

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
MARCH 9, 2021**

7:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Present

Ellen Joachim, Chair; Carole Kasper, Vice-Chair; Cara Endyke Doran, Harold Engstrom, Kevin Matthews, Candace Miller

Also Present

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal; Kirsteen Patterson, Director of Finance and Operations; Mark Mason, Teachers' Association; Andreas Masiakos, Student Senate Representative; Lynn James, METCO Parent Representative; Art Reilly, Athletic Director; Susan Shields, Department Coordinator for Wellness; Mel Gonsalves and Kelly Mazza, Wellness Teachers; Maggie McLeod and Tallulah Longtine, LS Students

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:25pm.

Public Comment

Dawn Solowey, Sudbury

Today's DESE guidance is clear, everyone is going back fully in-person. High Schools must make plans now to prepare for a full opening. LS must ask parents simply "do you want full in-person or remote." "The time is now to begin shifting away from remote and hybrid learning models and return to the in-person instructional format." The state can order LS fully back on two weeks' notice and DESE will send a firm deadline soon. The guidance says in bold underlined print "we encourage schools and districts to bring back students at each grade level as quickly as possible." It says that many districts and schools are already moving to bring students from K-12 back for full time in-person learning in the coming weeks. We are tracking tons of schools who are bringing students back on or before April 5: Duxbury, Lynnfield, Westwood, Danvers, Weymouth, Braintree, Tyngsboro, Franklin, Peabody, - the list goes on and on. More are announcing imminent openings by the hour. The question now is when LS will return to fully in person. The answer is as soon as possible, not April 26. as the year will be almost over, not waiting until the state literally forces us to open, not keeping kids on zoom while all of our peers are back, not when the state is encouraging us to open saying there is not substitute for in-person learning, not after a neuro-psychologist who treats young people in Sudbury wrote you a letter sounding the alarm about LS kids' mental health. We are trying to understand what is the roadblock at LS. Is the teachers' union blocking kids from coming back? Is this really all about the union's scheduling preference for leaving at noon and being home on Wednesdays? The union's push for vaccine priority was premised on being back to school for kids. As you know, a change in learning model is not subject to collective bargaining with the Union, it is just an LS decision. The learning model has to serve the kids. LS students have

petitioned for full re-opening that has 450 signatures and counting. They are rallying tomorrow afternoon to bring LS back. Let's join the huge list of districts announcing full reopening on or before April 5. LS has a fully in-person plan on its website filed with the state last summer. We can do this like all these other districts. Let's not waste another two weeks for the March 23 School Committee meeting. Let's schedule another meeting because this is an emergency. Tell us how parents can help. It's been a year of terrible educational and mental health loss for our kids but now there is an opportunity to salvage a decent part of this year if we act quickly. Each of you has a chance right now to do the right thing by LS students to bring LS back fully in person in the next few weeks. Thank you.

Claudine Coulon, Sudbury

I would like to say thank you to Dawn which says pretty much everything that needs to be said. I am curious if the School Committee is going to respond to the multiple issues she had mentioned in her comments or if it's just going to be the comments meeting a dead-end.

Kathleen McConnell, Sudbury

I do want to highlight what we, as parents, can do. We want to help not to be difficult or to be causing problems, we want to help our children which is the ultimate goal for all of us and all of us on this zoom agrees with that. But what can we do to help. Say it and we will do it, we will figure out a way. I also agree with scheduling an emergency meeting and not waiting another two weeks. Time is ticking away, particularly for the seniors. They are running out of time and it is so unfair to these kids. It has been a very difficult year. This can end so let's please work together to figure out a way to get the kids back in school as soon as possible. Finally, we have received an email that the google meets were cancelled – why don't we keep those on, I had put mine on my calendar. Let's use that time, most of us have set aside the time. Why cancel it? Thank you.

Presentation – Wellness Department

Susan Shields, Mel Gonsalves, Kelly Mazza, Students Maggie McLeod and Tallulah Longtine. The students will share their experience this year in Wellness.

Ms. Shields reported that the Wellness Department began meeting virtually nearly exactly a year ago today.

Discussions began then on philosophical and pedagogical goals for the curriculum in the coming year. The goals were that students would be safe, have fun, be active, to play, to have an opportunity to socialize. Consequently, the curriculum has shifted to focus on resilience skills, self-care, and stress relief as overarching goals. Concentration is on the skills that students have learned through this pandemic year. Students participate in grade level teams which meet two mornings per week and involve physical activity. The remote students do a synchronous lesson on fitness. On remote Wednesdays, all students are in one class that focuses on the health component of the curriculum.

Mel Gonsalves is a teacher for the 11th grade. The activity model humanizes the experience by engaging students in conversation before beginning the activity. The wellness teachers make a

point to engage each student in conversation. The class provides time for students to socialize and destress. The afternoon classes involve content in Cardiovascular Fitness and Health Issues which are the required classes for the 11th grade. The courses include concentration on stress resiliency as well as pertinent health issues facing young adults of today. During the pandemic, healthy eating habits were not as consistent as is desirable so discussion on good nutrition and nourishing food habits. Substance information is presented by Ian Spencer, LS' Lincoln Safety Resource Officer.

The 10th Grade Level in Wellness involves community building experiences through game playing, creative projects, and physical activity. The afternoon focus for the 10th grade is CPR, self-care, and Outdoor Pursuits. The Depression Workshop has been included in the 10th grade curriculum in collaboration with the LS Clinical Counseling Department. Information and discussion regarding Substance Abuse continues. The Sudbury Fire Department and SRO Kim Walch have acquainted students with emergency situations and the Good Samaritan Law. The Wellness Department will also partner with the LS Librarians and Tech Team in building a virtual escape room.

Kelly Mazza, 9th grade level teacher with Vicky Caburian and Jacob Jones, presented the 9th grade curriculum. Physical fitness components begin the morning classes. Outdoor activities have included snowshoeing, sledding, fitness walking, pickleball, badminton, and volleyball. The online classes are the required classes for 9th grade: Introduction to Wellness which includes relationships, decision making, understanding one's own mindset and Foundations of Fitness which addresses proper form during fitness activities. In collaboration with the Clinical Counselors, the signs of suicide program, substance abuse subjects, and a collaboration with the LS librarians regarding finding and evaluating health related subjects on the internet.

LS students Tallulah Longtine and Maggie McLeod presented the student perspective of the Wellness program. Tallulah has been in the Remote Cohort and has found that the wellness department has been very good at communicating and connecting with students on a regular basis. They have developed creative ways of working out at home with materials found in the home. Maggie McLeod found that the Wellness teachers have made a great effort to connect with students and she feels that teachers in the wellness area are available and a resource for all students.

Ms. Wong added that the student check-in undertaken by the Wellness Department teachers who see all students weekly has been an invaluable ombudsman to teach students to recognize signs of distress among fellow students and to learn methods of self-care.

Information and Discussion

Art Reilly proposed a track club program for LS students which would begin the week of March 15 and take place outside as long as the track and roads are clear of snow. Additional events following the MIAA guidelines would be added as the weather permits. Competition at our track while other schools are competing on their own home track.

VOTE: Carole Kasper moved that the LS School Committee approve that the Track Club begin training the week of March 15. as proposed by the Athletic Director. Harold Engstrom seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, all were in favor via a roll call vote excepting Ellen Joachim who abstained from the vote.

Mr. Reilly requested approval for beginning Spring Sports – Baseball, Lacrosse (girls & boys), Softball, Tennis (girls & boys), outdoor track and field (girls & boys) and volleyball (boys) – that would begin on Monday, April 26. MIAA guidelines will be followed for all Spring Sports. Mr. Reilly also requested approval for Ultimate Frisbee which will follow guidelines similar to the outdoor sports. Rugby is a spring sport. LS coaches are working to establish safety protocols with other coaches and MIAA representatives for rugby. Wrestling also proposes to begin in spring but has not forwarded enough information to Mr. Reilly for him to request approval.

VOTE: Carole Kasper moved that the LS School Committee approve a spring season for the LS Ultimate Frisbee club. Cara Endyke-Doran seconded the motion. All were in favor via roll call, there was no further discussion.

VOTE: Carole Kasper moved that the LS School Committee approve the proposal before them for Spring Sports to begin on Monday, April 26, 2021 which will include Baseball, Boys/Girls Lacrosse, Softball, Boys/Girls Tennis, Boys/Girls Outdoor Track and Field, and Volleyball for Boys following MIAA guidelines. Kevin Matthews seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, all were in favor via roll call except Ellen Joachim who abstained.

Mr. Reilly expressed his appreciation to SudburyTV which has done an excellent job of live streaming home games.

Recognitions

Racial Climate Task Force was commended for bringing the “I’m Not a Racist am I” screening to the 9th and 10th grade diversity workshops and thanks to parents Judy Merra and Pamela Jones who led the initiative to bring the screening to Sudbury and Lincoln.

Michael Bunting and the local choir directors of our community schools who organized a virtual Community Choir event that brought together choral groups from all grade levels for a stellar performance on Friday, March 5.

Carly Evans and 26 student participants of the LSB Players performed “What Happens at the End”, an original song cycle which was excellent – also on March 5, 2021.

On March 3, David Hosford organized a virtual meeting with 300 educators from Latvia to introduce methods and structure of LS as well as a student’s typical day. It was well received in Latvia.

March 6-7, 2021, 14 of LS students competed in the annual National Ocean Sciences Bowl regional competition (the "Blue Lobster Bowl") against other high schools in

Massachusetts. The LS A and B teams placed third and sixth, respectively. In a competition run in tandem with the final elimination rounds, the LS C Team of ninth and tenth graders placed second in designing an autonomous undersea robotic exploring vehicle. This year the competition was entirely virtual, no traveling to MIT to compete, kids competing as a team but not physically together. It was also spread over both weekend days, so it was a marathon. Despite all this, the team members showed their true colors - performing at a high level and exhibiting grace under pressure along with good sportsmanship, good spirits, and good humor. To prepare for the event, the team has been immersing themselves in oceanography (physical, chemical, biological, geological), ocean engineering, marine policy, maritime history, and any other conceivable topic related to the sea as well as meeting 2 (sometimes 3) times per week honing their competition skills. LS Faculty Advisor BJ Pegram thanked Caroline Singler and Allison Richardson for giving up their weekend to manage the B and C Teams during the competition.

Congratulations good luck wishes to Niccolo Gabrielli and Tyler Saklad, Class of 2022, who will be competing at the Tournament of Champions for Speech and Debate at the University of Kentucky, April 2021.

Student Senate Report

Student Senate Andreas Masiakos reported that Student Senate Representatives attended a recent Faculty Meeting to extend their feedback on the Hybrid model to the Faculty. Ms. Wong attended a recent Student Senate meeting. Students are excited and anticipate returning to school for more hours. A fundraising effort has begun for a competition for T-Shirt Design.

METCO Parent Report

There was no METCO Parent report other than looking forward to hearing what the new educational plan will be.

Teachers' Association Report

Mark Mason acknowledged the Racial Climate Task Force for making the screening available to the LS community and reported that teachers in all disciplines have been incorporating the messages from the film into their classes. He thanked Chris Collins, Jane Murphy, and Regina Shopiro as well as the Librarians Paula Myers, Amy Hutchinson, and Peter Riedel for providing information on many forms of discrimination which has enhanced the discussions being held school-wide.

Chairperson/Liaison Reports

Carole Kasper reported on the Lincoln Select Bboard which hosted the Sudbury Select Bboard for a collaborative discussion, the LS Regional Agreement was one of the topics addressed. Transportation, housing, and diversity/equity initiatives were also discussed. Transition planning occurred last week, Ms. Kasper extended her gratitude to those who were instrumental in making it a complete and informative program. On Friday, March 5, Bella Wong and Leslie Patterson attended a Lincoln Parent Teacher Organization meeting in Lincoln.

Kevin Matthews reported on the recent Sudbury Finance Committee meeting, where the Committee voted to support the warrant article for funding the Stadium Field at LS.

Candace Miller reported that work continues on the LS School Committee Policy Manual.

Superintendent/Principal Report

Ms. Wong intended to report on new plans for Spring but the late breaking guidance from the Commissioner of Education and the planned telephone call with Superintendents tomorrow has led her to conclude that new plans will be presented at the upcoming March 23rd LS School Committee meeting. A fully in-person model is in the process of being developed. The process begins with the Academic Council and the Learning Continuity Committee, followed by discussions with the Executive Teacher's Association, in Faculty Meetings, and meetings with students. It is an iterative process and very inclusive with creativity sought from all parties. Environmental factors leading to the impetus to open schools to increased in-person hours: decreasing rates of infection, increasing availability of vaccinations; return of temperate weather. Nonetheless, there is a continued risk of COVID and its variants as well as rates of infection among adolescents which means that consistent safety features will continue – social distancing and mask wearing.

Current distancing guidelines are changing. DESE recommends all students be forward-facing with 3' distancing from seat edge to seat edge – in effect at 4' distancing. DESE recommended guidance plans will be announced in April and no date has been given yet for high school to shift to fully in-person. LS has examined all classrooms for proper distancing. There may be instances in which student cohorts must be maintained so that classrooms are not overcrowded. Work continues to ensure students are scheduled in the same classes they are presently enrolled in. This is especially evident in FATA and Science classrooms. Ms. Wong emphasized that all faculty and staff have been open and invested in the proposed return to students being fully in-person. Almost 205% of the student population is in Cohort R. Work continues to make the learning experience for Cohort R as strong as possible. Ms. Wong emphasized that work preparing for reopening to in person learning is ongoing. She also noted that 70% of LS students are registered for pool testing and that higher participation in pool testing will be beneficial to the entire LS community. Beginning in April, pool testing will be extended at no cost. Ms. Wong encourages others to participate in the pool testing. Efforts to plan senior events in a safe manner continue so that seniors may enjoy traditional graduating events.

Ms. Joachim acknowledged all the time and effort Ms. Wong and others have dedicated to continually planning behind the scenes for the best outcome for in-person education. Ms. Wong appreciated the support and the time expended by the LS School Committee toward working through the issues of the current school year to date.

Ms. Wong reported on her recent virtual visit with the Lincoln Parent Teacher Organization with Leslie Patterson. She appreciated the enthusiasm with which parents were looking forward to

their students attending LS. Travel plans are being created for next school year and include a student trip to Iceland, music trips to NYC, as well as exchange trips to France, Spain and Germany.

Director of Finance and Operations Report

Kirsteen Patterson reported that the Business Office is wrapping up three individual audits: the Student Activity Audit, the General Audit, and the End of Year Audit Report. At the next school committee meeting, the third quarter financial report will be available.

Action Items

VOTE on FY22 Operating Budget: Carole Kasper moved that the LS School Committee vote to approve the FY22 Operating Budget totaling \$34,864,7962, which reflects \$27,330,369 assessed to Sudbury, and \$3,876,655 assessed to Lincoln, as presented on February 24, 2021 during the posted Public Hearing. Harold Engstrom seconded the motion. Kevin Matthews pointed out the worrying trend that LS out of district expenses were increasing yearly and required monitoring. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote.

VOTE on Memorandum of Agreement to Amend Schedule B of the LS Teachers' Association Agreement – Extra Service Stipends: Carole Kasper moved that the Lincoln-Sudbury School Committee approve The Memorandum of Agreement to Amend Schedule B - Extra Service Stipends by and between the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional District School Committee and the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional Teachers' Association. The document is dated January 25, 2021. Candace Miller seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote.

Approval of Minutes

Carole Kasper moved to approve the edited Minutes for February 24, 2021. Candace Miller seconded the motion. There was no discussion and all were in favor via roll call vote.

Future Agenda Items

There were no future agenda items.

Public Comment

Christianne Murray, Sudbury

I would like to thank the LS Wellness Department for their presentation. It is my hope that the school committee members might better understand now, based on the presentation of the Wellness teachers, the outrage of a large group of LS parents after comments made at the last school committee meeting, especially as not one committee member had the courage to refute the false statements that were made that night. While we can absolutely appreciate everything the Wellness Department has done for LS students, there is still much work that needs to be done. Remote wellness classes cannot effectively catch all students who may be falling through the cracks. As she so eloquently stated, Dawn Solowey clearly illustrated all the many reasons why LS needs to add more than 6 hours of in-person learning each week. The proposed additional two half days is not enough. Nor is it sufficient to wait until late April for this

return. I truly believe that there needs to be another school committee meeting held before the end of March. It is extremely difficult for parents to understand why our students cannot have full day in person instruction. As Commissioner Reilly's guidelines released today clearly detailed, full reopening will be mandated before the end of this year. Since June of last year, "DESE guidance has consistently noted that 3 feet in classrooms is a safe standard for distancing if masks are worn and other mitigating practices are in place based on guidance from the World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics. DESE's approach to physical distancing was endorsed last summer by Governor Baker's COVID Command Advisory Board, the Massachusetts Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics, and medical experts from Mass General and Brigham and Women's Hospital. Since then, DESE's approach has been further endorsed and validated with numerous groups noting that 3' distancing in classrooms is standard and supporting the return of students to classroom. So if students can safely attend four half days with 3' distancing, there is no reason as to why our students cannot return to full days. There are hundreds of options for student to safely remain on campus for lunch. We have the space. Since last fall, DESE has also had a COVID Response Help Center in place to support districts with reopening, COVID protocols and operating guidance. DESE is encouraging districts at all grade levels to bring students back as quickly as possible. We have COVID pool testing in place since November. With improved COVID metrics across the state, so many districts are so much further ahead with planning and implementation strategies for methods of reopening. Parents are truly struggling to understand why LS lags so far behind. At this point, we can only look to our teachers' association and the agreement between the LS School Committee and the LS Teachers' Association. Many of us see this as the contributing factor for the reason LS is only offering 6 hours of in person learning. The proposed plan emailed to parents on Monday to add two half days was not acceptable then and is clearly not acceptable now based on DESE's guidelines released today. There is zero reason for students to leave the building by noon on Monday's and Tuesday's and by 11 on Thursday's and Friday's with zero hours in the building on Wednesdays. LS should not waste the precious few days remaining in the school year by waiting further. As DESE clearly stated in their reopening guidelines, districts need to survey their parents as soon as possible. While parental input is always valuable, it is particularly critical during this time when parents and guardians have the most unique insight into their child's remote learning experience, needs, engagement, attention, progress, skills, behavior, moods and mental health. Any survey sent should be sent to parents and guardians. Previous surveys were so sadly skewed they should not be discussed further as a point of reference going forward. And to finally address the subject of a waiver from DESE, there are specific circumstances for applying for such a waiver. I'm a bit surprised that members of the school committee are not more familiar with more of the guidelines that were released today. Commissioner Reilly made it very clear that a waiver is for extremely limited situations, not for affluent school systems with every mitigating strategy in place nor for a district with plenty of resources, a modern building and acres of grounds. Applying for a waiver should absolutely off the table. And finally, for parents uncomfortable with 3' distancing can absolutely choose to have their students remain in a remote mode. We cannot cater to the minority. We need full days of in person learning, we need to bring LS back. Thank you.

Claudine Coulon, Sudbury

My questions have to do with getting students back in school safely. Since we are not using the indoor gyms very much, could they be used for classroom spaces or lunch or for FATA and Science? I am just wondering if the gym space could also be used. The other thing, is that you don't say no to everything and are trying to find solutions but I am still hearing a lot of we can't do this and we can't do that. I would mention that the current schedule works really well and seems less stressful than the blue/white week frenetic schedule. The 90 minutes is actually a great break during the day. I don't understand why we can retain the existing schedule and have people rotate by grade or whatever to maintain the 90 minute schedule. So many students leave campus for lunch anyway, it seems we should be able to keep the current schedule with its 90 minute break. Finally, I also feel that the wellness program is amazing and I applaud all the wellness teachers. I have very specific knowledge that they are not able to catch kids. That kids that look to be happy and perfectly fine and don't indicate any issues, are having very serious issues and wellness is missing that. So suggesting that they are able to monitor students' state of mind is not accurate.

Colleen Dunn, Sudbury, LS Senior

I would like to thank the School Committee and administration for their work in getting us this far. But I am a senior and I think that Seniors have been extremely neglected in many ways. The vast majority of seniors do not take wellness. In addition to that, we have only had one senior event this year. We want to go back to school and we want to go back now. I hope the committee does more and does better. Thank you.

Sharon Schmidt-Ross, Sudbury

Is there any consideration for bus registration because of the traffic that is going to happen every morning and every afternoon at pick up and drop off.

Dawn Solowey, Sudbury

I just want to encourage the committee and Bella and the administration to think hard about whether or not we can come back sooner. It seems that this is wafting to April 26th which is 7 weeks away and a long time. Other districts are doing it and obviously didn't plan on using April vacation to move furniture. As for Colleen's comments, more should be done for the seniors and right away. If they don't go back sooner, there will only be a month remaining in their senior year. Let's be proactive and make this work.

Adjourn

Carole Kasper offered a motion to adjourn the meeting, Candace Miller seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 10:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Francy Zingale

To view video of the meeting, please go to: <https://sudbury.vod.cstus.tv/vod>