

# Swampscott School Committee

## Regular Session Meetings

January 13, 2021

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

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.

### **Community Announcements:**

Ms. Wright thanked the Learning Center at the HS. She commented on how much she liked their Christmas cards.

Ms. Randall felt that there should be class discussions regarding the events happening in the country versus it being at the discretion of teachers. Ms. Diaz stated that it would be good to discuss opinions in a healthy way versus sweeping them under the rug.

Ms. OConnor mentioned her disappointment regarding events that impacted the return to in-person learning. She has heard stories from the health department about parents sending sick kids to school. She stated it was disrespectful to the community and teachers.

Ms. OConnor made a statement about the open letter that was sent to SC. She stated that they want as much in-person as possible. Ms. OConnor said they respect the effort that parents put into the letter. She said the Leadership team and staff work tirelessly to give students the best education under the circumstances. Ms. OConnor said they are all aware of the physical and emotional toll on everyone. They are resolved to do right by our students.

**Superintendent's Report:** Ms. Angelakis's report will be posted on the Superintendent's Page under the SPS web page.

### **Superintendent Report:**

Mr. Kasper provided an update on the Stanley ventilation project. The mechanical engineer and architect have completed the design. The Invitation to Bid went out today. Mr. Kasper is expecting an April timeframe for moving back into Stanley. Ms. Angelakis thanked Ms. Sybert and Mr. Kasper. Mr. Delano asked about costs. The bid is posted on the Central register (\$120,000). The plan is to pay with internal funds.

Ms. Mulcahy spoke about DESE COVID pool testing. The state is covering the cost for the first 6 weeks. She spoke about the data, pros, and cons of pool testing. Ms. Mulcahy said Watertown spends about \$20-30,000 per week on testing.

Mr. Delano asked about the Genco labs and partnering with Salem. Ms. Mulcahy said there is a push to use BioNex Solutions.

Ms. OConnor asked about students doing a daily attestation. Ms. Angelakis said that we will be exploring options. It is important parents remind students that masks are required on school grounds. Ms. OConnor said it is disrespectful to teachers not to wear masks.

Ms. Wright asked about having kids that come to school sick taking a Rapid test. Ms. Mulcahy will look into opportunities.

Ms. Angelakis gave a basketball and hockey sports update. As a reminder, there will be no spectators at events.

Ms. Angelakis gave a presentation on Structured Learning Time (SLT). She stated that the SLT regulation was coming about because of the significant increase in mental health cases and hospitalizations. On December 11th we were notified that our district did not meet the new requirement. We have until January 19th to make adjustments. Ms. Angelakis discussed the shift in direction of the Phase V committee to meet the anticipated SLT.

Ms. Angelakis spoke about the open letter from parents. She stated that the administrators, faculty, and staff share parents' desire to increase synchronous and more in-person instruction for our elementary learners. She spoke about her own personal experience as a parent. She can relate and empathize with parents. She stated that pre-pandemic elementary live instruction time was less than MS/HS.

Ms. Angelakis spoke about the DESE STL data, differences in districts, lack of DESE guidance, the October 26th Hybrid plan, and things that have changed since then that have allowed us to increase “live” instruction for our January 19th model.

Ms. Angelakis stated that they hired a district-wide Grade 1 Remote teacher. There will be an expanded summer learning program to address gaps/learning loss. She stated that the option of a lottery for space was guidance from DESE. Ms. Angelakis stated that we are committed to fulfilling the mission of the Swampscott Public Schools.

The presentation will be posted on the School website under the Superintendent’s page. There is a link in the presentation to parent questions/answers. Also, the parent survey email has the question/answer link.

Ms. OConnor asked about the lottery decisions. Dr. Bacon does not believe a lottery will be necessary. Ms. OConnor asked about the reference to DESE Homeschool and on-line learning. Ms. Angelakis explained the references.

Mr. Delano thanked the superintendent. He mentioned having the town council weigh-in on any MGL violation. Dr. Bacon said we are exceeding the state's requirements as of January 19th at all grade levels. Mr. Delano supports robust enrichment studies. Dr. Bacon spoke about the current enrichment programs to close gaps. Ms. Sybert said the programs are being funded by federal grants.

Mr. Giantis asked if funding was a concern with implementing the new plan (not at this time). Mr. Giantis asked if anyone could participate in the summer program. Ms. Angelakis said they are refining the requirements and criteria. Ms. Raymond said that staff is paid whether students are there or not. Mr. Giantis asked if the mental health stats in the presentation was state data (yes).

Ms. Wright asked if we were auditing HS class attendance. Mr. Kohut said fewer people are choosing the hybrid option this time. Ms. Wright mentioned moving smaller classes so that an elementary class could use the space. Ms. Raymond said that most classrooms have a capacity of 11 people. If there is space, they invite someone from Cohort A/B to attend additional days. Ms. Wright said it is important people know that they are already looking at every square inch of space.

Ms. Wright asked if teachers were being evaluated this year. Ms. Angelakis said that the teachers are being evaluated. Ms. Bucklin stated that the teachers are working harder than they ever have and how proud she is of her colleagues.

Ms. Marshall was glad to hear if there was a capacity that kids from other cohorts were invited to attend. She asked moving to 3 feet distancing if the CDC changed. Ms. OConnor said she was concerned about the teachers. Ms. Mulcahy talked about the risk.

Ms. Bucklin said that she tells her kids that the best part of her day is seeing them. She discussed the difficulty of staying 6 feet from their young students, SEL needs, making sure the kids feel safe and are learning. Ms. Bucklin stated that it is intensive non-stop for four hours.

Ms. Chronis said they are all dying to get back to their jobs. She said that we all want the same thing. Ms. OConnor asked if the teachers felt they had a voice. Ms. Chronis said they are always discussing and feel like they can go to building principals.

Mr. Reid said that they agree with Ms. Bucklin. He said he has been teaching for 25 years. They are working harder and more hours.

Ms. Huntley said it is important to note that not all time spent with the students is calculated into SLT. She said teachers are giving up their time to have lunch-bunch with students.

Mr. Delano asked about the METCO program. Ms. Ogunbona said that the pandemic has shed light on the inequities in communities of color.

**Director of Human Resources Introduction:** Ms. Angelakis stated that Mr. Ricardo Flores would be at the next meeting.

**Boston Education Activism Tour (B.E.A.T):** Ms. Ogunbona spoke about the leadership retreat on December 4th. They viewed the B.E.A.T.: Boston Education Activism Tour video created by eight high school students in the METCO program. The students conducted research to uncover the history of activism for educational equality in Boston. Ms. Ogunbona shared the video.

**2019-20 NEC Annual Report:** Ms. Angelakis requested the report be moved to the meeting on the 27th.

**Director of Finance:** Ms. Sybert spoke about the CARES funds which covered the majority of the COVID expenses. She discussed the revenue problems with the operating budget. There is a \$300,000 revenue loss from programs that did not happen (Pre-K tuition, profitable food services, & extended day). Ms. Sybert said the loss in revenue will be offset by expense reductions.

Ms. Sybert said as of January, FY21 is tracking \$100-\$200,000 over budget. She clarified that it doesn't mean they overspent the budget. She will look at tracking items that are not final (i.e., heating), 2nd half of the year CARES funding, OOD, and the use of Circuit Breaker funds. Ms. Sybert said they will meet the obligation not to exceed the budget. Ms. Sybert will be reviewing FY22 staffing with building principals over the next few days.

Ms. Marshall asked about the Committee of the Whole meeting. Mr. Delano said that he and Mr. Giantis will set the meeting dates.

Ms. Wright asked if the CARES act can be used for salary. Ms. Sybert said yes but with some restrictions.

**Chair:**

**Tri-chair Update (Capital Planning):** Ms. OConnor said that Tim Dorsey and Fincom have requested a timeline. Ms. OConnor will defer to Mr. Delano and Mr. Giantis to connect with Mr. Dorsey to ensure they have the budget information.

Ms. OConnor said there was a high-level discussion on the Nahant contract. The last contract increased significantly. They hope to make more progress. She thanked Ms. Sybert for her work. Ms. OConnor stated that it is a balance of what is good for both.

Mr. Delano said it was refreshing and great on many levels. He feels it is a partnership that works for Nahant and Swampscott.

**Chapter 70 Hold Harmless Aid - (vote requested):** Ms. OConnor read a statement on the Student Opportunity Act legislation including the proposal to eliminate the Hold Harmless provision that prevents the reduction of state aid from the amount of the previous year. She mentioned the negative impact and revenue loss if the provision is removed.

Ms. Wright asked if this was still a concern. Ms. Sybert has not seen anything about the Hold Harmless changing. Ms. OConnor said this will be the first read until they can do some research.

**Sub Committee:**

**SBC Updates:** Ms. Wright said they had a hiatus over the holidays. They will start to have meetings again, talk to neighbors about traffic concerns, and have a workshop.

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

A. Regular Session Minutes-December 9th, 2020

B. Warrant 21-27

**Motion:** It was moved by Mr. Delano to accept the consent agenda & seconded by Ms. Marshall.

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

**Public Comment:**

Erik Sneider, the parent of an elementary student spoke about his experience of parent involvement during remote learning. He discussed the elementary schedule and frustration.

Keiko Zoll, a Stanley parent thanked Ms. Angelakis for her presentation and the teachers. She spoke about the data around SLT and commitment to improvement.

*Next meeting to be held on January 27th, 2021*

**Adjournment**

**Motion:** At 10:00 p.m. It was moved by Mr. Delano to accept the motion to adjourn & seconded by Ms. Marshall

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

Respectfully submitted,



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

Superintendent of Schools



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Date: January 28, 2021



Supporting Documentation:

 Superintendent's Report to SC 1.13.21 (3).pdf 

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 January 13, 2021, School Committee Meeting 

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 Jan FINAL Letter to SPS, 01-11-2021.pdf 

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 December 9, 2020 Regular Session Meeting Minutes Final 

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 Boston Education Activism Tour.docx 

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 2019-20 NEC Annual Report.pdf 

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 \_Final Superintendent's Report to School Committee (5).pdf 