TOWN OF BURLINGTON
Meeting Posting
Notice of Public Meeting – (As required by G.L. c. 30A, c §18-25)

DEPT./BOARD: School Committee – VIRTUAL MEETING using WebEx Technology*
DATE: April 14, 2020
TIME: 7:00 p.m.

This meeting is being held fully remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts’ March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 20.

AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Reorganization of School Committee (estimated time 7:00 – 7:30)
3. Approval of Warrant
4. Public Participation
5. Coronavirus Update from the Superintendent (estimated time 7:30 – 8:00)  
   a). Remote Learning from Home  
   b). April Vacation Week - Approval  
   c). Last Day of School  
   d). School Lunch Program  
   e). Transportation Services
6. Communication (estimated time 8:00 – 8:30)  
   a). School Building/Facilities Update  
   b). Monthly Financial Update  
   c). FY21 School Budget Process
7. Adjournment

*MEETING ACCESS INFORMATION ON NEXT PAGE

**Agenda subject to change
Meeting number (access code): 715 837 104
Meeting password: tuesday

Tuesday, April 14, 2020
7:00 pm  |  (UTC-04:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)  |  3 hrs

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Superintendent Eric Conti called this WebEx virtual meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. Present: Mrs. Christine Monaco, Mr. Stephen Nelson, Ms. Martha Simon, Mr. Thomas F. Murphy, Jr., and Mrs. Kristin Russo. Assistant Superintendent Patrick Larkin, Business Manager Nichole Coscia, and Director of Operations Bob Cunha also present.

Call to Order

Dr. Conti read the following statement: Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the (Name of Board) is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. He further explained that the Chat function is on; please type in a comment or question and the Chair will call on commenter.

Reorganization of School Committee

The Superintendent thanked Ms. Simon for her year of service as School Committee Chair. Dr. Conti requested a nomination for School Committee chairman. Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mrs. Russo to nominate Christine Monaco as chairman for the upcoming year; Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; motion carried 5-0-0. Chairman Monaco requested a nomination for Vice Chairman. Moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Mrs. Russo to nominate Mr. Stephen Nelson as Vice Chairman. Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; motion carried 5-0-0.

Chairman Monaco reviewed all 19 subcommittee assignments as follows:

1. Recreation Commission – T. Murphy
2. Two members to serve on the Academic Review Board – M. Simon, T. Murphy
3. Two members to serve on the Sick Leave Bank committee of the Burlington Educators Association. It has been the practice that the Superintendent and one member of the School Committee serve on this committee, but this is as the discretion of the members - Superintendent, C. Monaco
4. One member to serve on the Sick Leave Bank Committee of the Burlington School Administrators Association – M. Simon
5. Legislative contact person to the Mass. Association of School Committees – K. Russo, M. Simon
6. Chapter 766 Parent Advisory Committee – C. Monaco, M. Simon
8. Subcommittee to the Board of Selectmen – C. Monaco, T. Murphy
9. Subcommittee to the Ways & Means – S. Nelson, T. Murphy
10. Subcommittee to the Board of Health – S. Nelson, M. Simon
11. Subcommittee to the Recreation committee – C. Monaco, T. Murphy
12. Subcommittee to the Planning Board – S. Nelson, T. Murphy
13. Subcommittee for Wellness – M. Simon, C. Monaco, alternate E. Conti
15. Audit Subcommittee – T. Murphy
16. PTO Representatives:
   a. Fox Hill – K. Russo, C. Monaco alternate
   b. Memorial – S. Nelson, M. Simon alternate
   c. Pine Glen – T. Murphy, C. Monaco alternate
   d. Francis Wyman – C. Monaco, T. Murphy alternate
   e. MSMS – M. Simon, K. Russo alternate
   f. BHS – K. Russo, C. Monaco alternate
17. Burlington Youth & Family Services – M. Simon
18. Master Plan Steering Committee – M. Simon

As no one requested to change a subcommittee assignment, it was moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Mr. Nelson to approve subcommittee assignments 1-19 as presented. Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; motion
Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve the School Committee designee to the LABBB Collaborative as Superintendent Conti. Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; motion carried 5-0-0.

Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve as Central Office Sexual Harassment/Complaint Management Facilitators the Human Resource Director and Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Mrs. Russo and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve as Coordinator for Nondiscrimination Compliance (including Civil Rights and Title IX) the Human Resource Director and Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve as School Committee secretary Sharon Gilbert. Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; motion carried 5-0-0.

Moved by Mrs. Russo and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve the warrant as printed; Chair Monaco, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, abstain; Mr. Nelson, abstain. Motion carried 3-0-2. Ms. Simon suggested that the Committee consider that with the current school closure and virtual meeting circumstances that only one of the School Committee members be required to sign the warrant for the period of the emergency closure. After a brief discussion, it was moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mrs. Russo to authorize the designation of Chairman Monaco as the only person required to sign the warrant for the closure period during the covid 19 emergency. Mr. Nelson, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Russo, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye; motion carried 5-0-0. At the conclusion of the covid 19 emergency closure, the warrant will again be signed by all five School Committee members.

Town meeting member Adam Senesi inquired why the School Committee is reorganizing now instead of after the June town election. Chairman Monaco explained that the School Committee can reorganize at any time, this is the month the Committee typically reorganizes, and Ms. Simon further explained that at the time any new School Committee members come on in June the Committee can revisit subcommittee assignments after the election. Ms. Senesi commented that he wished the reorganization included the five members of the June School Committee block.

Dr. Conti thanked educators in a third week of remote learning and for putting in tremendous effort to shift from classroom learning to home. Currently, May 4 is a return to school, however, people are skeptical of an actual May 4 return. Administrators are receiving feedback, with the majority of it positive; teachers are trying to focus on student safety, staying connected and to give as many choices as possible. Assistant Superintendent Larkin writes a letter to staff every morning sharing best practices as well as student highlights. The Superintendent also thanked IT staff who distributed 500-600 Ipad. Mr. Larkin reported that for this first couple weeks, they are connecting with families and getting students what they need, and that learning choice boards have been instituted. Remote learning from home is new and unexpected for teachers, students, and families. At the elementary level there were 8,094 posts on see saw as well as 8,600 comments this week. He will share on the school website tomorrow a BHS student project growing lettuce, video from a kindergartner sharing their portfolio with their teacher, and staff videos saying hello to their students, and commented that we all miss our normal interactions. Teachers are connecting with their students online, asking how they are doing and then doing some class work. The Administration understands there are families with first responders and parents that cannot be at home to offer as much support as they’d want to and we are working with those families to help.

The School Committee commented: teachers and administrators are receptive to how every family is going through the pandemic differently and trying to meet everyone’s needs, thanked staff for creating remote learning for students, noted there is no right or wrong way to conduct remote learning, commended Burlington teachers for doing an exceptional job including collaborating with staff online as well as connecting with students online, mentioned students different learning styles and that some students may have a difficult time
with learning online, offered encouragement to parents, and in particular to parents of students who normally attend out of district or residential schools. The School Committee understands the difficulty everyone is going through and will do everything we can to get back on track.

April Vacation Week - Approval

Dr. Conti is requesting that the school calendar and in particular April vacation be amended as the Education Commissioner is not requiring that school districts go beyond their regularly scheduled 185th school day due to the pandemic which would be June 24 for Burlington. He further explained that with remote learning scheduled through May 4, there have been discussions about April vacation. He is recommending that the School Committee amend April vacation week by having Monday, April 20 and Tuesday, April 21 as vacation days and then conducting remote learning at home on Wednesday, April 22 through Friday, April 24. This would move the last day of school back to Friday, June 19. After brief comments it was, moved by Mr. Nelson and seconded by Mr. Murphy to vote on the school calendar change during April vacation to have Monday, April 20 and Tuesday, April 21 as school vacation days and to have Wednesday, April 22 through Friday, April 24 as remote learning at home school days; motion carried 5-0-0. Dr. Conti stated that the official last day of school will be June 19, there may be other school calendar decisions to be made specifically as for instance Governor Baker is contemplating moving Patriots day to September, and he will keep the School Committee updated.

School Lunch

Dr. Conti stated that the free and reduced lunch program is continuing in conjunction with the Burlington Food Pantry to feed children who are food insecure. Mr. Larkin explained he'd spoken with Cheryl Burns at the Pantry and they are comfortable working out of the Pantry location to provide food to school students. They are trying to facilitate opening more cold storage freezer space for the pantry, he will check in with them later this week, and explained if the school closure is extended, they will discuss the possibility of using school sites for food distribution as there may also be an increase of families who need access to food.

Transportation Services

The Superintendent thanked Ms. Coscia thanked for her efforts negotiating on the transportation contract with the bus provider. Ms. Coscia explained meetings have been held to work through business aspects, transportation carriers have large expenses and if they are unpaid, they'll go out of business. In order to mitigate this, Burlington is working with 6 other school districts to ensure we have Trombly buses/drivers when we return to school. At this time, they are in the negotiating phase, once a resolution has been reached it will be presented to the School Committee before proceeding. The two priorities are to: get students safely to and from school and for those services to come at a fair and reasonable cost.

School Building/Facilities

Mr. Cunha explained that the statement of interest submission deadline has been extended to May 6 and he hopes to have a draft version to share with the Committee soon. There currently are two ongoing projects at Francis Wyman: replacement of fire alarms and installing air conditioning on the first floor. There are two small crews working and they will complete the projects in a couple of weeks. He also explained that for the request for qualifications for architectural & engineering services, he's narrowed it down to three companies, and they are also affected by the coronavirus situation. He has conducted interviews with two of the finalists and is looking to schedule the last company later this week. The three companies have great track records and strong experience. Mr. Nelson requested that recommendations for their services be sent to the Committee as soon as possible and preferably not the day before the next meeting. Chairman Monaco expressed concern about the Pine Glen school, if renovation/replacement will be allowed on that piece of land and stated there has been some reassurance that construction will be possible but we do want a definitive answer.

Dr. Conti reviewed the revised FY21 budget calendar: a tentative FY21 School Budget Public Hearing and approval is scheduled for the April 28 meeting, on May 6 the FY21 School budget will be presented to the Ways & Means Committee, and town meeting will be on June 10. He explained the budget presentation at the next School Committee meeting will be presented at guideline and Mr. Nelson requested that the School Committee get recommendations well in advance of the meeting. In response to Mr. Iler, Dr. Conti replied that the school budget subcommittee will meet sometime next week. In response to Mr. Murphy, Dr. Conti responded that the School Department has not received a firm amount of
funding available for school warrant articles. Burlington will be facing 4th quarter revenue challenges, and the school department will work with the town if reductions need to be made. been requested to cut or defer requested warrant articles

Monthly Financial Update

Ms. Coscia reviewed the FY20 revolving account summary through March 31 explaining that only the school lunch account is in deficit of -$90,662, state reimbursements for this account have only been received through December, the cafeteria is not selling lunches but are paying workers, and it should be anticipated that the current deficit will increase. In response to Mrs. Russo, Ms. Coscia replied that the Afterschool Program has a healthy balance, a deficit is not anticipated, there aren’t plans to stop services for the Sprouts program, and there have been no discussion of refunds at this time. Mr. Murphy suggested that a request for a reserve fund transfer to address the lunch account deficit would be an appropriate use of funds. Dr. Conti commented that the school department may have excess funds in, for example, the per diem substitute account which could potentially cover the deficit. Ms. Coscia further explained there is a good chance the deficit could be addressed through federal or state funds; it’s too soon to make relief plans or make a transfer from the school budget (i.e. using savings from another account this fiscal year). The Superintendent stated they are keeping a close eye on the remaining budget funds, we do not know what type of relief school districts may potentially get from the federal or state government and is anticipating having to take of budget account deficits locally. In response to Ms. Simon, Ms. Coscia agreed that the two pages of FY20 operating account budget remaining funds are similar to last month’s totals due to orders not being placed and/or not spending funds in contracted services which contributes to minimal changes in remaining budget funds.

Dr. Conti noted that at the April 28 School Committee meeting: an elementary statement of interest will be submitted for approval, there will be a FY21 School Budget public hearing, a summary of reductions needed to make the guideline and then final approval of the FY21 budget. A Memorandum of Agreement with the BEA Unit A is being worked on and the Superintendent expects it to be available to be voted on at the next meeting as well as a recommendation of a firm to provide architectural services. If the Governor announces schools will not be reopening on May 4, DESE will issue additional school guidelines.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Mrs. Russo to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.; motion carried 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Gilbert
Recording Secretary

Date submitted: 5/12/20
Date approved: 5/12/20