

WEST BOYLSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, March 10, 2021 - 7:00 p.m.
Middle/High School Media Center-Library

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

James Pedone, Jr., Chairman
Jason Ponticelli, Vice Chairman
Jennifer Breen
Nancy Hubbard
Christine Quirk

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT

Richard A. Meagher, Superintendent of Schools
Christopher Fournier, Principal, Middle/High School
Alex Audette, Principal, Major Edwards Elementary School
Roger E. Pontbriand Jr., Business Administrator
Sherri Traina, Director of Special Education

ALSO PRESENT

Faculty, audience and press.

Mr. Pedone called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Quirk moved, seconded by Ms. Hubbard to accept the minutes of the February 10, 2021 regular meeting.

VOTE 5-0-0

2. Student Recognition Awards: Major Edwards, Middle School, High School

Students from the Elementary and Middle/High School were recognized as Student of the Month: Anya Johnson, Camden Diaz, and Christian Fancy.

3. Student Advisory Council Representative Joanna Pano reported on:

- Student Council – MASC Virtual leadership conference in April; Virtual Polar Plunge fundraiser for Special Olympics of Massachusetts
- NHS – Update on fundraising event; Induction ceremony in May
- NAHS – Fundraising updates; Upcoming Art Show TBD
- Wellness Club – Update on forming an Equity Council
- GSA – Updates on support groups
- Tri-M – Open Mic Night, April 9th
- International Thespian Society – Updating social media for the group; Improv Night April 16; Induction Ceremony May 25
- National French and Spanish Honor Society – Update on combined Virtual Induction Ceremony
- Yearbook – Updates
- DECA – State Competition Week March 8 – March 12
- Sports – Updates
- Class – Updates

4. Acknowledgement of Camera Crew

5. Highlight on Schools: Teaching and Performing during the Pandemic – Debra Huard

Ms. Huard presented the Teaching and Performing during the Pandemic.

6. Community / Student / Faculty Input

Keith Wiley – WBTA President, read a letter to the School Committee titled “The Walls” along with requesting the committee adhere to the current suggested DESE reopening dates and to not open schools sooner. Mr. Wiley continued to request that administration and School Committee Members listen to how students feel about schools opening.

Keary Bartlett, 190 Maple Street, spoke to the School Committee about her personal understanding of teachers wanting to be vaccinated prior to being fully in the classroom along with expressing her children’s desire to be back in the building for more in-person learning.

Leah Fernandes, 23 Brandywine Road, spoke to the School Committee about the various reasons schools haven’t opened and personally feels opening fully needs to happen, while expressing her children’s desire to be back in the building for more in-person learning.

Chris Fournier, West Boylston Public Schools Faculty, expressed his concerns for opening the schools prior to the recommended DESE reopening date.

Melisa Carter, West Boylston Public Schools Faculty, spoke to the School Committee about the desire in normalcy for students, as many are struggling with social and emotional matters during the time away from the classroom.

Moira Johnson, 92 Bunker Hill Parkway, spoke to the School Committee members about personal concerns of children missing the daily structure of being in a classroom and having the feeling of being part of a team environment.

Jill Cummings, 23 High Street, spoke to the School Committee about how her family has multiple children in the West Boylston Public School district and out of all the children, it is her elementary level children that truly desire to be back in school full time, as they require the daily structure and interaction with others.

Deb Goodwill, West Boylston Public School Faculty, spoke to the School Committee and stated she has been very impressed with how the district has managed since the start of school this year.

Joanna Pano, West Boylston High School Junior, spoke to the School Committee about the difficulties of as a student returning to five full days of instruction. Joanna requested to continue to have Wednesday as a day of remote learning where students could continue to check in with teachers, meet with clubs and study for the week. Joanna also expressed speaking to the junior class about another event besides a prom this year due to COVID and the willingness of the junior class helping the senior class as they have next year to have a prom.

Sydney Olsen, West Boylston High School Senior, spoke to the School Committee about wanting to have the schools open safely and how much work she finds herself and classmates completing Wednesdays. Sydney also shared the current ideas the senior class has discussed once any prom activist are approved.

Kristina Quirk, West Boylston High School Senior, spoke to the School Committee about her personal experiences and difficulties with hybrid learning and how she benefited once she was able to return to four day in person learning. Kristina also shared she would prefer to have the senior prom at an off-site venue if possible.

7. School Choice Recommendation

Mr. Meagher presented the School Choice recommendations.

Mr. Ponticelli moved, seconded by Ms. Hubbard on the School Choice Recommendations.

VOTE: 5-0-0

8. Vote to Approve Reopening Plan

Mr. Meagher presented the Reopening of Schools Plan.

Ms. Hubbard moved, seconded by Mr. Ponticelli to open the Elementary School on March 22, 2021.

VOTE: 5-0-0

Ms. Quirk moved, seconded by Ms. Breen to open the Middle/High School on April 5, 2021.

VOTE: 5-0-0

9. Warrants –

Mr. Ponticelli moved, seconded by Ms. Breen to accept the payables warrants dated:

- February 16, 2021
- March 1, 2021

VOTE 5-0-0

Ms. Quirk moved, seconded by Ms. Hubbard to accept the payroll warrants dated:

- February 19, 2021
- March 5, 2021

VOTE 5-0-0

10. Vote to Approve 2021 Prom Activities

Mr. Fournier presented the Junior/Senior 2021 Prom Activities.

No Motion

11. Communication and Reports

- a) Major Edwards Elementary School Principal Mr. Audette reported on:
 - Updating learning model
 - Professional Development Day – March 5th
 - Enrollment Change Deadline – March 12th
 - Grades Close – March 17th
 - Read Across America Challenge – Month of March

b) Middle/High School Principal Mr. Fournier reported on:

- Progress Reports Issued – March 5th
- Virtual Teacher Conferences – April 14th
- Report Cards – April 16th
- April Vacation – April 19-23
- College Seminar for Grade 11
- MCAS and AP Exam Updates
- Fall II Sports Updates

Ms. Breen moved, seconded by Ms. Hubbard to approve the co-op of West Boylston and Tahanto for Track & Field and Tennis for the Spring 2021 Season.

VOTE: 5-0-0

c) Director of Special Education Ms. Traina reported on: None

d) Business Administrator Mr. Pontbriand reported on:

- February 2021 Expense Report

Mr. Ponticelli moved, seconded by Ms. Hubbard to approve the transfer of \$30,000.00 from School Choice Account to the School Lunch Revolving Account.

VOTE: 5-0-0

e) Superintendent of Schools Mr. Meagher reported on:

- Proposed Return of Major Edwards
- Communication
- Pool Testing
- COVID – 19 Vaccine

f) School Committee Reported on:

Mr. Pedone expressed that a delay in opening schools should not be due to faculty and staff not being vaccinated. At this time, opening the schools using social distancing, masking wearing, hand washing along with many other safety protocols in the schools is acceptable measures and others schools have successfully done so. He also expressed that the seniors have missed out a great deal and it is very important for them to not only have a prom this year but to also be able to bring a prom date.

Mr. Ponticelli expressed the importance of the schools opening in full, prior to the recommended DESE date, along with expressing other businesses and schools have opened and many of them have not been vaccinated.

Ms. Breen expressed delaying the opening of school for the elementary level children to April 5th would be very close to April vacation and stated her personal concerns for the elementary children to be back sooner for needing normalcy in their lives. Ms. Breen shared the understanding of concerns with in the district about there being risks opening prior to all being vaccinated however, there comes a time we need to move forward.

Ms. Hubbard listened to Mr. Meagher's proposed plan on opening the West Boylston Public Schools and after thoughtful consideration, given all the concerns with vaccination and transitions back to full in person learning, the schools may need to consider opening at two different times. This would bring the Elementary Students back in

March and the High School Students back in April allowing for more to be vaccinated and perhaps an easier transition.

Ms. Quirk expressed not only as a School Committee member but, also as a parent of a senior at the West Boylston Middle/High School that she shared the mutual feelings that the students have missed out on a great deal this year. It would be a grand gesture to grant the senior class a prom not on the school grounds. Ms. Quirk also agreed that opening the schools with a phased in approach would also be a safe measure for the students, teachers and community.

12. Adjournment

Ms. Breen moved, seconded by Ms. Hubbard to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m.

VOTE: 5-0-0

Respectfully submitted,

Anita Pratt
Recording Secretary