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BURLINGTON

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SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Tuesday, September 14, 2021

TIME: 7:00 pm

LOCATION: 123 Cambridge Street, Burlington, MA 01803
Administrative Offices, School Committee Room

ATTENDEES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Thomas F. Murphy, Jr., Vice Chair Mrs. Katherine Bond, Mr. Carl Foss, Mrs. Christine Monaco, Ms. Martha Simon, Superintendent Eric Conti, Director of Operations Bob Cunha

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Business Manager Nichole Coscia

MEMBER(S) REMOTE: Assistant Superintendent Patrick Larkin

GUEST(S) REMOTE: Ways & Means Committee Member Mr. Roger Riggs, Student Representative Brooke Hovasse, BHS Principal Mark Sullivan, Performing Arts Director Mr. John Middleton, Attorney Darren Klein, Burlington Youth Association Basketball President Brian Pupa

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Parent Beth Colburn, Track & Field Girls Coach for Burlington Shane Faria, Parent/Coach Adam Senesi, Parent/Coach Christine Kim

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Murphy called this meeting to order at 7:00 pm and 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 utilizing participation for the public via Webex technology only. He further explained that if someone would like to be recognized to raise their hand virtually.

APPROVAL of WARRANT

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to approve the warrant; seconded by Mr Foss.

Mrs. Monaco - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye, Ms. Simon - abstain, Mr. Murphy - abstain. Motion carried 3-0-2.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

INFORMATION / REPORTS

A. Subcommittee

Dr. Conti announced that there would be a Board of Health report later in the agenda.

B. Ways & Means

Ways & Means Committee Member Mr. Roger Riggs was remotely present, but had no new information to share.

C. Student Representative

The new student representative for the 2021-22 school year is Brooke Hovasse. She explained that they have not held any meetings yet this year; but in speaking with others, would like to have some sort of Homecoming. Mr. Murphy and the committee welcomed Brooke and advised that she should work with school administration on their ideas and looks forward to working with her over the course of the year.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE from the Superintendent

A. Board of Health Update/COVID Update

Both Dr. Conti and Mr. Larkin thanked Susan Lumenello and the BOH (Board of Health) for all their support and guidance. Mr. Larkin opened by explaining that we have had a couple of positive cases in the district over the last few days; one at Memorial and one at Francis Wyman. Families have been notified, and we will continue to update the district website ([COVID-19 Info & Reports](#)). Mr. Larkin explained that we receive a daily update from the BOH of the number of students quarantined in the district. As of 9/15/21, we will have 45 students in quarantine due mostly to the two classrooms that are currently closed at Memorial and Francis Wyman. We work closely with the BOH to follow the

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Mass DPH (Department of Public Health) as well as DESE (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) guidelines which are sometimes conflicting. Test & Stay protocols will be discussed during the COVID update ([BCAT News Article dated 9/15/21](#)). Contact Tracing will not be 24/7 due to district and BOH staffing. Contact Tracing will be managed up to a certain point during the weekday evenings and then resume the next day. Families may email COVID concerns to: covidconcerns@bpsk12.org. Both Mr. Larkin and Mrs. Barbara Conley, Nurse Leader respond accordingly to any emails.

Dr. Conti clarified some changes for the committee. One of the specific discrepancies between DESE and the Mass DPH (and Burlington BOH follows Mass DPH) was the distance for contact tracing. Last week DESE changed their contact tracing standard from 3 feet to 6 feet to match Mass DPH. As a result, with more elementary students in the buildings, more will need to be quarantined due to the classroom space. Dr. Conti further explained that once our Test & Stay plan is in place, students who are asymptomatic can be given a rapid test. If the test is negative, then the student can stay in school. Implementing the Test & Stay has been a challenge. We received our tests on 9/10/21 and are working with a company to track all the positive cases. Currently the company that the state has contracted is having some challenges with their software. We are hoping that the program will be up and running by October 1st, but that date is not definite. Some districts are rapid testing, but they are using leftover tests from last year. They are not using the new Test & Stay tests. Dr. Conti also made a point to emphasize that the Test & Stay program only applies to school related events. If your child is identified as a close contact and is quarantined and they participate in Test & Stay, they may attend school. When at home, the student remains in quarantine mode for the specified time and should not participate in any community events (i.e. cub scouts, sports). The reason they can come to school is the safety factors that are in place (masking, air exchanges, and distancing). Mr. Larkin explained that Test & Stay goes against DPH guidelines, but DESE has worked with medical consultants to put this plan in place. The only place the student is allowed to go to is school. Each day during the quarantine period, the student(s) would go to the nurse's office or specified area to be tested. If the rapid test is negative (after 15 minutes), the student(s) would be allowed to go to class for the day.

In response to Mrs. Bond's question about students who attend the after school care programs and whether or not they would be allowed to stay, Dr. Conti explained that since the after school care programs are in our buildings that we would treat it the same as if the kids were in a school program. In response to Mrs. Monaco's question about Test & Stay, Mr. Larkin confirmed that the current guidelines for Test & Stay is that if a student is vaccinated and asymptomatic, that they do not have to be tested. In response to Mrs. Monaco's concern about the confusion within the community about the Test & Stay consent form that was sent home, Mr. Larkin acknowledged he had heard the same concerns about the testing options on the consent form. He further explained that we have been told we need to use the consent form from CIC (Cambridge Innovation Center) which is the group that the state has contracted to run this program. The consent form includes testing options that Burlington Public Schools is not participating in. In our September 2nd update to parents, we informed parents we were only participating in the Test & Stay program. Although the consent form includes asymptomatic and pool testing, we cannot modify the form to only have parents sign and consent for Test & Stay only. Dr. Conti confirmed we are only doing the Test & Stay program. For the students who are currently at home in quarantine (as we do not have the Test & Stay in place as of yet), Dr. Conti explained that the students are learning remotely. Mrs. Monaco is concerned about the amount of time that it is taking to get the Test & Stay program in place. In response to Ms. Simon's question, Mr. Larkin confirmed that we are updating our COVID information on our website weekly. If there is a positive case in a particular school, parents of students in that school are notified by email. In addition, we will continue to report the number of positive cases to the Department of Education. Mr. Murphy wanted to clarify the expectations of remote learning. While there are currently some students who are remote learning due to classroom quarantine, these instances are an exception to the rule and are not to be expected as an option for other students / families. Dr. Conti confirmed these expectations.

Public hand raised from Beth Colburn who has 3 kids in the district. Test & Stay is not ready. It is unclear to her as to what would happen if one of her child's classrooms is shut down. DESE says that remote learning does not count as an academic day. She would like clarification of the process. In response, Dr. Conti explained that we are taking it case by case. In these first two instances, the entire classes were quarantined and were able to provide learning at home. Mr. Larkin further explained that DESE counts students who participate in 4 hours of school activities when out of school can be marked present. Expectations are not clear, and we will continue to have discussions with DESE to clarify the process. Additionally, Ms. Colburn expressed concern for students who need a remote learning plan and how those students are receiving the services needed. In response, Dr. Conti commented that we are not preparing for a remote learning experience as provided last year. We are supporting students in their learning as best as possible, taking it case by case or class by class. We will make adjustments as needed.

Ms. Simon expressed her concerns to be sure that if students need to be at home in quarantine, then we should be

prepared for their learning needs as well.

B. School Buildings / Facilities Update

Mr. Cunha opened by thanking the maintenance, custodial and clerical staff in getting the buildings ready for the start of school. We are still continuing the processes of full assessments of HVAC, measurements of the flows coming from the vents and CO2 testing. Air purifiers are in all teaching spaces and additional purifiers were purchased to be sure that there are as many fresh air exchanges in teaching and learning spaces as possible. PPE has been delivered to the buildings to be sure staff and students have access to masks and hand sanitizer.

Lunch at the elementary school is being held in the classrooms. At the middle and high school, lunch is being held in the cafeteria as much as possible and in larger spaces for overflow. The focus is safety.

The high school feasibility study to assess the HVAC and the condition of the building is still in process. The company has been very communicative and continues to have follow up meetings on assessing a building that is 40 years old. There are delays due to staffing and timing.

Bus transportation is always a challenge at the start of school. We publish the routes and let them run one to two weeks and make safety changes as needed. This year, we have added delays due to bus staffing. This is not problematic to just our bus company. It was announced by the Governor that the National Guard will be used to staff shortages. They will be sent to the larger communities first. We have 18 full time buses with 14 returning drivers and 2 spare drivers returning who will be assigned to bus routes which still leaves us short. We have some bus limitations with sporting events as well as late buses. As an interim solution for discussion at potentially the next school committee meeting, should we modify our expectations with fewer passengers as we did last school year?

C. First Fox Hill School Building Committee Meeting - September 22, 2021@ 7:00 pm

Mr. Cunha explained that this will be the first SBC (School Building Committee) meeting. There is no formal agenda, but will use the time for introduction, review where we are in the process, and take feedback from the group. This will be posted and available via WEBEX. Ms. Simon clarified that Mr. Murphy will be the chair of the School Building Committee.

COMMUNICATION

A. BHS Student Handbook - Second Reading

Dr. Conti confirmed that the changes that were made to the handbook were mostly grammatical. With those changes, it is recommended that the School Committee approve the BHS Student Handbook. Other changes were suggested, but require more conversation. Mr. Sullivan will come back with feedback.

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to approve the BHS Student Handbook; seconded by Mrs. Bond.

Mrs. Monaco - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Murphy - aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

B. Out of State Student Travel

- Dr. Conti explained that the BHS Marching Band will be participating in the Manhattan Concert Productions¹ in NY City from April 1-5, 2022. Students will perform at Carnegie Hall. The cost of the trip includes buses, hotel, performance, on-stage clinic, recordings, awards, a gala awards ceremony and dinner as well as a Broadway show. The total cost is the responsibility of the individual students and their families. There will be fundraising opportunities to help defray the cost. Mr. John Middleton will work with Ms. Jennifer Knight, Mr. Ray Porch, and Ms. Nichole Coscia to help support families who are having financial hardships.

Ms. Simon expressed her gratitude to the music department for moving forward and getting the students back involved in these wonderful activities.

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to approve Out-of-State Travel for the BHS Band to travel to NY City from April 1-5, 2022 to participate in the Manhattan Concert Productions; seconded by Ms. Simon.

Mrs. Monaco - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Murphy - aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

- Dr. Conti explained that the BHS Chorus/Orchestra will participate in the WorldStrides Heritage Festival² in NY City from March 25-27, 2022. The cost of the trip includes buses, hotel, performance, on-stage clinic, recordings, awards, a gala awards ceremony and dinner as well as a Broadway show. The total cost is the

¹ Manhattan Concert Productions Ensemble Registration & Agreement

² WorldStrides OnStage Programs

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responsibility of the individual students and their families. There will be fundraising opportunities to help defray the cost. Mr. John Middleton will work with Ms. Jennifer Knight, Mr. Ray Porch, and Ms. Nichole Coscia to help support families who are having financial hardships.

Mr. Murphy expressed his gratitude to Mr. Middleton and the music department for making these great activities available to students.

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to approve Out-of-State Travel for the BHS Chorus/Orchestra to travel to NY City from March 25-27, 2022 to participate in the WorldStrides Heritage Festival; seconded by Mrs. Bond.

Mrs. Monaco - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Murphy - aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

C. BHS Spanish Exchange Program

Dr. Conti explained that BHS is looking for School Committee approval to announce their intentions of conducting the Spanish Exchange Program³. The Spanish exchange program is in its fifth iteration of the program. BHS students will travel to Spain from February 10-25, 2022. The students will miss 6 days of school. Students will live with a Spanish family and follow a student to engage fully in the Spanish way of life. The cost associated is \$1,600 per student. Students and families are responsible for the costs associated. Chaperones will be 4 American teachers and 2 Spanish teachers. The Spanish students will travel to the United States from April 4-15, 2022.

Ms. Simon agrees that it is a great program and opportunity. In response to Mrs. Monaco's concerns about COVID interfering with the plans, Dr. Conti explained that we need to do prior planning and will plan as if we are going. All of these students would be eligible to be vaccinated and show proof of vaccination if required. Mr. Sullivan explained that the teachers do a great job in coordinating the program and it is a highlight experience for students who have the opportunity to participate. The program is very popular.

Motion was made by Mrs. Monaco to approve the request to announce BHS intentions to conduct the Spanish Exchange Program during the 2021/2022 school year; seconded by Mrs. Bond.

Mrs. Monaco - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Murphy - aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

D. Financial Update - FY21 Close

Dr. Conti reviewed the FY21 Revolving Fund Summary⁴ and FY Operating Budget⁵. Last fiscal year ended on June 30, 2021 and revolving funds all have a positive balance. Ms. Coscia was able to frontload the transfer of funds to the School Lunch account as voted by the committee at the last meeting. There are no other negative balances in the revolving fund account at this time. The Operating Budget shows an ending balance of \$1,347,942 which will be turned back to the town's general fund. Ms. Coscia and Town Accountant Mr. John Danizio worked to apply all the Federal Relief funds that were possible before the end of the fiscal year. Federal Relief funds allowed us to take some of our regular operating expenses and apply them to the Federal and State dollars first before using local dollars. Dr. Conti explained that it was because we received Federal Relief, we were able to turn funds over to the town.

In response to Mrs. Monaco's question about relief funds for the current school year and whether we could use those funds for the Test & Stay program, Dr. Conti confirmed that we do have Federal funds available and will look at options to use those funds for staffing, support and contact tracing.

Referring to the FY21 Accommodated Budget⁶, Dr. Conti reviewed the spent as of 6/30/21 column with an ending balance of \$12,217,362 which left a remaining budget balance of \$397,777 to be turned over to the town.

In response to Ms. Simon's concerns about sharing documents with the public ahead of the meeting, Dr. Conti explained that he felt that it was not a public packet until after the school committee meeting. Mr. Murphy agrees with the way the distribution of documentation is currently being handled due to documents or policies that may change over the course of a School Committee meeting. Mr. Murphy further explained that the Agenda is made public before the meeting and if anyone has any questions or concerns about a particular topic, they could contact a School Committee member or the school administration. Ms. Simon would like to find a solution to help the public follow discussions easier. Ideas were discussed and Dr. Conti will come back with suggestions for the committee.

Mr. Cunha confirmed that we do have [District Policies](#) which have been voted and approved posted on the district website.

³ Spanish Exchange Program 21/22 Itinerary

⁴ FY21 Revolving Fund Summary

⁵ FY21 Operating Budget

⁶ FY21 Accommodated Budget

Public hand raised by Christine Kim, coach for Burlington Pop Warner. Thanking the committee for opening the facilities back up. She feels it is safer for the kids to stay within Burlington than to increase their circle.

G. Superintendent's Goals and Reaffirmation of Planning for Success Goals

As Dr. Conti shared, Planning for Success⁸ is part of the District Improvement Plan we work on every three years. We are trying to get back on track for 21/22. We added the Equity Statement that the committee had developed last year (page 5). We may need to reword our Mission to better align it with the Equity Statement. In our 2022-2025 version of this plan, we have four objectives: Learning, Equity, Culture and Relationships, and Facilities and Finance. A couple of highlights is that we have additional resources to support our plan:

- Mr. Ray Porch, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will be spearheading an equity audit to accomplish one of our Equity objectives.
- Ms. Jennifer Knight, Director of Family and Community Engagement will be enhancing our communications with families in our Culture and Relationships objectives.

As part of the plan, the committee needs to approve the Superintendent's Goals. The Student Learning Goal and the Professional Practice Goal have been updated. We are restarting the Evaluation Process for all employees. Mr. Larkin and Mr. Porch have been working with administration to create common planning modules to reintroduce our evaluation procedures to emphasize the objectives that are part of the planning document. One idea is that we would all have a common professional practice goal. Dr. Conti explained that his professional practice goal is focused on having all students thrive which traces back to our Equity Statement. We are asking all educators to create a professional practice goal under that umbrella to align the priority of the Equity Statement throughout the district.

Dr. Conti's is requesting that the committee reaffirm the Planning for Success Plan which includes the Superintendent's Goals for this year.

Motion was made by Mr. Murphy to reaffirm the Planning for Success District Plan 2019-2022 (which includes the Superintendent's Goals) document; moved by Mrs. Bond, seconded by Mrs. Monaco.
Mrs. Monaco - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Murphy - aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

In closing, Dr. Conti would like to send a letter to thank Dave Adams at AFC (American Family Care) Urgent Care facility for supporting our students and families.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Mr. Murphy to adjourn at 9:50 pm; moved by Mrs. Monaco, seconded by Mr. Foss.
Mrs. Monaco - aye, Mr. Foss - aye, Mrs. Bond - aye, Ms. Simon - aye, Mr. Murphy - aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.

SUBMITTED

Respectfully,



Kristen Downie
Recording Secretary

Date Submitted: 9/28/21
Date Approved: 9/28/21

⁸ Planning for Success 2019-2022