

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 14, 2020**

7:30PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

To help ensure public safety during the Coronavirus outbreak on March 12 Governor Baker issued an Executive Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law GL c30A, sect 20. With that in mind the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District Committee will be holding this meeting virtually. The meeting will be available for public viewing via television and SudburyTV.org. The public will be able to submit questions or comments via email to SCquestions@lsrhs.net on Tuesday 4/07 starting at 7:15 pm.

Present

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

Also Present

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal; Peter Rowe, Director of Finance and Operations; Joshua Gilman and Paula Myers, Co-Presidents TA; Shelly Hinds, Director METCO Program at LS

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm.

Public Comment

There were questions from parents regarding student grades for Quarter 3. The questions were held until the Superintendent/Principal Report later in the meeting.

Presentation

Shelly Hinds, Director of the LS METCO Program reported on the state of the program for the School Committee members. She began with information regarding the GPA and rate of college applications among the LS METCO students, Both metrics have increased from 2018-2019 to the current year as has the participation of METCO students in co-curricular activities, particularly in athletics. Ms. Hinds reported that enrollment planning for the next school year has begun and that LS expects between 6 and 9 new students from Boston Public Schools for the coming school year. Ms. Hinds noted that communications with METCO Headquarters had improved immensely and that Ms. Hinds has joined the Board of Directors of METCO Inc.

A number of activities and events that were scheduled to take place during second semester have, of necessity, been cancelled. Accommodations to reschedule or re-format other opportunities such as SAT Preparatory Classes and the METCO Summer Institute, the initiation of a Summer Math Clinic at METCO Inc. in Boston were being investigated. Ms. Hinds was particularly interested in providing the Summer Math Clinic to provide enrichment for students and to aid in moving to a higher level in Math or becoming stronger and more confident in the math level they are being scheduled for in the fall.

Ms. Hinds noted that the LS METCO Parent Board has provided valuable support to the LS METCO Program and that the Board is endeavoring to encourage parents of underclass METCO students to become active participants.

Of utmost concern to Ms. Hinds is that METCO students feel a sense of “connectedness” and community at LS. She sees an increased engagement with METCO students and LS counselors and teachers and that most students have developed a relationship with a trusted adult at the school. The current school closure has required a significant team effort by Ms. Hinds, Ashley Gomes, and Joel McKenna as well as by LS teachers and Associate Principals to stay in touch with Boston students and keep them motivated to complete homework assignments and to attend office hours etc. Ms. Hinds has worked to develop alternative lines of communication with students such as Instagram, Tik Tok, and Facebook. She finds that communication with students engaged in remote learning requires persistence and creativity.

Recognitions

Ms. Wong recognized the LS Tech Team (Dennis Phillips, Jim Berry, Meg Notari) for ensuring that all students have access to technology to maintain remote learning. Charles Despotopoulos was recognized for establishing an online video library for students and complimented him on his seamless integration into the Technology Team. Rami Alwan, Christine Iskandar, Nicole Digenis and Paul Shultz were recognized for assembling Personal Protection Gear, Goggles, masks, gloves, and a UV cabinet for sterilizing equipment to distribute to area hospitals. She also recognized the Buildings and Grounds team for disinfection of the school building as well as their outreach to Sudbury and Lincoln Police and Fire Departments to disinfect their vehicles which was greatly appreciated.

Ms. Wong extended her gratitude, admiration and strong support of the LS Faculty that has learned new technical skills, rewritten their curriculum, and increased efforts to reach out to LS students to ascertain students’ level of engagement and motivation as well as endeavor to allay stress and provide support in whatever manner possible while watching over their own families and extended families. She has seen in LS Faculty their sense of responsibility to LS students and their determination to offer nothing less than perfection in educating students. Ms. Wong also recognized LS parents who have assumed increased responsibility for supporting the education of their students while maintaining their own remote work schedules.

TA Report

Josh Gilman reported that teachers are working remotely with their colleagues to problem solve and learn from one another best strategies for this new frontier of teaching. Faculty members are creating new connections with colleagues, and proposals for summer workshops in distance teaching are being submitted.

Chairman’s Report

There was no Chairman’s Report.

Liaison Report

There were no liaison reports.

Superintendent/Principal Report

Ms. Wong announced that there were three topics on which she wished to bring the School Committee members up to date: general updates from the Commissioner of Education Mr. Reilly; an update on remote learning at LS; and grading policies beginning with Quarter 3. There is no definitive update regarding ending school closure. The Commissioner indicated

that there would be an update from Governor Baker in a week but that an extension of school closure in the state was anticipated. MCAS exams would not be administered this spring. AP exams would be administered on subject matter covered up to school closure and be 45 minutes in duration. In terms of end of year celebrations, no announcements have yet been given. Discussions are being held at LS but there have been no results to date. Social distancing guidelines will have to be determined if/when school reopens. A parent submitted a question regarding what if the parents felt uncomfortable sending their student back to school without a vaccine being available? The answer was that this was a decision for parents/guardians to make. SAT assessments will not be administered in May 2020.

Phase 1 of remote learning began at LS with school closure in mid-March. Phase 1 entailed maintaining an academic structure for students beginning with review of curriculum recently covered. Faculty was to touch base with students individually twice weekly and hold office hours once per week in order to monitor attendance and participation in assignments and as a means of tracking student wellbeing.

Phase 2 began the week of April 5th and involves continuity of curriculum with new curriculum being extended to students. The faculty and administration of LS realizes that it will be impossible to teach students new material as it would have been taught if school was in session. They are cognizant that reinforcing material and skills to prevent regression will be important to reduce learning gaps with students. The goal is for students to engage in 14-15 hours of work per week. Full credit will be given for course work during this time period. In other words, students will receive full credit for spring semester courses if they fulfill assignments given by faculty.

Work is being done to foresee and prepare for gaps in learning if school resumes in the fall. Departments are beginning work to align the curriculum for the fall based on what has been accomplished during the remote learning period. The overarching mission during this time is to prioritize student access to equity and excellence recognizing that a student's home environment may or may not be conducive to effective learning.

Parent concerns and questions were transmitted via email and many involved assurances that there was administrative and departmental oversight of delivery of material to students, to consistent teacher outreach to students, and to an equitable determination of student assessment from teacher to teacher. A number of questions involved video, online teaching as a method of best reaching students, providing interaction between teacher and student, as well as between students. Ms. Wong pointed out that privacy issues with platforms such as Zoom prohibited LS from utilizing any but the Zoom for Education platform which was difficult to obtain. Despite information from parents that college classes were often held online, Ms. Wong reminded parents that high school students were minors and as such LS was obligated to protect their privacy. Mr. Matthews raised the concern that our peer schools were outpacing LS in delivery of a quality education during school closure. He stated that one aspect of providing a strong education involved providing a schedule and routine for students to follow. Ms. Wong assured him that the quality of education being delivered by LS faculty was high. The problem with synchronous classes was that a student's home environment may not be able to provide access to the synchronous classes if another student in the household required the computer, for example, or if there was not sufficient bandwidth in the home for multiple devices being run satisfactorily. Parents were also concerned that their student was not receiving enough personal interaction with teachers within the remote learning paradigm.

The third item to be discussed was the issue of grading for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4. In discussions with faculty, administration, and department coordinators, it was determined that

issuing pass/fail grades for Quarters 3 and 4 was the best and fairest means of assessing students at this time. While some of our peer schools were grading regularly for Quarter 3, Ms. Wong pointed out that those schools were closer to the end of the quarter than was true at LS. Many teachers indicated that culmination projects had not been completed nor even started for LS students because so much of the quarter remained at the time of school closure. Parents of 11th grade students were especially concerned given that their students were beginning discussions, contact, etc with colleges. Ms. Wong heard the parent questions and responded that she understood the parent concerns and that she would revisit discussions with faculty, administration, and department coordinators and bring parents and students up to date on the results of the renewed discussions.

Director of Finance and Operations

Mr. Rowe provided an update on vendor continuity of service contracts, the Quarter 3 Report, and an update on FY21. The continuity of service vendor contracts includes mitigating the effect of school closure on vendor employees and maintaining vendor staff for the eventual reopening of school. There will be a balance of savings and expenditures as a result of school closure. The savings are in terms of utilities, transportation expenses, cleaning contractor expenses, and substitute savings. Expenditures include the additional costs of disinfection of the school buildings, loss of building rental revenue, and the return of athletic fees for the cancelled athletic season. Mr. Rowe projects a \$160,000 savings for the remainder of the year.

An update of FY21 includes the forecast of lessening state revenues which means that there will be fewer state derived school revenue supports available. This will mean that the FY21 Budget which was approved in February will likely need to be revised and re-approved based on numbers yet to be determined based on the negative impact of the pandemic.

Ms. Wong reported on the status of EDCO's deficit. The EDCO business manager has resigned his position. An audit of the books has revealed that EDCO revenues are down in many areas. The projected deficit for this year will likely turn into an assessment to member schools as yet to be determined. Ms. Kasper inquired about the timeline for the assessment deadline. Ms. Wong presumes that the assessments would be due during the current fiscal year because EDCO will have to close its financial books.

Action Items

April Vacation will not be taken this year based on a survey of parent/guardians and teachers. April 21 to 24 vacation days will not be taken and that will result in a shortening of the school year by 4 days so that the 2019-2020 academic calendar for this school year will end on June 18, 2020. Lincoln Public and Sudbury Public have also decided to not have April vacation.

VOTE: Candace Miller moved to approve school being open April 21 to April 24th, 2020. The motion was seconded by Kevin Matthews. There was no further discussion and all were in favor by roll call.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the Minutes for March 31, 2020 was offered by Carole Kasper and seconded by Kevin Matthews. There was no further discussion and all members were in favor by roll call.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Future Agenda Items

Cara Endyke-Doran recommended meeting April 14th, 2020 with a limited agenda which was seconded by Candace Miller and Carole Kasper. There will be an extra meeting on April 14th. Kevin Matthews suggested that the meeting have a limited time period - a cutoff period at 9pm was suggested.

Public Comment

There was no further public comment.

Calendar

LS School Committee Meeting

April 21, 2020

Adjourn

Patty Mostue moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Kevin Matthews. All were in favor via roll call. The meeting was adjourned at 10:39 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Francy Zingale

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