

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**July 27, 2020 – Virtual Meeting**

PRESENT: Mr. Gellar, Mr. McCann, Mr. Antonello, Mr. Compitello, Mrs. LaRosa,  
Mr. Maginniss, Mr. Tussie

ABSENT: None

ADMINISTRATORS: Mrs. Burns, Mrs. Morrison, Mrs. Pellati, Mr. Taylor

ABSENT: None

ATTORNEY: None

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Meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. followed by the Pledge.

Announcements: None

**APPROVAL:**

Motion was made by Peter McCann, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve the dates/building sites for the 2020-2021 West Islip Board of Education Regular Meetings and Planning Sessions.

Motion was made by Peter McCann, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve Teamsters Local 237 MoA re: retirement incentive.

Motion was made by Peter McCann, seconded by Richard Antonello, and carried when all Board members present voted in favor to approve UPSEU MoA re: retirement incentive.

**DISCUSSION:**

Reopening of Schools

Mrs. Burns gave an overview of the district's Reopening Plan. Districts must post the reopening plan on their websites by July 31, 2020 and the Superintendent must affirm that all mandatory elements in the New York State Education guidance document are addressed.

The final decision to reopen schools will be made by the Governor during the week of August 3-7 and will be based on the daily infection rate in the region (Nassau/Suffolk). Schools will prepare to open if the region is in Phase IV and the daily infection rate remains below five percent using a 14-day average. Schools will close if the region, using the 7-day average, is greater than nine percent. The region is well below the 5% threshold and schools should reopen if the present numbers are maintained.

Mrs. Burns explained that the district convened a task force in June with over a 100 community stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, and nurses. Mrs. Morrison is working with instructional subcommittees to provide the best plan for the students in the district, and promote the health and safety of all students, staff and faculty. Mrs. Burns expressed that it is critical to get children back to the school setting, while taking preventative measures to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. A survey was sent to all parents, teachers and students, and resulted in over 400 pages of comments about a return to school. These comments have informed the district plan for the upcoming school year.

A comprehensive health and safety program will be in place requiring daily health checks and isolating symptomatic students who may be in school until a parent can pick them up. There will be required social distancing, and cleaning and sanitizing with the same products used by Good Samaritan Hospital. The district is ensuring proper ventilation and reallocation of space when possible. Mandatory fire/safety drills will be held as per state guidelines.

Mrs. Pellati is working closely with Suffolk Transportation to establish guidelines for buses, including the wearing of masks, socially distancing, and seating. Mrs. Pellati has applied for a FEMA grant to offset the expenses associated with PPE costs. The reopening plan demands adequate broadband for staff and students and teacher contact for all students whether they are in school or at home.

The Board of Education was asked to consider whether the approved Instructional Calendar be revised to provide three days for staff development before students return to school, whether student return be phased in at each building during the month of September, and whether students should return to school for in-person instruction every day. The instructional calendar changes are pending discussion with WITA.

If six feet social distancing cannot be achieved, barriers (sneeze guards) will be needed; it is required that everyone wears a face covering each day. To achieve six feet distancing at the elementary schools, class size must be at 15 students per class, making it necessary to add more teachers at significant cost. To accommodate K-6 class sizes of 23 or less and five feet apart, barriers can be purchased at a cost of under \$100,000. Mrs. LaRosa asked about the largest class size; Beach Street has 26-27 students per class for sixth grade and Manetuck has 26 students in some of its fifth grade sections. Mrs. LaRosa would prefer no more than 23/24 students in a section.

Mr. Gellar asked if masks are needed if barriers are in place. Mrs. Burns explained that barriers and masks are required if the social distancing is under six feet and masks are required for all. The Board must decide on six feet social distancing or a barrier with less than six feet. The alternative is a hybrid (AB) schedule and/or additional elementary teachers.

Mrs. LaRosa advocated for K-6 to return to school five days and have class sizes brought down. Mr. Gellar agreed with Mrs. LaRosa to add three sections to elementary, one each at Manetuck and Paul J. Bellew and one sixth grade section at Beach Street. Additionally, sneeze guard barriers would be purchased at a cost of approximately \$88,000. Mrs. Burns stated that the intervention teachers could potentially be used as classroom teachers, but did not recommend that option. The Board agreed.

Mrs. LaRosa asked about students with compromised immune systems. Mrs. Burns advised that accommodations would be made for medically vulnerable students. Other parents have the right to home school their children. An IHIP form must be submitted to the Curriculum Office by the extended date of August 1; however, given the circumstances, reasonable extensions will be provided.

Mrs. Burns suggested that the district is looking into an A/B hybrid schedule for grades 9-12 due to the density of the building.

Mrs. Morrison thanked the instructional committees for the information they provided and recommends an A/B hybrid schedule for the high school, and spoke about possibly using webcams on B days so students can be part of the instructional environment as much as possible. Mr. Antonello felt it is hard for teachers to both teach in the classroom and attend to the students via webcam and feels one group would lose out. Mrs. Morrison recognizes the challenges and is looking into the risk/reward but students would be tuned in and webcams would help teachers get through as much of the annual curriculum as possible. Mrs. Burns suggested reconvening the instructional committees and exploring the options.

The purchase of equipment was discussed, including hand-washing devices for secondary school cafeterias, outdoor tents for lunch, sneeze guards (barriers) where six-foot distancing cannot be achieved, and desks for kindergarten/PreK students.

Mrs. Burns explained that the elementary schools have sinks in most classrooms; the vanities and sinks at Bayview and Paul J. Bellew are undergoing an upgrade and their installation may be delayed. Mrs. Burns asked that sanitizing gel be placed in all locations and suggested stand-alone hand washing devices be used. Mr. McCann recommended that pricing be obtained. Mrs. Burns spoke about rotating schedules for lunch so students get a break from the classroom. Mrs. LaRosa suggested an outside area where kids can go weather permitting; the Board agreed.

Mr. McCann thanked everyone for putting the plans together and for giving the district options to get children back to school in a safe manner.

Mrs. LaRosa summarized that Pre-K/8th grade would go back to school five full days and the high school would follow the hybrid-teaching model. Mrs. Burns explained that Pre-K is moving forward but the layouts of the rooms are being explored.

Mr. Gellar spoke about his participation on the instructional committee meetings and thanked Mrs. Morrison, Mrs. Fulton, teachers and staff for the tremendous work they have done. Mrs. Burns spoke about how much she has learned from this process. The plan will be amended and sent to the state and posted on the district website for the community.

Mrs. Burns advised that she met with the Suffolk County Department of Health and there will be clear guidance and a protocol to follow if there is a COVID-19 case and will be providing this information to the community.

Mr. Gellar thanked everyone who joined the meeting. The meeting ended at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,



Mary Hock  
District Clerk

All correspondence, reports or related materials referred to in these minutes are on file in the District Office.

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