

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 17, 2020**

**7:00PM**

**GOOGLE MEET**

**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; Joshua Gilman, Co-President Teachers' Association; Art Reilly, Director Athletics and Activities; Andreas Masiakos and Riya Misra, Student Senate; Virginia Blake, Curriculum Coordinator

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm.

**Public Comment**

Can the School Committee Members please speak to the concerns of many in the community that positives revealed by testing will (1) trigger an overreaction shift to remote; and/or (2) overwhelm our contact tracing capacity? What specific assurances can you as a Committee provide as to specific metrics before moving to remote, as families weigh whether to opt in to testing? I support testing and believe that such assurances as to what would trigger remote – not only from Bella Wong but from the Committee members -- would go a long way to building trust and buy-in to the program. Thank you. **Dawn Solowey**

As the parent of an LS Student I received Bell Wong's email about the potential upcoming testing of students for COVID-19. Unfortunately there was no detailed information about the actual testing company that was chosen, specifically their methodology, the previous schools they have worked with and what their detailed process entailed. There are hundreds of testing companies that are now looking to capitalize on COVID outbreak for pure monetary purposes. The lack of transparency by the LS Administration on the selection process is alarming to say the least. What background and statistics have been provided by this organization to LS to ensure the accuracy of the testing process?

Additionally you are putting the students in a very uncomfortable situation for those who would agree to testing versus those who do not. There is no current data or evidence that supports the testing of the students at LS. If you have done all the safety protocols as you stated at the beginning of the school year in the Hybrid model and there has been no outbreak why would we engage in the resources financially and operationally? Why is there the need to change the course and go fully remote with testing from an organization we know nothing about? Based on the feedback that I gave revived from my student at LS and many others,

going fully remote is the path of least resistance for the teachers and administration. It is very clear that Ms. Wong's full intention is to make this a fully remote learning environment which goes completely against what Governor Baker and the state of MA is trying to achieve. **Craig Berkel**

### **Director of Finance and Operations**

Kirsteen Patterson reported that work continues on the FY22 Budget. Meetings with Lincoln Capital Committee have concluded, Lincoln Finance Committee will be December 9<sup>th</sup>, and the Sudbury Finance Committee meeting will occur on December 14, 2020. The FEMA application has been submitted whose reimbursement is for March-June expenditures. COVID relief grant will continue to be spent through December 2020. These funds have mitigated the expenses resulting from COVID precautions. The E&D submission has been extended to the end of November and Ms. Patterson is meeting with the Auditors to complete that submission.

The Health Insurance Renewal and Proposal has been concluded. LS will contract with Harvard Pilgrim Health Care beginning in June 2021. Ms. Patterson extended her thanks to the L-S Teachers' Association for voting to change the LS Health Insurance group. Retirees will benefit from an 18% reduction, faculty and staff will benefit from a 3.8% reduction in plan cost. Ms. Patterson invites the School Committee to support the change from the Minuteman-Nashoba Health Plan group to Harvard Pilgrim Health Care. Mr. Gilman added that the Fallon Health Plan members were encouraged by the incentives provided to ease their transition to a new health plan. Ms. Wong recognized the work of Kirsteen Patterson, the Executive Teachers' Association, and the members of the Insurance Advisory Committee who participated in this effort.

Ms. Patterson presented the FY21-22 enrollment report. Campus enrollment (students exclusive of out of district students) for FY21-22. Enrollment is steady with slight increases/decreases. The information will shape the budget process for future years. Projected enrollment for the next five years and ten year projections illustrate that enrollment remains steady with changes of just over 1%. Except for a one year bubble, the class enrollments remain level. Larger changes in enrollment would result in staffing changes so examination of five year/ten year projections are an important factor in planning future budgets and staffing levels. A close examination of projected enrollments permits staffing changes based on attrition.

### **Presentation of Class Size and Staffing**

Virginia Blake reported on class size and staffing for 2020-2021. Class sizes and enrollment projections have a large impact on curriculum offerings. Certain subjects, such as science, are greatly affected by differences in class sizes and require planning to have enough sections/teachers to cover the larger class. Classes above 100% reflect subjects in which students are able to double enroll. As FTE's decreased in the past year, class sizes have correspondingly increased somewhat. Scheduling student choices does not strictly follow class size. The current school year was made more complicated by the formation of cohorts which required finessing the balance of students in all classes. The electives in History and English

were more difficult to fulfill first choices because of the necessity of creating cohorts with even distribution of students. Most students requesting double enrollment in sciences and math were able to schedule their first choices. Choices for FATA classes were significantly affected by social distancing guidelines required by COVID planning. As enrollment declines, the number of students enrolled in an individual course increases and the ability to accommodate choices for students is more difficult. World Language has sequential classes in five different language which means that students in a certain sequence for a given language necessitate classes that can adequately accept those students.

Ms. Wong added that the financial climate and housing stock in member towns affect enrollment. This year, students returned to LS from private schools and there may be a similar trend upward in the coming year as a result of the economic climate impacted by COVID. Forecasting changes in enrollment and the resulting challenges in staffing and class sizes is difficult to ascertain but trends are watched closely. Preparing the future budget will be affected by the guidelines provided by our member towns and has not yet been received. Ms. Blake affirmed the determination of LS to continue to provide a wide variety in curriculum and provide an ability for students to enroll in the classes they would like to take. Ms. Blake and Ms. Wong also acknowledged that when students are able to take the courses they are interested in, their level of success is enhanced. The goal of scheduling is to encourage the passions of students and staff to teach/learn subjects of highest interest to them. Effort is made in providing course choices in subjects that will be useful to students as they move forward in their education and develop experience in courses that may affect their avocations in the world beyond LS.

### **Presentation of Winter Sports**

Art Reilly provided Athletic updates. Mr. Reilly met with all winter coaches to discuss future parameters for winter sports. State guidelines were released on November 6<sup>th</sup>. The COVID and sports and medicine committees weighed in on guidelines and recommendations. The MIAA is meeting on Friday, November 20 to approve final guidelines. Athletic Directors of the Dual County League will then meet to determine what individual schools are able to accomplish. December 14 is the earliest date for the beginning of winter sports. Mr. Reilly requests returning to the next School Committee meeting to inform the committee of the shape of winter sports. Basketball, Hockey, Alpine Skiing, Nordic Skiing, Swimming, Indoor Track, and Wrestling are possibilities but it will be impossible to offer all of them. With the Committee's approval the first opportunity to begin sports would be Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup>, after having the opportunity to meet with coaches, the families of each sport, and Dual County league officials. Ms. Joachim acknowledged that a number of parents have inquired about the start of winter sports. Ms. Wong complimented Mr. Reilly for his ability to navigate the intense feelings involved in student sports activities and his extraordinary ability to communicate with all interested parties.

### **Recognitions**

Ms. Wong recognized Associate Principal Tracy Ryan for her efforts in redefining the traffic patterns for incoming/outgoing buses and parent pickup/drop-offs. There are significantly

more parent drop-off and pickups which has caused significant traffic tie-ups on Concord Road. Tracy Ryan has tackled that thankless job with a smile which is much appreciated.

### **Student Senate Report**

The Student Senate last met shortly after Senior Dress Up Day. The seniors were happy to have the opportunity to enjoy Senior Dress Up Day. Conversations have begun regarding the Holiday Fundraising event. The students acknowledge that the school may need to be remote the week before winter break and so are preparing for that situation. The Student Senate will be meeting tomorrow regarding the COVID testing program.

### **Teachers' Association Report**

There is no Teachers' Association Report.

### **Chairperson Report**

Ms. Joachim reported on a recent meeting of the EDCO Board of Directors. Guidance from the Town of Sudbury is still anticipated. Ms. Joachim and Ms. Kasper have been brainstorming ways of addressing questions submitted by parents. They will prepare a FAQ document for parents to address common questions that arise.

### **Liaison Reports**

Ms. Kasper attended the Lincoln Finance Committee meeting regarding the FY22 Budget and the latest meeting of the Lincoln Capital Committee. As liaison to Lincoln Public Schools, Ms. Kasper attended a program about indigenous peoples which she found very informative and found the information useful for the Racial Climate Task Force Committee. Lastly, she reported that work groups for the implementation of the LS Strategic Plan objectives have been created, and the Strategic Planning steering Committee continues to meet regularly.

Ms. Endyke-Doran reported that the COVID Testing Subcommittee has been meeting regularly as well.

### **Superintendent/Principal Report**

#### Hybrid Model Update: Half-day vs. Whole-day

The decision was made to develop a half-day hybrid program because students have more structure in each day, more teacher interaction and more teacher contact time. There would be actually less contact in a whole day model. Everyday synchronous classes provide more contact time with the teacher and student contact time because each synchronous class includes the entire class population. Staff surveys after Thanksgiving will be collected to ascertain the success of the program. The half-day program avoids the necessity of providing lunch and study halls for students when not in class in a socially distanced manner. Mr. Gilman added that beginning with small classes in the morning worked well and returning to teaching students together in the synchronous classes provided a good flow and variety to the day. He added that the technology team at LS were amazingly effective in enabling communication with students in a variety of ways. Teachers are finding the half day hybrid model to be infinitely superior in quality and contact time with students while maintaining the safety of LS students.

Ms. Wong reported that Quarter 1 has just been completed and teachers have noted that the student grades are meeting expectations. Teachers and Administrators will be considering the data to devise strategies to improve student grades. The methods for reaching students who are struggling are not available in the current environment as they have been in the past.

Ms. Wong reported that the social/emotional health of LS students has been an overarching concern of the staff and administration that has guided decisions regarding the shape of our current educational efforts during COVID time. In an update of metrics to sustain continuity of learning, Ms. Wong continues to watch trends in COVID infection in the community and state-wide. Cohort R continues to increase in number. Teaching coverage remains a concern as does student positives in COVID infection. There are currently approximately 1 incident of infection per week. Efficiency in accomplishing contact tracing is increasing and the capabilities of the nurses to contact tracing in school is highly effective. ASPEN, the student information system, has been modified to assist in this effort. Students and parents have been very responsive in informing the school when there is a positive case. COVID testing will be initiated to better support in-person hybrid learning. Large scale testing that is more affordable and more accessible is now available. LS will initiate a testing program to carry through the winter months when an increase in positive incidences is anticipated. The testing is the PCR molecular test which will be administered weekly involving a nasal swab. Pool testing will be the method of testing which decreases the overall cost of the large-scale testing. The Town of Sudbury COVID relief grant will cover the cost of testing through the month of December. Fundraising efforts have begun for the January through March testing program which will amount to \$180 per student.

Ms. Wong has held a number of informational meetings with parents and community members with regard to the testing program. Highlights from the google meets include questions regarding:

Why is the testing not mandatory? LS is a public school and unable to mandate participation.

Do we have capacity for contact tracing? Yes, we do have the capacity to contact trace.

What is the number of student positives that would trigger switching to remote? There is no number – the limiting factor is ability to contact trace in a timely manner. The hybrid model enhances the ability to complete contact tracing with an outcome that is less disruptive in general in part because the students are socially distanced (6 feet) apart which lessens the contact tracing resulting in quarantine. Cohort R students are able to participate in the testing. It is possible to enter the testing program in January although there is a possibility that the program will not be viable for the January-March time frame.

Ms. Joachim thanked the Town of Sudbury for its generosity in providing COVID testing for the month of December.

### **Information and Discussion**

Ms. Joachim discussed creating a new method for dealing with community questions during School Committee meetings. The goal of a new method is to hear all questions and public comments in an equitable manner without making the School Committee meetings overlong. Public comments do not typically engender discussion with the School Committee during the meeting. Ms. Joachim suggested that it would be better to address the comments at another

time when the School Committee members can adequately respond to the questions. Ms. Kasper recommended having one instance of Public Comment at the beginning of the meeting so that community members do not have to wait until the end of the meeting. She stated a reminder that the School Committee meetings are not public forums. In addition, emails addressed to the School Committee are read by all members and it is an effective way to communicate with the School Committee members. Ms. Joachim noted that the emails and comments from parents are valued by the School Committee. Ms. Miller suggested voting on public comment options drafted for a future meeting.

#### **Action Items**

***VOTE: Carole Kasper offered a motion to approve and support the affirmative vote of the Lincoln-Sudbury Teachers' Association to terminate agreement with Minuteman Nashoba Health Group and to enter into a contract with sole health insurance carrier Harvard Pilgrim Health Plan effective June 1, 2021. Further, Ms. Kasper moves to recommend the incentive program for the current Fallon Health subscribers that will transfer to Harvard Pilgrim Health Plan. Harold Engstrom seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote.***

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Harold Engstrom offered a motion to accept the Minutes for October 27, 2020. Carole Kasper seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All were in favor via roll call vote.

#### **Future Agenda Items**

There were no future agenda items.

#### **Public Comment**

See attachment.

#### **Adjourn to Executive Session**

Carole Kasper moved to adjourn Open Session to move into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining as the Chair has so declared. Harold Engstrom seconded the motion. All were in favor via roll call vote. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Francy Zingale

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