

Board of Education Minutes  
August 12, 2020  
Special Meeting

**DRAFT**

A special meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, August 12, 2020, at 5:30 p.m. via ZOOM meeting platform meeting ID 837 6785 9506. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mr. McCord, Mrs. Mastroianni, Dr. Potemri (5:36 p.m.), and Mr. Mendolia. Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. Wilkison, Mrs. St. Germain, Mrs. Reyes, and Mr. Boucher. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. Proposed for Executive Session – Mrs. Wagner explained the executive session. On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Ms. Welborn, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn to Executive Session at 5:38 p.m. for the Purpose of Contract Negotiations.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 5:55 p.m.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – Mr. Nero and Mrs. Wagner answered questions from the public on topics that included students starting back to school, deep cleaning, and virtual Board of Education meetings. Mrs. Wagner said next week the Board will be going back to meeting in-person and she explained.
5. Presentations – None.
6. Administrators' Reports – None
7. Administrative – a. Minutes – On a motion by Dr. Potemri, seconded by Mr. Karpinski, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the June 24, 2020 meeting, the July 15, 2020, Special Meeting, and the July 22, 2020 meeting.
  - b. Correspondence – None.
  - c. Personnel – Mr. Nero will get the hiring information to the Board via email. With all the positions hired, they were all below Step 3. Mrs. Wagner asked about per diems and Mr. Nero said we have four and he is intending to bring in at least 2 more. Questions were asked about keeping these costs separate.
8. Reports – a. Superintendent – Mr. Nero said all the work is getting ready to open school. A negotiated settlement has been reached with the paras and custodians. The teachers have ratified the Memorandum of Agreement and Mr. Nero explained. Mr. Nero said a lot of the furniture is being shipped on Friday and he explained. He said it has been nonstop and he thanked everyone. Mr. Nero said we turned the switch on the new

accounting system and we also switched to a new health plan. It went smoothly. He thanked everyone for their hard work.

b. BOE Chairperson – She said things are falling under the re-opening plan. We will be having in-person meetings without the public. They will still be able to attend via ZOOM. Some meetings may also be held via ZOOM for parents at different levels. She said we have gotten great responses on the surveys and are taking that into account.

c. Committee Chairperson – None.

d. LEARN Board of Directors' Liaison – None.

9. Finance – Mrs. Wagner had comment. For those members of the public not aware, she explained the non-lapsing account. She had further comment. She spoke of a liaison and said she would try to attend one meeting a month to answer questions. Dr. Potemri said that was important and had further comment. She was wondering if they could send a different representative. There was further comment about the importance of a liaison. Dr. Potemri said it's important and not just during budget season. Mrs. Wagner said we are tracking all the COVID expenses as the state requested. Mr. Nero said we put in for Chromebooks through the state. Mrs. Martin explained what we put in for and that would put one in each student's hands. Dr. Potemri asked about having the building committee put back on the agenda.

10. Old Business – a. School Re-Opening Task Force Update – Mrs. Wagner said the task force met last night. The administrators put forward their recommendations. She had comment. They recommended we move to a hybrid plan to start. She said 82% of the students would come back with a hybrid plan. We want to get as many students into the building as possible. She said the plan was sent out to all parents and it is on the web site. Mrs. Wagner explained the three options. She said we are not pulling back on a start date and explained. We are looking at August 31<sup>st</sup> for the students with the first week being shortened days. She explained how the students would come in. We would re-visit this on September 26<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Wagner asked for Board member comments. Ms. Welborn said we have talked a lot about looking at the data. She would have liked a 100% return but understood the limited return. Mr. Karpinski said he has been following along with some of the committees and listened to Preston as well. He was a fan of the hybrid to slowly acclimate back to school. He had further comment about the pluses of the hybrid and spoke if we had to go full distance. He fully supports the hybrid plan. Mrs. Mastroianni said she really appreciates the work of the administrators. She said hybrid seems to be the way to go. She had some questions. Dr. Potemri said she has been involved in the committee. She said the hybrid makes sense as well. Dr. Potemri said some good points were made and thought the natural break of semesters would be a good thing but we are prepared for the model we proposed. Mrs. Wagner said when we look at a going-back approach, it doesn't mean we can't look at the different cohorts. She had further comment. She said it is so critical for our kids to be back at school. Dr. Potemri said we may need to look at the cohorts. Mr. Mendolia said he is nervous about

Kindergarten, first and second grade. He doesn't know if the children will need special help. He said it's a scary feeling for the kids coming in. He does feel the hybrid is the way to go. Mr. Nero wanted to remind everyone that the plans are amendable and he explained. He said it would have to go back to the Board but our plans can be amended anytime. Mr. Nero said he had a discussion with Steve Mansfield from Ledge Light. He said earlier in the spring, North Stonington had its first case of COVID. Mr. Nero had comment about the information that was able to be shared. He said Mr. Mansfield told him that when there is a case in the district, 99% of the time Ledge Light is notified. They would come into the district and do an investigation and find anyone who was less than 6 feet away for a period of 15 minutes. Mr. Nero said he can do a generic letter about having a case and notified the people that needed to be quarantined. He had further comment. We will try to notify the parents. He had further comment and said we will work with Ledge Light and they will tell him what information he can release. Mrs. Wagner said that the public would be notified. She read from Ledge Light's document. Mrs. Mastroianni commented about how they are notified about other things and gave headlice as an example. She spoke of acceptable forms of notification. Mr. Nero said the state has certain steps we have to follow. He had further comment and said we are going to follow what Ledge Light tells us to do. Mrs. Mastroianni said it sounds like we wouldn't be able to say, for example, there was a case in Mrs. Tardiff's class. Mr. Nero explained again the steps Ledge Light would take. He said it is a tough thing. He spoke of reporting instances to the Board of Education and the information he is only able to give. He had further comment. Mrs. Wagner had further explanation. Mrs. Wagner asked Mr. Boucher to give an update. He said early next week, signage will go up throughout the entire campus. He said mostly to remind about masks, washing hands and social distancing as well as traffic flow for the students. Everything will be well-marked. Starting next week they are upgrading the HVAC filters. A monthly changing of the filters will be done as well as a flushing of the building daily and he explained it had to do with the air. All the air inside will be flushed on a daily basis. We do have an HVAC contractor that will be supervising this with our guidance. He said students will be in on Mondays and Tuesdays and Thursdays and Fridays with no students on Wednesdays. He explained when the shifts would be working. Mr. Boucher said all the staff will be wearing masks and protective gear in certain areas. Students will be reminded to wash their hands. All entrance doors will be propped open so no students have to touch anything. When the building is locked up, disinfecting will begin. He said that will happen throughout the day. High touch areas will be hit upon. All restrooms will be cleaned a minimum of three times a day. Mr. Boucher spoke of the lunch wave cleaning. Every other bathroom stall and urinal will be shut down. Two of the three faucets will be shut down so students won't be next to each other. Paper towel dispensers will be installed and will be touch-free. A training session will be held with his staff. A checklist will be put on the doors. In the cafeteria, with the assistance of the kitchen staff and the administrators, they have come up with a table layout for social distancing. Disinfecting will happen at the beginning of lunch and after lunch waves. Mr. Boucher said at the end of lunch, the same thing will happen but more thorough and will include the floor. Classrooms will be provided with PPE, wipes and sanitizers. He asked that the students help by cleaning their space and he explained. He said they will be able to get in many areas and gave Pre-K as an example. Mr. Boucher will look at the class schedules and see when teachers will not be in their rooms so they can

get in and clean them. The grades that have bathrooms in the classrooms will be cleaned mid-day. All touch water fountains have been disabled but the bottle fill stations will be working. They will continue to disinfect those as well. The bus company will be provided disinfectant items and he explained. He explained they will be disinfecting for the most part on Monday, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays and deep cleaning on Wednesday and Saturday. He said Mr. Nero had a meeting with his staff and everyone is on the same page. Mr. Karpinski asked what they are doing with lockers and also the doors being open. Mr. Nero clarified. Mrs. St. Germain said part of the recommendation was to not use the lockers. Their desks have backpack hooks on them. Students will be bringing four classes a day of material so it will be different. Mr. Boucher said after every lunch wave the trash will be emptied. Mrs. Wagner said the teachers will be coming in five days for staff development and she reviewed what they will be trained on. She said a lot of questions came up about masks and mask breaks and she reviewed the approximate number of students in the classroom. She reviewed mask break scenarios. She said this hybrid model is a good chance to get the students comfortable wearing masks. Board members had questions. Physical education will be outside. They are already looking at what mask breaks will look like. Mrs. St. Germain explained how each student will have a device in their hands and that the teacher will have a laptop on their desk. They are working on what that will look like for those 85 minutes. She had further explanation of what that would look like. She didn't want people to think they could log off and take a break and walk away. It will be very different on what it will look like. Mrs. Wilkison it will be different especially at the primary levels. Primary will probably start their day with the morning meeting. They will gradually go to whole group level. They will meet with the teacher and do work. They will be sending home a weekly plan so parents know when their kids should be on. Grades 3-6 will have greater expectations for longer screen time. There will be opportunities for kids to learn in smaller groups. They will be working with each other and the teacher. The kids will actually be participating whether at home or in class.

b. School Re-Opening Plan – Mrs. Wagner had comment. Ms. Welborn made a motion that was seconded by Dr. Potemri that the North Stonington Board of Education begin the 2020/21 school year using the Hybrid Model as presented in the North Stonington Reopening Plan. Although local COVID-19 infection rates would currently support a Full Return, this decision is made to enable parents, students, and staff adequate time to adjust to new safety and health procedures in our schools. An evaluation of local COVID-19 infection rates and an assessment of school reopening will be made no later than September 25, with the goal to move to the Full Return model as soon as possible. This assumes no additional school reopening orders from Governor Lamont or changes and no significant changes in COVID-19 infection rates. Questions were asked and answered about bussing seating. Board members had comment. Comment was made that we need a solid plan and we can adjust accordingly. Mr. Nero had comment. The motion passed unanimously.

c. 2020-2021 School Calendar – Mrs. Wagner had comment on the calendars. She spoke of Calendar option 3. It gives us 180 school days for students and the training needed for paraprofessionals and she explained. There

was discussion. On a motion by Dr. Potemri, seconded by Mr. Mendolia, the Board voted unanimously to adopt Calendar option 3.

11. Policy – Ms. Welborn made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Mendolia to adopt Policy 5141.8, Face Masks and Coverings. Mr. Karpinski asked if this would eventually be pulled since it is geared to COVID. Mrs. Wagner said we can always alter it. Mr. Karpinski asked about sports. Mrs. St. Germain said CIAC has all those expectations outlined and will be coming out of ECC and she had further explanation. Mr. Mendolia asked about appropriate masks and Mrs. St. Germain said they have a policy on apparel and it should fall under that. There was discussion. The motion was amended to add “as amended.” The motion passed unanimously.

12. Calendar – Mrs. Wagner said our next meeting is scheduled for August 26<sup>th</sup>. She suggested scheduling a ZOOM meeting with middle/high level parents and elementary school parents. Mrs. St. Germain had comment on the date. Mrs. Wilkison said one thing she said they were concerned about was that there were a lot of questions on the survey and they were trying to get them answered. Mrs. Wagner felt a written response would be great but a ZOOM as well. Mrs. St. Germain had comment on recording those meetings. There was further comment and discussion. August 26<sup>th</sup> will be a potential Board meeting.

13. Public Comment – Mr. Hensley spoke of the Chromebooks and the cleaning. Mr. Nero and Mr. Boucher replied. Christine Hare, parent, thanked everyone for all the work they have done for all the kids and to keep them safe. She thinks North Stonington is awesome. She said every ounce of thought has gone into this. She is confident they will make good choices. She said she has a senior and a seventh grader. She asked about SATs. Mrs. St. Germain said yes and explained. Mrs. Hare asked about absences due to quarantine and how will they count if a student has to be quarantined. Mrs. Reyes explained everything COVID will not be counted and explained. Mrs. Hare asked about busses that drop off and pick up students at the daycare. Mrs. Wagner said they will be sanitized and Ms. Welborn explained how they will be sanitized between runs. A parent asked about a student being at home and the student can't get on the computer because a parent is working. Mrs. Wilkison explained about requesting a computer. The parent said it would be a matter of her son being at her parents' house with a lack of computer skills. Mrs. Wilkison explained they would help with that but he would be able to get on. Crystal Dame, parent, thanked everyone for everything they have done over the past six months. She asked about senior projects and senior activities and how that would go. Mrs. St. Germain said they are looking at senior projects already and are hoping they will be able to do it they way they are supposed to. She said whatever situation we are in during the spring, they will do everything they can to make it memorable for the seniors. She was wondering how it will work with her youngest child, how will it work with the other two students at home and not being able to get on if the siblings are in their classes. Mrs. Wilkison had comment and explanation. Mrs. Mehringer-Macina asked who would run the school if Mrs. Wilkison gets sick. Mrs. Wagner said she may be out just being sick and not with COVID. Mr. Nero said they are talking about that tomorrow and he elaborated. Mrs. Wilkison said some of their first grade teachers could explain what they are doing. Renee Bennett, first grade

teacher, said they plan on spending the first month or so teaching the kids how to navigate. Stephanie Goodwin said they will have the opportunity to do that at the start of the year. Jill Charette, parent, asked what the rationale is relying on the parents doing the temperature check for their children and she elaborated. She didn't think that was the right decision. Mrs. Wagner said we are going on the state's recommendations. Ms. Charette had further comment. She said it really concerns her. Why can't we err more on the side of caution. Mrs. Wagner said we would take that into consideration. A parent had a question about Google Meets and Classroom. Are the parents going to have to sign a waiver regarding privacy? Mrs. Reyes said there is a form that will be coming out and explained. It is the acknowledgment and consent form. She had further comment. Dr. Potemri asked about whether or not parents had to screen their children. Ms. Charette commented that if parents have to do the temperature check, they always send their kids to school sick anyway. Dr. Potemri wanted to clarify what she was asking. Ms. Charette said we should be doing temperature checks at the facility. Mrs. Hare commented that they did recommend they take temperatures when they walk in. She said they did that but then were told to stop because it was causing a backup. She said they would rather have the masks on. She said parents really need to take the responsibility on this. Dr. Potemri had comment on the different layers of temperature. Mrs. Hare had further comment. Dr. Potemri had further comment. Carolyn Bennett, teacher, brought up different scenarios that may happen and what would you do with these, such as an air handler going down, a lot of staff absences, and students not cleaning to name a few. Mr. Nero said as problems come up, we will deal with them accordingly. If we have to report out that to someone we will. Mrs. Wagner thanked everyone for their hard work and considerations. She said no plan is perfect but we are doing everything to keep your student safe and our staff safe. She invited the public to reach out if they had any questions.

On a motion by Ms. Welborn, seconded by Mr. Karpinski, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to  
The Board of Education