

WINCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 2021
VIA ZOOM

Board Members Present: L. Picard, T. Perkins, E. Holmes, T. Kilanski, J. Rokes
Administration Present: K. Dassau, V. Carey, D. Jack, I. Spencer

The meeting was called to order at 6:31pm by School Board Chair, L. Picard.

L. Picard read the Right-to-Know meeting checklist, took roll call and all Board members advised if anyone was in the room with them. T. Kilanski advised there were people in the room with him and more would be joining.

L. Picard MOVED to approve the Public minutes of the 1/21/21 Board meeting; SECONDED by: E. Holmes, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski – yes, L. Picard – yes, J. Rokes – yes, MOTION PASSED.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT – V. Carey:

Remote vs. in person instruction - V. Carey distributed and reviewed graphics of COVID statistics for a seven day rolling average and 14 day data, with the Board. Feels should be tracking downward pretty dramatically. There has been a downward trend since January 8th. Cheshire County numbers are doing better than numbers Statewide.

Reviewed a spreadsheet of numbers pertinent to Winchester; on 2/2 Cheshire County was orange rather than red. Winchester numbers have declined significantly in the past several days. Currently at eight active cases in Winchester; numbers are going down. That is to be celebrated; good news for Winchester.

There has been a lot of discussion from the Governor’s office and the DOE. It is true, schools have had very good protocol in place; statewide and in Winchester. V. Carey advised need to keep in mind any spread at school spreads to individuals elsewhere. We have not seen a spread in school; she is very proud of that. There is concern of spread in other communities; need to consider that. Everyone has different health and personal circumstances.

The staff have been surveyed regarding in-person instruction. Of those surveys received, more staff would want to go back once the numbers are below substantial spread; a small amount would want to go back once teachers are vaccinated and a small amount once all staff and students are vaccinated.

V. Carey objects to the notion that teachers must make sacrifices to get kids back to school. Need to do it in a way that doesn’t sacrifice the health of staff, students and families.

There are a lot of things for the Board to consider. V. Carey is suggesting from here, to survey all families to see who plans to participate in hybrid learning and under what circumstances, watch the next two weeks of data and State and Winchester numbers and make a decision on return-to-person instruction at the 2/18/21 meeting.

V. Carey explained they all need to accept that at times things will shift to remote learning to accommodate staff and/or student exposure. There will also be differences as to what can be offered dependent upon grade level. They still have strained staffing conditions. There needs to be strict protocols in place.

V. Carey advised with this survey parents can change from remote to hybrid learning.

T. Perkins advised Jason was now in the room and she was wearing ear buds.

T. Perkins asked if they decide to go back to in-person learning after the next meeting, would people have to quarantine after February vacation. If so, would it be March when the students went back? The Board discussed a possible return-to-school date. Two weeks of quarantine after February break would be March 15th.

V. Carey advised the Winchester staff is working extraordinarily hard for their students. They are teaching four days and one-on-one instruction on Friday, as needed. They are solidly meeting State requirements for learning.

V. Carey advised if they get the survey data soon from parents, she can send it to the Board before the 2/18 meeting.

T. Kilanski feels the attitude should be the same for kids being back at school as having people at the Deliberative Session.

V. Carey thinks she can deploy the survey by Saturday.

L. Picard – Everyone needs to be safe, cautious and observe protocols.

L. Picard thanked the staff and Administration for all their hard work. She asked V. Carey to keep the Board updated as she receives information.

BUSINESS MANAGER’S REPORT – D. Jack:

Manifests:

L. Picard MOVED to approve the Accounts Payable Manifest of 12/11/2020 in the amount of \$758,008.04, the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$878,115.58 dated 12/11/2020; the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$179,556.34 dated 12/17/2020; the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$191,665.25 dated 12/21/20; the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$126,245.73 dated 2/5/2021 and the Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$198,245.17 dated 2/5/2021, SECONDED by: T. Perkins, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski – yes, J. Rokes – yes, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.

L. Picard asked D. Jack to track down the 1/22 Manifest that she was seeing, but he has not. If the Board hasn’t seen it yet, D. Jack will bring it to the meeting.

BUDGET TO DATE:

D. Jack explained not much has changed. The number will probably be close to \$250,000 to \$350,000. Need to be sure they have seen everything; that nothing will come in that they didn’t expect. Some things have not been encumbered yet. They are in a place on the right side; not at a negative amount at this point.

L. Picard feels it may leave an opportunity to return money to the general fund and reduce the deficit.

D. Jack – That is the plan.

D. Jack thinks there are some COVID monies coming our way. Looking at Grants. Want to make sure they are not missing out on anything.

J. Rokes asked D. Jack about the Business Manager Line and about interest.

D. Jack’s advised that the figure had not been input yet. Will get information for J. Rokes.

J. Rokes asked about Transportation. How did we spend \$182,000 more with Tucker’s than what was allotted?

D. Jack advised that was Special Ed.

V. Carey explained they did not have a contract for Transportation this year when the budget was done. The contracted amount was a lot more than what was budgeted.

When we come back to full in-person learning, we will need to have transportation ready.

D. Jack will look into it and come back with answers.

V. Carey advised multiple busses are running now for students and also to deliver food.

D. Jack advised districts are encouraged by the State and Government to pay contracts; to get CARES money and other funds needed to agree to pay contracts.

J. Rokes asked if ACCESS can help deliver food.

V. Carey advised they had discussed with ACCESS picking up the route for food in the Summer and they decided it was not feasible.

K. Dassau advised we are still obligated to our contracts anyway.

T. Kilanski feels if ACCESS could use their busses it would give them the opportunity to offset their burden.

V. Carey advised there was a comment from a member of the public who advised ACCESS has no drivers at the present time.

D. Jack will follow-up on a couple of things for J. Rokes for the next meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT - K. Dassau:

*Business Manager’s search will be on the agenda for the next Board Meeting.

Facilities Report - I. Spencer:

*Facilities meeting today - discussed Ford Building rental. They have some tasks to do; moving forward. Progressing in a positive manner.

*Nine classrooms are in the process of having HVAC done. Hopefully will be done in the next week and then post-construction clean up and furniture moved back in.

K. Dassau advised as they continue to receive applications for the position, MRI will be doing a study to gain information and get input to see how the Business Office is running currently and give recommendations and data of the cost of doing business.

BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS/REPORT:

L. Picard advised they need to set the time for the Deliberative Session. It could be outside. Does the Board still want to do it at 9:00am?

T. Kilanski MOVED to have the meeting at 9:00 am on Saturday, April 10, 2021; SECONDED by: T. Perkins, after discussion, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins - yes, E. Holmes - yes, T. Kilanski – yes, J. Rokes – no, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.

Ian Spencer explained he has done some investigating into tent rentals. Feels it would be extremely reasonable for the School and Town to work together. Asked if the Board would allow him to work with whoever at the Town would handle that and facilitate it. A rough estimate is between \$3,000 and \$4,000 for two tents; one for the Board plus the Moderator and one for the Public. They would use COVID funds and split the cost with the Town.

L. Picard asked Ian Spencer to bring any recommendations to the 2/18/2021 meeting.

Ian Spencer will contact Ben Kilanski at the Town.

L. Picard advised at the next Board meeting have some committee work that has to be done.

Scholarship Committee:

L. Picard was contacted by Kristy Frazer regarding Scholarship Night. She is looking for someone to be the point person and help coordinate what Senior Night might look like.

T. Perkins will do that.

Policy Meeting:

Need to get a Policy Meeting scheduled for February.

Technology and Professional Development:

The Committee has not met. It has been a really odd year. L. Picard would love the Committee to meet in some capacity. She tasked V. Carey with setting something up by the next meeting.

V. Carey will poll members for time/date and bring to the next meeting.

Keene High Committee:

L. Picard advised they have not met; feels they should.

J. Rokes and L. Picard will set up a meeting.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Ben Kilanski felt V. Carey's presentation on return to in-person learning was a good report; well organized. He knows she put a lot of work into it.

Esther Beverly advised through Zoom that the staff have been available after-school as needed.

J. Rokes asked D. Jack how the workload with the hours he is working, is going.

D. Jack advised he is trying to keep time as open as possible; on-site once a week. He has a long commute so he doesn't want to use a big chunk of his time for travel. This time of year it is hard to get ahead. Now will be able to work on day-to-day things; not things like the budget.

D. Jack advised by doing a study of the Business office, they will be able to have some genuine input as to what is needed. Need to put time in to get the job done. Advised the Business Manager position is not a part-time job; it is a full-time job.

K. Dassau and D. Jack are in regular communication; hasn't been an issue of things not getting done.

K. Dassau advised he and V. Carey were saying today how smooth the transition has been.

J. Rokes and L. Picard agreed.

L. Picard agreed the job is full-time.

D. Jack can be e-mailed with questions. Most things he can get an answer to right away.

K. Dassau advised M. Braley is also in contact with D. Jack.

D. Jack explained it is not a one size fits all job. Need to be cognizant of what you need to do to get things done.

T. Kilanski MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:11pm.; SECONDED by: T. Perkins, after discussion, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Higgins
School Board Secretary