

**Cohasset School Committee
Minutes**

March 13, 2020

Noon

Cohasset Middle High School
Central Office
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA

EMERGENCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

In Attendance: Jennifer Madden
Craig MacLellan
Ashley Colleary
Paul Kearney
Ellen Maher via Phone

Also in Attendance: Dr. Pat Sullivan
Dr. Leslie Scollins

Call to Order and Roll Call: Vice Chair Jennifer Madden called the meeting to order at 12:05
Present Paul Kearney, Present Ashley Colleary, Present Jennifer Madden, Present Craig MacLellan, Present Ellen Maher

Emergency meeting, pursuant to MGL c 30A section 20(b), following gubernatorial declaration of state of emergency in the Commonwealth arising from COVID-19 Pandemic

Pledge of Allegiance recited

Superintendent Update: Dr. Sullivan received guidance from the commissioner of education today. The commissioner is not at the stage of cancelling schools statewide. The commissioner gave power to local constituents. Dr. Sullivan was expecting to hear sterner guidance on school closures. Schools in the Lighthouse Group were split about 50/50 on closing schools today. About half stayed open, half closed. Some closed as a preventative measure to stop the spread. The Lighthouse Group of Superintendents participated in a conference call this morning. Dr. Sullivan will make a decision later today regarding closing schools. Dr. Sullivan will also continue

to send his regular 5PM COVID 19 Update to the community. Dr. Sullivan meets with town leaders every day. This coordinated effort includes reviewing information from WHO, CDC, DESE, DHP, as well as local and state agencies. Student safety is paramount in Dr. Sullivan's decision making.

Dr. Sullivan stated that if school is canceled, social distancing must be in effect. He encourages not gathering in large groups. Dr. Sullivan stated that schools are working with police, fire and town officials. Dr. Sullivan stated that he is also working on how to support the social and emotional well-being of students. DESE has directed that school districts not provide on-line instruction. Dr. Sullivan is looking to provide enrichment activities to students.

Craig McLellan stated that Ellen Maher is present via cell phone because she is on vacation. Mr. MacLellan thanked the administration for its outstanding communication during this evolving crisis. Mr. MacLellan stated that while there are no known cases in our school at this time, he is in support of closing the school for some period of time. Ashley Colleary also stated that she is in favor of closing the schools. She stated that she is concerned about staff and that we need to act responsibly for the whole community.

Dr. Sullivan explained the 180 days of school guidelines and stated that the hard stop for Cohasset Public Schools would be June 24th. As of now, MCAS is a go. Jenn Madden asked questions about how decisions at the state level are being made and concern that localities are not getting more guidance. Dr. Sullivan said the Commissioner of Education is being guided by Dept. of Public Health. On the town level Dr. Sullivan and the Cohasset Emergency Response team is in regular communication with the town nurse, Mary Goodwin and town doctor, Dr. Golden. HIPPA and FERPA regulations are being followed. Dept. of Public Health is not recommending school closures. Dr. Sullivan stated that the schools and buses are being cleaned regularly. Dr. Sullivan stated that students in need of food assistance will be provided with food.

Dr. Sullivan advised that he is working with all town agencies and the district's leadership team to make sure we are working together in forming a plan. The leadership team is in full support of the Superintendent's plan.

The teaching staff has been outstanding, they are working diligently to engage our students and keep students focused on learning.

If we close schools, there will be no online virtual instruction. It was made clear by the Commissioner that there can be no virtual instruction due to the concern about access for all students.

Mr. MacLellan and Mrs. Colleary both expressed support to the Superintendent and expressed their recommendation to close the schools.

Mrs. Colleary asked if the Town has considered any help for our healthcare workers and Dr. Sullivan advised that up to this point, no, but he would bring it up.

Mr. MacLellan asked what impact this closing has on the last day of school and Dr. Sullivan advised that the calendar is 180 school days and 5 snow days built in. Normally districts do not have to make up snow days after mid-April. This year the Commissioner has waived the timeline. After March 15 districts will only have to go to school for the 185 days. If Cohasset were to close and all 5 days are used, then Cohasset will close on June 24. Questions about MCAS came up in the conference call with the Commissioner. DESE is looking at MCAS. Cohasset's most important focus is the students right now. Dr. Sullivan was not satisfied with the guidelines from the state today, indicating he thought the State would provide more input. The Commissioner was empowering districts to make the decisions but abdicating leadership. It has been the same message we have been giving and are sharing. The Governor's message seems more urgent than the Commissioners. School closing was not promoted from the Commissioner.

Paul Kearney stated that it is important to keep kids healthy. He is OK that schools were open today. Ellen Maher asked if a 14 day closure meant 'school days or 'calendar' days. Dr. Sullivan stated that school closure is only part of it, the whole town has to engaged in preventative measures. There was discussion as to the spread of COVID given that there is a 14 day incubation period. The disease can be spread through asymptomatic people. Ashley Colleary stated that the Rec Dept has closed and that we are living through nothing we have ever experienced.

Public Comment: Barbara Stefan of 260 Jerusalem Rd. Referred to Chief Quigley's post emphasizing that decisions are being driven by available data. She asked what is guiding DPH decisions and emphasized the need for process. Suggested that maybe some districts have been closed for cleaning. More data should be available Sunday. Lydia St. Onge of 401 Beechwood St. has been impressed with the communication from the district. Stated that students are nervous and that advanced notice of a closing would help families make plans.

Ellen Maher thanked Dr. Sullivan and the town for the communication and work on this issue. Mrs. Maher expressed that she is in support of Dr. Sullivan and his decision making process.

Mrs. Maher departed the meeting at 1:03pm.

Motion to Adjourn at 1:07 pm by Paul Kearney Second: Craig McLellan **All in favor: Aye:** Jenn Madden, **Aye:** Craig McLellan, **Aye:** Paul Kearney, **Aye:** Ashley Colleary

