

Board of Education Minutes
November 10, 2020

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A special meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom meeting platform meeting ID 849 2666 8461. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mr. McCord, Mrs. Mastroianni, Mrs. Mastroianni, Dr. Potemri, and Mr. Mendolia. Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Martin, Mr. Pont, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. Wilkison, Mrs. St. Germain, and Mrs. Reyes. Mr. Mansfield of Ledge Light Health District was also present. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

On a motion by Ms. Welborn, seconded by Mr. Karpinski, the Board voted unanimously to change the order of agenda items and move Item 5, School Re-Opening Plan to Item 3, before Public Comment.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. School Re-Opening Plan – Mrs. Wagner explained the reason for the agenda shift. She said we were fortunate to have Steve Mansfield of Ledge Light Health District with us this evening. Mr. Nero met with the administrators and Mrs. Wagner asked Mr. Nero to speak. Mr. Nero reviewed the background of the information received since school opened. He has been in contact with Mr. Mansfield and Mary Day (LLHD) frequently. He said Mr. Mansfield advised us to not go in full. Mr. Nero said we have always said we would look at the science and he elaborated. He is recommending that we not go full in at this time and stay in the hybrid model. He said he is recommending we wait until January to reassess the situation. He had further comment. Mrs. Wagner had comment. She said the state's plan has metrics to meet to go in full and we are not meeting those metrics. Mr. Mansfield explained the map of the state and explained the numbers. He said a very small number of cases can change things dramatically and he explained. He had further comment. He explained why the state moved to a two-week rolling average. By the matrix, he said we are right where we are supposed to be in the hybrid. He said things could change dramatically Friday or the following Friday and he explained. He had further comment. He explained what is happening in the communities surrounding North Stonington. He said the policies and procedures put into place have worked really well. He had further explanation of the decision-making process. He had further comment. Board members had questions that Mr. Mansfield answered. He had further comment and said he is there to advise you but ultimately it is up to the Board as to what they want to do. He spoke of the small population of North Stonington. He had further comment and answered more questions. He said sticking to the tried and true protocols is working well. Board members asked questions of Mr. Mansfield that he answered. He spoke of the holidays and seeing more cases. Mr. Mansfield thought we wouldn't be moving from the current model for the rest of the year. Board members had further comment. Mr. Mansfield commented on the numbers in the schools and there was only one case of student to staff transmission. Mr. Nero said we can't come back to this every two weeks; if we are going to re-examine this we should do it in January after we come back after the break. Mr. Nero had further comment on other schools closing until the break. Mr. Nero explained why we haven't had to close the schools for tracing. Mr. Nero said how efficiently they can contact trace determines how long the schools

are closed. He explained the process of contact tracing. He had further comment. Board members had further questions that were answered. Mr. Mansfield had further comment. Mrs. Wagner had comment about not changing our minds every two weeks. She had further comment. There was mention of Mr. Nero closing school based on the number of cases with or without the Board and there was comment. Mr. Mansfield said he and Mr. Nero are in constant communication. Mr. Nero said we have other operations that we have to run. He spoke of the numbers increasing and possibly having to close school. He had further comment and explanation. Board members had comment that the data is showing us we are where we need to be as well as students and staff struggling with virtual learning. There was discussion of certain students attending four days a week. Mrs. St. Germain had comment and further explained. She said she hoped the Board would give them the latitude to have those students come in and she explained. Mr. Nero commented. He spoke of the lack of discipline issues due to the present circumstances. Mrs. Wilkison said they do have some special education students and 504 students in four days. There are also some students with some needs that are struggling that they invited back for four days. They have two teachers doing all remote instruction for the students as well as one teacher that is doing a mix. She had explanation. Board members had comment about communicating this to parents. Mrs. Wilkison said at the last meeting they asked parents to communicate with them about their needs. She had further explanation. Mrs. St. Germain commented and said there is no set process but they are consulting with the teams at school and the parents and had further explanation. Mrs. St. Germain clarified that Wednesday is still a school day. They are still teaching but it is in a virtual model. Mrs. Wagner said we need to have a very exact process and we need to determine equity. She had further comment about it being a sound process. She had further comment. Board members had further comment. Mrs. St. Germain had further comment. Mrs. Costa said they have criteria for students on their IEPs and she explained and said even with that it is suggestive. It is very individualized and she explained. Mr. Nero had comment. Mrs. Wagner said what she is hearing is we stay on the hybrid. On a motion by Dr. Potemri, seconded by Ms. Welborn, the Board voted unanimously to take the recommendation of Mr. Nero to stay in the hybrid model and re-evaluate the situation in January. Board members had comment about the hybrid program at the elementary school to make sure that we are proactive. Board members commented about the better schedule at the elementary school recently. Board members commented that some of the younger children can't do this on their own. There was comment on the extra space and using it to leverage social distancing. There was concern about the impact on everyone in the community. Mrs. Wilkison commented. Mrs. Wagner wanted it to be clear that we are still in the hybrid model and she explained the parents just can't say they want their child to go four days. She said the administrators are working to identify students. They need to reach out to the teacher first and they will go to their administrator. She elaborated. Questions were asked and answered about virtual instruction versus in-school instruction.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – Mrs. Wagner asked to keep public comment to 2-3 minutes and comment only once. Roseanne Salisbury, parent, was disappointed we are not going back to full time but she understands. She had further comment and asked about the possibility of bringing grades K-2 in because they can't do the online learning. She had further comment. Kirsten Montgomery, parent, spoke of

having kids in school on Wednesdays. She had further comment. She spoke of the hybrid is the best option right now. Jessica Deary, parent, asked what is the plan moving forward to make improvements in the hybrid and distance learning. Mrs. Wagner said the administrators are always looking at the plans to make things better. Mrs. Deary had further comment. Mrs. Wagner said she didn't want to make any assumptions but we have been in this for 8 weeks and had further comment. Mrs. St. Germain had comment. Laura Mello, parent, said the IEP and 504 folks should be the priority. She spoke of Mr. Mansfield's comments about being where we should be. She had further comment. Mr. Nero said the plan did call for looking at this at the end of September. He had further comment. Mrs. Deary had further comment. Niki Dean, parent, said there are a lot of parents struggling with this. She had further comment. She questioned cutting sports if we are not returning and she elaborated. Mrs. St. Germain said there are no middle school sports and she elaborated. She said high school sports are only played with their area schools and she explained. She had further comment. Mr. Nero had comment. Mrs. Wagner had comment and said we are not going into this decision lightly. She said all the kids are struggling. The masks are working, the social distance is working. We have to look at the recommendations of the state department and the health district. She had further comment. She said this is the road we have to take right now.

5. C.E.N. Bandwidth Increase Discussion – Mrs. Wagner asked for an update on the Chrome Books. Mr. Pont said we have 165 in now but there is a lot of work to be done and he explained. Mrs. Wagner explained we are looking at an RFP for moving technology. Mr. Pont said he got good news on that; C.E.N. (Connecticut Education Network) would do it and he explained. Mr. Pont said the good side of that is we may only have to do a wiring job for the old guidance office closet. He will resume the conversation with the representative tomorrow. Mr. Pont said it would be a monthly subscription cost. We are at 1G now and we would go up to 10G. Mrs. Martin explained the reimbursement rate. She explained where the reimbursement goes now and what would happen in the future. Mrs. Martin said we can't be reimbursed if we went to 10G before July 1st. Questions were asked and answered. Mrs. Wagner asked if we can make it work. Mr. Pont said we are making it work and he explained the issues now and going forward. Mrs. Wagner said we probably want to get a solid figure on reimbursement for our upcoming budget. Questions were asked and answered. There was comment and discussion. Mr. Nero said there is a bigger picture. Mr. Pont had further comment on what he is trying to do.

6. Public Comment – None.

On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. McCord, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education