

Swampscott School Committee

Regular Session Meetings

March 10th, 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. 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. Myra Diaz and Tabitha Randell, Student Reps were present. Mr. Ted, School Committee was 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.

Community Announcements:

Ms. Randall spoke about the concerns (i.e., needed sleep, student health, mental break/breather) with pushing the HS start time back to 8:10 and Wednesdays becoming a full day.

Ms. OConnor read a statement about the past year. She spoke about bringing students back full time, reflection, losses, and finding the silver linings. Ms. OConnor stated that all the energy right now is around operating under the state mandate to bring students back full time. She said the Superintendent and her leadership team have done admiral work. She stated they are at a point where we need to allow the Superintendent and her team the space to do their job without intervention. Ms. OConnor requested people to follow the communication protocol processes and to avoid escalating each issue to the Superintendent. She said a lack of response doesn't correlate to being ignored. Ms. OConnor stressed that all logistics are being discussed within the experienced leadership team.

Ms. Angelakis said they hear everything even if they are unable to respond. She mentioned that the leadership team has many administrative assistants who send out emails on their behalf. They are looking to improve the process and create one email address.

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

Ms. Angelakis thanked the parent volunteers who organized to help make vaccination appointments and those that volunteered to help in the schools during In-Person learning.

Mr. Kasper said they made mechanical repairs to Unit Ventilators, Air Handlers, and Exhaust Systems. They undertook an ATC repair project to increase the ventilation in buildings. Except for the HS, there is an air purifier in every classroom.

He discussed the "Purple" Rooms (13-15 in district) which are underperforming in air quality. Updated LBA ventilation reports will be out by next week. Mr. Kasper provided an update on the Stanley HVAC project (on track for the end of March).

Mr. Kasper reviewed the building recommendations (i.e. small spaces may be utilized for small groups if there is an operable window and a purifier, multi-pronged approach of mechanical and natural ventilation, and air purification in spaces that are occupied at 3' social distancing). Ms. Angelakis stated that we are still not using small spaces that do not have windows.

Ms. Marshall thought Mr. Kasper's report was great and helpful. Ms. OConnor said it was very thorough. Ms. Wright is glad we are getting ahead of it.

Ms. Angelakis spoke about why they chose BinaxNOW over DESE pool testing. Ms. Mulcahy spoke about the test, nurse training, authorization forms, and Project Beacon reporting. She stressed that this isn't an excuse to send sick kids into school, and not a determination of whether they can stay in the building. All sick students will be sent home to follow the COVID protocols.

Ms. OConnor asked about the turnaround time. Ms. Mulcahy said the results take sixteen minutes. Ms. OConnor asked why a PCR follow-up test is needed. Ms. Mulcahy said the test was an added layer, not a clinical decision, and mentioned the limitations of Antigen testing. Ms. Angelakis said they will be able to start administering tests as of March 22nd.

Ms. Angelakis said she hears everything students are saying but that the time on learning state mandates are directing their plans. She mentioned the MS/HS schedule study will determine future scheduling plans.

Ms. Angelakis said that tents will be back up the week of March 29th. She mentioned purchases such as portable seating for indoor and outdoor use (elementary/MS), additional desks, desk shields for all elementary students, and picnic tables for each school.

Ms. Angelakis discussed the return of staff with medical accommodations. She stressed that the accommodations were their rights and law. Ms. OConnor asked about teachers on childcare leave. Ms. Angelakis said it is not available. HR is handling it case by case.

Ms. Angelakis spoke about the return dates from the Commissioner.

Ms. Angelakis provided an overview and outline of the district-wide plan. She said the nitty-gritty details and communications regarding returning to school will come from the building principals. The entire team has been a part of the planning which has been purposeful and cautious in approach. Ms. Angelakis noted they do not have all spaces worked out, and lunches which are still at 6 feet.

Ms. Angelakis said by no later than March 22nd, all Elementary Special Education students will go back to their original classrooms. The HS Remote one half day Wednesday will go full day remote Wednesday, and the SHS schedule reverts to five days.

Ms. Angelakis reviewed the schedule starting on March 29th (current Hybrid students only) for preschool, Grades K/1, MS/HS. Ms. OConnor asked about the survey. Ms. Angelakis said they went by Dr. Bacon's survey data.

Ms. OConnor asked about Grades 2-4. Ms. Angelakis said they will remain hybrid until April 5th. She discussed the goal to have all students (5-8 in) five full days with lunch starting April 12th.

Ms. Angelakis discussed other considerations and work. She spoke about Remote students, live Zoom, and the opportunity for current Remote students to be given the opportunity to change to In-person learning after April vacation.

Ms. Angelakis said that the state is requiring another parent survey. Dr. Bacon will be sending this survey by the end of this week.

Ms. OConnor asked about the HS Remote kids and live-streaming. Mr. Kohut said the model is to continue live-streaming for any Remote learners. Mr. Calichman said the MS will continue to live Zoom with the focus on the kids in front of them.

Ms. Marshall said the survey is to choose Remote or In-person learning. She wants people to have a clear understanding that Remote learning will not be the same after April vacation. She said the decision to be remote should be based on medical reasons.

Ms. Randall mentioned people still not being fully vaccinated. She felt it was forcing students to choose their families or better education. Ms. Raymond said it is not just about education but also the uptick in mental health issues.

Ms. Angelakis mentioned the web filter data. She stated there was still an opportunity to stay on pace with classmates, and the same education in a different platform but the focus of the teacher would be on the majority of students in front of them.

Mr. Giantis asked about mask requirements. Ms. Angelakis stated that no protocols have changed except for spacing. Mr. Giantis asked about students wiping down desks. Mr. Calichman said they ask all students to bring in wipes. Mr. Giantis asked about students gathering. Ms. Angelakis said they won't be congregating and are being disbursed from school grounds.

Ms. Wright mentioned that the three hundred Hybrid students returning were only half of the HS population. She asked about looking at staffing to combine classes to utilize teachers for Remote learning. Mr. Kohut said that means re-assigning students' schedules/classes. Ms. Wright was concerned that half the students may be Remote learning but the focus would be on In-person students. Mr. Kohut said some people were Remote learning because there was no teacher in the classroom. He expects more students will choose to return in April. Ms. OConnor said that the SC survey uncovered that some kids chose to be remote due to transportation and distance from the school. Ms. Marshall noted we will know a new number once the survey goes out.

Ms. Wright asked how many METCO students were returning. Ms. Raymond spoke about some of the issues/concerns being discussed. Ms. Marshall asked about transportation. Ms. Angelakis said transportation regulations had changed.

Ms. Randall mentioned mental health issues due to stress from schedule changes. Ms. OConnor said she gets it as a parent of a teenager. She said that no one is used to the back-to-school stamina.

Mr. Giantis asked about the availability for counselors when school is back to five days. Ms. Angelakis said they have been available throughout this time and will continue to be available.

21-22 Program of Studies ADOPT: Ms. Angelakis mentioned that Mr. Kohut spoke about the Program of Studies (POS) changes at the February 10th SC meeting.

Motion: It was moved by Ms. Wright to adopt the Program of Studies & seconded by Ms. Marshall.

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 4 to 0 via roll call vote.

SY21-22 School Calendar/Early Release (vote): Ms. Angelakis stated that this was not the ideal way to start off the year and noted the contractual obligations. She mentioned the timing of Labor day and the Jewish holidays.

Ms. Wright asked if any changes we may enact to school start times would impact the calendar. Ms. Angelakis said that start times were schedule-related and would not impact the calendar.

Motion: It was moved by Mr. Marshall to accept SY21-22 School Calendar & seconded by Ms. Wright.

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 4 to 0 via roll call vote.

2019-2020 Annual Report: Ms. Angelakis shared our annual report which is sent to the town hall in their required format. The report includes new hires, resignations, retirements, staff changes and reassignments, and what has happened at the individual schools throughout the school year.

Ms. OConnor asked if the report is posted on our website. Ms. Angelakis said we can publish it on the website.

SubCommittee:

SBC EBC-S Policy (Vote required): Ms. Wright said they voted on the change of social distance requirement from 6-feet to 3- to 6-feet at the last meeting but needed to update the policy. She spoke about the other revisions (remove flu vaccination requirement, revise calendar days from 171 to 170).

Motion: It was moved by Ms. Wright to accept all three changes to policy EBC-S & seconded by Ms. Marshall.

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 4 to 0 via roll call vote.

Foreign Exchange Students (policy draft JFABB) (Vote requested): Ms. Wright said we do not have a policy but should have a discussion. Ms. OConnor mentioned piloting a program through AFS. She said it is another way to impact diversity and seems like an easy thing from an SC perspective. She spoke with Mr. Kohut who was on board for trying it out.

Ms. Angelakis asked about the possible regulations. Ms. Wright spoke about the different types of exchange students (cultural exchange, tuition-free, J-1 Visa) and researching data from other districts.

Ms. Raymond expressed concern with providing required services. Ms. OConnor said that AFS has assured her that we don't need to provide services. Ms. Raymond said she had similar situations and the students had access to all education rights. Ms. OConnor stated that the administration has the last right of application approval, and mentioned Visa restrictions. Ms. Sybert expresses similar concerns as Ms. Raymond. Ms. Raymond will check with the attorney.

Ms. Marshall said we can review everything, case by case. Ms. Wright mentioned the program's rules. She said we need to look at each program and be sure there are safeguards. Ms. Marshall mentioned the policy does not have to say we have to take someone.

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

- A. Regular Session Minutes-February 24th, 2021
- B. Executive Session-February 3rd, 2021
- C. Warrant 21-35

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

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 4 to 0 via roll call vote.

Public Comment: Ms. OConnor said the limit was 3-minutes per person, comments only, and twenty minutes. She reminded everyone that there is a family input session tomorrow night at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Emily Cilley, the SPS lead nurse gave a shout-out to Ms. Mulcahy. She reiterated that anyone sick with symptoms is out of school regardless even with a negative test.

Caroline Mailhot, a HS parent mentioned her concern with kids violating mask and distancing policies.

Kawanda Boyd spoke on behalf of METCO families and mentioned their concerns (knowing what live instruction learning will look like in order to make decisions, transportation-requesting one (1) student per seat, losing spots in before/after school program care).

Scott Coughlin asked about the comment regarding time on learning families for remote students. He expressed concern and questioned why teachers would be concentrating more on the students in front of them versus remote students.

Colin Codner asked for the rationale as to why students are being held to previous agreements and remaining remote through April. He asked for an interpretation of the commissioner's mandate to return to class and asked if it overrides any previous parent agreement.

Rebecca Bucklin, teacher and SEA president thanked the educators and Ms. Randall for her comments on remote learning. She said we must care for remote learners. She said some other communities are hiring teachers for remote learners.

Leeanne Miller, a MS parent mentioned the school calendar and the start of summer school so quickly after the last day of school. She said the students need a break before summer school.

Keiko Zoll, a Stanley parent, said she was grateful for returning to school, and applauded parent volunteers.

Alison Oxtan spoke about continuing to work on the exhaust systems. She asked why students would be sent home regardless of rapid testing results. Ms. OConnor asked Ms. Mulcahy to write a communication.

Kraig Hitchcock spoke about the concern that Remote students were not eligible for return until a later date. He questioned why more people can't come back sooner. He stated that the choice to be a remote learner was made at a time that was very different.

Next meeting to be held on March 24th, 2021

Adjournment

Motion: At 9:26 p.m. It was moved by Ms. Marshall to accept the motion to adjourn & seconded by Ms. Wright

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 4 to 0 via roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,



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



Date: March 25, 2021



Superintendent of Schools

/dmm

Supporting documentation:



 Update Rev 4 Agenda March 10, 2021, School Committee Meeting 



 Superintendent's Report to SC 3.10.21.pdf 



 SCHOOL COMMITTEE 3-10-21.pptx 



 Policy JFABB - INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.docx 

 SPS ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020 

 Policy EBC-Supplemental draft 10-Mar-2021.docx 

 February 24th, 2021 Regular Session Meeting Minutes Final 

 February 3, 2021 School Committee Executive Session Meeting Minutes.docx 

 Copy of 2021-22 PROGRAM OF STUDIES draft 

 Copy of 21-22 School Calendar & Legend Rev 3 - DRAFT - 24-Feb-2021.pdf 
