

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: 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.

She further explained that the Chat function is on; please type in your name, question, and the Chair will call on commenter. Per School Committee policy, comments will be limited to three minutes.

APPROVAL OF WARRANT

Moved by Mrs. Bond and seconded by Mr. Foss to approve the warrant. Ms. Simon, abstain; Mr. Murphy, abstain, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 3-0-2.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Ms. Simon to approve minutes of 6/23/20. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

Chairman Monaco and the School Committee congratulated Dr. Conti on being presented with the 2020 Christos Daoulos award in recognition of outstanding service to Mass. Association of School Superintendents.

**Coronavirus Update from
The Superintendent
Equity Committee Update**

Student representative Sarah Shaikh provided an update of the most recent Equity Committee meeting last week noting they had created a draft action plan including: hiring anti-racist educators, creating a working environment for people of color, creating a safe environment for school students through affinity groups, developing protocols for student social media, and provide training to staff. The Equity Committee is recommending creating a permanent position of a Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and urged the School Committee to make this hire a priority during the 2020-21 school year.

**Anti-Racism Resolution –
Approval**

By consensus, this item was taken out of order. Dr. Conti read the Anti-Racism Resolution (below) noting that the source of the resolution is from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and requested that the School Committee approve the resolution.

WHEREAS, as schools have the responsibility to equip students with their civil right of obtaining a free and appropriate public education, it is the responsibility of each school to ensure we create a welcoming community for ALL students; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility that every district provide to all district staff, including School Committee members annual professional development on diversity, equity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, every district will commit to recruiting and retaining a diverse and culturally responsive teaching workforce; and

WHEREAS, every district will examine their policies for institutional and systemic racialized practices and implement change with sustainable policies that are evidence based; and

WHEREAS, every district will incorporate into their curriculum the history of racial oppression and works by black authors and works from diverse perspectives; and

WHEREAS, we as school district leaders can no longer remain silent to the issues of racism and hate that continue to plague our public and private institutions;

RESOLVED: that Burlington Public Schools and all the school districts in the Commonwealth must guarantee that racist practices are eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff.

We must ensure our own school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist that acknowledges that all lives cannot matter until black lives matter.

Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mr. Foss to approve the Anti-Racism Resolution. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Martha Duffield, Co-President of Burlington Against Racism & Parent Liaison to BPS Equity Committee shared a lengthy letter¹ endorsed by approximately 140 parents, staff, town meeting members, SEPAC, Interfaith Clergy, Womanade, Youth Sports, and alumni/students. The letter requested that the school district create an anti-racist Burlington Public Schools committed to racial justice by hiring a full-time Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. The Equity Committee has begun developing an action plan for the school district including: conducting an equity audit, provide professional development for staff, examine curriculum with an equity lens, establish an incident response plan and tracking system, hire staff of color, and create accountable and transparent systems.

Mr. Foss commented he supported the letter. Mr. Murphy stated that before the School Committee moves forward with this there are practical considerations: the town is looking for budget cutbacks, there are no funds in the FY21 budget for this additional position, school administration will need to create a job description and identify how to financially accommodate the new position. He further explained the School Committee will then need to have a robust discussion on this at a school committee meeting to make a decision, perform due diligence, and then to discuss and get feedback from the Ways & Means Committee. Mr. Murphy suggested that if there is enough additional information available for the August meeting it should be on the agenda or on a future agenda, as there is currently a lot of work and decisions to be made for the reopening of the schools in September. Ms. Simon explained she supports this new position, noted that staff is trying to do the right thing and do anti-racist work but work needs to be done on the curriculum, the budget is an important consideration however there is also a pandemic of racism as well as a covid pandemic. She requested that Administration come up with proposals on how to do this. Mrs. Bond agreed that the committee needs to move quickly but we need to make sure what we do is fiscally responsible, receive feedback, and if we can't add this new position, look at what works best, evaluate what and when the school district can accomplish this, particularly with all the current extra costs associated with the covid pandemic. Chairman Monaco stated that the School Committee had just received this request 90 minutes before the meeting, it would not usually be on a meeting agenda immediately, the FY21 budget is set, if the Committee decides to request a Reserve Fund Transfer from the town more detail will be required, including how the position will be involved with special education, and suggested it be put on the August agenda if it fits or on the first meeting in September. She commented that there might be a current staff member who could fit in this position. Dr. Conti stated that due to the urgency of this issue it should be put on the August agenda and commented that this new position may not be an additional position but a substitution for another position. Ways & Means John Iler observed that addressing this issue is important, there may be other ways to accomplish the outlined issues rather than hiring a dedicated person, it needs to be identified what is this more important than because a reduction will need to be made in another area of the current budget, school administration needs to provide a plan to address salary within the current budget and suggested that the town may not want to put funding into a RFT request for an additional salary. Martha Duffield concluded by stating that 35% of Burlington's demographics are non-white, it's important to think of servicing these people, and to think about people being hurt with racism.

2021-21 School Year
Reopening Plans - Update

Dr. Conti reviewed a comprehensive 35 page powerpoint on School Reopening Planning², which will be available on the school website. Highlights of this over 90 minute agenda item included details on:
- Guiding Principles – focus on health & safety of students and staff

¹ Burlington Against Racism Letter

² School Reopening Planning

- Parent & Staff Surveys – 1,600 parent responses received and 300 staff responded
- Initial State Guidelines Released
- Feasibility Study – risks, classroom distancing requirements, results of space analysis
- Feasibility Results – full return to school possible in elementary with 3 foot distancing, hybrid return to school needed at PreK, middle and high school levels and remote instruction changes required at all levels
- Personal Protection Equipment Status – 12 weeks of supplies currently in hand
- Three Initial Reopening Plans Required to be submitted to DESE by 7/31- full return, hybrid, & remote – no decisions for a fall instruction model has been made yet
- Draft daily/weekly school schedules were reviewed for PreK, elementary, middle, and high school; highly likely will need to flip between in-person/hybrid/remote learning due to spread of virus or state order
- Transportation guidelines not released yet
- Administration/Teachers – Translating State Guidelines into Reality (specific for each building)
- Initial parent feedback through school councils/PTO's
- Health Protocols to be released 7/24
- District Working Group Initiated – answer questions generated from school work teams & assist with communication
- BCAT Parent Forum on 7/23
- Remote learning changes – provide structure, consistency, content, feedback; proposing that hybrid/full return schedules match remote; iPads to be available for home use
 - Draft school schedules for preschool, elementary, middle and high school outlined
- Parents & Staff will be resurveyed in early August regarding school reopening
- Full plan documents & final decision regarding fall instructional model due to DESE by mid-August
- Proposed opening calendar: 8/25 first day for teachers - classroom set up, 8/26 – 8/28 professional development and preparation, 8/31 – 9/3 some in person instruction for identified students, remote teacher & class introduction, possible transportation training, additional professional development & prep time; Tuesday, 9/8 first day for all students
- Create District Working Group – draft participants outlined
- Parents/residents interested in participating in the District Working Group should submit an email expressing interest and include grade levels of children in the school system (if applicable)

School Committee comments included – Ms. Simon thanked staff for working on complex attempts at solutions which have conflicting needs for different families/students. Mr. Foss noted that as 17% of parents chose remote learning, which would be approximately 600 students, this may allow for more greater student distancing. Dr. Conti observed it may not necessarily, as the question didn't ask parents to identify what grade level their child was in. In response to Mrs. Bond, Dr. Conti explained that social studies/science at the elementary level is in the afternoon remote scheduling block as it is more difficult to teacher literacy and numeracy remotely but will discuss it with principals. Dr. Conti also commented that teachers not potentially returning will need to be matched with a remote learning assignment but nothing can match in person teaching and planning for a safe school environment. Mr. Murphy commented parent recommendations are spread out over the possibilities, it will be an impossible job to provide the majority of people with a solution they are satisfied with. He suggested that cohorts of Monday/Tuesday and Thursday/Friday might want to flip sometime in the school year due to the number of Monday holidays. Dr. Conti explained they are discussing these issues, families will not be 100% pleased, and they are trying to plan for the largest amount of in-person teaching for students and staff. He further commented that he will be meeting with Afterschool Director Donna Sullivan to discuss afterschool childcare. Chairman Monaco observed that she hopes everyone takes seriously: hand washing, wearing a mask, and social distancing so that the schools will not have to flip back and forth between in school and remote learning.

BEA President Diana Marcus commented: school this spring was crisis management not remote learning, we now have the time to plan and focus on teaching, there are questions unanswered on student seating/spacing at the elementary level, will there be movement breaks, is it the intent for students to sit in a chair for 4 hours, and will mask breaks be scheduled. Dr. Conti commented it's not an expectation for students to sit for 4 hours, they'll try to do outdoor teaching as much as possible, and there are placeholder blocks in the elementary schedule for specials.

Ms. Marcus inquired who will be the four teachers participating in the District Working Group; Dr. Conti explained that Principals will ask for volunteers and they want to have teachers from different levels as well as a nurse and counselor. Ms. Marcus commented that those 4 teachers in the group will not be tasked to represent BEA members and requested that BEA representation be included in the District Working Group and Dr. Conti responded that he'd work on that. Ms. Marcus stated she'd been contacted by union members who are participating in school based meetings held in school buildings; teachers in these meetings were asked to pair up and not following safety protocols or wearing masks. She further explained that teachers biggest concern is the guideline of 3' spacing and that the BEA union is requesting to please use the 6' distancing for everyone's safety. Chairman Monaco stated that she'd like Administration to ensure mask protocols are being followed, the schools may not be able to strictly meet 6' student spacing, we need to take guidelines and recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, and we'll do the best we can to put as much distance as possible between students in classrooms.

Parent Michelle Smith inquired about students in kindergarten & grade 1 not having to wear masks; Dr. Conti stated that he is encouraging all students to wear masks. In response to Ms. Smith, Dr. Conti explained that air quality in school buildings will have increased testing at the beginning of the school year, filters are changed regularly, and the schools have a mix of old and new hvac systems. Mr. Cunha stated that the two newest systems are 9 years old, all equipment is well maintained, and windows will be open in classrooms to circulate air. Maintenance crews are checking classroom windows but if anyone finds non-operational windows, they should report it. Mr. Cunha explained that classrooms without windows will have students and staff relocated and filters in univents for heating are changed twice per year. In response to Mrs. Bond's question if the air is re-circulated; Mr. Cunha responded that most of the a/c systems are internal and just blow cold air. Univent systems circulate clean outside air when those systems are running. In response to Ms. Smith, Mr. Cunha replied that teachers will have the remote technology needed for remote teaching – staff is on a three year rotation of new devices and the district has also purchased additional new equipment. In response to Ms. Smith, Dr. Conti stated that Nurse Leader Barbara Conley and Principals have identified covid isolation space in every school and staff will need to be trained on covid symptoms. In response to Ms. Smith, Dr. Conti explained that translating services are provided in predominate languages, that the initial parent surveys are more a part of the feasibility study with over 1,500 responses but as plans come out with more details the school district will survey parents whether they want to send their children to in-person school or an alternate. This will provide more precise information to school administration.

Chairman Monaco stated that a question on chat asked if air quality testing will be reported and Dr. Conti responded that the information can be shared with the school committee and the public. Parent Mike Souza thanked Dr. Conti and staff for their efforts; however, remote learning in the spring was terrible, and inquired that if remote learning is planned for after lunch, will it be teacher led. The Superintendent explained that it was clear from feedback that parents are seeking more consistency and more teacher directed instruction and the school district is trying to create a schedule where that would work. The intention is that at the elementary level students would be dismissed to have lunch at home followed with a remote afternoon session which would be led by a teacher. At the middle and high school level, the remote afternoon session may be self-directed. He further explained that lunch served at school is a risky event, schools that are scheduling it are taking up to three hours, which is hugely intrusive to student learning time. Teachers also need a lunch break and planning time after which they'd conduct remote learning, which would be substantially different than remote learning provided last spring. Mr. Souza commented that it's important that instructors enjoy remote learning and are teachers being trained on doing it effectively. The Superintendent stated that some teachers are doing summer trainings and some remote training will be provided in the early days of professional development and colleagues can train other staff. Formal training can be considered, however, the school district is trying to adhere to common platforms at the elementary level and different platforms at the middle and secondary level.

Parent Becky Norum, representing the SEPAC board, noted that Mary Houde has been very cooperative with the organization. Ms. Norum explained that in the spring, student feedback was shared accidentally, she is concerned with student privacy and that training on privacy during remote learning should be provided to students, staff, and parents to ensure that confidential information is not being shared. Dr. Conti acknowledged this training problem,

explained that it will be incorporated into the early training period prior to the start of school and creating a parent help line available till 8 p.m. has been discussed. Mr. Larkin stated that IT teachers will have a video beginning August 1 and training will also be provided to parents.

Town meeting member Eileen Sickler asked what will happen if a teacher says they don't want to come back. Dr. Conti responded that every teacher wants to be back in front of children, but some staff members may have pre-existing conditions and there is a covid care act application. Depending on subject areas, some teachers may be utilized remotely, and the school district will follow new regulations on job and health protections. We will have permanent substitutes but it may be problematic depending on different scenarios i.e. if a physics teacher at BHS is sick, how will that class be covered; the district will look at each absence on a case by case basis and try to plan for class coverage.

Parent Lynne Gauthier explained she and her husband are essential workers and if her elementary children are coming home at 12 neither parent will be available to supervise and her children will not receive remote instruction. The Superintendent explained this has not been fully answered yet regarding care of essential workers children, however, the district is looking at this group of students and a plan will have to be made. Dr. Conti announced he and Mr. Larkin will do a presentation on BCAT tv on Thursday, there will be opportunities for questions, a link to post questions will be available prior to this presentation, and FAQ documents will be posted online. If you'd like to submit a question, please email your question and include your name. There will be more video presentations in August on BCAT, we want to be sure all voices are being heard by the school district. More BCAT videos are planned on such topics as transportation, and individual school levels (elementary, middle, and high school). The video will air on Thursday at 6:30 – 8 and a notice will be sent to parents via Aspen.

In response to Chairman Monaco, the Superintendent explained if there are tables in classrooms they'd separate students to either side of the table and/or redistribute some student desks. He further explained that classrooms at BHS without windows will have the air quality tested in those classrooms prior to making a decision on using them and Principal Sullivan is looking at alternatives. Dr. Conti commented that all students will be encouraged to wear masks and staff will be required to wear them.

COMMUNICATION
Simon Youth Foundation
2019-20 District Partner
Report

The Superintendent shared the 19 page Simon Youth Foundation 2019-20 District Partner Report in the School Committee's meeting packet. The Simon Youth Academy at BHS had 9 graduates in June 2020, they awarded \$7,000 in renewable post-secondary scholarships, as well as a \$5,893 enhancement grant award.

Remote Learning Policy -
Second Reading

Dr. Conti explained these two new policies were developed by the Mass. Association of School Committees and a first reading was held at the June 23 meeting. Moved by Mr. Foss and seconded by Ms. Simon to adopt Remote Learning policy IHBHE. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mrs. Bond to adopt Remote Learning Addendum policy IHBHE-E. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Seal of Biliteracy

The Superintendent explained that a seal of literacy is awarded to BHS students who demonstrate proficiency in two languages by graduation and 29 students have accomplished this.

School Building/Facilities
Update

The Superintendent explained there have been questions regarding air quality in the schools, and this will be an upcoming agenda item including HVAC systems. He noted that currently there is warrant article funding to design a new hvac system at the high school and Mr. Cunha explained he's in initial conversations and is in the process of discussing the work to be done. Dr. Conti reviewed summer projects at Francis Wyman: fire alarm system completed, air conditioning completed and running, the library is being refurbished, and bathroom construction is in process. The BHS gym floor is being taken up next week and the plan is to install the new floor in late August. Dr. Conti explained that summer student custodians may need to extend their work schedule due to the work load and the funding will for this would be from the building rentals account. For next year, it will need to be discussed how to fund and continue this summer program.

Closeout of Completed
Warrant Article Projects –
Approval

Ms. Coscia requested that the School Committee approve the close out of five completed warrant articles and any remaining funds will be turned back to the town’s free cash account. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mr. Foss to closeout FY19 completed capital warrant article community custodial fees with no remaining funds. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mr. Murphy to closeout FY19 completed Francis Wyman Air Conditioning capital warrant article with no remaining funds. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mr. Murphy to closeout FY20 completed Schools Pine Glen sewer pump capital warrant article with no remaining funds. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mrs. Foss to closeout FY20 completed school BHS computer lab capital warrant article with no remaining funds. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0. Moved by Ms. Simon and seconded by Mr. Murphy to closeout FY20 completed school MSMS café tables with remaining funds of \$860.88 to be returned to the town. Ms. Simon, aye; Mr. Murphy, aye, Mrs. Monaco, aye; Mrs. Bond, aye; Mr. Foss, aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Chairman Monaco stated that a question was posted earlier on chat about the Afterschool program; she explained this program is self-sufficient and expenses/salaries for the program are paid out of money that is paid into that program. Chairman Monaco inquired about the possibility of the School Committee having a separate Facebook page, which would be a place to announce things rather than anything that would involve a discussion and members would be able to post directly to the page. Mr. Larkin explained that school announcements are put on the school website, twitter, and facebook pages, so it would have the same information. Dr. Conti suggested that he and Mr. Foss speak about this matter offline. Chairman Monaco commented that she’d like to return to in-person school committee meetings and had spoken to Town Clerk Amy Warfield about it who’d expressed concern about potentially not being able to accommodate community members who want to attend due to restrictions of the number of people meeting in the same room. Mrs. Monaco further suggested that a possibility be to use a dedicated tv room in addition to the School Committee room and noted that as it gets later in the season using the football field wouldn’t be a good option. Dr. Conti responded that he’d check with his colleagues for ideas, Governor Baker may update meeting options in the future, and he’ll research options for the August meeting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

ADJOURN

Moved by Mr. Murphy and seconded by Ms. Simon to adjourn at 10:10 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: 8/18/20

Date approved: 8/18/20