

Board of Education

Ellington, Connecticut

March 25, 2020

A virtual regular meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, March 25, 2020.

Present were: Mr. Blanchette and Young; Ms. Dzen, Picard-Wambolt, Nord, Socha, Kupferschmid, Underwood, and Mullin; Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools and Ms. Jaimee DePiano, Student Representative.

Also present were Mr. John Collins, Director of Technology; Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Construction and Instruction; Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations; Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services and Ms. Jennifer Brown, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent/Human Resources Coordinator.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Ms. Dzen, Vice-Chairperson.

CITIZENS AND STAFF FORUM

No one addressed the Board.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Dzen asked if anyone wished to remove any item from the Consent Agenda. Consent Agenda items one through ten were adopted.

1. Approval of the minutes from the February 11, 2020 Special Meeting.
2. Approval of the minutes from the February 19, 2020 Special Meeting.
3. Approval of the minutes from the February 26, 2020 Regular Meeting.
4. Approval of the minutes from the March 11, 2020 Special Meeting.
5. Approval of the minutes from the March 18, 2020 Special Meeting.

6. Approval of the employment of William Carroll as a Long Term Substitute In-School Suspension Supervisor at Ellington High School, effective March 6, 2020.
7. Approval of the employment of Sara Herget as a part-time Food Service Worker at Ellington High School, effective March 5, 2020.
8. Approval of the employment of Heather Sofianos as a part-time Special Education Aide at Windermere School, effective March 9, 2020.
9. Approval of the employment of Christian Ayala as a full-time Special Education Aide at Ellington Middle School, effective March 9, 2020.
10. Acceptance of the resignation of Aylin Barrera as a part-time Special Education Aide at Crystal Lake School, effective March 28, 2020.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Special Reports

Update - Distance Learning/COVID-19 Response

Dr. Nicol thanked his administrative team for their work during this time. He invited each administrator to provide a brief update for their respective departments and/or provide opportunities for Board Members to ask questions.

Mr. Hendrickson opened with the updates made to the website. His team has created district learning pages for parents, students and staff. The teacher toolkit page has personalized video tutorials for Ellington teachers, made by Ellington staff. This page has also been a resource for other districts.

Upcoming steps for Curriculum and Instruction include developing and implementing parent, teacher and student surveys as well as conducting PDEC meetings virtually. The survey results will be shared with the Board at upcoming meetings.

Questions regarding enrichment opportunities for students were raised, Mr. Hendrickson stated that they are looking to utilize the stipend positions for enrichment offerings at the High School and Middle School level where those positions are currently

available. There will also be opportunities to look at an enrichment structure K-12 as well.

Mr. Collins provided an update for the Technology Department. To date, over 800 devices have been given out to families using a drive-thru system. His team has also been working very hard setting up the district to work remotely and ensuring all staff have what they need including devices and VPN, as well as setting up distance learning.

Next steps for his team include building out web supports and returning to normal operations and focusing again on Infinite Campus implementation.

Ms. Socha commended John and his team for their hard work. She was able to pick up Chromebooks at Windermere and was impressed at what a positive and easy experience it was.

Dr. LaPorte reported that her team started off helping teachers feel comfortable with the new models and ensuring that compliance and IEPs continue during distance learning. Special Education Aides have been given structured daily sheets to help support families with special needs students.

Next steps include ensuring that all IEPs goals and objectives are being met while building out supports for students and families that have a need for it.

Mr. Greenleaf provided an update for the Finance and Operations departments. He had the chance to speak to a union representative that supports several of our unions, he reported that Ellington is one of the top districts in supporting staff and ensuring that they have work.

The business office has been working very hard, they were able to process payroll without difficulties, some had to come into the office to ensure payroll went smoothly. We still have the July 1st deadline for Infinite Visions and there are more training sessions coming up over the next few weeks. Any purchase orders that were submitted prior to distance learning that were for stocking up classroom supplies have been put on hold. Only purchase orders that pertain to distance learning will be approved as it is important to monitor expenses right now since we do not know how long this will last.

Food service has been up and running since the first day. Grab and go meals have increased and we expect that to grow as the program does not support just students but anyone in Ellington that is in need of a meal.

Van drivers are now supporting mail operations and thinking long-term with other ways they can help support as distance learning continues.

Ms. Dzen asked if we could set up a drive-thru for dropping off donations for the food bank at each school. Mr. Greenleaf stated that there is a bin centrally located outside of central office for donations to be dropped off and they will send another communication out as a reminder. They are also looking at a system for taking monetary donations.

Mr. Blanchette asked that we ensure our Hartford resident students are receiving meals. Mr. Greenleaf stated that Hartford Public Schools is set up to provide anyone in Hartford with meals and our students can access that, we will message out the details to our families. The team also brought bags of groceries to Hartford families during Chromebook distribution and some families did take those.

Dr. Nicol thanked the Board of Education for being approachable and easy to collaborate with on labor issues, that is not always the case in every district and he appreciates how supportive they have been to ensure that pay wasn't disrupted and the willingness to work through challenges. The Board's support is felt throughout the district, at all levels. We are trying to project what distance learning will look like down the road, it is an unknown, but with patience, flexibility and open lines of communication we will ensure we make decisions that are in the best interest of families.

Regular Committee Reports

Communications

Committee Chair Mullin reported that there will be another video coming out with Dr. LaPorte and hopefully Mr. Collins and Mr. Greenleaf down the road as well. The next video will be focused on social isolation and services available to those who may need it.

Curriculum

Committee Chair Young thanked the team for their work and would like to see that we remain as consistent as possible while still remaining flexible when needed.

Finance

Committee Chair Nord reported there was no meeting but has been in frequent communication with Mr. Greenleaf. A meeting will be scheduled for next month.

Operations

Committee Chair Socha stated that she will be connecting with Mr. Greenleaf to send out communications on Windermere and that anyone on the committee can contact her for their input or we can set up a committee meeting.

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ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent's Reports

Dr. Nicol stated that this agenda is very different than our normal agenda as we are adjusting to recent events. We hope that the April meeting will have typical presentations including Center School's presentation on their Problem of Practice.

Dr. Nicol will continue to work closely with the town on new executive orders and the Windermere referendum.

Mr. Blanchette inquired into the SAT, asking if it has been canceled and if a makeup date has been scheduled. Mr. Hendrickson stated that the SAT school day has been canceled and the state will be working with the College Board on helping students that rely on that test.

Directors' Reports

Monthly Financial Report

Mr. Greenleaf provided the most up to date budget report. The financials look basically the same as last month's report. They are monitoring the Covid situation and there is more pressure for savings than spending at this point, but the situation is being monitored closely.

BOARD LIAISON REPORT

Student Liaison

Ms. DelPiano reported that most events scheduled to take place in March have been canceled. She stated that she is worried for seniors and what it would look like for them if the rest of the year was canceled. Distance learning is going well and students are able to work with teachers easily. Teachers at the high school are offering office hours and that is helpful.

Mr. Blanchette asked if students are upset about not having their senior prom. Ms. DelPiano said they are and it is very hard. She personally reflected on the possibility of

not playing lacrosse for the last time and the students who will not have their last band or chorus concert.

Dr. Nicol stated that this is a hard time for the seniors right now and he encouraged students to think creatively on alternatives and submit your ideas to teachers and

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Mr. Guidry. If we can figure out a way to support them, we will. Ms. Dzen echoed those sentiments on the Board's behalf.

Ellington Middle School

Ms. Dzen reported that things are running smoothly. Some parents were wanting access to school for items that kids left behind, they will work on a process for that.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

There were no action items on the agenda.

CORRESPONDENCE/ROUNDTABLE

Each board member took a turn thanking the administration for their work during this time.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt

2nd. M. Underwood

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Picard-Wambolt

Secretary