

**TOWN OF SIMSBURY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Record of Proceedings

Regular Meeting

May 12, 2020

Ms. Susan Salina called the virtual meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Roll Call:

Members present: Mmes. Susan Salina, Tara Willerup, Lydia Tedone, Jen Batchelar and Sharon Thomas. Messrs. Todd Burrick, Jeff Tindall and Brian Watson.

Also present: Superintendent Matt Curtis, Assistant Superintendent Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent Sue Homrok-Lemke, Director of Personnel Neil Sullivan, Director of Technology Jason Casey, Director of Finance Amy Meriwether, and Recording Secretary Katie Wilde.

PUBLIC AUDIENCE

None

Public Audience

BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Willerup reported that the Curriculum Committee met and discussed the educational aspects of the Facilities Master Plan and the best next steps. The presentation from the committee meeting will be shown to the Facilities and Enrollment Task Force at their next meeting.

Communications

Ms. Thomas reported that she participated in the Reopen CT Advisory Roundtable meeting. She stated that there were a lot of comments regarding distance learning and the continuation of learning remotely. Ms. Thomas noted that some colleges are considering having students on campus in the fall and having them stay home after Thanksgiving through the rest of the semester. She stated that Commissioner Cardona will have a call with BOE members later this week.

Ms. Tedone stated that regional advisory teams are the voice of K-12 education for the Reopen CT Committee. She stated that CAFE has been hosting BOE Chairman roundtables and webinars. She noted that plans for commencement vary across the state. Mr. Curtis stated that the district needs regulatory guidance on the parameters for graduation in order to plan, and that guidance has not yet been received.

Mr. Tindall stated that Ms. Murray's presentation at the Curriculum Committee meeting provided the academic perspective on the Facilities Master Plan. He stated that the Facilities & Enrollment Task Force (FETF) will meet next week and see the academic presentation. The plan will come back to the BOE for a decision and approval at an upcoming meeting.

Ms. Lemke reported that meal assistance distribution continues for families in need. Principals will send a reminder out on their listserv to parents this week. Ms. Murray reported that the Reopen SPS Teaching & Learning Team is pulling together, looking at summer preparation for September. Seventeen people will participate in the first meeting on Friday. A 3 tier model has been designed. Participants will include department supervisors, teacher leaders, a board member and parents.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the FETF meeting is scheduled on May 20 at 5:00 p.m. This is a Zoom meeting that will be accessible on television via SCTV. Mr. Sullivan reported on the Reopen Simsbury Schools (RSS) Task Force. The group met on Monday and includes those involved in logistics and operations, as well as those who will need to follow executive order guidance. Representatives from maintenance /custodial staff, health services, technology, finance, Farmington Valley Health District, high school, middle school and elementary school participated in the meeting. Future discussions will include representation from the SEED after school program, the preschool program, and St. Mary's School. Mr. Sullivan stated that a lot of thinking was put out on the table and the challenges of eventual reopening were articulated. The RSS Task Force will meet again in 2 weeks, and once a week during the summer.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A. Approval of Minutes of April 23, 2020

Ms. Tedone: MOVE to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2020 meeting.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

B. Approval of Minutes of April 28, 2020 meeting

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2020 meeting.

Mr. Burrick: Seconded. So moved.

C. Gift from Latimer Lane PTO

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the proposed gift of a commemorative sugar maple tree from the Latimer Lane PTO be approved.

Ms. Batchelar:Seconded. So moved.

D. End of Year Fiscal Authorizations

Mr. Burrick: MOVE that the Simsbury Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to act as the Board's agent in renewing applications for state and federally funded programs.

Mr. Tindall: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the Simsbury Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to transfer funds from those accounts in which a surplus is anticipated into those accounts in which a deficit is anticipated.

Ms. Willerup: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Tedone: MOVE that the Simsbury Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent (or designee), with Board of Finance approval, to approve any and all expenditures from the non-lapsing account for Unexpended Education Funds Account.

Approval of
Minutes of April
23, 2020

Approval of
Minutes of April
28, 2020

Gift from Latimer
Lane PTO

End of Year
Fiscal
Authorizations

Mr. Tindall: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Willerup: MOVE that the Simsbury Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to request Board of Finance approval for the deposit of unexpended funds at the close of the fiscal year into the non-lapsing account for Unexpended Education Funds Account; as authorized by state law, the amount of said deposit will be no more than 2% of the Board's current year operating budget. Unexpended funds over the 2% threshold will be returned to the Town General Fund Balance.

Mr. Tindall: Seconded. So moved.

Ms. Batchelar: MOVE that the Superintendent, with the approval of the Board Chairman, be authorized to hire staff for the 2020-21 school year during the period of July and August when the Board is not in session.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

INFORMATION AND REPORTS

A. HJMS Project Update

Mr. Curtis stated that the HJMS renovation project has been moving forward efficiently during the school closure. Mr. Casey stated that Phase 3 is coming to a close which includes the auditorium and additional classrooms. Phase 1 and 2 are already completed which includes the Library Media Center and classrooms. Phases 4 and 5 have been moved up due to the ability to complete more work with the school closed. Overall the project is 82% complete at this time with a final completion date of September 22. Ms. Batchelar asked if the completion date might be moved up sooner. Mr. Casey responded that there are some deliveries that were scheduled for the end of the project, and it is unlikely they will arrive sooner.

B. Equity Update

Ms. Lemke reviewed the BOE 5 year goals, noting that each of them include threads of equity. She noted the work of the Equity Council, Spirit Council and RE-Center that all correspond with strategic goal #2: Compassionate and Connected School Culture. Ms. Lemke stated that the purpose of the Equity Council is to assess the organizational issues that impact equitable access, experiences and outcomes for SPS students. With this information, the council will make recommendations that will guide strategic planning and implementation of change efforts to eliminate persistent equity gaps in the district. Equity Council accomplishments include: collaboration with the Center for School Change, monthly meets with various stakeholders, the development of both individual and collective equity lens, professional development of membership, anecdotal "changes" in conversations and practice, data protocol implementation, drafting of a district definition, as well as core beliefs and stance.

Ms. Lemke outlined the work of the Equity Council going forward. Virtual meetings will be held on May 21 and June 4. The council will look at how distance learning has incorporated equity, perform a self-assessment and a data dive into culture and climate in Simsbury. Ms. Lemke stated that next steps for the council include providing the BOE and the community with a summary document. The Equity

HJMS Project Update

Equity Update

Council will continue their work next year. Ms. Willerup stated she is pleased the Equity Council is moving forward with 2 meetings this year so that the students who have been involved can see the completion of their work.

C. Distance Learning Survey Results

Mr. Curtis stated that there was a wide range of parent input and the district can make adjustments based on the feedback received. Ms. Murray stated there were more than 1,700 responses to the survey. She reviewed the themes at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

At the elementary level parents are appreciative that teachers are responsive and supportive to kids and families. They are receiving support from special education teachers and access to district devices. Areas for improvement include providing more opportunities for real-time instruction, addressing the use of technology, and the use of multiple platforms. Additionally broadening the content with new learning in science and social studies, and balancing screen time with hands-on materials and need for parental support in K-2.

At the middle school level students are enjoying their time with their teachers. There are clearly articulated expectations, routines and schedules. Flexibility for students and families is enhancing student independence and less stressful. Parents like the later start to the school day as students are more rested. Areas for improvement include providing more live classroom meeting time and recording lessons for later use. Additionally, increasing the use of PowerSchool to inform students/families of progress and expanding social/emotional supports that address anxiety and mental health issues.

At the high school level parents are pleased with the live lessons in real time, flexibility for families, and the structure/organization of the schedule. The structure reinforces independence and responsibility. There are connections with teachers and peers, less homework which equals less stress, and the later start time is better for kids. Areas for improvement include providing more new learning, timely feedback to students, extra help sessions, and recorded lessons. Parents asked for a schedule with lessons 5 days a week and noted the importance of ongoing collaboration among teachers to support special education students.

Ms. Murray pointed out the implementation of 1:1 Chromebooks at the middle and high school levels was an advantage going into distance learning. Ms. Willerup asked if there have been many emails from parents outside of the survey. Ms. Murray responded 1-2 dozen over the past 8 weeks. Mr. Curtis stated that he has received a similar volume.

Mr. Tindall stated that this is great feedback, drilled down to provide the opportunity to take the distance learning program to the next level. He asked if the district purchased Chromebooks or hotspots for K-6 students. Ms. Murray responded that 436 Chromebooks, from carts in grade 3-6 classrooms, were distributed with 26 going to teachers. In addition, 140 iPads were distributed to K-2 students. The district purchased 12 hotspots and has distributed 6 of them. The district is providing repairs for all of these systems. Mr. Tindall noted that some residents think that the pandemic is providing a savings to the school district, when in fact it is not.

Distance Learning Survey Results

Ms. Batchelar asked about the return of textbooks and devices. Ms. Murray stated that drop off bins will be provided in the SHS parking lot for textbooks, library media center materials, musical instruments and sports uniforms. Once timing is decided the plan will be communicated with families. Students moving from 8th grade to 9th grade will need to swap out their Chromebooks. Ms. Murray stated that the district wants to make sure that students have devices for the start of the 2020-21 school year. Ms. Batchelar asked about items students left behind. Mr. Sullivan responded that if the stay at home order ends May 20, we will allow teachers into the schools to pick up their things. Custodians will bag items left in students' lockers and those items will be available for pick up in June.

Ms. Thomas asked if the district will be reimbursed for the technology that is being distributed. Mr. Curtis responded that funds, relative to the CARES Act, are similar to Title I funds and the district anticipates receiving funds of approximately \$100,000. Mr. Sullivan stated that through the Public Safety Committee, we are tracking costs related to COVID-19 as part of the FEMA process to receive disaster relief funds. Ms. Meriwether noted that the application for reimbursement is very specific. The town is submitting for everything, but does not yet know what will be reimbursed.

Ms. Thomas concurred with the survey results that we should provide recordings of classes for students. Mr. Watson stated that the older kids seem to be set in a schedule. He urged the district to move to more of a consistent schedule for elementary students so they can settle into a routine. Ms. Murray stated that this also came up in the survey, setting a schedule for elementary students so that parents aren't inundated with emails. The district is looking at ways to do that.

D. Fee Schedule for Use of Simsbury Public Schools

Mr. Curtis stated that the fees charged for the use of our buildings covers the custodial cost. The fees for 2020-21 are an increase of 2% over the current fees. Mr. Curtis noted that these fees are not a significant generator of revenue, approximately \$50,000 per year. Neighboring communities were contacted for a fee comparison. The fee schedule will come before the board at the next meeting for approval.

Mr. Burrick asked if the charges should be raised higher to accommodate additional cleaning procedures that will need to take place next year. Mr. Curtis responded that we are still planning in that area, and it is questionable as to whether outside groups will gather next year.

E. Quarterly Budget Analysis

Ms. Meriwether reported that expenditures to date are in line with last year. In late March/early April the district received additional Choice entitlement awards totaling \$57,579. Due to the fact that we cannot offer after school programming, the district may need to return \$20,000-\$30,000. As a result of the COVID-19 shutdown, building usage revenue will have a projected deficit of \$10,640. However, this will be offset by a projected year-end surplus of \$10,007 in school tuition revenue.

Ms. Meriwether noted that based on Governor Lamont's Executive Order, the district continues to pay all salaries. She stated that a deficit of \$400,000 is expected in the out-of-district budget. Other losses include \$80,000 in Nutrition Services and

Fee Schedule
for use SPS

Quarterly
Budget Analysis

\$95,000 in Athletics from Pay for Play. Losses will be offset by savings in the bus contract in the amount of \$468,000 and the substitute account in the amount of \$200,000. With additional smaller savings in other departments, the overall net savings is approximately \$330,000. The amount of the non-lapsing account will remain at \$385,000.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Willerup: MOVE to adjourn the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

Ms. Tedone: Seconded. So moved.

Jen Batchelar
Secretary

Katie Wilde
Recording Secretary

Adjournment