

BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD

MAY 13, 2020

MEETING MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Brookline School Board was conducted on Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at 11:01 a.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library.

Kenneth Haag, Chairman, presided:

Board Members Participating: Erin Sarris, Vice Chairman
Karen Jew, Secretary
Rebecca Howie
Alison Marsano

Members of the Board Absent:

Also Participating: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
Bob Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis, and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically.

Board members and members of the Administration were participating via Zoom. Each member of the Board was asked to state, for the record, where they were, why their attendance in person was not reasonably practical, who, if anyone, was with them, and whether or not they were able to hear the proceedings.

Vice Chairman Sarris

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Member Jew

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was currently alone in the room she was in, her family was home with her, and she could hear the proceedings.

Member Marsano

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, her family was home with her, and she could hear the proceedings.

Member Howie

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, her family was home with her, and she could hear the proceedings.

Chairman Haag

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in although his family was home with him, and he could hear the proceedings.

It was acknowledged all members participating electronically could be heard. The Board was reminded all votes would be taken by Roll Call.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS - None

PUBLIC INPUT

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Drive

Spoke of the fiscal challenges the pandemic has caused residents to face related to employment difficulties as well as the challenges on the educational front. He noted the agenda item related to discussion of potential savings, and the hope the District will be able to achieve savings that can be passed on to the taxpayers.

NOMINATIONS/RESIGNATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE

Superintendent Corey informed the Board the Organizational Meeting of the SAU41 Governing Board has been postponed until the June timeframe. The Governing Board meeting, typically held this time of year, also addresses issues such as salaries of SAU personnel. As the COOP Annual Meeting has not yet been able to be conducted, there is no official budget for the SAU. Once the date of the COOP Annual Meeting is set, a date for the next Governing Board meeting will be identified.

The Administration continues to move forward with interview committees. Recommendations on a few positions will be forthcoming. An update on hires is anticipated for June.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Brookline School Board [December 18, 2019](#)

The following amendments were offered:

Page 1, Line 40; replace “formerly” with “formally”

Page 2, Line 11; insert “/” between “slope” and “grade”

Page 2, Line 11; replace “1-12” with “1:12”

Page 2, Line 26; delete “his” before “Troop”

Page 3, Line 10; replace “Principal” with “Dennis”

Page 8, Line 26; replace “out” with “our”

Page 8, Lines 34-35; amend the sentence to read: “The whole concept of vicarious trauma; that as the responder to trauma you can put yourself in a position, is something we need to be very sensitive to.”

Page 9, Line 2, delete “that every” before “that they”
Page 12, Line 13; replace “invent” with “event”

**MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag 4
Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED
Member Jew Abstained

Special Brookline School Board. [January 8, 2020](#)

The following amendment was offered:

Page 4, Line 44; replace “2020-2022” with “2020-2023”

**MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MARSANO**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Alison Marsano, Rebecca Howie, Erin Sarris 3
Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED
Members Haag and Jew Abstained

Brookline School Board. [January 21, 2020](#)

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO ACCEPT, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag 4
Nay: 0

MOTION CARRIED
Member Jew Abstained

Brookline School Board – **Public Hearing.** [January 21, 2020](#)

The following amendments were offered:

Page 2, Line 14; remove the “\$” before “4.5%”

Page 3, Line 17; “contribution” should be plural

Page 10, Line 18; replace “send” with “sent”

**MOTION BY MEMBER HOWIE TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER SARRIS**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Kenneth Haag

4

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

Member Jew Abstained

Special Brookline School Board. [February 3, 2020](#)

Brookline School Board – Deliberative Session [February 3, 2020](#)

**MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING AND
THOSE OF THE DELIBERATIVE SESSION CONDUCTED ON FEBRUARY 3, 2020, AS
PRESENTED**

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris

3

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

Members Haag and Jew Abstained

Special Brookline School Board. [March 17, 2020](#)

Brookline School Board – Organizational Meeting [April 1, 2020](#)

**MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
CONDUCTED ON MARCH 17, 2020 AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING CONDUCTED ON
APRIL 1, 2020, AS PRESENTED**

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER HOWIE

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Erin Sarris, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Kenneth Haag

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

Brookline School Board. [April 29, 2020](#)

The following amendment was offered:

Page 3, Line 1; Replace “Chairman Mann” with “Chairman Haag”

**MOTION BY MEMBER MARSANO TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Rebecca Howie, Erin Sarris, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Kenneth Haag	5
Nay:		0

MOTION CARRIED

PRINCIPAL REPORTS

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug noted Principal Molinari has been participating in a number of hiring committees; Case Manager at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy (CSDA) and a classroom teacher at the Richard Maghakian Memorial School (RMMS). There was a shift with a 3rd grade teacher moving to kindergarten. Once all of the movements have been finalized a new schematic can be provided.

Daniel Molinari, Principal, RMMS, added interviews for the position of School Psychologist would begin the following day, and they recently hired a Speech Pathologist.

He spoke of the efforts of the PTO in regard to Teacher Appreciation Week.

He expressed his gratitude to the students, parents, and teachers for their efforts with remote learning, the maintenance and office staff at RMMS and CSDA for their hard work, and the food service personnel for their efforts in providing families in the community with meals.

DISCUSSION

- Transportation

Student Transportation of America (STA) was compensated for the period March 13th through April 4th. Since that time, the SAU has been in discussions with them. As of last month, the issue was turned over to legal counsel. STA was looking at a 70/30 split, which the Administration did not feel was appropriate. Legal counsel has suggested the District pay for fixed costs.

With STA coming on board this year, they were able to significantly upgrade our bus fleet, which comes at a cost of leasing those buses. That is one of the fixed costs. Also looked at are the costs associated with the leasing of the vans utilized for special education, the lease for the bus barn, and two salaries; mechanic who remains on full-time to address maintenance, inspections, regular start-up/runs, and that of the dispatcher who will be developing the bus routes for next year.

STA is not looking for driver salaries. Although originally requested, the District did not feel that was appropriate. In some ways, a driver actually benefits from going on unemployment. We do expect drivers will come back in the fall. We do believe it will be somewhat difficult because of concerns over COVID-19. STA has been advertising regularly, and hopes to overcome driver shortages. It is believed it will be competitive in the fall, and that there will be drivers from across the State that may not be comfortable driving. It is unknown what the restrictions will be on the bus company for numbers.

Legal counsel is recommending that we understand the positive relationship the District has enjoyed in the short time it has been with STA and the desire for that to continue. It is a benefit that they work with a number of other school districts in the area and there is the ability to share/shift drivers, get buses for field trips and extra-curricular runs, etc. We are not paying any fuel costs (purchase directly), not looking at driver labor costs, or other variable costs.

The recommendation of counsel and of the Administration is that the District cover up to 55% of the cost for the months of May and June. Funds are available in the budget. This will represent a savings, and will ensure we have buses, the mechanic, and the dispatcher.

Superintendent Corey noted the lowest percentage he is aware of that a district is covering is 45%. That is a percentage he was made aware of for a district that actually has a pandemic clause in their contract. Our contract does not obligate us to pay. If unable to pay for their leases, etc., the transportation company could not assure us what would happen in their overall scheme.

Member Marsano remarked the expectation is not an unreasonable one. We are in a unique situation where we came on with STA with the selling of Hollis Transportation. We need to keep up a good relationship. A 70/30 split seems excessive. But the costs included seem reasonable. In order to maintain that going forward and looking forward to next year and the possibility of a greater driver shortage, we need to uphold our end. It is a reasonable request.

Chairman Haag agreed the breakdown makes sense, and questioned STA's response to the proposal. Superintendent Corey stated STA is aware of the proposal. They are not thrilled, but he would not expect them to be. This is an issue that has been going on throughout the State, and there is a balance that is needed. Yes we need a fleet of buses and we need to be able to run next year, but it is also that we are not getting a service and the taxpayers are going to be feeling this impact. They are aware of the proposal, and if all goes well with the 3 board meetings today, he will be notifying them tomorrow of that intent. Kelly Seeley, Business Administration will do the calculations.

Addressing the two salaried positions, Superintendent Corey noted the mechanic is doing yeoman's work. He is taking the buses out regularly, will ensure each receives its inspection sticker and certification, is researching the different means that will be used to alleviate concerns about the virus come the fall, the dispatcher will be doing the routes, etc. He and Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug will reach out to the dispatcher to start to formulate those new routes to gain efficiencies.

Member Marsano commented on mention made around the possibility of additional cameras, etc. on the buses, and stated her opinion while this might be a good opportunity, in terms of labor, to do something along those lines, it should not be done. She does not believe any cost savings being seen at this time should be invested in a more expensive product for down the road. Superintendent Corey responded the SAU has not requested that. It would be a new cost to the bus contract and something that would need to have to go before each board. Although he believes GPS would be a nice feature, it is an added expense and could be added during the school

year. His hope would be that we are back in session next year and board meetings are able to include a lengthy discussion around that as it would present new issues.

Asked what the 70% request represented, Superintendent Corey stated STA was looking at the fact that some of their drivers may opt not to go on unemployment (personal choice) and were looking to see if they could compensate those individuals. He had felt that issue had to be black and white. From his research with working with other Superintendents he felt it was in the drivers' best interest as unemployment would compensate them better than we could. There were also some minor costs around what he would call variable expenses. Although it would not be above 55% of the cost, it could be slightly lower once the calculations are completed.

- FY20 Budget Update

Kelley Seeley, Business Administrator, noted all Purchase Orders that no longer pertain, due to being in a remote learning environment, are being closed out. Were the fiscal year to end today, and all of the adjustments already made, we would be giving back to the taxpayers approximately \$400,000. She stressed that number will change. It could be lower or higher. There will be additional expenses and additional savings.

With the last student day as June 12th, which is much earlier than normal, and there being a certain number of days that we cannot go without services for our special education students, we will have at least one additional week of the Extended School Year (ESY) program in the month of June (current fiscal year (FY)) at a significant cost. We will most definitely have compensatory education costs related to special education students. We do not know what those costs will be at this time and whether those costs will fall in FY20 or FY21.

Food Services has done a fabulous job of distributing food to our families, are using all inventory, and doing everything they can to ensure costs for that program do not exceed what we have for fund balance. However, there is the potential that could experience an overrun in cost. The only revenue being generated is what the State is providing for reimbursement. If the program goes into an overrun situation, it will have to be addressed through the General Fund. We will likely also have additional cost for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and disinfection. Some of that cost will be in FY20 and most in FY21. We will have re-opening costs, some of which may fall in FY20. It is understood there will be device replacement costs. Across all 3 districts, devices have been sent out to help students with remote learning needs. Some will come back in less than perfect condition and some may not come back at all.

There are savings that have been identified. Transportation is one area of savings. The District will be eligible for funds from the CARES Act (\$9,000). The District is also eligible for a small special education grant as well as some cost reimbursement (75%) through FEMA.

Ms. Seeley recommended the Board consider pre-purchasing some of the FY21 needs such as in the area of technology believing the most widely scenario is the District will be hit hard in FY21 with all of the costs mentioned. It would be helpful to be able to free up some funding to get through the costs that will be seen in FY21 while still returning funds to the taxpayers.

Member Marsano questioned if the food service program would run throughout the summer, and was informed it would end on June 12th. Those costs would be incurred in FY20. She questioned if there is a means of supporting those in need over the summer months noting the Nashua School system has a program in place. Ms. Seeley commented the Nashua School District does summer offerings as part of their budget/planning. She has had a few email discussions with the Emergency Director in Brookline. He is aware June 12th is the last day the school will be offering the service, and the Brookline Food Pantry is ready to welcome those families who

need to move from our food distribution to the Food Pantry distribution. He is getting the word out, and our Principals will include that information in our newsletter as we get closer to the end of the year.

Member Marsano questioned the number of devices that are out to students and those that are in-house that are being considered for replacement in FY21. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated there to be very few planned for replacement in the budget. In terms of devices loaned out, rather than have parents go to 4 different buildings to access technology needed for remote learning, we looked at families and their requests for devices and asked them to pick up the devices from the District with their youngest child. The District loaned devices out to students of RMMS, CSDA, HBMS and HBHS, and all were documented and signed out. Brookline loaned out approximately 90 devices. We will have a process in place for accepting the materials back. We expect some might not come back in the same condition they were loaned out, and are looking for a variety of different resources such as grant funding to replace some of those.

Understanding that we may need to look at remote access for stretches of time throughout the next school year, the question was asked of whether it makes sense to collect those checked out devices or to keep them going through the next school year. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded for students that would require those devices for ESY we will keep them loaned out. However, this summer is when we do all of our updates, and maintenance on the devices. It does make sense to collect them back and complete that process. Also, we have seniors who are graduating and folks who are moving out of town. We would send the survey out again as there are new families who have moved into town as well as families who had devices that may no longer be functioning, etc.

Vice Chairman Sarris questioned if the \$400,000 amount is after or prior to allocations to the various trusts approved by the voters, and was informed the amount is after the approved allocations.

Member Jew commented on continual improvements with remote learning. Having been through a few weeks of remote learning, her personal responses to the survey would be different now. She questioned if a follow-up survey would be sent out. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded she would likely send out another device survey in the fall, depending on what the situation is at that time. She, Superintendent Corey, Assistant Superintendent Thompson, and Ms. Seeley will discuss distributing another survey relative to remote learning for the June 12th timeframe to help with planning moving forward.

Chairman Haag commented on an update he viewed from the NHSBA on a task force for the re-opening of schools. He questioned if the District is engaged in or taking recommendations from that. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated she, Superintendent Corey, Assistant Superintendent Thompson, and Ms. Seeley were all engaged in conversations at the State level and Superintendent Corey participated in a conversation with those who run schools in Europe who have already re-opened. All of our circumstances are different, but it is important to learn from those who are in a different place than we are so we can ensure we make informed decisions moving forward.

Superintendent Corey spoke of his participation at the Superintendent level; later in the day would be in discussion with the Commissioner and Superintendents across the State. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug is a member of the Curriculum Association that does the same thing and Assistant Superintendent Thompson with the Special Education Association. They are looking at it through multiple lenses. The piece that has always made New Hampshire unique is the local control. Ultimately, our plan would be for the Brookline, Hollis, and COOP schools.

Superintendent Corey commented there are many variables at the moment, and the Administration is currently trying to get through graduation and the Annual Meeting at the COOP District. They have not done any formal planning; teachers and administrators are all in the “what if” scenarios. As we get closer to June, we will be ready to perform in whatever environment we are intended to; could be remote learning to begin, could be face-to-face (not sure what that means), and will have a fall back plan in case things escalate from a virus point of view, e.g., how quickly could we transition to remote learning again understanding the primary concern is safety.

DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the Superintendent’s recommendation for transportation

**MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT TO COVER THE FIXED COSTS, AS DESCRIBED, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED FIFTY FIVE PERCENT (55%) OF THE CONTRACT COST
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MARSANO**

ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Haag commented he believes the recommendation to be a fair compromise.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Erin Sarris, Karen Jew, Alison Marsano, Kenneth Haag

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the Superintendent’s recommendation regarding non-union employees

Superintendent Corey noted a previous action of the Board authorizing the Superintendent to make decisions relative to operations. The non-union employees referenced, O.T., speech, and language, do not fall under the union, and typically receive a salary increase at this time of year. What will be utilized is the amount approved by the Board in the budget.

Member Marsano questioned if it is in line with what was approved last year, and was informed it would be a range from 2.1% to a maximum of 3% (per contract). The actual amount would be determined by Assistant Superintendent Thompson and Amy Rowe, Student Services Transition Coordinator, through the annual review process with the employee.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY MEMBER SARRIS TO ADJOURN
SECONDED BY MEMBER JEW**

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Rebecca Howie, Alison Marsano, Erin Sarris, Karen Jew, Kenneth Haag,

5

Nay:

0

MOTION CARRIED

The May 13, 2020 meeting of the Brookline School Board was adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Date _____ Signed _____