

**Richmond Consolidated School - School Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, October 13, 2020
6:00 PM

Approved

Present: Adeline Ellis, Ina Wilhelm, Dewey Wyatt, Peter Dillon, Jill Pompei, Mary Shook

Guests: Anna Smith, Cristine Lenfest, Michelle Smith, Neal Pilson, Rachel Kanz, Lisa Callahan, Lauren Broussal

1. Call to order: 6:00pm

DW noted it is being recorded, per MGLCH30A,Sec20f

Meeting to be held by conference call due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

An Executive Order from the Governor of Massachusetts relieves public bodies from the requirement in the Open Meeting Law that meetings be conducted in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, provided that the public body makes provision to ensure public access to the deliberations through telephone, internet, or satellite enabled audio or video conferencing or any other technology that enables the public to clearly follow the proceedings of the public body in real time.

In addition, all members of a public body may participate in a meeting remotely; the Open Meeting Law's requirement that a quorum of the body and the chair be physically present at the meeting location is suspended.

All other provisions of the Open Meeting Law, such as the requirements regarding posting notice of meetings and creating and maintaining accurate meeting minutes, as well as the limited, enumerated purposes for holding an executive session, remain in effect.

Web: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/305456197> . Phone: (872) 240-3412 Access Code: 305-456-197

1. Public Comments: Lauren B said the cover story in the Richmond Record this month is about school reopening. It was written by Jane Hartford and is a strong, positive story. She believes we will all like it.

Lisa Callahan said how she is happy to be at Richmond every day. She is proud of her Administration, and how the Principal is handling everything. In talking to others in the field, we are leaps and bounds ahead of everyone and in a great spot. This is owed to Jill, Cristina, Peter, others who have worked to bring it all together. She wishes to have all the kids back. Cristina L: seconded comments, thrilled with start and how great it is to have kids back. Working with Jill has been amazing. Both Jill and Peter haven been immediate in their responses to her requests as she navigates the protocols. She is hoping to get more kids in person as the metrics are low as the kids will benefit.

2. Review and approve minutes: 9/23/20 Motion to approve as amended IW, 2nd AE, Roll call all in favor, 9/8/2020 Motion to approve as amended IW, 2nd AE, Roll call all in favor. Exec Sessions: 9/8/20 Motion to approve as amended AE, 2nd IW, Roll call all in favor, 8/26 Motion to approve IW, 2nd AE, Roll call all in favor, 8/7/20 Motion to approve as amended AE, 2nd IW, Roll call all in favor.

DW noted we are still looking for a capable and willing personal to take minutes. DW made a motion to approve a rate of \$20/hr for someone to take and transcribe minutes, with consideration for adjustment depending on interest. 2nd IW, Roll call: all in favor.

3. Principal's Report

a. School opening, teaching learning update

General Positives:

Shout Outs

- Students have done a GREAT job with following our new routines- hand washing and sanitizing, wearing masks, maintaining distancing
- Faculty and Staff-pitching in to help at snack and lunch (we are playing waitstaff in the café, delivering outdoors and to classrooms), pitching in to cover duties, helping at arrival and dismissal
- Ronna- helping with tech questions as we implement our LMS, getting IPADs ready for our youngest learners and distributing them
- Tracey and Manny- ensuring the building is cleaned and sanitized, ensuring classrooms were set up for

distancing, ensuring we have enough sanitizer

- Cristina- getting signage all over the place, putting 6 ft markers on the floors, going into classrooms to meet with each group of students to ensure proper handwashing, answering any covid related question that comes our way, getting a flu clinic for staff and helping Emilie Jarrett with the Richmond Flu Clinic
- Cafeteria – serving students in school as well as remote learners, having to shift their way of doing things
- Teachers and paras- learning to use our LMS, livestreaming lessons, planning for those at home as well as those at school
- Natalie- reconciling covid screener each morning, figuring out how to safely dismiss our bus kids with the new protocols in place, managing powerschool and CANVAS, helping deliver lunch...

Concerns:

- With no extra staffing, it is difficult to cover duties. When someone is out, it becomes difficult
- We have very few subs. We have no custodial subs
- The health screener takes a tremendous amt of time each morning. We aren't able to do our usual morning announcements due to this – a few parents asked about it on the feedback survey
- I am worried about the teachers who are balancing in person and remote learning, They are doing an incredible job but it is hard.

Facilities/Staffing:

- Building is being cleaned and sanitized throughout the day and in the evenings
- Signage is ALL over the place
- Held fire drills
- Trooper Canata met with cohorts of students to talk about shelter in place, etc.
- Met with faculty to discuss lockdown, safety in COVID

Academic:

- Hybrid learning is up and running. Teachers are live streaming many lessons, using CANVAS as our LMS for both in person and remote work
- We have 26 students who chose remote only. Classroom teachers have folded them into their live streamed lessons and are able to provide additional activities with the help of our remote ranger, Julia Sabourin
- School Council met to review and update SIP
- REEF grant applications are open through end of October

Social Emotional:

- We provided some SEL PD during our first 11 days. We then surveyed teachers to ask what they needed and followed up with some tips.
- REEF grants can have a SEL Focus
- Mr. Wentworth is meeting with all grades (both in person and remotely) to offer support.
- We continue to look at ways we can support students, especially our remote only learners – offered an unstructured lunch bunch on Wednesdays

Family/Community Involvement:

- PTA is meeting to identify what they CAN do given the restrictions on visitors
- Friday updates continue to go home
- Positive notes are also going home to individual students

Feedback Survey went home. Results are overall positive.

1.) Communication:

Families are happy with communication from administration and teachers. 88% rated communication at a 4-5 on a scale of 1-5 They appreciate weekly updates

2.) CANVAS:

Students and their family members are learning to navigate CANVAS. A few parents would like another Q and A for using CANVAS which I tentatively scheduled for next Tuesday.

There was a concern that not all teachers home pages looked exactly the same. We did our best to be set up similarly, there are a few that are different. We must remember that a pre K home page and a middle school home page should look different.

Someone expressed a concern that their child was spending time learning CANVAS rather than academics, but by taking the time now, we will make that time up as the year goes on, especially if we have to pivot.

3.) Remote and Hybrid Learning Time: Most families felt our remote week went well. With hybrid, they are very pleased with livestreaming, with blend of live and pre recorded or asynchronous lessons. They

recognize how hard staff is working.

It's interesting: A few families want more on line time with teachers during remote days, a few families want more independent or choice activities so their child is not on line so much.

I just want to remind folks that this is new to staff and we are only a month in and we will get to a point where more teachers feel comfortable with break out rooms. And once teachers know students better they will be able to offer choices or independent activities or more small group support

- 4.) Bussing /Kiss and Ride: Feedback is that its going well.
- 5.) Snack and Lunch: Only positive comments
- 6.) Mask Breaks: Kids report they are fine and that mask breaks are enough.
- 7.) Other: Safety is priority and it shows. Kids are happy to be back. Grateful for all we are doing.
- 8.) Only question is when we will move to fully F2F.

DW asked if there was new information relative to families managing schedules with their work days. Jill said she has communicated options, and believed improvements have been made, but no one expresses issues through the survey process.

DW asked about the daily COVID disclosure process and the challenges of administering and adhering. It was acknowledged during school open planning that this would be difficult and likely will need to be adjusted. This currently is a significant work load in the morning taking resources from other tasks. No one else in Berkshire County is requiring daily responses. Peter will discuss with the teachers union adjusting to a weekly reminder of requirements. It is not in the Memorandum of Agreement but Peter says it is the right thing to arrive at a mutual agreed adjusted process.

DW expressed appreciation for the continued hard work and attention to so many complex details. AE acknowledged how much is on Jill's plate and asked if the SIP is a priority right now. Jill said they are in pretty good shape and it is an important document. IW agreed we do need to look for areas to simplify right now.

AE asked about requirements to be a substitute teacher. PD explained Assoc Degree or 2yrs of college (so Jr Sr can work as subs). Need to be finger printed and a few other things. What is hard now is retirees have been major of the substitute pool but they are now an at-risk group. RCS is better than probably any other building but it is still difficult to attract. AE asked about the socialization for students learning remotely. Jill said they worked to provide some more unstructured virtual events such as a "lunch bunch." She will talk with PTA about other ideas.

- b. Pre-School Update: The Administration recommended continuing with not charging for Pre-K. IW asked about financial implications and number of students. Peter said that absent COVID we were talking about this anyway as a service to residents, with COVID it doesn't make sense to charge tuition. The loss in revenue can be managed. PK attendance is not subjected to School Choice. We'll revisit what the next school year looks like next February or so. Motion to continue not charging to the end of this school year by IW, 2nd AE, Roll call, all in favor.

4. Superintendent's report

School opening, teaching learning update (supplemental to Principals):

Echoed what Cristina and Lisa said in public comments. Folks are working really hard in a proactive way. Everyone is exhausted but still doing great work. There were issues today with the heating system which has been an ongoing issue. Admin and town hall working on the contracted improvements. Steve S from BHRSD is looking at other insulation improvements.

The USDA announced that all school meals will be free for the rest of the year. The District will be reimbursed for it. This is a huge deal, especially for those families struggling financially.

A research study connected to MIT and Rutgers professors has been identified. This provides free saliva based COVID testing for all staff (on a voluntary basis). This will be offer the week of Oct26 at RCS. Berkshire Community Action Council in Pittsfield offered five Chromebooks they got through a grant. They have been passed on to students (not school property). Thanks to BCAC.

Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC): meeting weekly, looking at metrics. OK for the moment, in a good position. He is looking to transition more students to in person teaching. We expect it will become more difficult with the on-set of flu season so watching data closely.

Update on incorrect salary placement: Working to correct issue where eight teachers were not properly placed on the salary schedule last year and were overpaid. This was related to a small component in the contract updated last year that wasn't factored in when updating placements. Peter is negotiating with REA on specific steps correct. Also reviewing for any opportunity to improve processes to avoid in future. The Admin first identified this around the beginning of September but this has been receiving specific attention over the last couple weeks. There was some discussion about the implications and difficulty this caused,. This has occurred in other districts before. Peter apologized for this and will provide an update on the solution next time.

Last Spring the District was billed \$90 for a musical event the school participated in. This was sent to the teacher but didn't get to the Secretaries who arrange payment. Since this was in the previous fiscal year we can't pay it from the existing budget. Peter asked for approval to pay from the School Choice account (otherwise a Town Meeting would be need to appropriate funds). Motion to pay the \$90 from School Choice by AE, 2nd IW, roll call: all in favor.

5. Special Education Director's report: Mary thanked Jill for all the work and support she has provided, and also to Natalie for her support. She has submitted the 240 (PK) and 262 (teachers salaries) grants. She has scheduled a PACC meeting for Oct27 which will be held remotely. Communicating with parents on needs and to verify they have interaction access. DW thanked her for her hard work.
6. Superintendency plans, next steps: DW updated current status. We are under contract until June 30, 2021. Need to discuss options, any meetings to be scheduled, and role of Superintendency Advisory Committee. Recently the Shaker Mountain School Union voted to reconfigure to two towns, without Richmond. IW thought going back to the SAC to check on what priorities were identified, what opportunity for continued shared services with BH, and how Lenox factored in. Peter emphasized the need to resolve this by the end of the calendar year and not let it go out to May/June. AE asked about the Consultant we work with earlier this year, and if available for more work if needed. IW doesn't support working with Consultant as it's not needed and folks have the prowess to deal with the needs. AE agreed. DW noted there would need to be new funding for any more work. DW mentioned that we should keep in mind that sometimes having a neutral person brings some value. LB and NP agrees we have the talent needed to move forward. NP asked if we knew if BHRSD is open to a multiyear Shared Service agreement. DW has heard comments in BHRSD public meeting about concerns with Shared Service. DW will connect with BHRSD Chair to understand current position and set a meeting to discuss. Need to be sure Peter is not put in compromised position in any discussions. Lenox is meeting with a consultant to move their superintendent search process forward. DW asked about next steps with SAC. Not going to revised committee, but still need to identify what the SC needs from them. Strategically working forward to not compromise viable options is important.
7. Policy: none
8. Discussion about possible expansion of School Committee to five members: This has been talked about for years. DW noted the Town By-Law and Mass Gen Law requirements for any adjustment. There are pros and cons. With the current three-member committee the issue is that any two members are a quorum and are at risk of violating Open Meeting Law with any casual discussion that could ventured in to business of the School Committee. IW is looking for improved way of communicating. DW stated our means of communicating on the business of the school is in publically posted meetings. Any communication outside is only for meeting setting but not to include any expression of opinion on a meter before the committee. We can look to schedule additional meetings as needed, especially given the efficiency and convenience of on-line. DW pointed out that even with five members there is a risk of "serial communication" where consensus of a quorum could be arrived at by two talking, then one talked to another, and so on. He mentioned the Lee SC has recently run in to this issue. DW highlighted an issue of being able to sustain five members as the number of folks willing and able to volunteer the time is low. He has heard some folks might be willing to step up for a five member committee as

the work load would be less intense. More members would bring a broader perspective and input. IN the meantime Peter offered to connect more frequently IW and AE individually by phone to enhance their awareness of details on the range of topics. No further next steps identified.

9. Financial Report: The financial report will be provided to the C a couple days earlier so the meeting discussion and be response to quests from the SC members before meeting. No concerns at this point.
10. Other unforeseen items: AE ask about the status of the early retirement offer. Peter said no one accept. One person if it was time limited and could be taken in December, so need to look at this.
11. Adjournment: Motion at 8:05pm AE, 2nd IW, Roll Call: all in favor.

Submitted: dw