

Board of Education

Ellington, Connecticut

October 21, 2020

A regular meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at the Library Media Center at Ellington High School, 37 Maple Street, Ellington, CT.

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

Administration present were: Mr. John Collins, Director of Technology; Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations; and Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services.

Also in attendance: Ms. Jennifer Brown, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent/Human Resources Coordinator; Ayushman Choudury, Appointed Board of Education Student Representative.

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Mr. Purcaro, Chairperson.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Raymond Close - Member of the Ellington Volunteer Ambulance Corps

Dr. Scott Nicol recognized Mr. Close for all of his years of volunteering at the Rescue Post and Ellington Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Thanked for his service with Ellington youth and thanked him with a small token from the Board of Education.

CITIZENS AND STAFF FORUM

NONE

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Purcaro asked if anyone wished to remove any item from the Consent Agenda. Consent Agenda items one through three were adopted.

1. Approval of the minutes from the September 23, 2020 Regular Meeting.
2. Approval of the employment of Lauren Arpino as a long-term substitute teacher at Ellington High School, effective September 28, 2020.
3. Approval of the employment of Rachel Albert as a part-time Kindergarten Aide at Center School, effective October 5, 2020.

A motion was made to adopt the consent agenda as presented.

1st. J. Dzen 2nd. M. Kupferschmid

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Special Reports

Presentation & Continued Discussion on Contact Tracing Processes

Mr. Brian Greenleaf presented with Patrice Sulik, Representative of the North Central Health District, Department of Public Health.

Dr. Nicol commended Mr. Greenleaf for his continued support of EPS staff and nurses with contact tracing and the established parameters. Dr. Nicol also commended Ms. Sulik with the work she has done in supporting local school districts and providing current information for districts regarding COVID-19.

Mr. Greenleaf began a presentation of the mitigation strategies that have been working within the district. Mr. Greenleaf revered the current strategies and introduced the risk assessment and contact tracing of what to do once an individual may become sick. Mr. Greenlead stated that the overall percentage of Tolland Country has remained low and the other mitigation strategies the district is using are working. Ms. Sulik added that the current results were encouraging, with what strategies not only adults have been using but also children which demonstrates how resilient children are and how children

have adapted to the changes. Not to say that the number of cases are zero, but the transmission of cases is not within the school setting, but rather transmission is higher with out of school situations, gatherings and/or sports. Closing schools should be done thoughtfully, not reactively, not politically, and information should be provided so a complete decision can be made.

Mr. Greenleaf continued by again thanking Ms. Sulik but also recognizing our EPS nurses: Stephanie Sprague, Andrea Manigas, Kelly Hany, Lynn Seypura, Danielle Aldrich, and Christy Ballasy.

Mr. Greenleaf presented the districts' steps which are implemented when an individual may become sick:

1. Case Identification (families and staff providing information, daily meetings nurses and administration, and contact with NCDHD; all symptoms are taken seriously)
2. Contact Tracing (with positive test result, first degree of separation, look for close contacts (within six feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes of more) within the infectious period, participate in extracurricular activities, spend time with anyone outside of school)
3. Risk Assessment (who was in contact and was transmission from coughing, sports, not wearing a mask)
4. Isolate & Quarantine (to isolate: if individual has a positive test result, must isolate for ten days of symptom onset or test result; to quarantine: had close contact with individual and must quarantine for fourteen days)

Mr. Greenleaf discussed current COVID cases in the district context. Four possible exposure to others in school, three cases without school exposure, but several family members who may have tested positive and for that family members had to be quarantined. For each positive case, the quarantine process varies based on who may have been in close contact with the individual, and what the results are from contact tracing. Any information will be provided to the community, will continue to have open and transparent communication with students, staff and community members, monitor state and local data, continuous improvement of mitigation efforts, and educate the community to remain vigilant.

Mr. Purcaro thanked Mr. Greenleaf for the thorough presentation. Mr. Purcaro thanked Ms. Sulik for her work, being available 24/7, 365 days and being, on the record, the best local public health director in the state of Connecticut and thanked her for what she has

done for Ellington Public School system. Mr Purcaro opened dialogue for any questions the board may have.

Ms. Nord inquired on what the contact tracing procedure is for students who ride the bus. Mr. Greenleaf stated that students are assigned seats and the bus drivers report any discrepancies. Ms. Nord asked Ms. Sulik if she had contact with Hartford Health director and Ms. Sulik replied yes that there is constant communication with other districts within the state but also into Massachusetts as well.

Ms. Picard-Wambolt questioned the time period if an individual has tested positive yet is asymptomatic, since the exposure period is determined from onset of symptoms. Ms. Sulik explained the use of a template that can be used to determine a percentage of the exposures, acknowledging that the template is not perfect. There could be individuals who may test positive for COVID over a period of time but are no longer infectious. The information used is generalized and depends also on other factors such as an individual going to the salon, a restaurant, to the store that could increase the chances of exposure. Ms. Sulik stated with confidence that the testing data received by the district, the level of concern would be addressed based on the number of cases.

Ms. Underwood thanked both Dr. Nicol and Mr. Greenleaf for providing current data after a discussion last week. Ms. Underwood asked Ms Sulik why the rate used is for Tolland County and not just for the town of Ellington. Ms Sulik replied that the state of Connecticut developed guidelines from the state's epidemiologist that said that they are unable to draw in small numbers of data and give statistically accurate data bases on a small inference of numbers. Ellington having a smaller town population, or smaller denominator, the less meaningful the numerator becomes. However, any new data which has been released may fluctuate because the data and how it is obtained is continually evolving. The state has now released statistics based on a fourteen day average versus the previous seven day average. Ms Sulik explained that the state will continue to be cautious about the conclusions drawn based on percentages and rolling averages.

Mr. Purcaro addressed the nurses to indicate if their needs were being met and if they needed any supplies. All nurses indicate that they are low on supplies and need a replenishment as soon as possible. The nurses collectively mentioned the need of substitutes for their positions but also any help if possible. The task of contact tracing is very extensive and requires much time to complete. Ms. Nord questioned if the need is in the tracing process. One nurse felt that a medical professional should be helping with the contact tracing based on HIPAA laws and confidentiality. Ms. Sprague mentioned the need of having a substitute with the impending cold and flu season approaching.

Ms. Nord inquired about the time frame of when the nurses are contacted and when individuals are notified. Nurses stated that they are notified 24/7 so they have the information to begin notifications.

Dr. Nicol explained strategies may need to be adjusted based on a specific positive result.

Presentation & Continued Discussion of District Improvement Plan 2020 - 2021

Mr. Hendrickson explained the feedback received from staff in which 159 individuals participated in the survey. Ms. Picard-Wambolt stated in speaking with staff that the half day Wednesdays are so very important for planning and catching up. Ms. Picard-Wambolt supports having the half day Wednesday for as long as it is required that we offer full distance learning in addition to in-person, Ms. Nord also agreed that the half day is very important for the teachers as well as the students. Ms. Socha also agreed the importance of half days on Wednesdays.

Ms. Underwood asked Mr. Hendrickson for the continuation of half days proposed a motion on a monthly basis. Ms. Socha pointed out that in communication with parents that perhaps continue half day Wednesday for the remainder of the year. Mr. Purcaro suggested that this topic should be discussed at another workshop meeting in order to make a final decision on the half day Wednesday.

Dr. Nicol explained the communication had been made to students and families that half day Wednesdays would continue into November. Dr. Nicol feels that the communication continues to have discussions about half day Wednesdays and communication should be cautious and methodical so information released is accurate for families and that families would not be surprised with any unanticipated changes. Ms. Socha questioned Dr. Nicol of what the harm would be in committing to half day Wednesdays for the remainder of the year. Dr. Nicol responded that timing and the process required to make decisions understood by the community.

Mr. Hendrickson continued by stating in a conversation with Dr. Young and his curriculum theme presentation would discuss the importance of half day Wednesdays and the initiatives that support that. The importance is clearly communicated to both families and the community. Although received positive feedback, there also has been some opposing feedback which will also be addressed. Dr. Young stated that a meeting on Tuesday October 27, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. in the Ellington High School Media Center will discuss this topic in more detail, in addition to the math curriculum at the middle school.

Regular Board Committee Reports

Communications

None. Meeting scheduled Tuesday, November 10, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. in addition to a video of the behind the scenes at the BOE with the school nurses.

Operations

None

Curriculum

Dr. Young reiterated a meeting to be held on Tuesday, October 27, 2020 at 5:00 pm to discuss previous comments made by both himself and Mr. Hendrickson.

Finance

Ms. Nord began by discussing the active budget summary and learning the new Infinite Visions accounting system. Mr. Greenleaf answered a question proposed by Ms. Nord about having access to more detail for more analysis in the summary of the budget. Mr. Greenleaf stated that the level of detail will be available for the Board to review for the budget in Infinite Visions.

Ms Nord discussed a balance that was carried over from last year for the Open Choice Program of \$286,554, bringing the balance of \$862,214. From The Cares Act, EPS received \$51,000 and \$140,000 for a coronavirus relief fund which was a state grant as opposed to the federal grant, a portion of the \$40,000 for transportation was reallocated for Covid cleaning supplies and PPE. Discussed the HVAC system throughout the schools that most likely cleaning and service to the systems would increase based on more use. Mr. Greenleaf stated that it will be monitored throughout the year and will be addressed if needed. Ms. Nord continued with the possibility of testing the air quality in schools, the discussion of the calendar being a bit different as there is more faculty involvement in the planning of the budget. Mr. Greenleaf stated that a workshop had been added in December, budget worksheets had been sent out to principals today which would include formal ways staff can participate in the budget process and that will align with the superintendent's presentation of the budget in January. Mr. Greenleaf confirmed that a follow up with the Finance Committee is required in order to formalize it for the board to vote.

Ms. Nord continued to state that Brian drafted an ordinance presented to the Board of Selectmen and financial representatives from the Finance Board and were able to give back to the town of Ellington \$909,000, placing \$233,000 into a special account while research is made to become self insured. The process would be to start with an ordinance committee which has to approve the ordinance and then to the Board of Selectmen for approval and then to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Greenleaf confirmed that the ordinance did pass through the Ordinance Committee and through the town and would have to go through a town meeting. Although presented to the committee the \$223,000 to be moved to the medical reserve account which was received positively with that concept.

Policy

None. Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2020, at 5:15 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Nicol stated that Ms. Kupferschmid, Dr. Young, and himself attended the annual EDUInnovate annual meeting at the home of John Moser in which Mr. Moser decided to show his appreciation for all the staff of Ellington Public Schools and by EDUInnovate to provide a \$25 gift card to Luann's Bakery.

Dr. Nicol also attended an Ellington Equality event in which EHS students Angelina Miller and Ayushman Choudury were part of a panel with a guest speaker from CCSU discussing bipartisan voter education. He commended Ayushman for his participation in various events in town.

Dr. Nicol mentioned the Ad Hoc Diversity Committee which met on the first Wednesday of each month, led by Melissa Haberan who is an administrator, resident and parent in Ellington Schools and she is the appointed school liaison in that committee. Her role is to ensure that the school district is supporting the town's work in this area.

With Veteran's Day this year and the year's changes, Dr. Nicol proposed students K-8 would make a video to honor the veterans. For the high school, in working with Mr. Guidry, principal of EHS, the students would like to do an in person event, scaled down appropriately. May take place in the front parking lot six feet apart or veterans stay in

vehicles on Wednesday, November 11, 2020, with the rain date of Friday, November 13, 2020.

Halloween for middle school and high school students will continue with spirit week within the guidelines. Elementary students in each school will do different activities, Windermere K-1 modified outdoor parade, Crystal Lake decided on wearing fall colors and crazy hair. Center School will do an outdoor parade at Arbor Park with grades and cohorts assigned a specified time, with only one parent or guardian allowed to watch.

Book fairs will be held virtually in schools this year.

Ms. Socha wanted to clarify that all Silver students were included in all the communications from in-person and distance learning students.

Ayushman Choudury mentioned that the high school receives a daily bulletin of daily announcements via email.

Directors' Reports

Monthly Financial Report - Mr. Greenleaf

Mr Greenleaf presented a memo to members of the Board. Object 210 large negative, which is being worked out with the new system.

BOARD LIAISON REPORT

Mr. Choudury stated how exciting it was to participate in the panel discussion and felt the keynote speaker, a political science professor from CCSU was amazing. Mr. Choudury is also on the Ad Hoc Diversity committee as student representative. Also discussed his involvement in math improvements for grades 7-12 with Mr. Hendrickson and Dr. Young. SAT classes to be possibly instructed by students as well as teachers. He is also a member of the state student advisory council for education and had first meeting about best practices of distance learning and also building a school community.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Dzen requested a list of dates for all the different committees.

Ms. Picard-Wambolt wanted to continue the conversation about substitutes for nurses and extra help needed for contact tracing.

Mr. Greenleaf had a conversation with Dr. Laporte and developed leads for a floating substitute for the nurses.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Move that the Board of Education accept, with regret and best wishes, the retirement request of Victor Tosado, custodian at Ellington Middle School, effective November 1, 2020.

1st. M. Young

2nd. J. Dzen

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed

2. Move that the Board of Education accept, with regret and best wishes, the retirement request of Donald Healey, custodian at Ellington Middle School, effective October 30, 2020.

1st. M. Kupferschmid

2nd. J. Dzen

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

A motion was made to enter into Executive Session to discuss contract negotiations and invite Dr. Nicol, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations into the session.

1st. J. Dzen

2nd. M. Kupferschmid

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

The Board entered into Executive Session at 7:14 p.m.

The Board exited Executive Session at 8:23 p.m.

A motion was made that the Board of Education ratify the contract between the Ellington Van Drivers, Local 1303-268 of Council 4 AFSCME, AFL-CIO, and the Ellington Board of Education for the period of July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2024, as negotiated.

1st. J. Dzen

2nd. M. Kupferschmid

Vote: Unanimous. The motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE/ROUNDTABLE

None

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 pm

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt 2nd. M. Young

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Picard-Wambolt
Secretary