

FAIRHAVEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 8, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Bueno, Mrs. Kuechler, Mrs. Powers, Mr. Veitch, Mrs. McKenna, Mr. Monroe

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Baldwin, Mrs. Kohler, Mrs. Potter, Diane Sullivan, Wendy Weidenfeller, Nicholas Bettencourt, Yolanda Burnett, Andy Kulak

STAFF ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT:

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:47p.m.

The Chair informed the audience that the meeting was being recorded for public access. The Chair also explained the use of Zoom for this particular meeting. He also indicated that Public Comment will be held until the end of the meeting in order to allow everyone to speak.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Bueno, Powers, Kuechler, Monroe, McKenna, Veitch

Motion made by Ms. Powers, seconded by Mr. Veitch to approve the minutes from March 4, 2020. Minutes were approved, 5-0, unanimously.

Motion made by Ms. Kuechler, seconded by Ms. McKenna to approve the minutes from March 20, 2020. Minutes were approved, 5-0, unanimously.

Student Representatives were not in attendance of the meeting, per Dr. Baldwin.

Mr. Kulak was invited to speak on the goings on for the high school students. Mr. Kulak first spoke regarding the Senior Class. He has met with student leadership. He feels as though there are 2 scenarios to play out. The first is if we return to school May 4. If that happens, then we will continue with a normal end of year and even though the senior prom venue cancelled, they are still working on it. If we do not return until later, June 22 is the end of the year. We would hope to have graduation on June 21st, with Junior Day on the 19th. Dr. Baldwin indicates that these final ceremony dates are out of our control at this time due to the current scenario. Mr. Kulak stated that the kids are great; flexible, rational, and reasonable. Ms. Powers thanked Mr. Kulak for keeping the hope alive. Mr. Bueno stated that these events help identify who we are as a community. He thanked Mr. Kulak for providing a sort of road map during this time.

Mr. Monroe asked the other members if it would be acceptable to move Public Comment to the end of the meeting as he had indicated at the beginning of the meeting. All members agreed that it was.

Mr. Monroe explained why there isn't a formal vote for some things on the agenda. He went on to discuss ending the school year according to the Commissioner. He explained that it as well as April

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vacation continuing, is a local decision. He noted that even though the agenda doesn't explicitly say that these are topics that will be voted on during these discussions, the Committee members have the right to make a motion to extend the school year or change April vacation.

Student Enrollment

Dr. Baldwin went over the first agenda item listed - Student Enrollment April 2020. The members of the Committee reviewed the data. There were no questions regarding this topic.

Staff Updates

Dr. Baldwin gave the audience an update regarding the staff. Two updates were presented. One was dealing with Coronavirus and the other was normal practice of every year looking to the future. We normally post anticipated vacancies around this time of year. We have purposefully decided to hold off. Dr. Baldwin went over the normal nonrenewal practice that takes place that takes place the Thursday before April vacation. The intent to non-renew is done on the Thursday before April vacation. The final decision is made by May 1. We then post the vacancy. We usually post after town meeting.

Dr. Baldwin also pointed out that the School Committee voted at the last meeting for the appropriation of funding for everyone, except for daily subs. The CARES Act states that where practical, continue to employ as many as possible. We have decided to include the crossing guards and café monitors and ask them to provide service when needed.

April Vacation

Dr. Baldwin stated that we are in unprecedented times and that he has significant hope that can somehow get back to school this year, possibly late May or early June. The governor has not yet given a date. Due to this, Dr. Baldwin would like the opportunity to have time with the kids if we do get back to school and therefore, recommends keeping April vacation as is. The school community is going through something significant. Ms. Kohler agrees completely with Dr. Baldwin due to the unknown. Ms. Powers wanted to give a parent's perspective. She would like the feeling of success and connection to keep going. She feels as though the virtual classes help keep the connection and gives them something to look forward to. Ms. Powers made a motion to cancel April vacation for 2020. There was no second. Ms. Kohler wants to focus on the hope of getting back. Ms. Powers stated that she knows what she is hearing and that the kids are missing that sense of structure and accomplishment. Mr. Bueno stated that he respects Ms. Powers opinion. Mr. Bueno always wants to be a support for the social well-being of the students. He also feels that perhaps some students may not have the luxury of extra resources and that we should keep the calendar the way that it is. He feels as though we should play it by listening to what the Governor and Commissioner have to say. Ms. Kuechler stated that this is difficult to decide and that she grappled with the choice. She respects both sides. She feels as though having the 4 extra days at the end of the year could have an impact. Mr. Monroe stated that the calendar stays as is, as there was no second for the motion to change it. He asks for everyone's understanding as everything that is done is well thought out with the safety of students, staff, and families as the forefront.

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Teaching and Learning

Dr. Baldwin began by reminding everyone that this is a medical crisis with an educational impact. The intent is to do what's right for the kids and the community. We are a district about equity. We are taking this from the beginning with the hierarchy of needs.

Ms. Kohler spoke about the behind the scenes activity for the Teaching and Learning for this time. She stated that after the last meeting they started having Principal Meetings at 9am & Faculty Meetings at 11. She stated that the focus has been getting information to and from staff. She acknowledges this is a challenge for everyone. She stated that we are working to get connectivity for all. Teachers are working to engage the kids. The devices and hotspots were deployed on 4/3 and there is another one tomorrow, 4/9, and another possibly next week as the need grows. We also needed to get Chromebooks to paras. She recognizes that parents and students are struggling to get on a schedule and remain focused. We only received guidance from the Commissioner to utilize PBS and we have been communicating that guidance.

Ms. Kohler proceeded to review the document from the Commissioner and how the Fairhaven Public Schools align with the direct recommendations from the Commissioner. She reiterated that the remote learning is not synonymous with online learning. We have been taking what they already know and deepening that knowledge. The Commissioner recommends the length of the remote learning day should be approximately half the length of a regular school day and it is to reinforce their skills. She also went over the inner dynamics of staff and their work towards engagement and following best practices. The staff is having daily meetings and communicating well and frequently. She advocates that if anyone needs help in our school community, please reach out to the counselors, principals, or teachers. She also acknowledged all the people working hard in the background. Moving forward, we are trying to make this meaningful for students.

Dr. Baldwin commended the Principals for the work that they have been doing and the support they have been giving. Dr. Bettencourt began discussing the faculty meetings. We are aligning our agendas PreK-12. Faculty meetings are occurring daily and concrete tasks are being given to staff, including unified arts. These are to ensure that teachers are creating opportunities to be innovative and deepen the previously taught skills, understanding the different variables that could be affecting the learner. He discussed that the staff has clear areas to oversee within the content areas to ensure alignment with the Commissioner. He spoke about communication and connection - what it looks like, how deep it is, and when the families need support, giving the viable resources to help. He talked about allowing for flexibility with the understanding that we need to allow for families with many different variables.

Mr. Kulak stated that the educators are putting a lot of work into developing the learning plans. The staff has been divided by grade level and it has been a pleasure to work with this staff.

Dr. Burnett stated that as a new member of the Fairhaven Public Schools, she is glad that she is a part of a team that is focused on the well-being of the staff, students, and their families. She stated that has been helpful to have the daily Principals' Meetings. They focus on positivity, providing updates and objectives, and next steps. Every school has a shared document for teachers to post questions or ideas. They are working well together. We are one. She acknowledged all the educators and commended them for their work during this time.

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Ms. Weidenfeller discussed PreK-2. PreK teachers have been so dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of their students. They are releasing the movement activities, as well as uploading read-a-loud videos (these will start next week). They are coming up with specific plans for specific groups targeted for the learn to read group.

Mrs. Sullivan stated that her primary role is to ensure the representation of all students' needs in the all the learning systems in the District. The team is planning for our neediest of students. We have a holistic approach. We started from basic needs and then we move through the layer on enhanced, deepened intervention for our students. It is seemingly slow, but is done with purpose. She stated she has been having meetings. Mr. Mota has been having meeting with the counselors as well. The pathway for the unique learning needs of students should align with the Commissioner's guidelines. This year the District received its DESE determination regarding the need for technical assistance or intervention around special education. The district was designated as "Meeting the Requirements".

Ms. Kohler also thanked Erin Costa who built a website to suit the needs of the keeping learning alive. The resources and linked are all listed together on one page and it is to help with the school work. We are looking towards online field trips and other creative ideas to keep the engagement. There additional academic enhancement resources as well. All learning plans will be housed there. Erin should be able to upload so parents can access it over the weekend to assist in planning.

Mr. Kulak discussed AP students and progression. Now that we have developed our plan, teachers and students are reconnecting. The College Board has also cut out some of the information for the exams. Exams are still slated for May, online. They will be able to access them by multiple means.

Operations

Ms. Potter discussed the update on operations. The newest update is that we have been able to provide multiple meals to cover the weekends and have now been offering re-heatable meals. We are also working with the food services to provide food service to families who can't leave the house. We will be providing meals during the vacation and holidays. Summer Service Offer will allow some money to come back to the district. We have received really positive feedback and she can't thank our Food Service enough for their services.

She also discussed tech. They are trying to meet the needs of the community. Resources are low throughout the nation. The small tech team is now servicing 2500 people. She also discussed the device pick up and hot spot rollout. They are going to be offering virtual help and weekly sessions to bring the devices for troubleshooting. They are adhering to sanitization protocols and social distancing. We had about 100 students without connection, and the rollouts of devices will continue as long as we can. She also discussed the safety of the video conferencing with students. She asked the School Committee to review the document and let her know if they find it acceptable to send to families.

Ms. Powers is thankful for everything everyone is doing. She doesn't want her previous speech to take away from that. She is very grateful.

Ms. Kuechler is happy to hear about the continued lunches through holidays, weekends, and vacations. Thank you to everyone for responding the way they are as they go.

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Ms. McKenna wanted to thank everyone and encouraged everyone to take one day at a time.

Mr. Monroe went over the tech document (permission slip for video conferencing). This is for the parents to allow distance learning. This document will protect the staff, district, and families. Motion to approve video distance learning and permission slip to be sent to parents made by Ms. Powers, seconded by Mr. Veitch, approved 5-0, unanimously.

Mr. Monroe discussed our slower, intentional approach to the online/video/distance learning. He reiterated that all means all. We educate all students and our district has been diligent in making contact with all families to ensure that they will be able to access this new way of education. This is about making sure that everyone is getting what they need. He acknowledges everything that is being done. He thanks everyone for their dedication.

Ms. Kohler also talked about Mr. Moll has created face shields and masks for our first responders using the classroom printers and equipment. All equipment is inventoried. Motion to donate these items to Healthcare in the area made by Mr. Bueno, seconded by Mr. Veitch, approved, 5-0, unanimously.

Ms. Potter thanked the School Committee for their support. She has been in contact with SouthCoast Health and they are in desperate need of iPads to source their remote health sites. Motion to allow SouthCoast Health borrow our iPad inventory made by Donna McKenna, seconded by Mr. Veitch, approved, 5-0, unanimously. Ms. Potter will keep the School Committee informed of the documents and updates on this topic.

Dr. Baldwin acknowledged the strength of character of our teams as well as their willingness to help in any way they can.

Budget

Dr. Baldwin explained that the governor will present a new budget based on changed revenues by the end of the month. If the budget is not approved by June (town meeting is June 20), this year's budget will be divided by 12 and we will operate on 1/12th of our budget in the months to come. Mr. Monroe stated that this is a fluid situation and that we need to see how this plays out over the next few months.

Capital Projects

Dr. Baldwin stated that there are 2 issues. The first is the heating problem in the library in the high school. We are trying to remedy that now. We are utilizing this time period to do these types of projects. We had some walk through's ... solar on Thursday and an exterior viewing of windows to go out to bid. Dr. Baldwin spoke about hope. He spoke about the hope that we would have Junior Day as normal, that we will reconnect at school with our teachers and kids. He spoke about the senior class of 2020. He would like to get our Naming/Renaming Committee together to name the field "The Class of 2020" field once the new turf is put on the field. Mr. Monroe clarified the funding of the turf as a capital project. All School Committee members agreed to forward this idea to the Naming/Renaming Committee.

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Next Meeting is going to be May 6, 2020. Given the fluid situation, we will call an emergency meeting if we need to.

Motion to adopt the School Year Calendar for 20-21 School Year made by Ms. Kuechler, seconded by Mr. Veitch, approved, 5-0, unanimously.

Mr. Bueno spoke regarding continuing the message of hope. He thanks the finance committee for the turf. He thanked Stasia for her comments and Dr. Baldwin for sharing. He thanks everyone for doing the important work.

Mr. Veitch said everything is so new. He feels that we can't really plan or forecast. He thanks everyone for everything and says that as long as we keep doing what's right for our kids, we will be alright.

Public Comment

Mr. Monroe reminded everyone of the 2-minute limit. He will go unmute those who went through the link and they can speak. He will move on to the phone callers after he goes through that. No one volunteered through the link. No one had comments through the phone lines.

Motion made by Mr. Veitch, seconded by Ms. Powers to adjourn, approved, 5-0, unanimously.

Adjourned at 9:05pm.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Baldwin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Baldwin, Ed. D
Secretary to the School Committee
Fairhaven Public Schools