

Whately School Committee Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Tuesday, March 2, 2021

This meeting was held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provision of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, Section 20 using Google Meet and was live streamed.

MEETING MINUTES

Present: Chair Maureen Nichols, Robert Halla and Beth Reilly; Principal Kristina Kirton; Superintendent Darius Modestow

Chair Maureen Nichols called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

On a motion from Beth Reilly, and a second from Bob Halla, the Minutes of February 9, 2021 were approved 3-0-0

Roll Call:

Maureen Nichols	yes	Robert Halla	yes	Beth Reilly	yes
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Financial Statement. Business Administrator Shelley Poreda could not attend the meeting. There was no financial statement.

Public Comment: None

Under Unfinished Business:

- a. Anti-Racism & Equity Committee Update: Kelsey Cropp gave an update. The committee just had 2 meetings to see where they are, what the challenges are, and what are the next steps. The committee's next step is to ramp up clear communication between subcommittees, between schools, between teachers, and especially between the schools and the community. The committee is going to have a monthly newsletter headed by a junior at Frontier which will be sent to all of the schools and all of our families. The policy and procedure committee is looking to update/create clear policies and procedures. PD in the elementary schools continues and is going very well. The PD and curriculum subcommittees merged and are working on a proposal for next year that we will see at the April joint school committee meeting. The committees are working on long-term goals. In addition to anti-racism and equity, they are also looking at diversity and inclusion on a larger scale including concerns regarding sexism, homophobia, and ableism.
- b. COVID-19 Update: We are in our 2nd week of Covid pooled testing. Whately has 54% participation, 89% from staff and 45% from students. Commissioner Riley extended the free window of pooled testing until April 18, right before April break. Samples are collected at the school and then couriered to the testing facility. Results are usually available the next day. Currently, everyone who signed up is tested weekly.

Commissioner Riley announced last week that he is requesting all schools PreK to 5 (or 6) to come back to in-person learning 5 days a week by April 5. Completely remote students can remain remote. Under this new plan, hybrid learning would not be allowed. Darius said this would not be a huge change for us since WES is currently 4 days a week of in-person learning. The commissioner wants school to be as normal as possible by June so that September can have a normal school opening. Any remote learning in a hybrid model would not count as time on learning. DESE will be voting on this. We should have more information on this by early next week. Maureen said that it is strange to mandate this prior to teachers being vaccinated. Darius said the mandate says that this change to fully in-person learning is not dependent on staff vaccination.

Maureen mentioned that K-12 staff are in the next group to be vaccinated. Maureen asked when the staff are all vaccinated, are we expecting all staff to be in-person? Darius said he originally said that going from 4 days a week of in-person learning to 5 would not happen until after all the staff were vaccinated. He said this when we were expecting that staff vaccinations would happen in February. The expectation is that the school positions were hired as in-person positions, but we will have to review each case at that time. Vaccinations are considered complete and safe 6 weeks after the last person is able to get vaccinated. Darius is hoping that there will be regional vaccinations for “educators only” to avoid some of the problems the state has had with issuing the vaccines.

- c. FY22 Budget Proposal review: Superintendent Modestow gave an update. The Whately School Committee is scheduled to meet with the Whately Finance Committee on March 23 at 6pm to present and discuss the FY22 budget proposal. After discussion at last month's meeting, we will have a budget closer to a 2.5% increase. Darius said there is talk of another stimulus package coming, but no details yet. Whately will be getting \$38,858 from the ESSER II fund (new CARES Act funds). Some of this money will be used to bring our budget down to the 2.5% increase. The town of Whately's portion of the budget for Frontier is down this year so this is a good year for Whately Elementary to have a little bit higher budget.

Under New Business:

School Choice Vote: Darius said that each year, the school committee is required to vote whether they will accept school choice students. Principal Kirton presented the School Choice numbers. It takes careful consideration to balance the numbers in each class. We currently have 18 applications for school choice for this fall spread across all of the grades. This is a little more than we typically receive.

On a motion from Bob Halla, seconded by Beth Reilly, the School Choice vote for the 2021-2022 school year was approved on a vote of 3-0-0.

Roll Call:

Maureen Nichols	yes	Robert Halla	yes	Beth Reilly	yes
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Reports:

- a. Committee/Chair: Maureen gave an update from the Capital Improvement Planning Committee. There have been 2 meetings to review capital project requests submitted for funding in FY22 for the town of Whately. The priority of each request was voted on (from A highest to C lowest priority). The school submitted 3 requests: replace carpets with tiles in 3 classrooms, reconstruct and resurface the parking lot and driveway, and replace the kitchen oven. The oven was voted A (considered urgent high priority), the other 2 items were voted B (high priority that should be done as funding becomes available). The committee also wants to be prepared on the future needs of the school especially with the school being 30 years old and would like to try to avoid very large expenses in the same year. I shared some of the school's anticipated needs. They would like a detailed list with priority for each item for next year's capital improvement planning meetings. Bob asked if we could do the floor replacement this summer if we had money left at the end of the year. Darius said this is something we can talk about at the end of the year, see if there is any savings at the end of this year and discuss what it should be spent on.
- b. The Collaborative: None
- c. Principal: Krissy gave her report. As of Monday 3/8, we will have 102 hybrid students and 14 fully remote students. Two more students are changing from the fully remote learning model to the hybrid model. Krissy thanked the staff, families, and community for their hard work, patience, flexibility, and support. We are coming up to our Covid anniversary when school became remote. She also thanked Darius, Kim McCarthy, and the rest of the administration team for their strength and support they've given over the past year. Another sub has been hired for 1st grade and will be starting on Thursday.
- d. Superintendent: Darius reminded us that the April meeting is the joint school committee meeting with all 5 school committees where we talk about school and school committee calendars. We will also talk about our professional development plan and anti-racism and equity plan. The meeting is scheduled for April 6. Bob asked when the Whately School Committee would go back to in-person meetings. Darius said that was up to the school committee. We will have to make sure that public comment can still be given in some format. We may have our May meeting in person. MCAS are expected to happen in April and May. The length of the test will be half of what it normally would be.

Maureen mentioned that signature pages should be available now at the town offices for 1-2 school committee positions to have your name on the ballot for this June's election.

There was no Executive Session.

On a motion from Bob Halla, seconded by Beth Reilly, the committee adjourned at 5:04pm.
Approved 3-0-0.

Roll Call:

Maureen Nichols	yes	Robert Halla	yes	Beth Reilly	yes
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Summary of Documents Presented:

1. Minutes of February 9, 2021
2. School Choice numbers
3. Principal's Report
4. Superintendent's Report
5. February Enrollment

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Nichols, Chair