

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Special Meeting

August 20, 2020

Mr. Todd Burrick called the special meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Tara Willerup and Jen Batchelar. Messrs. Todd Burrick, Jeff Tindall and Brian Watson. Mmes. Lydia Tedone and Sharon Thomas joined the meeting via telephone.

Members absent: Mrs. Susan Salina

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Director of Personnel Neil Sullivan, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Ms. Batchelar read a letter submitted for public comment in support of opening schools full time. The letter was signed by 40 families.

Public Audience

BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Tindall reported that the SPS master plan was presented to the BOF earlier in the week. He stated that BOF members asked excellent questions and requested additional information for their financial modeling.

Communications

Ms. Batchelar stated that principals at each of the elementary schools are holding question and answer sessions with parents during a virtual meeting. These meetings have been very informative. Mr. Curtis noted that a lot of the questions now being received are building specific. Mr. Burrick stated that it is the intent of the board to hold in person public audience at the next meeting, if technically possible as the meeting must be streamed in real time.

Mr. Sullivan provided an update on the Return to Simsbury Schools (RSS) Task Force. Ms. Murray stated that new teacher orientation took place this week. Principals will be communicating school specific information with parents, including schedules for the first 2 weeks of school this week. Next week teachers will begin communications with their students on Wednesday.

Ms. Tedone reported that NSBA, CREC and CABA Board of Directors continue to meet regarding the reopening of schools.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- A. Approval of Minutes of July 21, 2020 Special Meeting

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2020 Special Meeting.

Mr. Tindall: Seconded. So moved.

Approval of
Minutes of July
21, 2020 Special
Meeting

<p>B. Approval of Minutes of July 28, 2020 Special Meeting</p> <p>Mr. Watson: MOVE to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2020 Special Meeting.</p> <p>Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.</p>	Approval of Minutes of July 28, 2020 Special Meeting
<p>C. Approval of Minutes of July 28, 2020 Meeting</p> <p>Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of July 28, 2020 meeting.</p> <p>Ms. Batchelar:Seconded. So moved.</p>	Approval of Minutes of July 28, 2020 Meeting
<p>D. Personnel</p> <p>Ms. Batchelar:MOVE that the Board of Education accept the resignations of Jennifer Clark effective August 7, 2020 and Heather Tanis effective August 21, 2020.</p> <p>Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.</p> <p>Mr. Tindall: MOVE that the Board of Education approve a non-salaried leave of absence for Rebecca Rosenthal for the period of August 24, 2020 – June 30, 2021 with a guaranteed position upon her return.</p> <p>Mr. Watson: Seconded. So moved.</p>	Personnel
<p>E. Approval of Gift from HJMS PTO</p> <p>Ms. Batchelar:MOVE that the proposed gift of \$8,900 from the Henry James Memorial School PTO be approved.</p> <p>Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.</p>	Approval of Gift from HJMS PTO
<p><u>INFORMATION AND REPORTS</u></p>	
<p>A. Reopening Plan Update</p> <p>Mr. Curtis reviewed the topics for discussion this evening. SPS teachers will return to work on Monday and have a full week to adjust to the environment and receive professional development. The following week students will return for ½ days in order to adjust and receive training on safety measures. Families who have chosen the distance learning (DL) model will receive communication shortly. Close to 20% of our student population will be educated in the DL model, with percentages highest at the elementary level. Mr. Curtis stated that during the presentation the hybrid model and transition time frames will be addressed, as well as access, equity and COVID related expenses.</p> <p>Mr. Curtis pointed out that school reopening continues to be a fluid situation. He noted the trends among local school districts, with 27 of 35 districts starting in the hybrid model. Mr. Curtis reviewed the public health data markers, provided by the Farmington Valley Health District and the CT Department of Public Health, relative to the 3 learning models. He stated that he feels good about the hybrid approach which allows us to organizationally move to the new environment, and allows students to</p>	Reopening Plan Update

become accustomed to the new way of doing things. Mr. Curtis noted the full in-person return of our youngest students is necessary as we know that this group struggled with distance learning in the spring.

Ms. Murray reviewed the elementary educator professional learning schedule for next week. Areas to be covered include health and safety, technology, social/emotional learning, faculty meetings, department/grade team time, professional learning communities, and classroom time for teachers. DL teachers will login to these sessions. Ms. Murray outlined the schedule for the first week of school for students, 8/31 – 9/4. She noted that specifics will be provided by each principal. At the elementary schools, on the 2 days when the opposite cohort is in school, the cohort at home will login to the classroom at certain times during the day. At the secondary level students will login from home and follow their course schedule. Ms. Murray stated that DL teachers will reach out to their families next week.

Mr. Sullivan addressed the choice of Monday as the day for all students to be involved in distance learning. Between the start of school and the second week in October there are 3 school holidays on Mondays. Some districts are suggesting they will do a deep cleaning with Wednesday as the DL day. In Simsbury we will clean and disinfect the buildings every day. We have increased the number of custodial hours by 120 hours per week by adding additional custodians and supporting any needed overtime.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the August survey data. 18% of families have chosen distance learning. At the elementary level, 17 classroom teachers have been assigned DL roles. Some roles have been reassigned as classroom teachers. These include interventionists, math coaches, language arts consultants, and other classroom teachers. There will be 2 classes each for grades K, 4, 5, 6 and 3 classes each for grades 1, 2, 3. For families choosing DL at the secondary level, students will follow their assigned course schedule. A handful of teachers at the secondary level will work from home with a substitute in the classroom.

Ms. Batchelar asked who will be heading up the 17 teachers involved in distance learning. Mr. Sullivan responded that Betsy Gunsalus, Director of Elementary Curriculum, will head up that group. He noted that the district is trying to keep students from the same school together in the DL cohorts.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the hybrid learning model transition to full in-person learning schedule. Grades K-2 will return to full in person on September 14. Grades 3-6 will return to full in person learning on September 29. The week of September 29th a decision will be made relative to HJMS and SHS students returning to full in person. The actual transition would not occur prior to October 13th. Ms. Batchelar asked if the schools will have tents outside. Mr. Sullivan responded that a large part of the lunch plan at HJMS and SHS includes the use of tents.

Ms. Lemke addressed access and equity. She noted the importance of making sure that all students have access to the general education experience. Ms. Lemke stated that the Equity Statement, adopted by the board, will serve as a filter for our plans and actions. Ms. Batchelar asked how we are handling students who are new to special education. Ms. Lemke responded that a number of evaluations were done over the summer, and others will be completed during the first 45 days of school. She stated that students with more intense learning needs may transition back to full

in-person learning with the K-2 cohort. Ms. Lemke reviewed the distribution of technology hardware to our students by grade level.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the HEROES daycare program being offered to SPS employees for their children during the hybrid model. The program is being offered at a reduced cost and is a break-even endeavor.

B. COVID Expenditures

Ms. Meriwether stated that with offsetting savings, the 2020 end of year budget has a surplus. In fiscal year 2021 COVID expenses are nearly \$400,000 and projected costs are an additional \$400,000. At the next BOF meeting a request will be made to use surplus from the 2020 fiscal year to offset expenses in the 2021 fiscal year. Ms. Meriwether stated that notification was received this week stating that the town will receive an \$83,000 grant from the Cares Fund. Funds from the non-lapsing account will also be utilized to offset the COVID expenditures. There is currently \$385,000 in the non-lapsing account. Ms. Meriwether stated the town is now able to apply for FEMA funding, but the parameters around what they will cover keeps changing. She noted that it is likely additional PPE will need to be purchased after the school year starts.

In response to Ms. Thomas, Mr. Curtis reviewed the ventilation plan. He stated that as part of the CT State Department of Education Reopening Plan, the Department of Public Health recommends that districts have someone review the ventilation systems in each school. Mr. Curtis stated that we brought in a consulting firm to look at 3 specific categories and make recommendations as needed. The 3 categories are increasing fresh air, decreasing recirculated air and decreasing blown air. The district has begun making the recommended improvements while we await the final plan.

Mr. Tindall asked the overall cost of the district's COVID expenditures. Ms. Meriwether responded that \$400,000 was spent in fiscal year 2020 and \$800,000 in fiscal year 2021. Ms. Batchelar asked when students will receive a letter from their teacher. Ms. Murray responded that elementary placements will be sent out on August 26th. A welcome video from their teacher will be sent at the end of next week.

Ms. Batchelar suggested a picture of the teacher be placed in the classrooms if they are wearing masks. Ms. Murray noted that employee badges include a picture. Ms. Batchelar asked if students can use their own devices. Ms. Murray responded that as long as the device has the proper applications, they can be used.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m.

Ms. Batchelar: Seconded. So moved.

COVID
Expenditures

Public Audience

Adjournment

Jennifer Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary