

Wakefield School Board
12-29-20 Public Minutes
Held in the Multi-Purpose Room and via Zoom
Approved

In attendance:

Board: Relf Fogg. Mary Collins and Bob Ouellette via Zoom. Excused: Lino Avellani

Administration: Superintendent Jerry Gregoire, Business Administrator Marie D'Agostino, Student Services Director, Anne Kebler, Principal James Lampron

Facilities Director Joe Williams. Transportation Director Brennan Peaslee

Public: Connie Twombly. Parents and community members via Zoom

Call to Order

Mr. Ouellette called the meeting to order at 6:00 and led those present in person and on zoom in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Tracy Searles who works at the school as an LNA spoke about her bout with Covid and her suggestion to not go back to face-to-face learning. Rene Mailhot is a Medical Social Worker and agrees with all Mrs. Searles points about not returning to face to face learning now. She can tell the Board this will get worse. She has not had any contact with any students since December 9th but she can say there have been many students who have had Covid. She doesn't know the number. She assisted a Wakefield family with multiple children and parents who all got Covid. Lisa Wunderlich, Paul School Nurse said there have been cases of children and families who have contracted Covid as late as December 18th and if the whole family gets it the children can be out as long as twenty-four days. She said Wakefield is considered a substantial spread of disease at this time with thirty new cases in Carroll County yesterday and they're up 10.8% in one day. She recommends not coming back to school until February 1st or at least until after Martin Luther King Day. There was a discussion about the best practices and what is effective for children returning to school

Old Business

Remote Learning and Covid 19

Mr. Gregoire, using a Power Point presentation pointed out that the State DHHS, as of yesterday, shows three cases of Covid among Wakefield children with no clusters and a total of thirty new cases in Carroll County in one day. . He went on to say when we go back and forth from face to face to remote it takes a couple of days to prepare the materials so we lose two days each time we do this. There are not enough computers for 1:1. It is unknow if the State will give us any relief from the six days we have lost and will have to make up as of now. Mr. Gregoire recommends staying remote until January 25th with Board re-evaluation made on the 19th. Mr. Gregoire said there have been six resignations from bus drivers since we went remote. We

currently have five drivers. That significantly restricts the ability to transport children to school. Mrs. Collins said she knows other schools are continuing face to face learning. Why can't we? Parents have contacted her and they want their children in school. Mr. Gregoire said when he put the ad on the NH Employment Security for drivers, we were one of one hundred and twenty-three ads for bus drivers.

Mr. Ouellette also wants the kids in school but with the bus situation and the jump in cases he is concerned and believes we should wait for two or three weeks. Mr. Fogg made some recommendations about transporting kids. Mrs. Peaslee said that there is at least one student registered for every seat. All Board members and administrators and teachers want kids back in school but their safety has to be considered. Mr. Fogg stressed the financial hardship many parents are suffering in our town. Mrs. Collins asked if the students that are in need of services (IEP) be receiving these services face to face at school? Mr. Gregoire said it's his understanding that everyone that had that requirement was offered it and no one opted in for this past period. If we go remote, they will be offered these services again. Mrs. Kebler said no one indicated that they wanted face to face because of the lack of medical support and administrative support in the building.

Mr. Ouellette made a motion, seconded by Mr. Fogg, to follow the recommendations of reevaluating coming back to school on January 19th. Roll call: Ouellette aye, Collins aye, Fogg aye, (Vote 3-0)

Transportation

Mr. Fogg asked if there is any sign on bonus for new drivers. Mr. Ouellette said that hasn't even been discussed by the Board.

Mr. Fogg made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to pay the five remaining drivers, those who have not quit or given their resignation a bonus of \$1,000 after taxes.

They deserve this loyalty stipend for hanging in there with us. He believed we had eleven highly qualified, loyal bus drivers when this all began. The five remaining will be the future leaders. Mr. Fogg would like to see the check issued along with their next paycheck and believes the drivers will be there once it's time to get going again. Mrs. Peaslee said she thinks this is wonderful for the drivers that are left but wanted to know why we furloughed the drivers, lose three of them due to the furlough, just to give money to the people that stayed and now not have enough drivers to transport kids? Mr. Fogg said with proper leadership the drivers would have been furloughed last march and we wouldn't have these current distractions. Everyone's lack of knowledge about the furlough process...Mrs. Peaslee told Mr. Fogg that the drivers were getting fifteen hours a week which gives them about \$180 a week to live on and they are not receiving unemployment. She said when the drivers come back, they will be pulling double duty. Mrs. Peaslee questioned if Mr. Fogg was going to make sure the drivers are going to stay before they get the money? She said you are going to be doubling some of these drivers' hours. Mr. Fogg said we have to take a look at the Covid seating. Mr. Gregoire understands people have to protect their families but greatly appreciate those drivers who have stuck with us through this crisis.

Roll call: Ouellette aye, Collins aye, Fogg aye (Vote 3-0)

Mr. Fogg made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to offer new bus driver applicants a \$500 sign on bonus with the stipulation they serve the districts for 90 days.

Mrs. Collins asked where the bonus money would come from. Mr. Gregoire said there is plenty left in those lines.

Roll call: Ouellette nay, Collins aye, Fogg aye (Vote 2-1)

Mr. Gregoire will put this in the ads for bus drivers.

Public Comment

Connie Twombly thanked the Board for thinking of our children and holding off until the 19th to make a decision to come back to school. Jess LeBar said you talked about in school services for IEP's being offered and no one took you up on that. She said that's not true. She asked and was told by two people in the special Ed department that face-to-face special services were not being offered. Mrs. Kebler said that they didn't have the staff. In order to keep the Partner Program going they need an administrator and a nurse in the building. Ms. LaBar said her second grader was also not offered in school services. Mr. Gregoire asked that Ms. LeBar send him an email so he can look into this further. Nicole Beckwith asked that decisions be made and not at the last minute. She wants her children in school. She also asked what the plan is if they don't have drivers. Mr. Gregoire has reached out to other districts for drivers. She would like to reevaluate remote learning days. Mr. Gregoire will be looking at a hybrid method.

Adjournment

Mr. Ouellette made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Collins, to adjourn the meeting at 7:29

Roll call: Ouellette aye, Collins aye, Fogg aye (Vote 3-0)

Respectfully submitted for approval at the next School Board meeting.

Priscilla Colbath

Secretary Pro Temp