

MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2020

Committee Present:

Leigh Martin, Dorothy Scally, Sean Nicholson, Phil DeZutter, Vikki Ludwigson, Kerry Laurence

Administration Present:

Joseph Maruszczak, Superintendent of Schools
Maureen Cohen, Assistant Superintendent
Dennis Todd, Director of Student Support Services
Jay Byer, Business/Finance

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Sean Nicholson.
Chair's Statement on Remote Participation/Governor's Executive Order Suspending Remote Participation Requirements

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

Approval of Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Kerry Laurence, to approve the agenda.

VOTED:

Phil DeZutter, yes
Sean Nicholson, yes
Leigh Martin, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes

Approval of Open Session Minutes of March 3, 2020

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Leigh Martin, to approve the Open Session March 3, 2020

VOTED:

Phil DeZutter, yes
Sean Nicholson, yes
Leigh Martin, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes

II. SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

Status Update- Educational Considerations in Light of COVID-19 Closure

Dr. Maruszczak commented to the School Committee this has been a long week with updates being made almost hourly. It was determined 2 weeks ago by the Blackstone Valley schools superintendents all schools will close for 2 weeks. Shortly thereafter, Governor Baker closed all schools until April 6th. This has been challenging for the staff. Leadership team has asked the teachers to focus on sharing assignments based on reinforcing what has been learned, connecting with students to help with the

uncertainty and anxiety. He noted each household in the district has different circumstances.

Dr. Maruszczak participated in a conference call with Commissioner and it was indicated the closure would be extended beyond the 3 weeks announced.

MURSD Extended Learning

Dr. Maruszczak indicated there would be a shift to individualized plans. There has been lots of work in regards to technology. He thanked Dave Quinn and Joe Leacu with their assistance in disbursing devices and hot spots to students to provide all students the online learning experience. Technology has also been working with the staff on the different apps available to assist.

Dr. Maruszczak is confident an extended learning program will be developed with the staff for the students. MURTA has been supportive and a MOU is being developed/discussed.

It was noted a new website: MURSDextended.com has been developed. Thanks to Dr. Cohen, this was in place 48 hours after the closure. It is a great resource for all stakeholders where FAQs are answered.

Financial Considerations: Employees & Contracted Services

Dr. Maruszczak noted all district staff were being paid their full pay. There are clear expectations for the staff. Custodians sterilized all school buildings last week and are now on call. Cafeteria workers, except for the workers preparing the grab & go lunches, are not working. District was notified the bus company laid off all of the bus drivers. According to MGL, the district cannot pay invoices for contracted work not being performed. It was noted the district is continuing to pay out of district costs on guidance from DESE in order to maintain the circuit breaker.

Jay Byer commented the State is still reviewing financial issues. There is concern about not paying transportation since next year reimbursement figured is calculated on the amount paid in FY2020. There is a thought to 'save' monies currently not being paid to the bus company for FY2021 transportation costs.

Status of FY2021 Budget & Approval

Dr. Maruszczak expressed concern about the FY2021 budget. It is anticipated each town will delay their town meeting and town election. There are many unknown financial and educational consequences.

Collaboration with Our Communities

Dr. Maruszczak provided the good things happening in the communities. Mendon Neighbor Brigade has been established to assist families in the district. The cafeteria team quickly established grab and go lunches. These lunches are only available at Nipmuc due to logistics however all students can go to participate. On Friday, there were 71 lunches served. MURSD is also partnering with Mendon Senior Center and Upton Council on Aging to find creative opportunities to assist the elderly in the communities.

III. NEW BUSINESS

Committee Questions & Discussion

Dr. Maruszczak asked the School Committee for their questions:

- In response to Sean Nicholson concerns for the rest of the school year, Dr. Maruszczak indicated they will be looking to the State for guidance. However, Dr. Maruszczak indicated the district will pledge to "make

everything right.” For example, the Class of 2020 and their senior activities, there is a commitment to figure it out.

- Vikki Ludwigson thanked the administration and staff for their communications. She expressed frustration over MCAS where there should at least be a delay of the test if closure is beyond 3 weeks. Dr. Maruszczak indicated the DESE is applying for a wavier on the federal level and State Legislature would need to vote on changes to MGL governing MCAS. It was also indicated the April SATs have been rescheduled until June and AP testing will be streamlined to a 45-minute take home exam.
- Kerry Laurence asked about special needs compensatory services and the budget impact. Dr. Maruszczak stated most of the services can be delivered virtually with the special educational teachers. 10-15% of the students will need a plan to be developed for additional services in the summer/fall. It was indicated there probably won't be a dramatic cost impact but the cost factor is to be consider.
- Phil DeZutter asked about out of district tuitions. These costs continue to be paid to ensure receiving school is whole. Follow up is needed to ensure these districts are conducting remote learning.
- It was indicated the utilities are on night/weekend schedule. There will be NO snow/ice removal since the buildings are not in use. Supplies are not being ordered since they are not needed at this time.
- Professional development – staff members are meeting virtually. These meetings are discussing apps and Dave Quinn is the point person. Online professional development pages are being developed so the staff has tools.
- School Committee members indicated their thanks to everyone for this new way of learning.

IV. COMMUNITY COMMENTS - NA

V. CORRESPONDENCE

VI. Other Matters Not Anticipated by The Committee Within 48 Hours of The Posted Meeting

VII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Future Updates Re. Closure/Educational Activities - April 6
- Update on Memorial Elementary School Principal Search – April 6

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: On motion of Dorothy Scally, seconded by Leigh Martin to adjourn

VOTED:

Phil DeZutter, yes
Sean Nicholson, yes
Leigh Martin, yes
Vikki Ludwigson, yes
Kerry Laurence, yes
Dorothy Scally

Meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.
Minutes by Kelly McElreath