



**QUABBIN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Committee Minutes
Thursday, January 14, 2021
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
	David Correia	Member, Hubbardston
	Dave Deschamps	Member, Barre
	William Hansen	Member, Hubbardston
	Fred Jean-Francois	Member, Oakham
	Ned Kelly	Member, Hardwick
	Walter Nutter	Member, Oakham
	Marcelino Sarabia	Member, Hardwick
	Peggy Thompson	Member, New Braintree
	Mark Wigler	Member, Hubbardston

ABSENT

Emilly Cartier	Member, Hardwick
Debra Chamberlain	Member, Hubbardston
David Marsh	Member, Barre

ALSO PRESENT

Dr. Sheila Muir	Superintendent of Schools
District Administrators/Staff	Cheryl Duval; Kristin Campione; Colleen Mucha; Andrew Walsh; Adam Couturier; Gregory Devine; Shelly St. George; Jill Peterson; Tricia Worthington; Sue Musnicki; Chris Carlson; Keri Dubois-Gould; Eleni Marinelli; Colleen Fors; Shannon Harris

Press:

Town Officials/Residents:

Students Nicholas Whitelaw and Thomas Doyle
Parents and community members not identifiable on Zoom

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- December 10, 2020 – Motion made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Brophy to approve the minutes of December 10, 2020. Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

a) Superintendent of Schools

- Superintendent's Report - Dr. Muir reported that Covid expenses will be covered through September of 2023 by a grant in the amount of \$719,000. This will have to be shared with Eagle Hill School and St. Aloysius.
- Dr. Muir reported that the state will be offering pooled Covid testing for students and staff. This will be done with consent only from families and staff. The cost of this program is being paid for by the state for six weeks, through March 28, 2021. After that, districts can make the decision to continue at their own expense. Pooled Covid testing is done by testing a group or "pool" of students or staff (ex. 10 in a pool), if the pool returns a positive case, that pool of people will then be tested individually to determine where the positive test result originated from.
- Dr. Muir reported on the number of Covid positive cases. To date, there are 8 positive students, representing 0.37% of the student population and 4 staff members, representing 1.12% of the staff population. These cases are all from within the community, not from within the school district.

b) Director of Administrative Services

- Ms. Duval did not have access to the warrant numbers, therefore they will be presented at February's meeting.
- Food Service Update – Participation in the weekly distribution of free meals has risen. On January 7th, distribution was for 410 students, or 5,740 meals distributed in three hours. Since schools reopened (September – December) 129,175 meals have been distributed. Since March, when COVID hit, 265,000 meals have been distributed.

c) Teacher Advisory Council

- Evan Barringer, President of the QRTA, was unable to attend the meeting this evening. However, Mr. Barringer did submit a letter to the School Committee which was read by Mr. Wolanin in open session. A copy of this letter is attached to the minutes.

d) Student Advisory Council

- Eleni Martinelli, Student Government Advisor, Thomas Doyle, Grade 12 student and Nicholas Whitelaw, Grade 9 student joined the meeting to report on their experiences with hybrid learning. Tom Doyle, 12th grade student, reported that the teachers have gone above and beyond for their students on a regular basis. Morale has not been great due to the challenges of remote and hybrid learning. Thomas is a band student and reported that his fellow students are excited that they can play together again with the accommodations that have been put in place. They currently have specific instrument masks and filters for some instruments. Cohorts play twice a week with roughly 15 students per cohort. Students are 10 feet apart when playing or singing. In order to accommodate the distancing between students, they have moved to the cafeteria which isn't wonderful acoustically. They are currently working on a virtual concert. Practice for that takes place on "we video" where each student performs separately at home, and then they are all put together and synchronized. Nicholas Whitelaw, 9th grade student transitioned from remote learning to hybrid learning at the beginning of trimester 2. Nicholas found remote learning to be very challenging due to the little contact he had with teachers and the motivation needed to do the work on your own. Nicholas and Thomas worked with Student Government to put out a survey in regard to the Week-At-A-Glance (WAAG). They reviewed the responses and came up with some ideas to help students. This would include things such as sharing time management skills for students. Students are also having a hard time with the lack of social interaction with their peers. Student Government wants to find ways to help students with all of the aspects of school that they are missing.
- Colleen Mucha, District Director of Elementary Teaching, Learning and Support reported on the success of vacation camp. The district received a grant for three vacation camps. The first of which took place

during the December break for three hours per day for three days. This camp was for students in grades K – 2 and offered a chance to work on their literacy skills. A video was shown of the camp in Hubbardston which was run by Wendy Castriotta and Joanne Welch. The camp took place at all the elementary schools and was also attended by administrators. An RLS parent with a remote student enrolled their child and ended up seeing the possibilities for in person learning. They have now switched their child over to in person from remote. Additional camps will be held during February and April breaks.

4. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

a) Administrative Review

- No report was given

b) Audit

- No report was given

c) Budget

- No report was given. Date of first meeting is being determined.

d) Central Office

- No report was given

e) Collective Bargaining

- Five out of six contracts have been ratified, ending with 3 year contracts. Paraprofessionals meet next week for ongoing discussion.

f) Plant and facilities

- The subcommittee met with Glenn Wojcik of Pioneer Valley Environmental who conducted an air quality study which looked at the air exchange in classroom. Clare Barnes, Plant & Facilities Manager, identified representative rooms in each school to be tested. PVE measured the airflow which consists of a combination of air coming in from outside, as well as air flowing through the ventilation system as inside air reading by total cubic feet per minute. The state recommends 4 air exchanges per hour. Potential cleaning of coils may help this exchange. The MS gym had very low readings. It is believed that this is due to a buildup of dust on the coils which should be cleaned and then retested. The MS gym has been put out of use until additional testing after cleaning can be accomplished. New Braintree received a couple of low readings which could be due to damage that was done to the coils during the ice storm. They will be cleaned and retested.
- The subcommittee discussed the Capital Plan and three important projects
 - An asbestos study is needed at Hardwick Elementary School. Department of Labor did an inspection of the building and the plans of the building. There is a statement from the architect stating that there is no asbestos, however, that statement does not have the architect's seal. Out of an abundance of caution, asbestos testing will be performed.
 - Repairs to the fire panel and alarm system at the MS. The current system is a proprietary system that is so old we are unable to find parts for repairs. Cost to replace is approximately \$141,000.
 - The chiller at the MS/HS consists of three parts – chiller, condenser and water tower. The water tower on the roof is rusting and needs replaced ASAP. Currently there are leaks at the chemical feed lines, and it appears that only the part around the unit will need replacement. Currently awaiting cost of the condenser. Estimated cost of repairs for the chiller system and fire panel/alarm is \$500,000 to \$600,000.

g) Policy & Review

- Motion made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Brophy to remove Policy DIA – Student Activity Funds from the table.
Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

- Dr. Allan discussed the changes to the Academic Guide for SY21/22 which include Advanced Quantitative Reasoning, Intro to Innovation Pathway, Product Design, Computer Integrated Manufacturing A, Computer Integrated Manufacturing B.
Motion made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Sarabia to approve the changes to the Academic Guide for SY 21/22.
Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.
- Dr. Allan reported that Mrs. Marinelli, Nicholas Whitelaw and Thomas Doyle had also attended the Policy and Review/Reform meeting on Monday to discuss the Week at a Glance as well as the hybrid learning model discussed this evening.
- Dr. Allan also reported that the district has received \$330,000 in Innovation Pathway Grants.
- DESE updated student learning time regulations were discussed. Hybrid students are required to have 35 hours over 10 days and remote learners must have 40 hours over 10 days. A daily live check in by educators is also required. These changes go into effect on January 19th.
- MCAS testing update – Seniors could receive credit if they passed an approved course and demonstrated competency in that subject in lieu of a qualifying MCAS score. Grades 3 – 8 will only take part of the assessment which will shorten the assessment time. The ELP date has been extended and the MCAS Biology test will be given in June as well as February.

h) Special Education

- No report was given.

i) Technology

- Subcommittee meeting was held this evening. Discussed online learning issues and the protocols for log in that the elementary students have. Technology has been added to the classrooms to assist with synchronous learning. Bandwidth has not been an issue at this time. The majority of students currently have chromebooks. One larger budget need/request is for a new firewall.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- None

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

- None

7. SCHOOL COMMITTEE CONCERNS

- Comment was made that it may help if the district promoted public awareness of the vaccine for COVID-19.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- Student Opportunity Act – This was originally voted on at the March 12th School Committee meeting. Dr. Muir reviewed the This plan is in response to a requirement from DESE. Unfortunately, due to declining enrollment and hold harmless status, we will not receive the funding. A copy is attached. Motion made by Mr. Brophy and seconded by Mr. Sarabia to accept the Student Opportunity Act Plan as presented for SY2021-2023.
Motion passed 9-0-1 by a roll call vote: Dr. Allan – no; Mr. Brophy – yes; Mr. Deschamps – yes; Mr. Wolanin – yes; Mr. Sarabia –yes; Mr. Hansen – yes; Mr. Correia – yes; Mr. Wigler – yes; Mr. Nutter – yes; Mr. Jean-Francois – yes.

9. REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

- None.

10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Brophy to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.
The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Bennett
School Committee Secretary