

Regular Session Meetings

September 23rd, 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, Mr. Delano, Ms. Carin Marshall, 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. Student reps present: Myra Diaz and Tabitha Randell.

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 Comment: Ms. OConnor noted that she had been asked why the pledge of allegiance has not been occurring. Ms. OConnor explained that it was not a political statement but a function of operating on Zoom. The pledge of allegiance will resume when the SC is in more official circumstances.

There were no public comments.

Introduction of Student Reps: Ms. Angelakis introduced the two new student representatives: Myra Diaz and Tabitha Randell. Ms. Randall spoke about her background including being active in clubs. She hopes to study math and political science. Ms. Diaz was the captain of the basketball cheer team last year, current captain of the football cheer, on student council, and plans to pursue a career as a nurse practitioner.

Community Announcements:

Ms. Marshall is happy that school is back. She welcomed and hopes to sit with the student reps soon.

Mr. Delano welcomed the student reps. He spoke about the passing of former PE teacher, Mr. Don Hallet. Mr. Delano wanted the community to realize that over 2000 devices were distributed. He recognized Ms. Mackey and the Tech Ninjas.

Mr. Giantis welcomed the student reps. He mentioned that he is glad to see the kids happy to be back in school.

Ms. Wright gave a hello to the student reps. She thanked Ms. Huntley for the walk through of Stanley. She gave a shout out to teachers. Ms. Wright said she was happy to see nice comments on social media.

Ms. Connor stated that it is a sigh of relief that we have started school again. She feels that the what ifs and fears may be alleviated a little now. She is impressed with the communications being shared with the SC. Ms. OConnor thanked Ms. Angelakis and her team.

Ms. Randall spoke about the eight-period class schedule and 9:00 a.m. start at the HS. The new schedule has been positively accepted and they hope it is continued when school is in-person.

Ms. Diza spoke about COVID and the excitement of a fall sports season.

Superintendent's Report: Ms. Angelakis' report will be posted on the Superintendent's Page under the Swampscott Public School's web page. Ms. Angelakis stated we all want the kids back in school as soon as possible.

Occupational Therapist: Ms. Angelakis spoke about the newly hired Occupational Therapist, Ms. Amanda Mulcahy. They have developed a robust 30-day Entry Plan which includes meeting with the lead nurse, nursing staff, visiting buildings, reaching out to the Health Dept. and reviewing COVID related policies and procedures we already have in place.

This is Ms. Mulcahy's first day. Ms. Mulcahy spoke about her background and goals for the next 30 days highlighting a data system, employee survey, and tracking. She expressed her thanks for the opportunity.

Ms. OConnor asked them to talk about what it means to be an Occupational Health Nurse. Ms. Angelakis mentioned focusing on health & wellness related to the building, students, and faculty. Ms. OConnor welcomed Ms. Mulcahy.

Opening of Schools: Ms. Angelakis provided an update on the opening of the schools. She did building visits and it was nice to see so many teachers were in their classrooms doing Zoom with students. Ms. Angelakis said it was fun to see the students on Zoom as well.

The seventy-five requests for leaves are down to about fifteen. They are in the process of gathering more information on the fifteen remaining requests. Ms. Angelakis stated that they were not all approved and noted the number significantly dropped.

Ms. Angelakis spoke about the Zoom issue on Chromebooks. She provided an update on recycled Chromebooks with memory issues and the discussion with the budget subcommittee to fund replacement of the older models. Ms. Angelakis talked about iPads and the lightspeed filter which does not allow safe YouTube videos. She noted that over 2000 devices were given out and asked for patience as they work out some of the glitches. She stated that the glitches with some HS schedules have been resolved.

Ms. Raymond spoke about the first high student need cohorts. She thanked Ms. Cilley. Ms. Raymond stated that she is happy to see kids and staff in. She discussed supervising, testing spaces, Zooms, and shared OT preschool seating tip recommendations. The next step is the cohort at Clarke and Hadley on October 5th.

Ms. OConnor asked if we were sharing information with all families (i.e. posture). Ms. Raymond said it is being shared out to all families via school principals.

Kindergarten Screening: Ms. Angelakis showed a picture of Kindergarten screening which is complete and took place in outdoor spaces.

Facilities: Ms. Angelakis has been asked if kids will be able to be back before October 26th. She noted that a lot depends on facilities. Ms. Angelakis reviewed the positives including the replacement of water fountains with sinks at the elementary schools, and the exhaust systems installed in the medical isolation rooms at the MS, HS, and Stanley.

Ms. Angelakis spoke about the kick-off meeting with the mechanical contractor last week. Each principal identified the rooms needed on October 5th so the contractors may begin work.

Mr. Kasper's team is exploring the fluid in the MS heating system to glycol instead of water to avoid freeze-ups and pipe bursts.

She extended an invitation for the School Committee members to visit the buildings.

Educational Materials Distribution: Dr. Bacon spoke about the materials and textbooks needed for instruction being distributed. She stated that the first week back was being encouraged as Social Emotional learning. Dr. Bacon spoke about the bins for the Elementary school students and displayed photos of some of the materials in the bins (i.e. letters, dice, & cards).

Reading and Math Assessments (3 &4): Dr Bacon mentioned the Phase 4 Planning team recommendation of assessing students. She discussed needing to know where kids were at when entering school.

Dr. Bacon noted that core area assessments are being designed for Grades 5-12. The assessment will identify if there is a need for support or remediation due to any gap.

She discussed the Aimsweb Math assessment for Grades K-4. Dr. Bacon spoke about the reading assessment which complies with DESE Dyslexia screeners. The iReady reading assessment is being used for Grades K-4 to gain a lot of information on strengths and needs improvement of reading skills. They started today with Grades 3 and 4. She noted that students were focused and did well.

Timing issue: Dr. Bacon mentioned the miscommunication regarding material pickup. She stated that distribution was set for Wednesday during the day so teachers could be involved and see students. She expressed that any time there is an invite with a timeline that doesn't work for a family to please reach out to their building principals so they may accommodate.

Ms. Angelakis stated we are doing a lot in person and making connections.

Ms. OConnor stated she is blown away by everything occurring. She feels that it is obvious we are a world away from the spring time experience.

Food Service: Ms. Sybert said we are continuing to foster connections to the buildings. The grab and go is being done at each of the five schools, orders may be placed online, and the USDA is permitting free to all students.

Ms. Marshall asked if lunch could be picked up even if not pre-ordered. Ms. Sybert said there are a few extra meals prepared but we need to be able to plan.

Chair:

SBC Meeting Update: Ms. Wright said they are feeling pressure to pick an option soon. They looked at the Stanley location more closely. She walked through the newly created 7C and 7D option based on neighbor input.

There is a meeting on September 29th (boards), and the 30th (Finance committees). Ms. Wright asked SC members to attend the meetings if possible and to think about pros/cons of the options.

Ms. Angelakis said she was impressed with last night's presentation and meeting.

Ms. OConnor asked Ms. Wright to have Ms. Caron put the meetings into their calendars.

Ms. Wright stated that everyone is being invited as a board. She expects that feedback would be different based on their committee goals, i.e. the council on aging may need parking on sight.

Mr. Giantis asked how the vote was going. Ms. Wright said she has not been checking the vote as it skews the voting. She mentioned the three different configurations that people were voting on.

The mailer regarding the survey went out today.

Ms. Randall mentioned sustainability concerns and asked if they were being considered. Ms. Wright talked about the Sustainability subcommittee, open spaces, Geothermal energy, and sustainable materials.

Policy ACAH Against Harassment (Vote requested): Ms. Wright walked through the policy changes. She noted that they needed to vote on the standard of evidence (preponderance or clear and convincing) before voting on the policy. Ms. Wright and legal recommends preponderance of evidence.

Ms. OConnor asked if the standard was to determine guilt or innocence. Ms. Marshall noted there is a big distinction and is not evidence for making the determination of guilt or innocence. Ms. Wright said it is when something is happening student to student/student to teacher that we need to decide if we investigate because of preponderance of evidence or wait until clear and convincing evidence to investigate.

Mr. Giantis stated that regardless of the standard complaints will be investigated. He thought the standard kicked in during review to determine how it is evaluated not if it is investigated. Mr. Giantis has concerns regarding due process. He noted that preponderance of evidence could lead to serious career or college repercussions from an accusation. Mr. Giantis said under a higher standard the investigation is taken seriously but the standard is 50+ percent of evidence. He stated that clear and convincing evidence protects everyone in the process. Mr. Giantis said that the awareness of harassment is more prevalent. He did not feel that the higher standard of evidence would impact voices being heard or victims coming forward. Mr. Giantis noted that the higher standard instills some protection for all parties and is simple fairness.

Ms. OConnor said that any shred of evidence would factor into the level of scrutiny. She would prefer that any indication is considered and the use of the lesser standard of preponderance.

Ms. Raymond spoke about complaints being under reported and one person's word against another

Tabitha Randall felt that clear and convincing evidence did not show support for the person being harassed. She said victims often don't speak up as it is difficult to prove.

Mr. Giantis said he appreciated everyone's statements. He did not feel that clear and concise evidence would keep people from coming forward. He said all complaints would be fully investigated. Mr. Giantis noted that the complaint is viewed carefully and the higher standard offers protection and fairness to the process.

Ms. Wright stated that she has a hard time going against counsel. She said that clear and convincing does not support the victim. Ms. Wright noted that we are in the business taking care of kids. She felt we need to err on the side of caution with children being harassed not having their life wrecked. She appreciated Mr. Giantis point but from the victim side supports preponderance.

Ms. OConnor said she supports preponderance of evidence. She would not want a teacher working with students because the complaint did not have clear and convincing evidence. She wants to err on the side of caution.

Ms. Marshall asked if the policy rule has to be written the same for a complaint from a student against an adult as student to student. Ms. Wright said it is the same. Ms. Marshall asked if the evidence was just for the sexual harassment. Ms. Wright said it is for all harassment.

Ms. OConnor called a vote.

Motion: Ms. Wright moved to adopt the standard of preponderance of evidence for the harassment policy and second by Ms. Marshall.

Mr. Giantis spoke about a personal experience with his son and harassment. He felt people just want it to stop so the more protection the better. He said the higher standard does not keep anyone coming forward. Mr. Giantis said as parent/father if your kid is involved or facing accusation you would want the most protection as they can have in the process.

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 3 to 1 via roll call vote. Ms. Marshall-yes, Ms. Wright-yes, Mr. Giantis-no, Ms. OConnor-yes.

Motion: It was moved by Ms. Wright to accept the ACH Against Harassment Policy as edited and seconded by Ms. Marshall.

Vote on Motion: The motion passed 3 to 1 via roll call vote. Ms. Marshall-yes, Ms. Wright-yes, Mr. Giantis-no, Ms. OConnor-yes.

Consent Agenda

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

- A. Regular Session Minutes – September 9, 2020
- B. Donations-Anonymous SHS Chromebooks or Supplies
- C. Warrants 21-10 & 21-12

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

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

Ms. Wright asked about separate line items for grants. Ms. Sybert explained the process.

Next meeting to be held on October 14, 2020

Adjournment

Motion: At 8:52 p.m. It was moved by Ms. Wright to accept the motion to adjourn & seconded by Ms. Marshall.

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

Respectfully submitted,



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

Superintendent of Schools

/dmm

Supporting Documentation:

Date: September 24th, 2020



Donation-Anonymous-SHS chromebooks or supplies.pdf



Policy ACH - Policy Against Harassment DRAFT for Vote 092320.docx



September 9th, 2020 Regular Session Meeting Final Minutes



Superintendent's Report to SC 9.23.20.pdf