

**WINCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 18, 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 6:33pm 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. Perkins advised at some point there might be a child in the room, T. Kilanski advised his wife was in the room, but would be leaving.

L. Picard MOVED to approve the Public minutes of the 1/27/21, 1/28/21 and 2/4/21 Board Meetings; SECONDED by: T. Perkins, 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:

*Return to hybrid instruction: V. Carey explained the intent was to have discussion tonight as to the date to return to hybrid learning. They have done surveys for families. Today the Governor announced he will sign an executive order for all schools to return to two days per week of in-person instruction beginning March 8, 2021.

V. Carey shared and reviewed data with the Board. Explained there is a slight increase in numbers; some from Cheshire County due to students in two local colleges. Many attributed to an increase in the 20-29 age group. There are very low numbers in Winchester and Cheshire County towns continue to decline. The level is still at a substantial spread; heading down, though.

V. Carey reviewed the parent survey with the Board. Explained things will look a little different at each grade level. Staff have put a lot of time and work in so that all grade levels could return to four days a week. Not five days, as they still need to provide time to remote learners.

HVAC system has been completed and new classrooms need to be moved. Huge kudos to the Custodial staff; they are on the ball and available. Teachers are working late and over the weekend to get stuff in spaces. The March 8th date is a little tight; feels staff need to take their vacation although she knows many will be in the building during that time.

V. Carey explained there continues to be a strain on staff. Some are not permitted by their doctors to return to in-person learning or have restrictions. How do they fill in the gaps? They have had to make adjustments in-house. Will be adhering to protocols.

V. Carey advised she and the staff are super excited to come back to four days of in-person learning. There is a lot of work still to do.

L. Picard wants to be sure teachers are supported. If staff need anything from the Board, such as a body in the room, she encouraged V. Carey to call on them.

V. Carey advised that those staff with health concerns have advised that the deciding factor to coming back was the fact that they felt Administration and the School Board were supportive and they could trust them.

T. Kilanski advised if V. Carey and Admin/Staff feel they are not quite there to return to four days and it has to be two days for a couple of weeks, he would leave that open.

V. Carey appreciates that. They would like to get into a new model so as not to confuse families, staff, bus drivers, etc. If they hit any major snags, they would alert the School Board.

Question on-line: When kids return, what is the day they won't be in school?

V. Carey explained the vast majority of students will be in school Monday through Thursday. Kindergarten and Pre-School will be in Tuesday through Friday. For Seventh and Eighth grades there will be five cohorts of students rotating; having no more than four cohorts on campus at a time. There will be a different four days for each of the four groups; the off day is different depending on which group they are in.

The Board gave a huge thank you to Val Carey, Gary Tashjian, Administration, Ian Spencer and Custodians for all their hard work and everything they are doing.

BUSINESS MANAGER – D. Jack:

Manifests:

D. Jack advised that the Manifest dated 12/3/20 has been approved; it just needs to be signed.

L. Picard MOVED to approve the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$169,529.39 dated 1/22/21 and the Accounts Payable Manifest in the amount of \$160,706.24 dated 2/19/2021; 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 MOVED to approve the Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$223,088.29 dated 12/11/20 and the Payroll Manifest in the amount of \$195,769.60 dated 2/19/2021; SECONDED by: E. Holmes, VOTED by roll call: T. Perkins – yes, E. Holmes – yes, T. Kilanski – yes, J. Rokes – yes, L. Picard – yes, MOTION PASSED.

D. Jack came to the meeting with answers to J. Rokes questions on Transportation. He explained that the projected deficit in that line was \$182,000. However that number, as it stands right now, has been reduced to \$94,000 due to the way encumbrances were being handled.

FACILITIES REPORT - I. Spencer:

*HVAC project in the Elementary School is completed. Things went impressively smoothly; done in a very timely manner. His staff has done a very impressive job along with other staff members who are moving a lot on their own. Thank you to them!

*Ian Spencer hopes to have final numbers for tents and will talk with Ben Kilanski for the next Board Meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – K. Dassau:

*No need for non-public tonight.

*The search for a Business Administrator continues. To date they have received five applications; none have been a successful fit. MRI is doing an assessment of the Business Office, not just the Business Administrator. They would like to post a salary range so people who see the position would know if that is something they would accept. They are asking the School Board for guidance.

D. Jack reviewed the number of Business Administrator positions available in other school districts in the area. The State requires all the same reporting no matter how big/small. He feels \$76,500 would be on the lower scale of things in means of attracting people. He has seen \$105,000 and \$110,000 in comparison. The highest currently is the \$130,000 range or maybe more. That would limit candidates if they are given the choice. Will make it difficult to get someone. He will include numbers for comparison with assessments.

T. Kilanski would like to see two more numbers from comparable towns.

K. Dassau advised Hinsdale's Business Manager makes \$105,000 and Hillsboro pays \$95,000-\$96,000.

K. Dassau advised Winchester is trying to incrementally increase salaries.

L. Picard explained that during the last four budget seasons they have proposed increased salaries for the four major positions. She reviewed with the Board comparisons with other districts for the four positions.

D. Jack can send the link for all Business Managers in the area to the Board so they can come back to recommend a salary range for the Business Manager.

L. Picard will send the link with a comparison of other positions in other districts.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT/COMMENTS – L. Picard:

Policy Meeting:

Met tonight; waiting for updated legislation and will then review Disciplinary Policies and look at two new policies.

Keene High Committee:

L. Picard and J. Rokes are looking to meet with the KHS Committee on 2/25 at 6:30 via zoom.

Technology and Professional Development:

Meetings will be coming.

V. Carey explained they need staff preparing to go back into their classrooms; can get meetings on the books, but feels it should be after March 8th. She will send out a poll with a couple of dates and get the Committees' feedback.

Scholarship Committee:

L. Picard will touch base with T. Perkins and put her in touch with Kristy Frazier.

Facilities Committee:

Ian Spencer advised that the Committee meets at 5:00pm. before the first Board Meeting of the month.

L. Picard advised at the next Board Meeting they will discuss holding in-person meetings. If they don't have staff to clean, could continue with Zoom. Don't want to add to what they are doing.

Ian Spencer advised his staff would have to UV the library or the gym; would have to do it twice so that would require overtime.

L. Picard thinks that answers the question, but they will have a conversation at the next Board Meeting.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Someone on-line asked about getting information to parents about the return-to-school procedure.

L. Picard advised it will be completely detailed.

V. Carey explained she will do an All-Call to parents tomorrow evening and then teachers will be reaching out directly to parents to outline what in-person instruction will look like as well as schedules.

Bridget Pearce asked if the Board goes to in-person meetings would they still be live-streamed.

L. Picard – yes.

T. Perkins thanked V. Carey and the teaching team – they did an awesome job. They went above and beyond. Kids are so fortunate to have all of you.

Kevin Bazan advised the District has a history of low pay; if we want to hire someone certified need to give them a reasonable pay. Feels \$90,000 is reasonable.

Sheena Dingman asked about switching rooms.

L. Picard explained that the switching is due to bringing furniture etc. back; only staff are switching.

Several members of the public said they are very excited about going back to four day in-person instruction.

L. Picard MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:00pm.; SECONDED by: E. Holmes, VOTED: 5-0, MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Higgins
School Board Secretary