

Virtual School Committee Meeting

May 28, 2020

4:30 p.m.

Introduction of Members:

Jane C. Reggio, Chairperson
Erin P. Vinacco, Vice Chairperson
Caryn D. Vernon, District Treasurer
Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary
Jack R. Keefe, Member
Sarah E. Williams, Member
Wendy L. Greenstein, Member
Tammy A. Lemieux, Member

Also in attendance were Superintendent, Jason DeFalco, EdD and Assistant Superintendent, Matthew J. Ehrenworth.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mr. Keefe and unanimously voted to approve the Warrants and Minutes of the May 14, 2020 meeting.

Unit C Early Retirement Incentive

Mr. Ehrenworth stated they are looking into offering an Early Retirement Incentive to Unit C Support Staff members this year. They have not offered this incentive in the past. There will be different payouts for different types of formulas they could use. They want to share their thoughts with the Committee.

Dr. DeFalco would like to see if the Committee members have an interest in this. He would like to have a general discussion to see what people are thinking about it.

Mrs. Vinacco asked if Unit C members who have already declared retirement would be eligible for this incentive?

Mrs. Reggio stated that if someone already declared retirement they are not eligible. It is the same with the Unit A members.

Mrs. Vinacco feels we should make it fair and equitable by having a 12 month figure and a 10 month figure.

Mrs. Reggio stated there is such an inequity in pay that it makes it difficult to have only 2 numbers. There doesn't seem to be a good middle ground. It is hard to have equal comparisons. They want to enable the District to use funds towards next year's budget.

Dr. DeFalco stated there are employees eligible for retirement who work 2 hours a day for 10 months and then we have someone working 12 months a year and 7.5 hours per day. There needs to be a different rate for the different categories.

Mrs. Vinacco - the incentive here is to rehire at a lower cost. We still see a savings no matter which way we go.

Mr. Ehrenworth - we could save the District a minimum of \$8,000 if all that are eligible decide to retire. They tried to come up with a system that is equal across the categories. For example, a cafeteria worker might work anywhere from 2.5 hours per day to 6.75 hours per day. They would prorate the \$2,000 buyout for the person only working the 2.5 hours per day.

Dr. DeFalco sees 2 trains of thought. One approach took into account hours and calendar and there is one that only looks at years of service.

Mr. Ehrenworth can check out the formulas and get back to them but still have the vote to authorize the creation of the incentive with a maximum buyout number. They won't exceed an amount for any one category.

Mrs. Reggio wants to tweak the motion a bit. She wants to entertain a motion to come to some kind of agreement with amounts or limits in it.

Mr. Ehrenworth stated that even if everyone received the \$3,000 buyout there would still be a savings for the District.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Williams, seconded by Mr. Keefe and voted 7 in favor, 1 abstain - Mrs. Greenstein to offer the Unit C retirement buyout recommended by Mr. Ehrenworth. This is done with the understanding there will be prorating of the amount based on hours worked. The incentive will be based on the following: \$3500 for a full 7.5 hour custodian, \$3000 for a 6.5 hour para-professional, \$2500 for a 12 month administrative assistant and \$2000 for a 6 hour per day cafeteria worker. These amounts are to be prorated based on hours worked and length of time.

Mr. Ehrenworth spoke with the Unit C president and she thought the offer was very generous.

Report of the Superintendent

Updates on Covid 19

Staff Return

All custodians returned 2.5 weeks ago. They will move forward with summer projects in order to get a head start. This week administrative assistants and cafe staff as well as the leadership team came back to working 2 full days this week.

Dr. DeFalco is filing with the Governor's office on the Covid 19 return to work outline to keep all safe while they are here. It is fairly easy to have social distancing. Staff members are very happy to be here. They have all been working at home but are happy to be here. They will keep this in place until the end of June while being mindful with staff who are juggling other responsibilities.

Summer planning supports of students - planning summer tutoring and working with instructional coaches and principals. Looked at ESY programming through Mrs. Pilla-Gallerani and look to expand that summer programming and pull in as many kids as we can to work on IEP goals and summer work. This will run parallel to the tutoring program for general education students for a couple of hours of tutoring per week. Looking at the power standards and also the summer workpiece as well. Take something off the plate of parents. Coaches are working hard on identifying existing resources. They want to use our literacy program we are launching in the fall to give kids a jump start on it.

It is all gauged on parents willingness to do this. It's a tricky balance. They are trying to help parents out over the summer and give them an incentive to do this.

They are continuing the food program throughout the summer. The delivery system might change and they may need to go back to the community sites once school ends. Breakfast and lunch for the 7 day stretch will continue.

Fall 2020 return and recovery - Reading, watching and absorbing all they can and look at the return to school in the Fall. They had their first Return and Recovery team meeting. The members are Mrs. Reggio, Mrs. Williams, leadership team, leadership from Unit A and Unit C, 3 nurses, 3 counselors and the food service director. The meeting was held on Zoom. They were able to start initial conversations around the remote learning piece on what they need to consider for the Fall. Feedback was great with great conversation and dialogue. You could tell people are really focused on thinking, reading and studying it.

Communication Commissioner of Education - looking for a better sense of what the Dept. of Education will not leave to the local level and then what the District can figure out themselves at the local level. Dr. DeFalco wants to know this so they can spend their planning time wisely.

Mrs. Williams - input from parents and students as to what they think works best. The lunch program could be a model for others.

Mrs. Reggio found the first meeting to be a very energetic meeting. Everyone spoke. It was a great opportunity to begin planning for the unknown.

Mrs. Lemieux - Sees strong opinions on both sides of the social distancing versus not. She hopes that when all are talking about this they need to have different versions for different families. You have some families who are relaxed about it and one that is very frightened. She wants to educate both without penalizing someone for having their strong opinions.

Mr. Ehrenworth - The conversations could revolve around the possibility of a one week on and one week off rotation of school. They need to set up the structures and protocols and flexibility to accommodate all families. The Committee is already starting to think about this. They are considering all in their preparations.

Dr. DeFalco - received 6 emails from parents who work in school systems in other communities. Asked to align it to where they work. We need the consistency piece.

Mrs. Reggio feels for all parents and she also has to worry about what is best for the students in the District.

Mrs. Lemieux - we are not going to make everyone happy but will try their best.

Mrs. Greenstein - the state has not made decisions so the District cannot make decisions yet. She worries about the kids who are going to be at home alone because their parents had to go back to work.

Dr. DeFalco - can commit to getting feedback. He wants to hear from students as well. Some parents want to keep the remote learning after the Covid issue is over. Don't fight to get back to exactly what we had.

Mrs. Lemieux - When giving feedback the families need to do it on a child by child basis.

FY21 Budget Update

Outline the fact that there has been conversation from multiple groups with informal conversations about significant state revenue shortfall issues. It will make its way down to municipalities and school districts. However, in the midst of this Blackstone held their annual town meeting and they supported our budget and we are so appreciative of their support. If our initial FY21 budget is supported by both communities we can continue with our planning process. We are hoping Millville will support our budget.

We are not planning to go back to the Towns to ask for additional funding regardless of what the revenue state shortfall is. They will find a way to operate within what they are given. We may not know until late in the summer. We will work cooperatively and creatively and try to figure out different ways and scenarios.

Continue to put the best educational opportunities forward for students and to update all throughout this process.

Mrs. Lemieux - did we get additional funds for food service?

Dr. DeFalco- yes we did receive authorization from the federal and state program to continue with the reimbursements we are getting now throughout the summer.

Report of the Business Office - Matthew Ehrenworth

Transportation reimbursement

Regional districts get transportation reimbursement somewhere between 75 -80%. Prior to this crisis we were looking at strong revenues for Massachusetts and they thought they would receive 80%. Our rate is now closer to 84% this year. It gave us \$120,000 in revenue this year that were were not anticipating. We want to take that money now and move it into a transportation account and use it in FY21 right at the start to go towards transportation.

This stops this money from being tied up in E & D. It goes down as an expense for this year and does raise the budget. If we move it from Fund 1 that funds the budget and move it into Fund 18 the transportation line we have to note it as an expense and that our budget increases for FY20. This means no difference in the Towns contributions for this year or next year.

Mrs. Reggio stated we can go up in funds if we notify the Towns because we are not impacting their contributions. The Town will have 45 days to hold a hearing to decide on it.

This reimbursement is from last year's budget that we get in FY20. The option is for the funds to go into E & D or the transportation fund. We are opting to put it in the transportation fund to be used at the beginning of FY21. If we were not faced with the potential of the state revenue loss we would place it in E & D.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Greenstein and unanimously voted to move \$120,000 from Fund 1 (General Fund) into Fund 18 (Transportation Fund) due to the fact that the transportation reimbursement came in higher than expected for FY19.

Mrs. Reggio said congratulations to the Senior Class who will have an outdoor ceremony at the BMR High School with a parade at 2:00 p.m. on June 5th.

The next School Committee meeting will be held on June 11th.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Keefe, seconded by Mrs. Greenstein at 5:45 p.m. to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of: M.G.L. chapter 30A, section 21 (a) (3) to conduct strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation and not to return to the regular meeting. This motion was followed by a roll call vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST: _____
Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary