

Board of Education Minutes
April 7, 2021

A regular meeting of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, April 7, 2021, at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom meeting platform meeting ID 894 6031 2967. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mr. Karpinski, Ms. Welborn, Mr. McCord, Mrs. Mastroianni, Dr. Potemri, and Mr. Mendolia. Also present were Mr. Nero, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. St. Germain, Mrs. Reyes, and Mr. Cillino. Chairperson Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Public Comment on Agenda Items with Students Speaking First – None.

4. Presentations – a. Student Support – Mrs. St. Germain explained they wanted to present to the Board what they want to do to support students starting this year. Mrs. St. Germain reviewed a timeline that began in the spring of 2020 and explained those items. This current year they were streaming every day with no lesson repeats. She reviewed what they have been doing since the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. Mrs. St. Germain said the biggest impact they had on students beginning in December was the Wednesdays that the students came back into the building for extra support. She elaborated and explained how those students were identified. The staff worked really hard during common plan time and team curriculum; Mrs. St. Germain said the staff has done an outstanding job. Looking ahead, they are proposing an in-person abbreviated schedule from April 21st to June 9th. The majority of students would leave at noon. She explained how the students would be identified. The entire staff would support students and she elaborated. Mrs. Reyes further explained the Wednesday schedule. She had further comment. Mr. Cillino explained how the elementary school started the school year and said they also had no repeat of lessons. He reviewed what they did on the last Wednesday before the students came back full-in. He explained a one-size-fits-all would not work for extra help. He reviewed their support plan. He said they will go into next year still playing catchup. Once we end this year, we can talk about where students left off and where we need to make up that ground. Each teacher will be taking time to address the social-emotional well-being and he gave examples of what they will be doing. Mrs. St. Germain said each building will have their own needs. On their side, they would potentially need an additional bus run and she explained. There are no contractual changes needed because the teachers will still be teaching the whole day. Mr. Cillino said they would like the ability to pull various students from various cohorts and classrooms and he explained. They would not require any contractual changes either. Students and teachers would have their normal lunches. Mrs. St. Germain said it is important to tackle this now instead of waiting until next year; they are excited to get started on this. Board members had questions that regarding summer school and enrichment offerings. Mrs. Wagner thanked the administrators for doing this. Questions were asked and answered on the fall schedule. Ms. Welborn commented that if resources become an issue, she would like those students that are struggling to get help. Further questions were asked about whether this was mandatory participation for those students identified and Mrs. St. Germain said it was and she explained.

Further questions were asked and answered regarding whether this extra help would be for credit recovery or catch-up. Mr. McCord questioned whether this would be okay with the bus company and he was told yes. He also mentioned that for majority of the students they have been doing a four-day week and are we up to covering our curriculum. Mrs. St. Germain said we have been doing a five-day week and explained. She elaborated. She was confident we are where we want our students to be with curriculum. Questions were asked and answered regarding keeping up with lab requirements. Mrs. St. Germain had further comment. Mr. Mendolia asked if a child does not need help, can we keep the child at school if there is an issue. He was told they would assess that situation. Mr. Karpinski asked about a hybrid model next year and Mr. Nero said we are waiting to hear definitely on that but the thought is that there would be no virtual learning at the district level. If you want your child to go hybrid, you have to take your child out of school and enroll in the state's program and he elaborated. There was discussion. Mrs. St. Germain had comment on the RISE grant and said that is another avenue to look at for those Wednesdays for enrichment. Mr. Karpinski asked about elementary summer school and Mrs. Costa responded and said they are running an extended school year. She elaborated. They are opening up another program to grade 6 and are working on the criteria. Mrs. Mastroianni thanked all the administrators for getting ahead of this and making a plan so quickly after having the students back in full. Mrs. Wagner and Mr. Nero had comment on the administrative team. Dr. Potemri thanked all the administrators and said that Mrs. Costa and Mr. Cillino seem to have developed a solid plan. The Board supported the administrators plan moving forward.

5. Administrative – a. Approval of Minutes – March 10, 2021 – Mr. Karpinski made a motion that was seconded by Mr. McCord to accept the minutes of the March 10, 2021, meeting. Questions were asked and answered on the minutes. The motion was withdrawn. On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. McCord, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes as amended in item six regarding PSAT testing.

March 18, 2021, Special Meeting – On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. McCord, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the March 18, 2021, special meeting.

b. Correspondence – None.

c. Personnel – Mr. Nero said we had a custodian that was hired and left recently. He said Carol Pezzullo has been hired and elaborated. He said kudos to Monique Herard and John McGrath from Aramark and he explained the situation in the kitchens today.

6. Reports – a. Superintendent – Mr. Nero said at the town meeting the other night the financial system for the town was voted down. It is the same system we are using and he explained. It would have been the best thing for the town to get the program. He wished there was some way for that to be supported. He elaborated. He said he felt bad when it was voted down. Mr. Nero reviewed information regarding vaccinated persons regarding travel. We heard this last week for the first time that the official guidance is that deep cleaning is overkill. He explained. We are going to continue for the rest of this year and we have to re-think this for the beginning of next year for our

reopening plan. He said it is important to do a thorough cleaning and he elaborated. Mr. McCord said he got up and spoke twice about how good the financial package is. He thought there was still a possibility it could be purchased through the regular budget. They are using Quick Books. Mr. Nero said that is his thought too about getting it in the budget. Dr. Potemri agreed and said she didn't think people understood. There was further comment on the benefits of the financial package for the town. Dr. Potemri didn't think the presentation was very good and she elaborated. She said the value to the taxpayers and the town is where they need to focus. There was further discussion. Mr. Nero said we have the ESSER grant and ESSER II grant and he explained. We can use the ESSER II grant in 2022-2023. He said the ARPE3 grant has not released the criteria yet. He said a lot of the money will be for educational purposes. We may want to look at hiring on a yearly basis a behavior specialist so the principals can do their routine day to day. The ARPE3 grant will be substantial. We cannot supplant anything in the budget; that is the district or town's responsibility. He had further comment. The state has hired a team of auditors for the next ten years to make sure this money is spent correctly. Mrs. Martin said although we are covering social-emotional, it can't be for special education specifically because we have to maintain our maintenance of effort. Mr. Nero said he is excited about what we know and where we can go in the future. He had further comment.

b. BOE Chairperson – Mrs. Wagner said the secretary contract is coming up for June 30. Mr. McCord and Ms. Welborn will help with that. The department of education does have some kind of testing available but will leave it up to the school. There is a lot of work being done on the school side. Mrs. Reyes said their counselors will join in on that with the administrators. She said they are still working on the Sandy Hook Promise and explained the training they have taken so far and they are following through on that. May 3rd through 7th is teacher appreciation week and May 6th is nurse appreciation day. She elaborated. Mr. Nero said we are working on the end-of-the-year for some kind of barbecue and he explained. Mrs. Wagner wants to do something for teacher appreciation week and they will think about that. Mrs. Wagner asked about the town hearing for the budget. Mr. Nero heard from Mr. Urgo today that it is the 19th. Presentation-wise it should be similar to the Board of Finance presentation. She elaborated. Dr. Potemri had some ideas for teacher and nurse appreciation. She would like to get together with some other Board members. There was discussion.

c. Committee Chairperson – Mrs. Mastroianni spoke on behalf of the North Stonington Education Foundation and said they are on for the 10th to create an outdoor space at each school and she explained. Tents are coming and hopefully at the elementary some support for a permanent outdoor classroom. There was further discussion. Something will be scheduled for May to work on policies and the strategic plan. May 1st at 8:30 a.m. will be a special meeting for policy and the strategic plan.

d. LEARN Board of Directors' Liaison – None.

7. Old Business – a. School Re-Opening Plan – Nothing new to report.

8. New Business – a. Non-Renewal of One-Year Position – Mr. Nero explained we did have a teacher go out at the beginning of the school year on leave and he explained. On a motion by Mrs. Wagner, seconded by Dr. Potemri, the Board voted unanimously that the contract of Courtney Lauer not be renewed for the following year upon its expiration at the end of the 2020-2021 school year, and that the Superintendent of Schools is directed to advise such person in writing of this action.

b. Graduation Date – Mrs. St. Germain explained the sheet regarding graduation week. She said we need to come up with a back-up plan in case the weather is bad and she explained her thoughts about streaming the ceremony and elaborated. They have worked to streamline these activities. She explained they have worked hard to keep the kids safe. Questions were asked and answered. There was discussion. Ledge Light is discouraging indoor events. There was further comment. There was discussion of alternate venues. Further questions were asked and answered. There was further comment. On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. Mendolia, the Board voted unanimously to set graduation date as June 11, 2021.

9. Calendar – May 1st is a special meeting and the next regular meeting is April 21st.

10. Public Comment – None.

On a motion by Mr. Karpinski, seconded by Mr. McCord, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta t. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education