

Regular Session Meetings

October 28, 2020

A meeting of the Swampscott School Committee was held in virtually in Swampscott, MA commencing at 7:00 p.m. with the following members present: Ms. Amy OConnor, SC Chair, Ms. Suzanne Wright, Ms. Carin Marshall, Mr. Delano, Mr. John Giantis, School Committee members. Also, Present: Pamela Angelakis, Superintendent of Schools, Jean Bacon, Director of Teaching & Learning, Martha Sybert, Business Administrator, and Martha Raymond, Asst. Superintendent of Student Services. Myra Diaz, Tabitha Randell, Student reps were absent.

The School Committee was meeting in a virtual setting, fully remote via teleconferencing, practicing social distancing, and in accordance with the Governor's suspension of certain open meeting laws. The meeting was being recorded and broadcast live on the local cable station.

Public Forum: NA

Community Announcements:

Ms. Wright said she is happy to see kids going in and out of school. She noted that it felt closer to normal.

Mr. Giantis said it is commendable that the MS students are participating in their own community safety.

Mr. Delano spoke about traveling safely now that kids are back in school.

Ms. Marshall said it was fantastic that students are back. She had one student start Hybrid on Monday and one goes Thursday.

Ms. OConnor mentioned that there was no Public Comment as a Google doc went out last week to solicit questions. She said that there were over fifty questions which will be answered this evening. Ms. OConnor said that the SC is talking to parents throughout the district and all feedback is being passed along. She spoke about the Thursday political rallies which are loud, traumatic, and disruptive to the learning environment. She met with Tri-chair, the head of selectman, and the town manager. She is confident that this is being looked into and some changes will be made to protect kids.

Superintendent's Report: Ms. Angelakis' report will be posted on the Superintendent's Page under the Swampscott Public School's web page.

Ms. Angelakis said how happy she is to see teachers and students back in school. She stated that the 2nd round of staff COVID screening was completed.

She mentioned that a notice went home for parent Seesaw training (K-2) tomorrow evening. Ms. Angelakis said it is being recorded and will be available on the SPS family help web page.

Ms. Angelakis has been invited as a Superintendent of a METCO district to be part of the Racial Equity Working Group. She read the goals of the committee.

Ms. Angelakis discussed snow days which DESE has left as a local decision. She discussed that many have suggested instead of snow days to have Remote days. She is hesitant to take away more traditions such as a snow day. She said it is also dependent on weather conditions. Ms. Angelakis plans to call it on a case by case basis.

Ms. Marshall asked if it was fair to say we can call it either way so if we have already had too many snow days then we can call for a Remote day. Ms. Angelakis said we do not need to make a decision one way or another and may call storm by storm.

Ms. Angelakis discussed the Commissioner's call. She discussed that the DESE guidance is no longer to go to Remote learning when a community is three weeks in the red. The guidance is changing to look at where the transmission is occurring, contact tracing, and clusters in the community.

Ms. OConnor asked if it was that as long as it is not happening in school. Ms. Angelakis stated that we are bound to have numbers in the school but we need to look at clusters, data, and contact tracing. Ms. Marshall said it could be community spread and not related to the school (i.e. nursing home).

Ms. Angelakis said the Commissioner and the Board of Education are pressuring for live Zoom and possibly making it a regulation. She has prepared the union in case it comes down as a mandate/regulation.

Mr. Giantis asked about the timeline. Ms. Angelakis said it may be coming soon but no timeframe.

Ms. Angelakis said some schools were looking at 2 weeks of Remote learning after Thanksgiving. The Commissioner has given the directive that this should not be done and or it may result in an audit.

Ms. OConnor asked why we would wait for a mandate by the Commissioner on live Zoom. Ms. Angelakis said we are not waiting and currently running some live Zoom.

The Commissioner said the 2-1-2 Hybrid is not working due to the amount of asynchronous learning in this model. Ms. Angelakis said they have been talking about moving to a 3-2 model.

The CDC guidance regarding close contact is changing to 15 minutes cumulative in a 24 hour period. Ms. Angelakis mentioned the importance of maintaining the 6 feet social distance.

Ms. Angelakis spoke about lacking communication from some of the schools. She explained the decision making and communication process. Mr. Delano stated that parents were on point with the communication issues. Ms. Angelakis said the message has been given.

Community Q&A: These will be created into a FAQ and posted. The questions were grouped into categories.

Health & safety: Ms. Mulcahy spoke about face mask breaks and face mask policy, the Flu shot mandate which is new this year, 3 feet versus 6 feet apart, negative test results and still staying at home for 10 days, how decisions will be made on Hybrid to Remote, protocols when a student or teacher in a classroom has COVID like symptoms, the process if someone has COVID, and transition the return of student's after breaks and quarantines.

Ms. OConnor mentioned staying with the 6-foot difference in the classroom is fewer students which helps the HVAC work properly. Ms. Angelakis stated that the LBA occupancy rates will be revisited and that more bodies challenge the HVAC.

Ms. Wright asked how many districts were using the 3-foot distance. Ms. Angelakis said one colleague is facing challenges with 3-feet. Ms. OConnor said it would be helpful to know how many districts are using the 3-feet distancing. Ms. Mulcahy said that with the new CDC close contact rules that all would be sent home with the 3-feet distancing. She stated that it is safer to be at 6-feet.

Ms. Wright noted we are using CDC guidelines not DESE. She stated that the new CDC close contact rule would be an issue with 3 feet. She is more comfortable with 6 feet.

Mr. Delano asked about the negative test results and 10-days out of school. He asked for clarification that if someone has an alternative diagnosis from a doctor (i.e. allergies) that the student will be able to come back to school. Ms. Mulcahy said that they could return in that case and the nurses have been notified.

Ms. OConnor asked what happens when someone is positive or symptomatic in a child's class and their child tests negative. Ms. Mulcahy spoke about being asymptomatic, negative testing, and contact tracing (MAVEN-contact tracing DB).

Ms. Marshall asked about an example of someone sipping water than starting to cough. She said some symptoms are common with COVID but not everything is COVID. Ms. Mulcahy spoke about the protocols sent out with symptoms. Ms. Mulcahy stated if there are two or more symptoms on the COVID list then out the door.

Ms. OConnor asked if they would get a call if there was a positive case in their child's class. Ms. Mulcahy said they would be notified by email if possible COVID like symptoms in the room. Then if it is determined a person is positive and you are a close contact to that person you will receive an email and be contacted by DPH.

Mr. Delano asked about emails versus a phone call. He stated it may be easier for the parent to talk to a live body. Ms. Mulcahy stated that they would be personally contacted by DPH.

Ms. Marshall asked about self-certification and if the MA DPH has adopted the new CDC close contact rule. Ms. Mulchay said it has been or will be adopted.

Community Q&A continued:

Teaching & Learning: Ms. Angelakis spoke about the elementary and MS half days versus 2 full days per week, spaces, and why students do not eat in the classroom. She spoke about supporting Remote Learners Social-Emotional well-being.

Ms. OConnor asked if we could investigate the cost to get proctors to cover lunches. Ms. Marshall said that we have negotiated with teachers in the past. She suggested it was worth a conversation to see if they would do lunch in the classroom.

Ms. OConnor asked about any MS activities or clubs. Ms. Angelakis responded that the HS is just finalizing clubs and activities and the next step would be the MS.

Dr. Bacon discussed the steps being taken to increase the level of synchronous learning, why we are not staying fully Remote, time on learning and DESE requirements, guidance as to how teachers present asynchronous material, in-person schedules impacted by holidays, and family and student engagement.

Ms. OConnor asked about older levels and asynchronous fully remote learners utilizing online schools. Dr. Bacon noted that she attended a DESE workshop in August. There were two vendors that offer on-line schools. She stated that an on-line school could have 100 students to a teacher. The leadership team did not feel the schools represented the kind of education wanted in our community.

Mr. Delano stated that we need to adjust on the fly. He spoke about the Wednesday schedules and that we can do better. Mr. Delano suggested taking a look at the online schools again as something may have changed. Dr. Bacon agreed that we can do better and they are working on the Wednesday remote schedule. She said the focus was getting students back in the buildings and it has only been two days. Mr. Delano strongly urged them to move quicker than we are now.

Ms. Wright stated that the elementary levels have the hardest time managing Remote learning. She said she looked at the online learning schools and the student-teacher ratio. She agreed that they do not represent the type of education that we expect in SPS.

Community Q&A continued:

Special Education: Ms. Raymond talked about students on IEPs, access to 4-5 days of in-person instruction of Grid C Special Education services, and MS block moving to 45 minutes.

Mr. Delano expressed concern regarding kids feeling anxiety which may lead to bad decisions. He stated that we need to have this on our radar. He asked about the students with a failing grade and disengaged students. Ms. Angelakis stated that there would be a presentation at the next meeting. She will ask the HS team to provide regular updates.

Ms. OConnor asked if disengaged kids were in the earlier cohorts. Dr. Bacon stated that they were not as the first priority was students with disability services that we were legally obligated to provide.

Mr. Delano asked how many Metco students were attending school. Ms. Angelakis stated that there are seventeen out of fifty-four students riding the buses. Ms. Wright asked if there was somewhere they could go for Remote learning. Ms. Sybert said Ms. Ogunbona reduced the number of stops so there is less time on the bus. The HS has a full day, and the MS and elementary students have a spot at the MS they can go do Zoom classes. Ms. OConnor mentioned the importance of kids having a local family here if needed.

Chair: Ms. OConnor gave an update at the beginning of the meeting.

Sub Committee:

SBC Meeting Updates: Ms. Wright said they had a quick meeting. The final draft deliverable is due on November 6th. The PSR (preferred schematic report) submission explains the preferred option, all the work that went into the decision, and how education in the district looks like going forward. She stated that there would be community workshops at the beginning of the year.

Ms. OConnor mentioned the email to save the date 12/16 for a MASC training session.

Mr. Delano asked about families without the internet. Ms. Sybert responded that the district purchased hotspots and working with families.

Consent Agenda: Ms. OConnor read the purpose of the consent agenda and the items on the agenda.

- A. Policy Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes-October 13, 2020
- B. Regular Session Minutes-October 14, 2020
- C. Regular Session Minutes-October 19, 2020
- D. Warrant # 20-16

Mr. Giantis noted that he had reached out but was unable to view W20-16.

Motion: It was moved by Ms. Wright to accept the consent agenda without W20-16 & seconded by Mr. Delano

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 5 to 0 via roll call vote

Motion: It was moved by Ms. Wright to accept W20-16 & seconded by Ms. Marshall.

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 4 to 0 via roll call vote. Mr. Giantis abstained from the vote.

Next meeting to be held on November 4, 2020

Adjournment

Motion: At 9:00 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Delano to accept the motion to adjourn & seconded by Ms. Wright.

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 5 to 0 via roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,



Pamela R.H. Angelakis, M.A., M.Ed.

Date: November 5, 2020

Superintendent of Schools

/dmm

Supporting documentation:

 School Committee - Family Questions - 10_28_20.pdf 

 October 14, 2020 School Committee Final Minutes.docx 

 October 19, 2020 Regular Session Meeting Minutes Final 

 October 13, 2020 Policy Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.docx 
