

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, August 30, 2021

The meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held in-person, with virtual public access through Zoom Conferencing, on Monday, August 30, 2021. Chairperson Marjorie McBride, called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 p.m.

Present: Marjorie McBride, Chairperson; Tara Thibaudeau, Vice-Chair; Sheila Ellsworth, Treasurer; Victor Cabral, Secretary; Nicky Piper, Sarah Bullard, Erin Schofield, and Karen Cabral; Robert Hicks, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent; Diane Sanna, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent; Thomas Wood, Director of Facilities; Rose Muller, Director of Technology; Mary Ann Carroll, Esq., District Solicitor; Brenna Toland, Director of Student Support Services; Lee Ann Beaupre, Human Resources Manager; Diana Campbell, Recording Secretary. **Guests:** Amy Bratsos, COZ Program Coordinator.

- I. EXECUTIVE SESSION (6:30 PM - Closed to the Public)** Executive Session pursuant to RIGL §42-46-5(a) for discussion of the following:
- A. 42-46-5(a) (1) -Discussion of the job performance, character, or physical or mental health of persons. Said persons have been notified in writing and advised that they may require the discussion to be held in open session.
 - B. §42-46-5(a) (2) - Legal Advice

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to go into Executive Session; 2nd by Ms. Cabral. Motion passed unanimously.

II. OPEN SESSION (7:00 PM - Open to the Public)

Chairperson McBride opened the Open Session of the meeting at 7:05 pm.

III. OPENING BUSINESS

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

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairperson McBride asked if there was anyone who wished to make a comment.

Mr. Scarpino spoke about the requirement that masks be worn during school. He felt that it was unfair to ask students to wear masks, when it seems the same requirement does not apply to adults. Mr. Scarpino continued his comments, recommending to the committee that they devote their time to academic excellence, feeling that too much focus recently has been on dealing with the virus and not on academics.

Mr. Hewett made remarks that he intended to make at a previous meeting. He stated that the governor has no legal power to mandate masks in schools. He continued, speaking about Critical Race Theory (CRT) ideology stating that he feels it is divisive and dangerous. He opposes the infiltration of CRT in the curriculum. He asked School Committee members how they felt about CRT. Chairperson McBride interrupted to inform Mr. Hewett that, by law, the members of the School Committee cannot respond to Public Comment unless the subject is on the Agenda. Attorney Carroll stated that Mr. Hewett is out of order.

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V. ACCOLADES

A. MHHS Individual Athlete Awards

Mr. Cabral congratulated the following athletes that were missed in a previous meeting, honoring their accomplishments:

- *NATIONAL* Football Foundation Golden Dozen Award - Colton Dias
- All-Tournament - Hannah Rodriques
- Rhode Island Volleyball Coaches Association, All-Division Selections - Hannah Rodriques - 1st Team, Isabel Savinon - 1st Team, Abigail Ferreira - 2nd Team
Grace Stephenson - 2nd Team

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

Chairperson McBride stated that she was asked to remove Item E, Approval of Requisitions over \$5000 from the Consent Agenda. She asked for a motion to approve the other items on the list.

MOTION: Ms. Cabral made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda; 2nd by Ms. Thibaudeau:

- A. Approval of July 26, 2021 School Committee Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of 11 Homeschool Requests
- C. Historic marker at corner of Child and Cole Streets
- D. Appointment of High School Assistant Principal
- E. *removed*
- F. Approval of Bids
 - 1. Athletic Trainer
 - 2. Owner's Project Management
 - 3. Architecture & Engineering

VOTE: The motion was approved unanimously.

Before moving to the removed item, Chairperson McBride acknowledged Dr. David Weed of Warren, and invited him to speak regarding the historic marker on the corner of Child and Cole Streets in Warren. Dr. Weed introduced himself to the committee as someone that has been working with the community to place historic markers throughout the area to make note of the Pokanoket Tribe that lived in the area for 10,000 years. He stated that this marker provides an opportunity for the students, the community, and visitors to learn about the history of the Towns in the area that were originally formed during the 17th century. He explained that the Pokanoket Tribe was eventually displaced after King Philip's War, which took place on Josiah Winslow's farm where the Kickemuit Middle School is located. The marker will be installed by the school, with support of the Town. Principal Morrell spoke in support of the marker.

Chairperson McBride invited Interim Superintendent Hicks to introduce and welcome the new Assistant Principal for the High School, Robert Campion, who will officially start next week. He is an experienced and strong leader that will make a good addition to the team.

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E. Approval of Requisitions over \$5000

Chairperson McBride moved on to the item that was removed from the Consent Agenda. Ms. Ellsworth asked about an overage of \$800 on one of the requisitions. Mr. Ferrucci explained that since the Budget was based on a Budget that was impacted by the COVID pandemic, the original Budget was estimated to be too low. He explained that there will be a review in November when he will propose a revised Budget for the School Committee to approve.

MOTION: Ms. Ellsworth made a motion to approve the Requisitions over \$5000; 2nd by Ms. Thibaudeau. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION

A. The Use of Administrative Directives by the Superintendent to Establish Protocols and Procedures to Address a Public Health Crisis During the 2021-2022 School Year

Interim Superintendent Hicks explained his plan to re-open schools with a Policy that follows the guidance provided by CDC and RIDOH. The Policy provides an opportunity to link mask wearing with the infection rate. Since RI's rate is high and the governor has mandated masks be worn in school, Interim Superintendent Hicks is proposing that the District continue with mask wearing. If the rate goes down, then the policy will be adjusted. Masks will not be required when outside.

He explained the State guidance re: Distance Learning. He plans to have in-school learning, with accommodations for students who cannot attend school.

DISCUSSION

Ms. Thibaudeau asked if the School Committee needed to vote on the Policy. Attorney Carroll responded that since the Governor has mandated mask wearing, it is not necessary for a vote. The Interim Superintendent has already submitted his Plan as required by the State.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked if the School Committee will be required to vote on the Plan if the Governor does not extend his mandate. Attorney Carroll responded that the Committee will need to approve the Interim Superintendent's plan when the executive order expires.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked about mask breaks. Interim Superintendent Hicks explained that he will ensure that the Plan, that includes provisions for mask breaks, is implemented consistently at all the schools.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked about lockers. She wanted to know if they will be used at the elementary level. The Interim Superintendent Hicks didn't know the answer but promised to get back to the Committee with an answer.

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In response to other questions from Ms. Thibaudeau on quarantining, testing, etc., Interim Superintendent stated that the District will be following the guidelines from the State.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked if there would be consequences for not wearing a mask. Interim Superintendent Hicks responded that for the first 3 instances, there would be no discipline; after the 3rd instance there would be some, but he's not sure what it will be.

Ms. Piper asked if the District will be following the guidelines that are different for vaccinated and unvaccinated people. Interim Superintendent stated that the guidelines are different for those that are asymptomatic and vaccinated. Ms. Piper asked that the Plan include that information.

Interim Superintendent Hicks stated that the Plan is posted on the website.

Chairperson McBride paused the meeting briefly at 8:00 PM, while someone from the audience was asked to leave for being disruptive. The meeting resumed at approximately 8:05 pm.

B. Virtual Learning Option

Ms. Thibaudeau asked that the School Committee consider offering an option of virtual learning for those students who do not want to attend in-person learning.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to provide virtual learning options for families; 2nd by Ms. Ellsworth.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Ellsworth asked if ESSER 3 funds could be used for Distance Learning. Interim Superintendent responded that Distance Learning would qualify under the ESSER 3 grant guidelines.

Ms. Piper supported the option for families. She just wondered how it would be implemented. It seems like a lot of work to get ready for Distance Learning in an equitable way by September 8. Ms. Schofield agreed that Distance Learning options are a good idea, but felt that there needs to be a more complete plan, stating that Ms. Thibaudeau's proposal feels more like an idea and less of a plan.

Interim Superintendent Hicks explained that the State understands that there is some need for Distance Learning in schools. The District is working on a contract with a company that some Districts are using. He noted that logistics are in place, but there needs to be more work to come up with a plan.

Ms. Thibaudeau withdrew her motion. Ms. Ellsworth withdrew her 2nd.

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MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to investigate virtual learning options and to research how many families are interested in a virtual learning option; 2nd by Ms. Ellsworth.

VOTE: The Motion passed with a vote of 7-2; Mr. Cabral and Ms. McBride voted in dissent.

C. FY21 Year End Financial Report

Mr. Ferrucci explained that the Finance Committee met and reviewed the Fiscal Year End as of June 30, 2021. He reported the following:

- Books have been delivered to School Committee members.
- The District had planned to use \$1.1M from fund balance, but unexpected increased state aid and District cost savings resulted in a \$300K surplus, so no prior year fund balance was needed and the District did end the year with a surplus.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to accept the FY21 Year End Financial Report; 2nd by Ms. Ellsworth.

Ms. Ellsworth stated that she appreciates all the hours and hard work that went into the Report. She thanked Mr. Ferrucci for his efforts. Mr. Ferrucci stated that the Report will be on the website. Chairperson McBride asked Mr. Ferrucci to give a copy of the Report to the towns of Warren and Bristol.

VOTE: The Motion was approved unanimously.

D. FY22 Budget and Finance Report/Adoption:

Mr. Ferrucci reported on the Operations portion of the Budget first. He explained that he's been working with his new staff, the administration, and school principals, on the Budget that was approved in May to confirm what was needed for the school year.

He reported a slight revenue change due to an increase of \$97K in State Aid. He went on to explain some of the changes in expenses that had to be made in the areas of technology leases, staffing, and other areas. He recommended that the use of the Fund Balance surplus be carried forward for this year. He projects that he will know how much he will need when he reviews the budget in November.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to accept the FY22 Budget and Finance Report; 2nd by Mr. Cabral.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Thibaudeau asked about a position at the High School that was brought back. Mr. Ferrucci explained that the Budget is what he was given for approved positions. He is working with HR and Payroll so that he can align the numbers.

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Chairperson McBride asked that the Report be sent to the towns of Bristol and Warren. Mr. Ferrucci stated that he will codify the Budget and that should be the one that is provided to the Towns.

VOTE: The Motion was approved unanimously.

1. Capital

Mr. Ferrucci stated that he has been reviewing the Capital Budget with Mr. Wood. He noted that the list of Capital Projects costs a total of \$11,700,000. There are projects that have been completed. As of the end of fiscal year, the District had completed \$7.7M, leaving about \$4M to spend on other projects going forward. The report articulates \$3.8M in projects that can be addressed. There is a sub-category of projects that have completed the Design phase. He will be meeting with the State to determine if those projects will meet their criteria for Housing Aid. He asked the Committee for approval to spend \$2,658,000 based on current funding and to approve the balance of the projects contingent on qualifying for State Housing Aid.

MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to authorize the Capital Project program for the current school year of \$2,658,000 based on current funding and the additional Capital Projects as listed at a cost of \$3,779,000, contingent on the District being approved for State Housing Aid and in receipt of Housing Aid for the current year. Ms. Ellsworth seconded the Motion.

VOTE: The Motion was approved unanimously.

2. COZ Budget

Mr. Ferrucci explained the COZ Program Budget. There will be a slight increase in fees for the program to reflect extra costs. The program projects a \$100,000 in surplus at the end of the year.

MOTION: Ms. Ellsworth made a motion to approve the COZ Budget; 2nd by Ms. Thibaudeau.

VOTE: The Motion was approved unanimously.

E. Superintendent Search Process

Chairperson McBride presented the proposed Superintendent Search Process to the Committee. Ms. Thibaudeau asked if a Community Member should be included in the process. Interim Superintendent Hicks stated that the suggestion was approved.

MOTION: Ms. Schofield made a motion to approve the process with the suggested addition; 2nd by Ms. Thibaudeau.

VOTE: The Motion was approved unanimously.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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MOTION: Ms. Cabral made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm; 2nd by Mr. Cabral. The Motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Victor Cabral, Secretary
/dbc