

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

The meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held in-person, with virtual public access through Zoom Conferencing, on Wednesday, October 13, 2021. Chairperson Marjorie McBride, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 p.m.

Present: Marjorie McBride, Chairperson; Tara Thibaudeau, Vice-Chair; Sheila Ellsworth, Treasurer; Victor Cabral, Secretary; Nicky Piper. Carly Reich, Sarah Bullard, Erin Schofield, and Karen Cabral; Edward Mara, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent; Diane Sanna, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent; Brenna Toland, Director of Student Support Services; Thomas Wood, Director of Facilities; Rose Muller, Director of Technology; Mary Ann Carroll, Esq., District Solicitor; **Guests:** Ellen Estrella, RN; Diana Campbell, Recording Secretary.

I. Opening Business

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

Chairperson McBride pulled Items A & B from the Agenda
Interim Superintendent Mara pulled Item D

II. Discussion/Possible Action

C. Warren School Resource Officer (SRO)

Attorney Carroll explained that she has been meeting with the School Administration and Warren officials to discuss payment for the School Resource Officer (SRO) position in Warren. There was a Memo of Understanding (MOU) from a couple of years ago, when the Town had a grant to cover some of the cost of the SRO position. The grant would cover half of the costs and the Town and School Department would split the balance evenly. According to its financial records, the School Department owes the Town of Warren \$20,906 for the first year and ~19,000 for the 2nd year. The amounts are in dispute, with the Town of Warren stating that the amount owed is more than that. Regardless, the amount will need to be paid.

Going forward for this School Year, 2021-2022, the grant is no longer available. Should the School Committee decide to continue with the position, they would have to split the cost of the position evenly (50:50). Attorney Carroll is asking the School Department how they want to handle the SRO position at the Middle School.

All members of the School Committee who spoke agreed that the SRO role is important and they would like to see it continued. However, there is no money in the Budget and funds would have to come from the Fund Balance.

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MOTION: Ms. Thibaudeau made a motion to keep the SRO contract and to abide by the existing MOU contract. Motion was 2nd by Mr. Cabral.

DISCUSSION:

All members of the School Committee who spoke agreed that the SRO role is important and they would like to see it continued. However, there is no money in the Budget and funds would have to come from the Fund Balance.

As part of the discussion, Ms. Bullard pointed out that some parts of the SRO Job Description can continue even without a person working within the school everyday.

Mr. Cabral wanted to know if the SRO would be out of a job with the Police Department if the Committee should vote to not continue with the SRO position. Attorney Carroll believes that he will stay with the Police Department.

Interim Superintendent Mara pointed out that the Town of Warren is amenable to the idea of using the same model as the Town of Bristol, but for next year, as they do not have the funds in their budget this year.

VOTE: The Motion did not pass with a vote of 2-8; Chairperson McBride, Ms. Thibaudeau, Ms. Ellsworth, Ms. Bullard, Ms. Cabral, Ms. Piper, and Ms. Schofield voted in dissent.

DISCUSSION:

E. COVID-19 Policies and Procedures

Interim Superintendent Mara introduced and thanked the Nurse Teachers and Principals for coming to the meeting to respond to questions.

Assistant Superintendent Sanna also introduced Dr. Casey Eldert, the District's Physician. She thanked him, the Nurse Teachers, and the Principals for all that they have done in the past years to keep the schools safe.

Assistant Superintendent Sanna presented the Committee with a prepared COVID-19 presentation. She started by explaining that the District uses a layered approach to prevention that includes daily attestation, mask requirements for bus and in school, distancing, hand washing, sanitizing, etc. These approaches along with increased nursing support and on-site testing provides for quicker diagnosis and response.

She explained that the District, especially at the elementary level, are now using a "halo" approach to quarantining potentially infected students and/or staff. In this way, instead of quarantining an entire classroom when a student tests

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positive for COVID, only the students within the near vicinity of the positive student. The “halo” approach is only good if one student is positive, not if there are more than one in a single classroom. She further explained that if a student has been vaccinated, there is no need to quarantine. She encouraged everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated.

Assistant Superintendent Sanna’s slide presentation continued:

Prevent the Spread: Screen for Symptoms

- Students and staff with one or more major symptoms will be sent home to isolated and get a lab-based PCR test
- Students and staff with only one minor symptom can stay in school but should be monitored for additional symptoms

Determining Close Contacts

- An exposed person who was within 6 feet of an infected person (with or without a mask) for at least 15 minutes over 24 hours
 - Students in Grades K-12 who are not fully vaccinated will be sent home and require a lab-based PCR test immediately and again 5-7 days after the exposure.
 - With a negative PCR result, students can return on Day 8. If they are positive, they must be isolated for 10 days.
- When to Quarantine
 - If a close contact
 - Not wearing a mask at all times
 - Less than 3 feet apart for a total of 15 minutes or more within 24 hours.
- When not to Quarantine
 - Are vaccinated
 - Tested positive in the last 90 days

Jessica Almeida, parent of a Rockwell student, asked about travel. Nurse Teacher Ellen Estrella explained that travel guidelines depend on the circumstances. If the State is considered to be low-risk and travel is to a small group/family there is lower risk than if travelling to a high-risk State and for a large event (concert, e.g.).

Ms. Piper asked about consistent enforcement of the guidelines across the schools. Nurse Teacher Estrella explained that each case needs to be evaluated on a case by case basis. It may appear to be inconsistent from the outside, but circumstances may call for different approaches to quarantining, etc.

Ms. Reich asked when the “halo” approach was started. Nurse Teacher Estrella explained that they have been following guidance from RIDOH.

Ms. Ellsworth asked about the PCR test turnaround for getting results. Nurse Teacher Estrella explained that the District is not doing PCR tests in-house yet. Appropriate staff will be getting trained at the high school sometime in October.

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The turnaround should be 24-48 hours once the in-house testing begins. She stated that Dominion will move any test from a K-12 student to the top of their list, which will improve the turnaround time.

Nurse Teacher Estrella explained that athletes are different. Athletes are at a higher risk and go through regular pool & individual testing.

Assistant Superintendent Sanna discussed how Distance Learning is happening. If there are only a few students who are out due to positive test results, they will be treated like any other illness. In the case of a whole class of students being quarantined, the teachers will use Google Classroom to provide instruction to the students.

Ms. Cabral asked about bussing. Assistant Superintendent Sanna stated that the bus policy is under review by RIDOH and that the District's policy will be adjusted as soon as RIDOH explains their new guidelines and recommendations.

Principals further explained that it is difficult to do some kind of "halo" approach to quarantining because the busses are full and kids are not being assigned seats. Interim Superintendent Mara stated that he has asked the bus company to make an effort to improve assigned seating implementation for students.

Ms. Cabral asked about lunch. Students are eating in their classrooms for the most part, but some are eating outside or in the cafeteria.

Chairperson McBride wants to make sure that the District is doing everything it can to keep students in school. Interim Superintendent Mara stated that promoting COVID-19 and Flu vaccinations will make a big difference is the rate of quarantining.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked about how much testing has been done to date. It was explained to her that every student that is sent home due to being symptomatic needs to be tested before returning.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked about the impact of quarantining on academic progress at KMS and MHHS. She asked if ESSER funds can be used to provide extra support for those students who may fall behind. Assistant Superintendent Sanna stated that the District has used ESSER funds to hire two math and reading specialists to help students to need help catching up. She also stated that KMS is planning an after-school program and that the District is thinking ahead for the summer.

Ms. Thibaudeau asked about faculty attendance. Mr. Morrell stated that his attendance at KMS is great, but that Elementary staffing needs support. There is an overall substitute shortage, which is putting a strain on teachers. It was pointed out that the District is investigating increasing the compensation for substitutes to attract more candidates.

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Mr. Chidester, teacher at Mt Hope High School, asked for the vaccination rate at KMS and the HS. Nurse Teacher Estrella answered that it is 38.4% at the high school. She did not have the data for the middle school. She stated that not all parents have provided vaccination information on their children's vaccination, so it may be higher. She explained that the information has to be given voluntarily, so the District relies on parents providing that information.

Mr. Chidester also wanted to correct a comment made earlier by a member of the School Committee about slipping test scores. He explained that the achievement scores in the District are holding the line and are not slipping.

Chairperson McBride closed the discussion by encouraging parents and staff to contact their school Principal if they have further questions.

III. Executive Session

Chairperson McBride explained that there was a need to go into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation, get legal advice, and to discuss job performance, character, or physical or mental health of a person; said person was notified in advance.

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

IV. Adjournment

Chairperson McBride convened the Open Session at 8:40. There being no further action required, she asked for a Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion was made by Ms. Cabral; 2nd by Ms. Thibaudeau, to adjourn the meeting. All approved the motion. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

**Victor Cabral, Secretary
/dbc**