



Georgetown School Committee

Monday, July 13, 2020 6:00PM

Virtual ZOOM Meeting

Special Session Minutes

Barbie Linares, Chairman
Michael Hinchliffe, Vice Chairman
Cheryl Lachendro, Clerk
Pamela Lundquist
Suzanne MacDonald

Virtual Attendance:

Barbie Linares	Superintendent Jacobs	Jack Tiano
Michael Hinchliffe	Suzanne Sutherland	Margaret Maher
Cheryl Lachendro		Dan Richards
Pam Lundquist		Collin MacDonald
Suzanne MacDonald		

This meeting was conducted using ZOOM Technology. Chair Linares called the meeting to order at 6:03PM.

1. Call To Order:

Barbie Linares - present
Michael Hinchliffe - present
Suzanne MacDonald - present
Cheryl Lachendro - present
Pamela Lundquist - present

2. Discussion of Back to School Options for Fall 2020

Superintendent Jacobs began the discussion by explaining that there are 3 options for back to school for the fall 2020, in-person, hybrid and remote. Superintendent Jacobs explained that the town has received \$700,000 in Cares Money from the state and federal government, which can be used for COVID related expenses. Although there are limits to what it can be used for, it can be used on what is needed for the year, for example, if an additional nurse, custodians to help with sanitizing or PPE purchase. The state is recommending that the district purchase at a minimum of 12 weeks of PPE in advance. The Superintendent then clarified social distancing for the classrooms. She said the Mike Anderson has received a call from the state level. They explained to him that if desks are 3 feet apart, children actually measure 6 feet apart (nose to nose). This has been set up in each school based on the highest-class size. This also means that most furniture in the classrooms have been removed to accommodate the proper distance between the desks. In addition, the library at the high has also been set up to accommodate the 6 feet distance.

The Superintendent explained that she sent the School Committee a list of questions that will need to be determined before deciding on which model we can use. Other than the desks distance, they are looking at other items, such as how to have the students socially distant coming in and out of the school safely. Task forces have been created that are comprised of key leaders, union representatives, teachers, parents, paras, secretaries and custodians. At the Middle High School, there are also students on the task force. The goal is for them to work together the next 2-3 weeks and answer the questions that we can't answer. The Superintendent added that in addition of the help from the task force, surveys have gone out to teachers and will be going out to families in the next day.

Superintendent Jacobs added that the preschool is a bit more complicated and they are in the process of discussing options for the coming year. There are no clear answers yet, but they will follow up with more information as it becomes available.

The Commissioner has requested that a template be submitted to the state by 7/31 with an explanation of the options being considered. The models that are being considered will then be discussed with the public by the first week in August. The Superintendent added that she will post on the district website a FAQ and will add information as it is received.

As far as bus transportation, the Commissioner has requested that each district take a poll on who is considering riding the bus. He has stated that he believes they will function on a third of their usual capacity. The Superintendent has not discussed the bus details with NRT yet. Once we know how many students are interested in riding the bus, we will work out the routes and if necessary, add double runs, which we have done in the past.

She added that the Commissioner is working with Unions cutting the required school days required down to 177 for students and 180 for staff, which will include 3 training days.

Chair Linares introduced Joe Pittella, President of GEA and Mike Murphy, Vice President of GEA to discuss the Union concerns and the recent survey results. Mr. Pittella commented that the survey was distributed to teachers/staff and it shows that safety issues are the biggest concern. DESE Guidelines that were released did not address the teachers and staff safety. One question asked on the survey was how interested are you to get back into the classroom and teachers overwhelmingly responded they want to get back full time, but want to be safe. An overall concern is how to keep the younger students socially distant. The GEA is recommending a phase in approach for return to school. The survey results show that the majority of teachers would endorse a hybrid model if all the safety measures are put into place. They understand that the remote model that was used this past spring was not the best situation and there were a lot of issues, but they feel that if you add in the attendance and grading policies, they some of the issues will be resolved. Mr. Pittella pointed out that the rate of infection in Massachusetts was actually lower when schools closed in March as it is right now. Mr. Murphy gave a summary of some of the concerns that the teachers/staff expressed, how do we enforce the 6' social distancing with the younger grades, how do we enforce the face masks, child care concerns and flexibility, enforcing remote learning, how do we enforce keeping sick children at home, PPE availability and air quality concerns in the buildings.

Mike Anderson answered some of the concerns by explaining that every HVAC and exhaust fan have been tested and are working to 100% efficiency. All filters have been replaced with what has been recommended by the DNR, who worked on the construction projects at the Penn Brook. They are looking to hire additional staff to not only clean each classroom during the day, but will also be fogged and sanitized every night. In addition, during the day there will be extra cleaning to the frequently touched surfaces. The Cares Money we will receive from the town will be used to hire additional part time custodial staff. In addition, PPE will be provided for teachers and any additional protective gear they may request. Portable sinks will be ordered for classrooms that do not currently have them and wall mounted sanitizers will be included in hallways for each building. Plexiglas barriers will be ordered for teachers/staff that request it and they will possibly also be adding Plexiglas barriers for student desks.

Mr. Hinchliffe voiced concerns regarding starting the year remote since there were so many issues this past spring with new software and programs. Collin MacDonald responded to Mr. Hinchliffe's concerns by explaining that there will be additional professional development days in the beginning of the year to train teachers and work with teachers on changing curricula and also working on improving network systems.

The Superintendent added that we are still waiting on advisory from the Commissioner regarding band, chorus and gym. We should find out next week, but safety will always be our first concern.

Mrs. Lachendro voiced her concerns that best teaching practices will not be met. She understands that safety guidelines must come first, but what will the long term effect be on the students. The Superintendent responded that they are trying to find solutions. Also, the issue of students sitting at tables rather than desks was brought up and Mr. Anderson responded that 2nd grade classroom tables will be replaced with desks and dividers will be ordered for kindergarten and 1st grade.

A parent asked a question regarding if there were any medical experts at the state level that could explain and answer questions to parents and children. The Superintendent added she will look into a medical professional to advise us as a district. Also asked is there virtual etiquette for when online assignments/projects are group collaborations and Mr. MacDonald added that we have standards for digital literacy.

Mrs. Lundquist asked if there are any guidance/criteria on how to move between the three models safely if numbers were to change for our district. The Superintendent said she would follow up with the Commissioner on the next meeting.

Chair Linares asked if we know how much of the Cares Money the school is scheduled to receive and the Superintendent responded that we are in the process of working with the town on distribution of what we are allotted.

Chair Linares announced that Suzanne MacDonald would be on the MHS task force and Cheryl Lachendro will be on the Penn Brook. Mrs. Linares thanked everyone volunteering for the task force for their time and effort.

Another parent wanted to comment about remote and hybrid learning models. She asked if there has been any thought given to it being a synchronous model. The Superintendent responded that this is one of the models they are considering.

MOTION: Cheryl Lachendro (S. MacDonald second) motion to adjourn at 8:03PM. Roll call vote was taken.

Barbie Linares - yes

Michael Hinchliffe - yes

Cheryl Lachendro - yes

Pamela Lundquist - yes

Suzanne MacDonald - yes

Motion carried (5-0)

*Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Weiss, School Committee Secretary*