936.

If approved, the revised Budget will be the base going forward and will be updated on the District's website for the public.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to approve the revised 2022 Budget; 2nd by Ms. Cabral.

VOTE: The motion was approved unanimously.

- F. Approve the utilization of the MPA (Master Price Agreement) for replacement of High School Band Room heating unit, as recommended by the Budget Facilities Subcommittee

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to approve the replacement of the High School Band room heating unit; 2nd by Ms. Cabral.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Thibaudeau asked that the amount and budget line item be included on future meeting Agendas.

VOTE: The motion was approved unanimously.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Executive Session pursuant to RIGL §42-46-5(a) for discussion of the following:

- A. **42-46-5 (a) (2)** Collective Bargaining (BWEA) Contract Negotiation Discussion

MOTION: Chairperson McBride asked for a motion to go into Executive Session. Ms. Piper made a motion to go into Executive Session; 2nd by Ms. Reich. All approved the motion.

At 8:07, Chairperson McBride closed the Open Session of the meeting and stated that the Committee was going into Executive Session and that there were no other items for the Open Session, except to Adjourn the meeting when the Executive Session is closed.

After the close of the Executive Session, Chairperson McBride re-opened the Open Session at 8:44 pm.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to seal the Minutes of the Executive Session; 2nd by Ms. Cabral. The motion was approved unanimously

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to adjourn the meeting; 2nd by Ms. Cabral.

VOTE: The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Victor Cabral, Secretary /dbc