

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
JULY 28, 2020**

7:00 PM

Google Meet

Present

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

Also Present

Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01pm

Public Comment

Questions regarding re-opening plans: Does the two-week delay apply? Parent has changed mind regarding hybrid plans and would prefer remote-only plan. Parent believes that 6-10 ft separation is the current best practice. Parent wonders if funds saved by not having school open will be redirected to support for families and students. Finally, may students enroll in Remote Only learning even if they do not have special conditions warranting it. Questions to be asked after Supt/Principal Wong's report.

Recognitions

Ms. Wong recognized Peter Elenbaas, Charles Despotopoulos, Dennis Phillips, Donna Cakert, Franczy Zingale, David Hosford, Conor Hanover, Bouke Noordzij, David Cole, Heath Wright, John Flynn, Shari Idelson, Kathleen Thompson, Darius Green, Tracy Ryan, Robin Shaikh (nurse on call), Kevin Rossley and members of Buildings and Grounds and other staff members who made Graduation 2020 possible. Ms. Wong also expressed her gratitude to the LS families for their efforts in maintaining the safety protocols. The student speakers and musical artists were terrific. There were 240 graduates present out of 353 graduates.

METCO Parent Representative

There was no METCO Parent Representative Report.

Chairman's Report

Ms. Joachim reported that there would be no School Committee retreat meeting this summer despite the value of meeting with the Administrative Team. A virtual meeting would not be effective in the circumstances this summer.

The Sudbury Public Schools School Committee is applying for a grant from the Sudbury Foundation to hire a speaker to address race and equity. The LS School Committee is invited to join if this comes to pass.

Liaison Report

There were no liaison reports.

Superintendent/Principal Report

Ms. Wong expressed her gratitude to the Learning Continuity Committee for working diligently to update plans for hybrid, 100% Remote, and 100% In-Person to be available to the School Committee members on Friday.

Ms. Wong learned very recently about the ten days available for Professional Development for Faculty. Consequently, the 2020-2021 school year will be 170 days long rather than the typical 180 days. Ms. Wong has inquired of the Commissioner if there would be flexibility in terms of when the professional days occur and noted that LS has already provided additional professional development days for faculty this summer. The change will require that the school committee re-vote approval of the calendar. Plans are underway to provide in-school days for students new to Lincoln-Sudbury. Ms. Miller noted that this was an acknowledgement by the Commissioner of the formidable task of ensuring student/staff/faculty safety involved in the start of school as well as preparing to provide a quality educational experience for LS students given the unusual circumstances. Ms. Joachim suggested adding a School Committee meeting on August 4, 2020, to accommodate voting on the school calendar.

Ms. Wong has set up google meets with parents, including parents of student requiring student services and was happy to see that many parents attended the meetings. Ms. Wong found it very instructive to learn parent concerns and beneficial to answer questions and concerns regarding the hybrid educational plan. The half-day hybrid model will provide maximum structure and maximum direct instruction by teachers. The half-day model offers half-day in-person instruction followed by a half-day independent student effort followed by a synchronous meeting at the end of day. The full-day hybrid model presents full-day independent work by students and full day instruction. Ms. Wong intends to send out a letter to all parents delineating the different plans and an invitation to families to choose either hybrid or remote for their student and commit to that plan for the semester. A survey will be sent out soon regarding transportation plans: the guidance is for 3 foot distancing, one student per bench, open windows, etc.

Many parent questions involved when would a change to 100% remote learning be required. Mr. Murphy, of the Sudbury Board of Health, indicated that the state would present a set of metrics for determining when 100% remote learning would be necessary. Ms. Miller noted that keeping close tabs on Sudbury numbers regarding Covid19 infection and transmission would be required to know how the disease is transmitted.

Ms. Wong addressed the numerous questions regarding metrics she had been fielding from parents. There were also questions regarding socially distancing and daily monitoring students. Ms. Miller asserted that information regarding rules, expectations, and guidelines would need to be definitive and complete with consequences to ensure the safety of all students and staff.

Ms. Wong requested that the draft submitted to the LS School Committee be signed at the present meeting. The Department of Education requests an indication from L-S which model will be used to open schools in September. The final plan is due August 10, 2020. The declaration of intention to be voted on today is not binding since the Commissioner acknowledges that there is some inherent fluidity to plans for the reopening of school. Ms. Joachim posited whether changing from a hybrid plan to a fully remote plan required lead time. Ms. Wong responded that transitioning to 100% in-person would require time to put in place since it will require furniture removal and additional safety features and practices to be initiated. Ms. Kasper summarized the purpose of the impending vote on education plans. The School Committee will be voting on the three educational plans that will be submitted to the Department of Education and submission of the plans is due by the end of July. A subsequent vote will be required by August 10th for submission of the most likely plan to be undertaken by LS and the submission will be to the Commonwealth's Department of Education. Neither submission is binding since dealing with Covid19 trends requires flexibility to ensure maximum safety of student, faculty and staff. Ms. Wong expressed a strong desire, based on conditions at the time, to bring students (particularly 9th graders) into the school for in-person instruction but acknowledged that she was ever mindful of the safety of all. Ms. Miller added that the LS School Committee, LS faculty and staff were absolutely committed to providing the best possible education to LS students while keeping in mind their safety and the safety of students and families.

Public Comment

Parent comments expressed concerns with safety of students in school based on adherence to safety rules, parent inability to confidently choose among the learning plans for their student and reluctance to be confined to remote if that is initially chosen.

Q: Please answer the question about whether METCO students will have to travel for just the two mornings per week, and also how will they participate in sports, do they stay and then take a late bus? What do they do when everyone else is remote learning?

A: Ms. Wong met with Boston parents last week and will meet again with them again this week and will share plans at a later date once additional conversations have taken place with the Boston parents and students.

S: Perhaps the 10 days can be used as transition days between changes in education programs.

Q: I can't commit to the Remote Academy if I don't fully know the program proposed.

A: A full program definition for the Remote Academy will be presented to parents before they have to decide which program they will choose for their student.

Q: How can parents choose an in-school model if they do not know how safety issues such as mask wearing and social distancing will be addressed?

A: The mask guidance will be affirmed in a way that is reinforcing and positive. A social distance of 3 ft between students is the guidance suggested at the moment. There is no plan that requires 10 foot social distancing.

Q: Parent expressed concern that there was more conversation regarding consequences of not following safety protocols rather than the social and emotional support for students who are troubled by the current situation.

A: The LS counseling staff will be available and prepared to assist with social and emotional issues presented by students.

Q: Parent asked if a student may change from hybrid to 100% remote depending on the family's concerns for changing trends of the infection rates.

A: It may be that all students will transition from hybrid models to 100% remote depending on infection trends.

Q: Will testing be required for students and staff?

A: We do not have guidance for testing at the moment. There are no funds nor avenues of access to testing for schools. The dilemma is that students, faculty and staff are encouraged to stay home if they are feeling unwell. However, testing should be available to affirm positivity to minimize disruption. Regular testing is perhaps the only means by which certainty of infection can be monitored.

S: Superintendent and staff have worked hard to provide thoughtful, careful plans for the coming year. The School Committee must support this extraordinary effort.

VOTE: Kevin Matthews offered a motion to submit LS' plans to begin school with the Hybrid Half Day Model to the Department of Education. Carole Kasper seconded the motion. Ms. Miller stated that based on current understanding of COVID19, LS hopes to begin the school year with the Hybrid Half Day Model despite the fact that 100% Remote is by far the safest method for all members of the educational community. It will be incumbent on the members of the LS School Committee to watch carefully the infection's trends and be prepared to alter plans. Ms. Wong reminded all that this submission was not binding. There was no further discussion. All were in favor based on roll call. Ms. Wong offered to draft an addendum to acknowledge that there was considered concern and discussion regarding shifting trends and that this vote represented the process to date but that the LS School Committee had grave concerns regarding this vote. Ms. Kasper moved to add an amendment to the current vote to acknowledge the School Committees concern regarding this required submission. Kevin Matthews seconded the motion. Based on roll call, all were in favor and there was no further discussion.

Ms. Kasper reminded the LS Community that if there were further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the members of the LS School Committee.

Other Business – Communication Outreach

Candace Miller has drafted a communication that will include the Sudbury Public School Committee and Lincoln Public School Committee, as well as the Lincoln and Sudbury Select Boards, Town Officials, and the Lincoln and Sudbury Boards of Health. The intention of the communication is to underscore the importance of adherence to public health recommendations in order to reopen schools. Ms. Joachim requested the opinions of the LS School Committee members.

Vote: Cara Endyke-Doran moved to approve the collective statement from the Lincoln and Sudbury School Committees as well as the various community boards that pledged to maintain the safety and wellbeing of our community members. Candace Miller seconded the motion. Approval based on a roll call of LS School Committee members.

Ms. Wong indicated her intention to send out an email to the LS community with the substance of the evening's conversations.

Future Agenda Items

Ms. Joachim requested an additional LS School Committee meeting on August 4th to vote on the changes to the 2020-2021 LS Calendar. Ms. Miller recommended advocacy by the LS School Committee regarding testing for COVID19 and the delay in receiving results.

Public Comment

A parent sent in the request that while safety first is paramount, please also consider student's wellbeing.

Adjourn to Executive Session

Ms. Kasper moved that the committee members begin executive session to discuss matters of strategy with respect to collective bargaining and for the purpose of reviewing and approving executive minutes not to return to open session as the Chairman has so declared. All approved via roll call.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:38pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Francy Zingale

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

