



**QUABBIN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Committee Minutes
Thursday, April 1, 2020
Educational Support Center**

This meeting was held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 2 utilizing Zoom Technology.

PRESENT

Chair	Lee Wolanin	Member, Barre
Vice-Chair	Mark Brophy	Member, Barre
	Dr. Richard Allan	Member, Barre
	Debra Chamberlain	Member, Hubbardston
	David Correia	Member, Hubbardston
	Dave Deschamps	Member, Barre
	William Hansen	Member, Hubbardston
	David Marsh	Member, Barre
	Walter Nutter	Member, Oakham
	Marcelino Sarabia	Member, Hardwick
	Geoffrey Spier	Member, Hardwick
	Peggy Thompson	Member, New Braintree
	Mark Wigler	Member, Hubbardston

Absent: Fred Jean-Francois, Oakham; Ned Kelly, Hardwick

ALSO PRESENT

Dr. Sheila Muir	Superintendent of Schools
Cheryl Duval	Director of Administrative Services
District Administrators/Staff	Kristin Campione; Gregory Devine; Colleen Mucha; Adam Couturier (arrived 7:30); Andrew Walsh; Clare Barnes; Christopher Carlson; Sue Musnicki; Jill Peterson; Shelly St. George; Tricia Worthington; Evan Barringer; Keri Dubois-Gould
Press:	Ellie Downer, Barre Gazette;
Town Officials/Residents:	Heather Budrewicz, Interim Barre Town Administrator

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:41 p.m. by roll call. Chairman Wolanin explained how the meeting would transpire. All participants would be muted. If they wish to speak to a topic, participants were instructed on using the "raise your hand" feature or type their question/concern into the "chat" feature.
2. **SCHOOL CLOSURE AND COVID-19 UPDATE:** Dr. Muir opened by commending the QRSD administrative team on the incredible amount of work that has been done over the past few weeks with information and requirements changing on a daily, and sometimes hourly basis. Dr. Muir also commended Kim Staiti, School Nurse Leader on her expertise in guiding the district prior to the school closure.

Plant & Facilities – The Plant & Facilities Department has been continuing to clean and sanitize all group spaces such as the gyms and cafeteria. They have moved on to sanitizing classrooms. Once a classroom is sanitized, it is closed off with no entrance permitted. If someone has to enter the classroom, the room would then have to be sanitized again. The P & F department has also been assisting with cleaning before, during and after food distribution. Once all areas are sanitized, the staff will be encouraged to do some professional learning and mandated trainings remotely. As time goes on, summer work will be started.

Food Service Department – Dr. Muir commended the Food Service Department who was able to so quickly start distributing food to children. Closure announcement from the Governor took place on Sunday, March 15th, and Food Service was distributing food to students on March 17th. Initially, DOE informed us that schools with greater than 50% enrollment were eligible for funding. The decision had to be made as to whether or not the district would accept the cost of feeding all students. This past weekend, the district was informed that all meals will be reimbursed. The district is trying to be responsive to families' needs. Some families cannot get transportation to get food, so volunteer staff members are delivering. The first day of distribution, the district put out 22 meals at the middle/high school and 83 at HES for a total of 105. Nine days later, 133 meals were put out at the middle/high school and 126 at HES for a total of 259. The district has reached out to the transportation company who is willing deliver meals and school work. Starting this week, food for Saturday and Sunday will also be distributed.

Educators (Teachers, tutors, paraprofessionals, nurses, clinical staff, guidance, etc.) – Dr. Muir reported that all have been working diligently to create choice boards which have offered a wide variety of choices to students to provide high quality learning opportunities. These boards offer new choices and activities every week. All educators have been given professional learning and mandated training, as well as Google Suite courses. All educators have office hours daily to answer questions from students and parents. The district will provide remote special education services to students with disabilities to the best of our ability. The district is trying to manage communications with families and be sensitive to the stressors our staff and families are encountering.

Principals and Office Managers – All principals and office managers are doing whatever it takes to assist educators and parents.

Central Office Staff – Many people in Central Office are doing their same responsibilities virtually and have been consumed by virtual meetings with the DOE, Commissioner Riley, DPH and DESE. Continuing to encourage the support staff to work virtually as much as possible. They have also been given mandated trainings as well as professional learning.

Technology Team – The technology team has been sanitizing all devices in the district and have been simultaneously setting up technology needs with Zoom, Google meets, etc. Devices have been distributed to staff who needed one. Wifi will be made accessible at all schools from the parking lots for staff and students. Andrew Walsh has been vetting online platforms and software. The team has been providing tech support for teachers and students via a day long zoom meeting Monday through Friday. At this time, consideration is being given to the possibility of providing devices to students. Mr. Walsh believes we could get these out in a short period of time. Most parents surveyed said they did not have enough devices in their homes for continuing to work on school work, and many are sharing devices. The high school currently has a 1-1 Chromebook program, so distributing those would not be very difficult. The middle school and elementary schools currently use Windows devices. Chromebooks are web managed and can be managed wirelessly, as well as disable online. Windows devices can be upgraded to Chromebooks at an initial cost of \$27,120. This was something that was being considered down the road. At this time, we could supply down to 3rd grade in elementary school with the amount of devices we have. As an alternative, so all children could have access, Mr. Walsh recommends supplying one Chromebook per family, and if a family has a need, once all distribution takes place, supply another. The School Committee members agreed that Mr. Walsh's plan was the best approach.

Dr. Muir then discussed payments to employees. At this time, extended day workers have been cleaning their spaces and working in professional learning. As a norm, they work variable schedules, and have been paid according to their average number of hours over the past 30 days. Dr. Muir would like to continue to pay them while they participate in professional learning. This is a similar situation with lunch monitors. They could engage in more professional learning in regard to supporting students in unsupervised situations. DESE recommends that districts continue to pay hourly employees, as they will be needed when school reopens. There is a possibility of using lunch monitors to hand out food at the distribution sites. If the hourly employees were to go on unemployment, it would be between 50 – 60% of their rate. The district is self-insured for unemployment, so we would pay everyone's claim, versus paying the employees 100% of their pay to better themselves with professional learning plus work on the food line.

Motion made by Mr. Deschamps and seconded by Mr. Spier to follow administrative recommendation to continue to pay extended day, lunch monitors and recess monitors through the end of the school year.

Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote: Dr. Allan – yes; Mr. Marsh – yes; Mr. Brophy – yes; Mr. Deschamps – yes; Chairman Wolanin – yes; Mr. Sarabia – yes; Mr. Spier – yes; Mrs. Chamberlain – yes; Mr. Hansen – yes; Mr. Correia – yes; Mr. Wigler – yes; Mrs. Thompson – yes; Mr. Nutter – yes.

3. **FY21 BUDGET DISCUSSION** – At the FY21 Public Hearing, the Committee voted a number that was higher than what the district wanted, and the plan was to see what revenues would be coming in, as well as cuts made by building level administrators. The district is in the midst of negotiating six contracts, which are now all on hold. Towns will be operating on 1/12 budget if they are unable to have town meetings entering into the new fiscal year. Towns will need to make their FY20 assessment payments. Letters need to be sent to the towns by April 30th, therefore, at this time, the letters will state the public hearing number and then we will proceed from there.
4. **TRANSPORTATION CONTRACT DISCUSSION** - The district is following guidelines from DESE in regard to paying employees and contracted services. It was suggested on Monday to re-negotiate bus contracts down because busses aren't running. Dr. Muir and Ms. Duval are recommending the district continue to pay the transportation coordinator. If we continue to pay, but negotiate a lower rate, we will receive less in transportation reimbursement in FY21. If we receive less transportation reimbursement in FY21, dollar for dollar loss of revenue will mean high assessments to the towns. Whatever is saved now will be lost next year in transportation reimbursement.

Motion made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Deschamps to allow the Administration to negotiate with the Bus Contractor, J. P. McCathy & Sons in the best interest of the QRSD.

Motion passed by a roll call vote (12-1-0 with Mrs. Thompson abstaining): Dr. Allan – yes; Mr. Marsh – yes; Mr. Brophy – yes; Mr. Deschamps – yes; Chairman Wolanin – yes; Mr. Sarabia – yes; Mr. Spier – yes; Mrs. Chamberlain – yes; Mr. Hansen – yes; Mr. Correia – yes; Mr. Wigler – yes; Mrs. Thompson – abstain; Mr. Nutter – yes.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – None.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Hansen to adjourn the Zoom meeting at 8:28 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Bennett
School Committee Secretary