

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

**Monday, May 10, 2021**

The meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held virtually on Monday, May 10, 2021, via Zoom Conferencing. Chairperson Marjorie McBride, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:09 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; Jonathan Brice, Ed.D., Superintendent; Diane Sanna, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent; Thomas Wood, Director of Facilities; Rose Muller, Director of Technology; Mary Ann Carroll, Esq., District Solicitor; Diane Brennan, Lee-Ann Beaupre, Human Resources Manager; Diane Brennan, Temporary Chief Financial Officer; Joel Harrington, Interim Business Manager; Edward Clarke, M.Ed., CAGS, Director of Student Support Services; Kathryn Brown, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent; Diana Campbell, Recording Secretary. **Guests:** Dr. Deb DiBiase, Principal of Mt. Hope High School; Dennis Morrell, Principal of Kickemuit Middle School.

**I. Opening Business**

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

**II. Public Comment**

Chairperson McBride invited public comment, noting that the time for Public Comment will be limited to 15 minutes and requested that Mr. Cabral be the timekeeper.

Ms. Reich made a motion to suspend the rule about the 15 minute limit for Public Comment. Chairperson McBride replied that the motion cannot be made because the Agenda specifically states that the time for public comment is limited to 15 minutes. She added that the amount of correspondence that had come in through emails and phone calls, that the Committee has a good idea of the concerns of the public.

There were several public comments made about the proposed FY22 Budget cuts, including the impact of the Budget cuts:

Sophia Ferolito, Bristol resident and student at Mt Hope High explained how the Theater Program made an impact on her development from a terrified Freshman to become a part of the welcoming family of the theater group. She credited Mr. Mendillo for his support and encouragement. She quoted several other students who also credited the Theater program and Mr. Mendillo for their growth and development. She noted that the Performing Arts continues to grow and has been recognized with awards, RI Drama Fest won in 2019. She acknowledged the difficulty of the School Committee's decision, but hopes that the committee takes into account the feedback letters that they received from the public as they make their decision.

Ms. Reich requested to ask Attorney Carroll if the Chair can deny the motion that she made to extend the Public Comment limit, citing Roberts' Rules guidance on a motion. Attorney Carroll explained that the Motion could not be made because the Agenda filed with the Secretary of

## BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

State lists the time limit of 15 minutes, so it cannot be extended by a motion. If the time limit hadn't been specified on the Agenda, the motion would have been valid.

Shannon Gray, parent of a 3rd grader at Colt Andrews, stated that she felt that Colt Andrews carried a disproportionate number of cuts compared to the other elementary schools. She noted that Colt Andrews has been recognized as a blue ribbon school for closing the achievement gap. She is concerned that class sizes, due to the number of cuts of teachers, will have a negative impact on the students, especially the ones with special needs.

Mia Fartura, a senior at Mt Hope High School, credited the Theater program with helping her to deal with her struggle with emotional issues. The way that she was accepted by the theater group helped her to grow. She encourages the School Committee to reconsider their proposed cuts to the program and Mr. Mendillo.

Vicki Boyle, a Department Head for the Mt Hope High School Performing Arts Department, representing many MHHS teachers, spoke out in favor of not making cuts to the award winning performing arts department and the Family & Consumer Sciences Department at all grade levels. She noted the impact of the recent pandemic on performance opportunities, such as choral concerts and plays. The program is in the process of becoming a part of the CTE program. She believes that by cutting the program that the District will lose some students to private school.

Chairperson McBride noted that there are two petitions that she received that will be entered into the Minutes. She also noted a letter that she received from the RI Council on the Arts, that will also be included in the Minutes.

Sarah, a MHHS alumnus and recent graduate from the Massachusetts Berkeley College of Music in Boston. She encouraged the Committee to not cut the program because it is so important to students interested in pursuing careers in the Arts.

Shannon Davis, a MHHS alumnus and Music educator, pointed out that music and the performing arts are an important part of a high school curriculum. Music and arts education help achievement scores in Math and ELA, as well as the social emotional learning that occurs in those classes.

Elizabeth O'Shea yielded her time to Bethany Carpenter. Ms. Carpenter spoke on the Colt Andrews student assessment data and the impact that the proposed cuts could have on their achievement. She pointed out that class sizes and early intervention for students at the earliest levels. She noted the difficult year that the students have had due to the pandemic. She felt that these cuts could end up costing more in remedial programs and needs. She stated that Colt Andrews is a Title I school with a transient population. She felt that for this reason, it needs to be a 3-track school.

### III. Consent Agenda

\_\_\_\_\_All items under the Consent Agenda are considered to be routine by the School Committee and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Committee member requests, in which event the items will be withdrawn from the

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

general order of business and considered in the normal sequence on the agenda. Consent Agenda items are received and filed with no discussion or further action taken.

- A. Approval of April 12, 2021 School Committee Virtual Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of April 28, 2021 School Committee Virtual Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Mr. Cabral made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda; seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau. The Motion passed unanimously.

**IV. Action**

**A. FY22 Proposed Cuts**

Superintendent Brice explained the District's financial situation and the need to cut \$23.5m in order to balance the budget. He explained that the majority of the Budget (~80%) is made up of funds for payroll and benefits. For that reason, many of the cuts will come from reductions in staffing (FTEs). He reminded the Committee that the District must present a balanced budget to the State by June 1, 2021.

He acknowledged that theater and the arts can be life changing for some students, but that other subjects have also changed lives. He stated that the difficult decisions of where to make cuts will not jeopardize core programs.

Attorney Carroll further explained that the District needs to start its fiscal year with a balanced budget in order to be in compliance with State law. She also explained that staff whose positions will be cut will need to be notified by June 1, 2021.

**Discussion:**

Several Committee members expressed their disappointment in the cuts that are being proposed. They appreciated the public comments and the many emails that they have received from the public who were concerned about the cuts and their impact on students, the arts, and programs, noting that extra-curricula programs are just as important as academics.

Several Committee members stated that they would not vote in favor of the FY22 Budget as presented with the proposed cuts.

Ms. Ellsworth expressed her frustration that the process of cutting the Budget seems to happen every year, where the Committee is forced into cutting FTEs. She stated that she would like to see how the proposed cuts align with the District's Educational Plan and the District's goals. She stated that the ESSER funds are not the answer to the District's financial situation. Stating further that they could just perpetuate the cycle.

Ms. Schofield asked about class sizes at Colt Andrews and Hugh Cole after the cuts. Superintendent Brice explained that class sizes are within the contractual guidelines, with the lower grades (K-2) with the lowest class sizes. He acknowledged that some classes are close to being over the contractual guidelines and that there may be a need to find funds to add a classroom if enrollments increase at those levels.

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

Chair McBride summed up the discussion by stating that she too appreciated the many phone calls and has a positive history with the Theater group, but in the end the Committee must make the tough decision to cut \$2.3m before June 1. She noted that the Committee has only one week to identify the cuts that they are willing to support. Since it was clear that the majority of the Committee was not in favor of the proposed cuts, she asked for a motion to table the discussion and to set up a meeting for Monday, May 17, for the purpose of voting on proposed cuts and to lay off the certified staff members. She asked Committee members to reach out to Superintendent Brice to discuss their concerns and to present their ideas and solutions for a compromise over the course of the week until the May 17, 2021 meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Cabral made a motion to table the FY22 Proposed Cuts until a May 17, 2021 meeting with the specific agenda of:

1. Accepting the recommended budget cuts
2. Accepting the recommended certified staff cuts and non-renewals.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Thibaudeau. All approved the Motion.

Chair McBride urged the committee to bring their questions, suggestions, and feedback to Superintendent Brice early in the week so that he has time to incorporate them into the proposal for the May 17th meeting.

**B. Acceptance of Donation for Scholarship Fund for MHHS from R.V. Simpson Trust**

Superintendent Brice stated that he received notice of a \$100,000 donation to be put into a Trust, so that every year a \$5000 Art scholarship can be given in the name of R.V. Simpson. Chair McBride explained that the School Committee is responsible for accepting the donation. Superintendent Brice would like to provide the scholarship to a deserving student this year. The Scholarship is for a student pursuing a future in the Arts.

MOTION: Ms. Piper made a motion to accept the donation; seconded by Ms. Bullard. All approved the motion.

Chair McBride asked Superintendent Brice to thank the donors from the entire school committee.

**V. Discussion**

**A. School Committee Plan for Superintendent Evaluation SY 20-21 and School Committee Goals**

Chair McBride explained that In an effort to get back on schedule with the School Committee's policies, Ms. Schofield will send a letter to members of the committee asking them to identify 8 goals that they have for the committee, the district, or the community and to send them to Ms. Campbell by June 1. She stated that the Superintendent has also been asked to prepare his own goals by June 1. It is the plan to have a retreat to discuss the goals.

**VI. Presentation**

**A. i-Ready and mCLASS data (by grade; by school)**

The iReady and mCLASS data presentation was removed from the agenda.

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

### **B. KMS Moving Up Ceremony and 8th Grade Activities**

Principal Morrell presented his plans for the 8th Grade Moving Up Ceremony, which will take place on June 17, 2021 at 6:30 pm, with a rain date of June 21, in the Athletic Field at . He noted that all RIDOH guidelines will be followed. He acknowledged that the guidelines change frequently, so plans may change as the guidelines change. Only KMS students will be allowed to attend events and activities. Virtual students will have the option to participate in person. Students will process to the field and, when called, will walk across the stage to receive their awards. After the ceremony, students and parents will have an opportunity to have pictures taken.

In response to a question on participants, due to changes in guidelines, there will be opportunity for parents and guests to attend the ceremony, socially distanced and sitting with their family pods, in the field.

### **C. Update on 2021-2022 School Calendar**

Assistant Superintendent Sanna presented an updated School Calendar for SY21-22, with the start date of September 7, 2021 and an end date of June 16, 2022. To achieve the shortened calendar, professional development days were combined with distance learning days for the students. In this way, students do not lose any instructional days.

There will be an orientation day for staff on August 31.

In response to a question, Superintendent Brice explained the process for distance learning, which will be that students will have assignments to do at home and that, when possible, teachers will check in to support students.

### **VII. Executive Session (Closed to the Public) Recess to 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**

There was no need for an Executive Session because there is nothing to discuss in an Executive Session. Attorney Carroll confirmed that there was no need to go into Executive Session.

### **VIII. Adjournment - 9:01 p.m.**

MOTION: There being no more business to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Thibaudeau to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Ellsworth. The motion passed unanimously.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Victor Cabral, Secretary**  
**/dbc**