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:   June 9, 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. Approval of Warrant
3. Approval of Minutes of 5/12/20
4. Public Participation
5. Coronavirus Update from the Superintendent (estimated time 7:00 – 7:45)
   a). Remote Learning from Home – Parent Forum
   b). BHS Graduation
   c). End of 2019-20 School Year Wrap Up
6. Communication (estimated time (7:45 – 9:00)
   a). School Building/Facilities Update
   b). Monthly Financials
   d). FY20 Budget – Spending/Savings Analysis
   e). Year End Purchasing
   f). Student Opportunity Act
7. Adjournment

*MEETING ACCESS INFORMATION ON NEXT PAGE

**Agenda subject to change
Meeting number (access code): 129 608 6334
Meeting password: tuesday

Tuesday, June 9, 2020
7:00 pm  |  (UTC-04:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)  |  3 hrs

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Chairman Monaco called this WebEx virtual meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. Present: Mr. Carl Foss, Ms. Martha Simon Mr. Thomas F. Murphy, Jr., and Mrs. Katherine Bond. Superintendent Eric Conti, Assistant Superintendent Patrick Larkin, Business Manager Nichole Coscia, and Director of Operations Bob Cunha also present. Ways & Means subcommittee members present: Sue Harrigan, Diane Creedon, Jaya Voruganti, Robert Neufeld, and John Iler.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Monaco 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 School Committee 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.

Chairman Monaco, Ms. Simon, and Mr. Murphy welcomed new members Mr. Foss and Mrs. Bond. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mrs. Bond to elect Mr. Murphy as Vice Chair of the School Committee. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0. Chairman Monaco, Mr. Murphy, and Ms. Simon thanked Mr. Nelson for his 24 years of service on the School Committee commended his analytical skills and well spoken, calm demeanor. The Committee again thanked Mrs. Russo for her nine years on the Committee. Chairman Monaco offered condolences on the recent passing of former BHS Guidance Counselor Elaine McCabe.

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

In response to Mr. Foss, Ms. Coscia explained the warrant process prior to the School Committee approving a warrant. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mr. Murphy to approve the warrant. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, abstain, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 4-0-1.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Mr. Foss to approve minutes of 5/26/20. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

SE PAC member Beth Colburn commented that she will speak later in the meeting regarding end of year student services.

Ms. Simon read a prepared statement regarding the killings of black people, the protests across the country, and the need for Burlington Schools to take action against racist experiences to provide the goal of a safe, supportive environment and education for every child. She requested that a discussion of these issues be held at the next school committee meeting as well as to identify efforts underway. Dr. Conti explained the Equity Committee has held meetings with current and former students as well as staff and they are trying to help frame conversations but with the school pandemic closure, some of these conversations have been derailed. The new student representative Sara Shaikh will be invited to our next meeting to participate in this topic. Chairman Monaco suggested including other town boards for this joint work such as the Board of Health, Selectman and some special education students.

Coronavirus Update from The Superintendent
Remote Learning from Home and Parent Forum

Dr Conti stated that EEC state guidelines for summer camps and day care were released and the Recreation Department is meeting with the Board of Health to figure out how to offer programs safely; some programs will use school facilities but they are not school run. The Afterschool Program is hoping to run some version of the Summer Central program for kids but it will require approval from the Board of Health and Nurse Leader Barbara Conley.

He further explained that DESE state guidelines for Extended Year Services were released Sunday night, the initial planning is to offer remote learning, and they will begin planning with the hope to provide in person extended year services later in the summer. They are reviewing questions and obstacles to overcome (i.e. protective equipment and training). Summer camp and day care guidelines have different requirements than school districts’ Extended Year

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1 Ms. Simon Statement
Services. With things and requirements changing every few days, the school department needs to be as flexible as possible, but we need to provide safe services to students and staff. SEPAC member Beth Colburn commented that she understands that the DESE requirements are not the same as summer camps and summer central, but if those programs are being offered in person then Extended Year Services should also be offered in person. The Superintendent agreed that it doesn’t make sense but he believes as time goes on requirements will evolve into more progressive standards and these are two different state agencies with different requirements. Dr. Conti will be coming back to the School Committee with any problems to solve and resources needed to offer an in person program later in the summer, which will also need to be approved by the Board of Health. The school department is not ready to provide in person Extended Year Services on July 8. In response to Mr. Foss, Dr. Conti will share both the EEC and DESE guidelines to the School Committee.

Mr. Larkin stated the Remote Learning Survey\(^2\) had ended and a few hundred more survey results have been received for a total of 1,054 total responses. He reviewed a powerpoint presentation on the updated results explaining that the number of people responding increased but the outcome on survey questions/percentages remained the same. Mr. Larkin will post the survey results on the school website. They are beginning to identify trends. A teacher survey was sent out today and a student survey will be sent out tomorrow. School planning for the fall will begin when the DESE guidelines come out on June 15.

The Superintendent answered a number of questions submitted via the chat function of tonight’s meeting including:

- does the school district plan to provide more technical support to parents for remote learning – Dr. Conti explained a discussion was held about creating a help desk for parents but there is not a firm plan yet. Mr. Larkin commented they will start to plan a summer professional development offering for parents if there is a significant amount of remote learning scheduled for the fall.

- Inconsistency of instruction between grade levels, teachers and schools – Dr. Conti will continue trying to increase consistency between grade levels.

- Kindergarten students needing in person instruction – Dr. Conti commented that he thought there will be some sort of in school presence in the fall as some skills can’t be taught remotely (i.e. how to hold a pencil). There is a lot of push at the state level to have students back in school for some amount of time in the fall.

- Concern about privacy levels for school learning platforms (i.e. seesaw). Mr. Larkin explained seesaw and stated that teachers can choose to post only some students’ work or not at all. He further explained that after receipt of state guidelines on June 15, staff will create a first draft for fall learning which will be posted and feedback will be requested, the plan will be revised in August particularly as the state could change the guidelines. Dr. Conti explained he anticipates a lot of restrictions in addition to social distancing such as no recess and students not eating in the cafeteria. All plans will be shared with incoming kindergarten parents via email.

- Parent Liz DiTucci explained that 35% of parents answering the survey said remote learning was unmanageable and she felt that percentage was too low. She also noted the survey didn’t delineate what type of student work was being done (i.e. busy work or learning new information). She explained that teachers have done their best with remote learning but there is a lot more work to be done. Dr. Conti clarified that the parent survey is a look back instrument. Mr. Larkin observed that there were a lot of individual comments received along with answers to the survey questions and once guidelines are received June 15 fall planning will begin.

Dr. Conti believes the fall 2020 will not be a typical school opening, that local school districts will only have a small portion of DESE regulations that will be able to be done differently, and he’ll communicate regularly with families and staff. Mr. Larkin commented that if parents have more to share, they should call or send an email; we don’t want families to feel that they weren’t heard. Mrs. Bond voiced some concern with the amount of screen time students will

\(^2\) Remote Learning Survey Results
have and to make sure to look at alternatives i.e., homework packets. The Superintendent explained prices for purchasing two sets of curricular materials (one for home and one for school) for each student is being researched and that copying homework packets would be difficult for the number of students the schools have. Ms. Simon commented that it is very difficult for Dr. Conti and administrators to figure out all the details and how to get back to in-person schooling and that remote learning is not a better solution than in class learning and students safety is of the utmost importance. Dr. Conti agreed but the guidelines need to be finalized first because if class sizes cannot be larger than 10, some students may need to participate in remote learning and some at school, there are not funds to hire more teachers, and our employees may have difficulties if they live in a different community and have their own children that need to be in their town’s school buildings. He hopes to receive some information on special education services when the guidelines come out June 15.

Mrs. Bond inquired if visors could be utilized rather than masks and the school district would purchase them. Dr. Conti replied that is also being researched, Nurse Leader Barbara Conley estimated that for the first 12 weeks 78,000 disposable masks and 400-500 visors will be needed. He believes that the state is trying to put together a combined mask/visor purchasing pathway for towns but stated that requirements will change over the summer dependent on the virus infection rate. Burlington schools will also look at identifying/creating clean spaces in schools for anyone who shows signs of infection.

In response to transporting students, Dr. Conti believes adequate buses will not be able to be provided as each bus would only be allowed to hold 12 or 13 students under current conditions or only be able to provide on a very limited basis under the current CDC standards.

He is collaborating with colleagues in the Middlesex League to share good plans/ideas across districts. He summarized by stating that everyone wants students back in classrooms in the fall and school staff will do everything possible to make it happen.

BHS Graduation

Dr. Conti congratulated the class of 2020, thanked BHS Principal Sullivan, Administration and staff for providing the most permissive graduation allowed with Board of Health approval. It was a very family centered event this year, with each student receiving their diploma, walking onto the stage, and having a picture taken with their family. The School Committee commented that they’d heard from a number of parents, everybody understood given the constraints, commended speakers at the event, and appreciated the efforts of staff as well as thanking them for their creative way of celebrating seniors.

End of 2019-20 School Year Wrap Up

Dr. Conti remarked that student remote learning will finish on June 13, teachers have gone into classrooms and bagged up students’ personal items, and parents are starting to pick up their child’s belongings. He thanked teachers for organizing and performing this work. Teachers will schedule meetings with students and/or families during the week of June 15 and review summer resources that will be available.

During the week of June 22 parents will return approximately 600-700 student iPads, devices, chargers, and cords to the middle school and IT staff will disinfect and update the devices. In the fall, the Superintendent expects to send home with students 3,500 iPads rather than just the 1,000 devices currently distributed each fall. The school district will need to purchase additional devices and accessories to accommodate this.

Ms. Simon commented that the district is also providing a lot of racial resources, there is a 21 day racial equity challenge, and Mr. Larkin will post this information on the school website. Mr. Larkin remarked that this is a historic time and it’s important to take the time to pause, reflect, and learn about racism.

COMMUNICATION

School Buildings Update

Mr. Cunha reported that voting was held in the BHS wooden and rubber gyms and the graduation event was held on Sunday. Tomorrow town meeting will be held on varsity field with social distancing being observed. Staff have been working periodically but yesterday a more regular schedule began and administrators and teachers are coming in to schools on an as needed basis.

He then provided an update on the water damage to the BHS gym floors: the insurance company has been in touch, have agreed they are damaged and will need to be replaced. He has one estimate and met with another one today, price estimates will be submitted to the
insurance company who will then agree on a negotiated price to replace the floors. The school district has a $100K insurance deductible per catastrophic event. Mr. Murphy inquired if there are plans to request payment of the deductible by a reserve fund transfer warrant article in the fall and how long it will take to process the claim. Mr. Cunha replied that a funding mechanism has not been identified yet, with two quotes available a company should be able to start relatively soon, and floors could be replaced by October. Dr. Conti further noted that it also depends on when the invoice for the repair bills are received to consider a final funding mechanism. Ms. Simon expressed concern about system failures at the high school and inquired if the requested list of system failures from the past 5-10 years had been completed. Mr. Cunha explained that he has a partial list but is looking at what is defined as a repair and what is defined as maintenance (such as yearly). Ms. Simon stated she’d like to have both repairs and maintenance and the amounts spent for BHS. Mr. Cunha clarified for Ms. Creedon that the $100K deductible is for each individual claim. In this one claim there is damage to two gym floors, vinyl floors, lighting, electrical, ceilings, and wrestling mats as well as custodial overtime, and emergency services to complete the cleanup and dehumidification. In response to the question if this damage could have been avoided, Dr. Conti replied that maybe with a closer roof inspection and Mr. Cunha further explained the event could have been much worse if Principal Sullivan had not come in on that Saturday morning to discover the water, the heating units were not off, and a maintenance crew does inspections but they cannot see inside a metal pipe or if a joint weld fails, or hard water damage.

In response to Mrs. Creedon, Dr. Conti explained that parents were given three choices for a tuition refund from the Afterschool Program – to keep balance the current balance and apply it towards summer programming, offered a refund or to donate it to the Afterschool Program.

Ms. Coscia reviewed the FY20 revolving fund summary table which all have positive balances with exception of the school lunch program with a $209,958 deficit which includes wages and food and stated that all reimbursements from the state have been received. Dr. Conti explained the basics of the monthly financials in the meeting packet to the two new school committee members. The Superintendent also explained that he anticipates cafeteria staff will have to prepare and deliver boxed lunches to students in the fall.

The FY20 Operating Budget – shows what is thought to be projected surplus or where deficits may exist; at this time, there are still a lot of unknowns. Ms. Coscia noted another column showing projections as of 5/31/20 was added to pages 2-4 and on page 2 salary - line 31 substitutes – as we are not using daily subs, the projected spending was reduced. On expenses line 59, utilities costs were difficult to identify an exact reduction number. The FY20 year end operating budget shows an anticipated surplus of $2.2 million and then to fund the cafeteria deficit with $233K which leaves a projected $1,979,891 surplus. All anticipated surplus and deficits are a moving target and are not definite figures. Mr. Iler observed that the projected surplus figure appears to have increased by over $1 million from last month. Dr. Conti stated that the School Committee has limited fiscal autonomy, had the authority to transfer money from expenses to salaries or vice versa to manage the bottom line budget amount. He further explained that there are increased year end extra costs for example: $100K insurance deductible and significant purchasing needs to be expended prior to June 30. He further explained that the school department will not be turning back $1.9 million in budget surplus due to the need for summer programming and to prepare for school in the fall. At the next meeting, he will provide a list of pre-purchases needed such as PPE, extra devices, and duplicate curricular materials as a pandemic was not planned for in the FY20 budget.

In response to Mr. Murphy, Dr. Conti responded that the School Committee will attend town meeting tomorrow night, he’d spoken to the moderator who indicated his intention was to complete town meeting in one evening and would be beginning an hour earlier than normal. If some items are not addressed, they will be deferred to September town meeting. In response to Ms. Simon, Dr. Conti explained he was not planning to give a presentation on the FY20 budget cost savings because Town Meeting members are voting on a FY21 budget. Chairman Monaco further explained that the moderator would not accept questions on prior budgets.

In response to Ms. Sickler, Ms. Coscia replied that transportation cost savings are not more than $150K because of the agreement settled with Trombly Bus for closure of part of the school year during the pandemic. Dr. Conti reviewed the accommodated budget which is for children with disabilities and the itemized costs of the account. Ms. Coscia explained that line 73 expenses are subject to change because the final cost of transportation of students through the LABBB
program and other member districts has not been finalized. The accommodated budget surplus is anticipated to be $448,902. The state budget will be delayed or postponed, $105K of state funding is expected and Ms. Coscia anticipates $112K of CARES federal money; however, it has not yet been planned how to spend those monies.

The Superintendent announced that the Simon Evening Academy graduation ceremony will be held remotely tomorrow night but he will not be able to attend due to town meeting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

ADJOURN

Moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Ms. Simon to adjourn at 9:40 p.m. Mr. Murphy, aye; Mr. Foss, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Ms. Simon, aye; Mrs. Monaco, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Gilbert
Recording Secretary

Date submitted: 6/23/20
Date approved: 6/23/20