

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
DARTMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

August 18, 2020

The warrants for bills payable were reviewed and signed by the School Committee.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Chris Oliver at 4:00 p.m. and was held remotely via Zoom Technology. The Chair stated the meeting is streaming live on the DHS Media YouTube channel and noted the meeting was being videotaped for future broadcast over DCTV. The Chair advised viewers that public comment can be emailed to the recording secretary at kathleengenthner@dartmouthschools.org.

Present were the following members: Mr. Oliver, Dr. Jenkins, Mrs. Amaral, Mrs. Waite and Mr. Nunes.

Also present: Dr. Gifford, Mr. Kiely, and Mrs. Genthner.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Oliver stated public comments can be emailed to Kathleen Genthner at kathleengenthner@dartmouthschools.org. Comments will be shared with Committee members and available for review once tonight's meeting minutes are approved.

Mr. Oliver stated that numerous emails have been received today which were acknowledged by and forwarded to Committee members by Mrs. Genthner.

Mr. Oliver made a statement pertinent to comments which have been received by the School Committee members as they relate to the district's return to school plan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the Regular Session Minutes of August 3, 2020 and August 10, 2020. On a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0: Mr. Oliver – Yea; Dr. Jenkins – Yea; Mrs. Amaral – Yea; Mrs. Waite – Yea and John Nunes – Yea.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the Executive Session Minutes of August 3, 2020 and August 10, 2020 as written, with the stipulation that they be held until such time as the matter or matters for which the session was held have been completed. On a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0: Mr. Oliver – Yea; Dr. Jenkins – Yea; Mrs. Amaral – Yea; Mrs. Waite – Yea and John Nunes – Yea.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion Pertaining to the Back to School Plan: Dr. Gifford shared her PowerPoint presentation - *Phasing in to Hybrid Model* - which was provided to Committee members in their meeting packets.

Dr. Gifford provided clarification on the June and August surveys and stated they were meant to provide information as the administration planned and prepared the district's back to school plan.

Dr. Gifford stated the more recent survey was sent to gather data in order to assist in the forming of student cohorts.

Dr. Gifford added that district plans are subject to collective bargaining; negotiations are ongoing.

Dr. Gifford provided a reminder to folks who have specific questions relative to the back to school plan to forward them to questions@dartmouthschools.org which can be addressed at the administration's virtual question and answer program to be held in the near future.

Dr. Gifford provided further explanation as it concerns decision making considerations: enhanced cleaning protocols (including PPE, air purifiers, and electrostatic sprayers noting the district is following local and state health guidelines); isolation areas/nurse stations; staffing (including virtual and TA coverage); and virtual learning platforms.

Dr. Gifford stated storage bins are on site to store excess furniture and other items in order to reduce the number of unnecessary items and provide more space within classrooms for social distancing.

Dr. Gifford provided an update on financial support reporting that the district's grant submission to the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) provided under the CARES Act was approved: PPE and technology was purchased with these funds.

Dr. Gifford reminded the Committee teachers will be participating in ten days of professional development starting August 31, 2020.

Dr. Gifford provided an update on Edgenuity, the virtual learning option for families who do not want to send their children back to school buildings; the program will be available to high school and middle school students.

Dr. Gifford stated the district has decided to contract with Edgenuity since the district is familiar with this program as it has been used at the high school for credit recovery and other purposes.

Dr. Gifford added that the Edgenuity program is a catalog of courses with students learning independently; Dartmouth staff will facilitate/supervise the educational process.

Dr. Gifford noted the virtual learning platform for the elementary level has not been decided; the district is looking for an affordable program that offers "live taught" sessions adding Dartmouth staff will facilitate the educational process.

Dr. Gifford provided information about physical education as well as extracurricular activities noting the district must follow DESE and MIAA guidance.

Dr. Gifford reiterated that the remote learning phase is September 15th to September 30th; attendance will be taken and grading will be done on assignments given noting teachers will have flexibility to provide instruction (as they do in the physical classroom); there will be structured schedules for students and staff.

Dr. Gifford explained that students whose IEP requires particular services will start in school on September 15, 2020; this includes PreK students whose IEP requires in person services.

Dr. Gifford provided a schedule and an explanation of the district's proposed Phased-In Remote to Hybrid plan which will begin the week of October 1st.

Dr. Gifford added that it has been challenging to create the student cohorts as it is being done district wide; school administrators are doing their best to place siblings in the same cohort.

Dr. Gifford stated students will be assigned coursework by their teachers for remote days.

Dr. Gifford added students who choose to start school under the virtual learning platform will be allowed to move to the hybrid plan but only at a semester break.

Dr. Gifford asked the Committee to take a vote approving the proposed Phasing in to Hybrid plan.

Mr. Oliver asked if a video or photographs particularly at the elementary level could be posted on the district website for parents to see what a remote learning and hybrid classroom looks like.

Dr. Gifford responded yes; adding that the elementary schools are creating videos for kindergarten.

Mrs. Waite asked if PreK students would not be participating in remote learning and would start in hybrid mode from the start

Dr. Gifford responded that is correct.

Mrs. Waite asked if PreK students would have to wear masks and socially distance.

Dr. Gifford responded desks have been spaced per the guidelines and students will be expected to wear a mask unless they are exempt for medical reasons; there will be masks breaks and outside recess.

Dr. Jenkins asked if teachers will be required to use one “LMS” across the district.

Dr. Gifford responded yes; the district will be using google classroom/google meet.

Dr. Jenkins asked if the district will be implementing any programs to help support parents with free/reduced lunch and additional school supplies.

Dr. Gifford stated that that could be considered; we will need to confer with teachers about what supplies would be necessary.

Mrs. Amaral stated parent concerns about students who may miss a lesson and how they would be able to “go back” and get the missed information.

Mrs. Amaral made comments about parent concerns around PreK students.

Mrs. Amaral asked if “our” collaborative would have access to DHS classrooms they lease if we are remote.

Dr. Gifford responded yes.

Mrs. Amaral stated concerns about students placed out of district.

Dr. Gifford directed Mrs. Amaral to the Elizabeth Townson, the district’s Pupil Support Services Administrator.

Mr. Nunes asked if students who opt for the virtual learning platform will they be able to participate in sports, music or other extracurricular activities.

Dr. Gifford stated the decision has not been made at this time; adding she is inclined to let students participate.

Mr. Nunes asked how students will be able to pick up materials from the school.

Dr. Gifford stated the schools will reach out to their respective families to schedule the dispersal of materials, when necessary.

Mr. Nunes asked about the lunch program.

Mr. Kiely we are prepared to “cross the bridge” but need some approval from USDA and guidance from the state to continue a “grab and go” program during the remote as well as during the hybrid phase.

Mr. Oliver asked if the cost provided for the elementary virtual learning platform is per semester or for the year.

Dr. Gifford stated she believes it is for the year.

Mr. Oliver asked if students who enroll in the virtual learning platform are no longer considered Dartmouth students would the district be able to include them in its state reporting; if not, the district would then lose Chapter 70 funding for those students.

Dr. Gifford responded “we” continue to look into this matter.

Mr. Oliver asked about the protocols once the district phases in the hybrid model specifically when a student becomes symptomatic.

Dr. Gifford responded we are following DESE and state guidance which is “linked” to the Return to School Plan which is posted on the district website.

Mr. Oliver asked questions about transportation: including monitors and sanitizing buses.

Mr. Kiely responded state guidance provides for 25 students per bus; “our” needs support slightly less than that number noting mask will be required on buses, hand sanitizers will be available, there will be assigned seating and an area in the front of the bus will be designated for a student who may become symptomatic and the parent is not available to take the student home.

Mr. Kiely added we will have two sets of routes one for Cohort A and one for Cohort B covering the town twice.

Mr. Kiely noted it is “our” intent to impact the school day as little as possible while factoring in the cleaning of buses in between the high school, middle school and elementary school cycles in the morning and the afternoon.

Mr. Oliver asked if parents should expect to be allowed only one location for pick up and drop off Monday through Friday.

Mr. Kiely responded that is correct.

Mr. Oliver asked about the taking of attendance either in remote or hybrid mode and is it a state requirement.

Dr. Gifford responded this is correct.

Mr. Oliver asked if the district will work with families who do not have internet access.

Dr. Gifford responded the district is working on wi-fi hot spots with Comcast as well as other possibilities.

Mrs. Waite asked about Edgenuity for the high school and can students start at the beginning of the year and not after the remote phase.

Dr. Gifford responded she will get back to the Committee.

Mrs. Waite asked about teacher coverage and asked if the district has thought about hiring several full time substitutes for each level.

Dr. Gifford stated this has been discussed but not decided upon yet.

Mrs. Waite asked what the plan is to reevaluate continuing in hybrid mode or returning to fully remote phase should data warrant it.

Dr. Gifford responded we need to keep the conversation going adding we want to give parents enough time to adjust to any shift.

Dr. Jenkins commented a two week meeting schedule during the fall would be helpful.

Dr. Gifford reported Project Time started today at the high school where twelve newly hired staff met with Mrs. Oliveira.

Mrs. Amaral stated her concerns about students who may have internet or other issues that may prohibit them from logging on during remote learning periods which would adversely affect their attendance record.

Mr. Oliver agreed and asked that there be follow up communication with parents of students who are frequently absent.

Dr. Gifford agreed.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins to approve the Phasing in the Hybrid Model as presented by the administration. On a roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0: Mr. Oliver – Yea; Dr. Jenkins – Yea; Mrs. Amaral – Yea; Mrs. Waite – Yea and John Nunes – Yea.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent's Update: Dr. Gifford had nothing further to report.

Report of the Chair: Mr. Oliver asked Committee members if they would be agreeable to move next week's meeting to Tuesday, September 1 at 6:30 p.m.

Other Matters that May Not have been anticipated at the time of the Agenda posting.

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The next regular session of the School Committee will take place on Tuesday, September 1, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. at the Dartmouth High School Media Center; the public will not be granted physical access to this meeting but will have continued access to meetings via live stream at the DHS Media YouTube channel <https://youtube.com/dhstvmedia>.

Dr. Jenkins moved, seconded by Mr. Nunes to adjourn to Executive Session at 5:45 p.m. in order to provide an update with respect to collective bargaining with union personnel and not to return in to Open Session. On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Bonny L. Gifford, Ed. D.
Superintendent