

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

Thursday, November 19, 2020  
5:00 – 6:00PM

*Approved*

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

Guests: Cristine Lenfest, Michelle Smith, Rachel Kanz, Neal Pilson Heather Ostrander, Natalie Gingras

1. Call to order: 5:03pm Roll call

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.

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2. Motion by IW to move to Executive Session at 5:06pm, 2nd AE, all in favor. Purpose: Executive Session pursuant to MGL Ch30A, Sec21a to discuss strategy with respect to negotiations with BHRSD. Holding this discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on negotiations. Returned to Public Session. 5:43pm

3. Potential vote on BHRSD high school tuition agreement: BHRSD offered a 3 year and a 5 year version. The School Committee discussed details in previous meeting on 11/10. IW motion to accept Tuition 5 year agreement starting Jul 1, 2021, 4%/year. 2nd AI, Roll call all in favor.

4. Potential vote on Shared Services Agreement with BHRSD: DW summarized where we currently are, and the path we have been on the last few years. We have been in a Shared Service with BHRSD for 4+ years. BHRSD could not sustain the involvement with the three SMSU towns due to extensive travel distance and time commitments. They would not continue with all three towns but were willing to continue with Richmond. New Ashford and Hancock hired their own Superintendent, business management, SPED Director while Richmond was in a one year extended shared service agreement with BHRSD. On 9/29 the SMSU Committee voted to move forward with modified structure, excluding Richmond. There has been some consideration of shared services with Lenox but very limited. They are currently in the process of hiring a Superintendent leaving a lot of unknowns and variables. A more complex model of shared services and regionalization at the high school level with BHRSD was looked at. This was found to be not practical, and very complex to set up. Hiring a professional to serve Richmond only ("going it alone") is a model was not desirable due to limited professionals in the pool salary requirements, acceptance by the State, and no direct connection to other resources. DW express it would be difficult to find one with the needed skills, a reasonable price after consulting with MASC. Richmond strongly prefers to maintain its autonomy and to settle on an agreement for at least three years to bring some stability. So we are back to a looking at a continuation of Shared Services with BHRSD. The current agreement expires Jun30, 2021. Shared Services is not just for the Superintendent but also Business manager and access to the Facilities Director to support needs (other areas of collaborations). The Richmond School Committee was given a 3 year offer. DW said there needs to be a focus on further improvements and to continue building relationships. The financial aspects in the proposal are a sizable increase but reconciles cost to meet needs. The offer is for \$60,000 for three years, each with 4% increase. AE: agreed with the summary of the past and moving forward. She requested we look at the termination details. IW: Maintaining a formal

relationship with a larger organization while still maintaining our independence is a good. The agreement shapes up for more time, experience and relationships with Richmond. We can build on the past relationship and she approves what has been proposed.

We want to work to get this in place soon so it is settled. No vote was taken but the School Committee is in favor of proceeding forward on the multiple year agreement. The School Committee is expected to vote on this in next meeting.

5. School teaching learning model update: Jill provided a summary for the School Committee. She explained why we haven't changed to remote at this point in time, while others neighboring districts have. We are continually looking at the numbers, the Joint Safety Health Committee (JHSC) meeting at least weekly. Nurse Lenfest is in constant contact with the various health departments and agencies. There are three possibilities to inform a decision to move to remote: county numbers increase more significantly, if there are clusters within a grade or multiple grades, and to be sure we can adequately staff. We will be a COVID rapid test site very soon.

There are no active cases in Richmond or linked to the Richmond Community. AE asked how many students were from Pittsfield since the numbers are higher there. There are about 40 families that live in Pittsfield. Her opinion is that school should be fully remote from after Thanksgiving until after the New Year. IW disagrees and wants to go along with recommendations from safety committee, administration and other resources. She is reading in the MASC daily newsletter to keep up on what others are doing and feels Richmond does not necessarily need to directly follow what neighboring towns are doing. She feels the students' needs to be in school, clearly with safety provisions in place, and that it needs to be continually reviewed and assessed. Jill added that families have demonstrated they are taking responsibility seriously. DW agreed it is so valuable for students to be in school so we don't want to prematurely lose that, if it can be done safely. It is a tough balance on all the factors.

The School Committee does not have the authority to direct a change but a vote would be based on the recommendation of the Administration, and that their recommendation is from sound comprehensive assessment of various factors.

DW offer time for public comments: Natalie Gingras asked what the Shared Services encompasses. DW explained it includes the components of Superintendent, business manager, director of facilities. The School Psychologist is not included in this, it is a separate agreement. The committee discussed the need to further clarify expectations and to be more proactive, less reactive. She is concerned about the amount of time available to meet Richmond needs.

Cristine Lenfest: reiterating what Jill and Ina have said about staying on top of things, and how she is so impressed with what everyone is doing to stay on top of the preventative measure and taking their responsibilities seriously. It is one of the main reasons why Richmond doesn't necessarily need to directly follow others. Don't get complacent. The data shows covid transmission has been from the community, not within schools. We owe it to the kids here. The consequences of not being in school are horrifying; they need trusted adults, food security. She is tightly in communication with other health officials. She knows we may have to pivot to remote at some point.

6. Adjournment: Motion at 6:11pm AE, 2<sup>nd</sup> IW, Roll Call: all in favor.

Submitted: dw