

**Watertown Board of Education
Regular Board of Education Meeting**

Meeting Date: August 31, 2020
Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m.
Meeting Place: REMOTE MEETING

Members Present: Ms. Leslie Crotty, Chairman
Mr. Tom Lambert, Vice Chairman
Ms. Janelle Wilk, Secretary
Mr. Robert Makowski
Ms. Cathie Rinaldi
Ms. Diane Bristol
Ms. Cindy Eastman
Mr. Jason Malagutti
Ms. Josephine Cavallo-Rosa

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. John Ramos – Interim Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Tom DiStasio – Business Manager

A. Convene Regular Meeting – 7:30 p.m.

B. Salute to the Flag

C. Roll Call – Ms. Davidson

D. Minutes

Agenda Item: D.1
Subject: Minutes of the August 17, 2020 Special Board of
Education Meeting (6:30 p.m.)

Motion Presented By: Ms. Rinaldi
Motion Seconded By: Ms. Bristol

Text of the Motion: Yes, Madame Chair, I move to accept the minutes from the Board of Ed Special Meeting.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: D.2

Subject: Minutes of the August 17, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting (7:30 p.m.)

Motion Presented By: Ms. Bristol

Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rinaldi

Text of the Motion: Yes, Madame Chair, I make a motion that we accept the minutes of the Special Board Meeting on August 17th, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion passed

Agenda Item: D.3

Subject: Minutes of the August 21, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting

Motion Presented By: Ms. Bristol

Motion Seconded By: Ms. Rosa

Text of the Motion: Yes, Madame Chair, I make a motion to accept the Special Board Meeting minutes from August 21st, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: Mr. Makowski
Vote: Motion passed

E. Superintendent's Recommendations and Report

1. Appointments – (Information Only)

Ms. Ashley Alves to the position of Science Teacher at Watertown High School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired on an annual contractual salary of \$67,477.00, Step 10, MA degree, per the Watertown Educational Association Contract.

Ms. Ashley Andreyck to the position of Building Substitute for Judson Elementary School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired at a daily rate of \$100.00.

Ms. Allyson Bourassa to the position of Building Substitute for Judson Elementary School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired at a daily rate of \$100.00.

Ms. Claire Capozziello to the position of Speech & Language Pathologist for Swift Middle School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired on an annual contractual salary of \$52,580.00, Step 3, Sixth Year, per the Watertown Educational Association Contract.

Mr. Kevin Dandonoli to the position of Paraprofessional, Category 5/Corridor, for Swift Middle School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, being paid the hourly rate of \$15.17, Step 1 of the Paraprofessional Contract.

Ms. Loren Garfield to the position of Special Education Teacher at John Trumbull Primary School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired on an annual contractual salary of \$58,953.00, Step 7, MA degree per the Watertown Educational Association Contract.

Mr. Andrew Godbout to the position of Paraprofessional, Category 5/Corridor, for Swift Middle School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, being paid the hourly rate of \$15.17, Step 1 of the Paraprofessional Contract.

Ms. Geogianna Kariak to the position of School Nurse for Polk Elementary School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, to be paid the annual contractual stipend amount of \$47,300.00, per the Watertown Nurses Union Agreement.

Ms. Madelaine Kelsey to the position of Building Substitute for John Trumbull Primary School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired at a daily rate of \$100.00.

Ms. Sharon Martino to the position of Accounts Payable Clerk for Watertown Public Schools, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, being hired at an hourly rate of \$22.23, Step 1 of the Secretarial Contract.

Mr. Lawrence Palladino to the position of Building Substitute for Swift Middle School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired at a daily rate of \$100.00.

Ms. Courtney Salatto to the position of Special Education Teacher at Swift Middle School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired on an annual contractual salary of \$46,917.00, Step 3, BA degree, per the Watertown Educational Association Contract.

Ms. Elizabeth Sideravage to the position of First Grade Teacher at John Trumbull Primary School, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, hired on an annual contractual salary of \$49,748.00, Step 5, BA degree, per the Watertown Educational Association Contract.

Ms. Francine Shannon to the position of School Nurse for Watertown Public Schools, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, to be paid the annual contractual stipend amount of \$47,300.00, per the Watertown Nurses Union Agreement.

2. **Transfers – (Information Only)**

Ms. Maureen Ziegler from the position of time and attendance secretary for Watertown Public Schools, to the position of school secretary at Watertown High School, effective September 1, 2020.

Ms. Diane Chere from the position of school secretary at Judson Elementary School, to the position of library clerk for Polk & Judson Elementary Schools. effective September 1, 2020.

3. **Resignations – (Information Only)**

Ms. Rebecca Zadlo from the position of paraprofessional at John Trumbull Primary School, effective September 14, 2020 for personal reasons.

4. **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Ramos – Good evening everyone. I want to thank the Board of Education for this opportunity to work with you during this critical time. I would like to thank the Board Chair, Ms. Crotty, in particular, for her assistance in helping me to transition into this position. And again, I thank all of you for your support. Let me also take a moment to thank our Summer Staff for all of the work they have done to prepare for the new school year. They truly have worked tirelessly in many ways and in doing things that obviously no one would have anticipated, even just a few months ago, and here we are. My hat off to all of them. We had the opportunity to welcome back our teachers last Friday and we are grateful to have them return as well as those that are new to our district. We are very excited. There is a level of concern and anxiety given all that is going on in our world and country, but nevertheless, as Educators, we can't wait to see our kids. We are very busy with PD and putting the last touches on our preparations as we look forward to welcoming back our students on September 8th.

I need to mention that we are in need of substitutes and so if anyone out there hears my voice and it might have interest in becoming a substitute in the Watertown Public Schools we are trying to get in touch with us over at the Munson House.

F. Reopening Schools – Plan Update

Dr. Ramos - We have two areas that I would like to update you about. First of all, Paul, (Athletic Director, Paul Catuccio) would you please give us an update on sports?

Mr. Catuccio - Currently, our high school sports meeting and small cohort of kids and are scheduled with our coaches to minimize any contact with others so there is a progression that all of our coaches have been coached on, so to speak, that will take them through a series of progressions and expanding those groups and cohorts to eventually playing some contests on August 1st. All of our coaches are working diligently and it is great to see the kids out there. I got out there today to see a few of our team's conditioning and it is great to see them out there and active.

Dr. Ramos - Let me also give the board an update on the Chromebook situation. Jeff, (Director of Technology, Jeff Turner) can you fill us in on that please?

Mr. Turner - On Thursday and Friday, we had 8 hours of Chromebooks and we probably handed out about 650 at the high school along with some siblings as well. Today, from 2 to 6, we handed out another 150 at Polk. Tomorrow, Judson is from 1 to 5 and Wednesday we are doing 10 to 3 at Swift. John Trumbull second grade will be Thursday and then we will have another pick up at the high school for anyone who couldn't make it during the day probably from 10 to 2. I will look at the hours for that and talk to Dr. Parlato before the hours are set. Chromebooks are out there; any parents who have not picked them up, if your child is not at that school, feel free to come to any one of those days to get your machine please.

Dr. Ramos - I would also like you to know that all of our Principals and in some cases, our Vice Principals, are on the call this evening as we prepare for the Q&A.

Ms. Crotty - Thank you to our Athletic Director, Paul Catuccio, and our Director of Technology, Jeff Turner for being here this evening, I appreciate it. Just a quick question for Jeff, will we be at the end of this delivery, one to one for all students?

Mr. Turner - Numerically we will be, but some parents are doing a BYOD (bring your own device), which they are more than welcome to do. We will have the Chromebook cases sometime in early to mid-October. The shipping on those is the issue. But if a parent does need one, we will have one.

Ms. Crotty - Excellent. That is incredible that all of our students in the district will have a Chromebook, or those that wanted to, their own device. Thank you for all of that hard work that it took to get us to this point.

G. Public Participation (Please state name, address and topic of discussion)

To view public participation, please go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtJet2TelyM>

H. Item of Discussion – Covid-19 Reopening Costs Update

Mr. DiStasio - Good evening everyone, I just want to take a moment to talk through the projected costs associated with the reopening of our schools this fall.

These are costs that were not included in our budget that was approved by the Town Council for fiscal year 2020-2021, but they are for items and services that are essential for us to bring our students and staff back to school as safely as possible.

I will take you through these projected costs in four different high-level categories: Staffing & Salaries, IT Hardware & Software, PPE, and Furniture & Equipment.

Staffing & Salaries is made up of the costs that we anticipate to hire additional positions or increase the workload of current staff for the purposes of executing our reopening plan. Some examples of these costs include: Custodial overtime, hiring additional nurses so that each school has two, adding substitutes to each school to ensure class coverage, and as Dr. Ramos mentioned, we are continuing to do so, we are adding hall monitor positions to Watertown High School and Swift Middle School to monitor the flow of traffic, increasing the hours of part-time paraprofessionals to cover lunches, accelerating the timeline for the hiring of another network coordinator for the district to account for significant increases in devices for distance learning and hybrid learning models.

These costs are projected to be about \$141,600 per month. These costs are projected on a monthly basis because of the uncertainty over how long they will be required. Depending on what happens over the course of the year, these projections may change.

The next category is IT Hardware & Software, which is primarily made up of chromebooks and chromebook cases that were purchased to allow all students to participate in the hybrid and distance learning models, as well as software packages that will be used to allow for web-based learning. These costs are projected to total to about \$360,700.

PPE is the next category of costs. This category represents: masks, touchless hand sanitizer units and stands, gloves, wipes, gowns, face shields, plexiglass sneeze guards, etc. Currently these items are projected to cost about \$404,000.

The final category of costs to review is Furniture and Equipment. At this point, these costs consist of: desks and chairs that were purchased to allow for students to eat in the cafeteria without facing each other, storage bags and storage cubbies that were purchased so that elementary school students can safely store items in the classroom, as well as the installation of touchless water bottle fill stations. These projected costs amount to about \$35,000.

Now I want to talk a little bit about the funding sources available to cover some of these costs: The first is Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, which was made available to school districts through the CARES Act. Watertown Public Schools was allocated about \$175,000 through this grant. This money will primarily be used to cover the cost of chromebooks. The second funding source is Coronavirus Relief Funds, which also originated from the CARES Act. Just a couple of weeks ago, the State announced allocations for each school district under this grant. Watertown's allocation is about \$282,000. Once these funds have been exhausted, FEMA would be the next funding source to look to in order to seek reimbursement for the costs that we have incurred. Based on information posted on FEMA's website, eligible costs are reimbursable at 75%. The Board of Education cannot apply for reimbursement from FEMA directly, but must go through the Town. We have been in touch with Ms. Zappone, the Town Finance Director, to follow this process. Additionally, we have reached out to our FEMA Public Assistance Coordinator at the Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security for guidance on how that process should go. Ultimately that is a reimbursement grant. So, upon making certain purchases, getting an invoice and paying for the purchases, we will provide proof of our cash withdrawal to seek reimbursement from the Federal government.

I. Public Participation (Please state name, address and topic of discussion)

To view public participation, please go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtJet2TelyM>

J. Communications – Secretary

None

K. Committee Reports:

Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Ms. Cathie Rinaldi, Chair – No
Policy and Labor Committee, Ms. Janelle Wilk, Chair – Yes

The temporary covid-19 package is available on our website.

Budget and Finance Committee, Ms. Diane Bristol, Chair – No
Facilities/PBC/Operations Committee, Mr. Thomas Lambert, Chair – No
Governance and Community Engagement Committee, Mr. Robert Makowski, Chair – No

L. Report from the Board Chair

Ms. Crotty – As we look forward to welcoming students back into our schools on September 8th, let us remember the marathon that it took to get us here. As a colleague in Cheshire Public Schools said, “it has been like running a marathon except that after each hill is climbed, the race officials change the location of the finish line”. Since the State introduced its plan, they have continued to add addendums and clarifications, sometimes on a daily basis. How that translates

to the experience our students will have in the classroom and at home is yet to be determined, but what we do know is this: our leadership and our staff can overcome any obstacles that we put in their path and can pivot accordingly. I ask the same of the community... as we navigate these uncharted waters over the next few weeks, be mindful of the orders we must follow, the care and concern our teachers have for your children, and the task the leaders who are steering the ship have before them. For those who have voluntarily chosen remote learning, know that you must take ownership of the decision you have chosen for your child; you have entered a path that can be both challenging and rewarding, yet could never replace being in the classroom and does not provide the same type of instruction as the distance learning model. For those sending your children to school, please assist us in the regulations so when your child is in school, our educators can focus on what is most important for them. To all parents and caregivers, we ask that you communicate directly with your teachers and building administrators when you have a concern. Please provide them the opportunity to address it before it becomes a larger issue. Together we can rise to the challenge that 2020 has presented us with. Let us all work towards the kind of memories we want to have when we look back on this school year. Thank you and welcome to school.

M. Action Items – Adoption of Items to be Approved by Consent

None

N. Future Agenda Items and Board Members Comments

Ms. Bristol – Shared that there were a few Board members at the new Town Hall/BOE building on Sunday and they had the opportunity to walk through and that it is a beautiful building and they did a great job.

Ms. Rinaldi – Wanted to thank all of the administrators and teachers and everyone for the hard work in getting us back to school and wishes everyone luck on the first day back.

Mr. Makowski – Also thanked all of the people who got us to where we are today and wanted to remind our parents that we are in a very challenging time from many aspects and he encourages spending more time with your children to refresh them of the protocols. Use this as an opportunity to be more engaged with your students because it can only help them. Also, a reminder to reach out to the teachers or administrators with questions.

O. Adjournment

Agenda Item:	O.1
Subject:	To adjourn the meeting

Motion Presented By: Ms. Bristol
Motion Seconded By: Mr. Makowski

Text of the Motion: Madame Chair, I move that we adjourn.

Discussion: None

Opposed: None

Abstained: None

Vote: Motion Passes

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindi Davidson
Recording Secretary

Janelle Wilk
Secretary of the Board