

MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD RETREAT MINUTES (MVSD)

Remotely VIA Google Meet

July 29, 2020

6:30 pm

Present: Board members Attending Remotely:

Board Chairperson, Chris Shepard (*joined the meeting at 6:38pm*), Highgate, Don Collins (Swanton) Vice Chair Devin Bachelder, (Franklin), Steve Scott, (Highgate), Peter Magnant (Franklin), Joanne Johnston, (Franklin), Terri O'Shea (Swanton), Meaghan Conly (Swanton) and Jen Chevalier (Highgate)

Others: Julie Regimbal, Superintendent of Schools, Dan Palmer, Lora McAllister

Call the Meeting to Order- Devin Bachelder (vice-chair) called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

MVSD Board Reopening Procedure

Julie Regimbal reported that Dan French sent out a memo on July 23rd regarding the re-opening of schools and the instructional disposition. School districts have three instructional dispositions available to them: 1. Remote Learning - School is closed for in-person instruction; 2. Hybrid Learning - School is open for in-person instruction but some students might receive instruction through remote learning; and 3. In-Person Learning - School is open and all students receive instruction at school. Back in March when schools shut down, it was an administrative directive and not a school board decision. The administration does have a responsibility to keep schools boards apprised of the status of schools and procedures. On July 15th, we were advised to really need to assure the school boards on how we will maintain operations and whether we will move to remote, hybrid or in person learning. Procedures need to be put in place for learning equities for all students, special education students meet their individualized education plan and students have access to food. Dan French said that school boards get to choose the model such as hybrid or remote. This is new guidance in which school boards should describe the parameters for instructional dispositions through policy or delegate authority to the superintendent to do so through administrative procedures. This could be done through policy or procedures but because policies need to be warned and have first reading etc., this could take up to 30-40 days to implement. With the constant changes in directions that the districts have been provided on a weekly basis, a procedure would allow us to be nimbler. The district has organized a steering committee to develop procedures, and revise as needed. This has been weeks of work from the administrative team. Julie contacted legal counsel and he said it is not a board responsibility for the board to develop procedures, it is the Superintendent's job to do this. However, with the constant changes

that the State has been providing, she thought that the board should have a procedure to authorize the Superintendent to develop a procedure for the hybrid model. The Superintendent will work with the administration and other committee members to complete this task.

Terri O'Shea inquired if we know how many teachers are coming back and how many students? Julie does have some preliminary information that was sent out via surveys. There is a survey that was sent out today to inquire how many students will want remote learning. The remote learning will be more rigorous than this past spring because the State has put out a minimum number of instructional hours that must be met. This will involve a commitment of teachers and staff dedicated to remote learning because teachers will be providing in person instruction four days a week with Wednesday being used for planning purposes.

Action

Don Collins moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to authorize the Superintendent to create procedures for the re-opening of schools. (Vote later after discussion)

Discussion

Meaghan inquired what would the role of the board look like if the board did not approve the authority to the Superintendent. Julie explained that the board would have to be very involved in hundreds of hours of planning to complete all the procedures needed to get this task completed. Due to the constant revised directions from the State, the board will be constantly meeting to be making the changes. This would also mean that instead of administration procedures, board members will be contacted by community members regarding the changes going from an administrative process to a political process. There is a ripple effect for every decision that is being made or revised as it may impact busing, food distribution, students learning etc. The steering committee is made up of a broad group of individuals including the administration from the schools and Central Office, school nurse leader, teachers, Directors of Buildings and Grounds Representatives, and the Association President. The steering committee is made up of smaller task force committees who does the information gathering and proposals that is brought back to the steering committee level for decision making. At the next meeting, the board will receive the re-occupancy plan that covers everything except teaching and learning aspect. Meaghan expressed concern about protecting individual employee's jobs. Joanne Johnston asked about employees wanting leave. Julie stated that those requests that are not part of the FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act) leave or Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) will be brought to the school board for their consideration.

Vote on Motion

Don Collins moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to authorize the Superintendent to create procedures for the re-opening of schools. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.

MVU Parking Lot Improvement

Dan Palmer reported that when schools re-open, it has been recommended that the students entering and leaving schools should be staggered. One of the requirements at this time is that students are health-screened at the first point of contact. All the children riding on the buses will be already screened when they arrive at school whereas students being dropped off or driving to school will not have been screened. They would like to have a separate entrance for students arriving on the bus from the students driving/being dropped off. Most parents preferred to drop off the kids at school instead of having them ride on the bus. This will cause clusters of vehicles in the usual drop off area. They are proposing having the buses come in the back way via the Frontage Road. The road will need to be upgraded for the buses to drive on it. The gravel road will need to be built up and widened. Kids coming in from this separate bus entrance will already be screened and will relieve the bottleneck of kids coming through the front door. This will give opportunity to screen the students coming through the front door and allow for social distancing. This plan provides the most safety for kids possible and he thinks that this will stay in place even if there are changes provided by the State. At the end of the day, the juniors and the seniors will leave a little bit earlier by the frontage road to help stagger the evening leave time and ease the traffic flow. The cost of this project was not budgeted because no one anticipated the pandemic during budget time and the need for this project. Lora explained that it was not put out to bid because it did not meet the threshold to go out to bid. She said that they have been very conservative in their purchases this year to allow for expenses that are COVID related that have not been anticipated. The contractor is a reputable company with good references.

HVAC Grant Update

Lora McAllister reported that there is six million dollars available in the COVID Relief fund for indoor air quality programs. The Coronavirus has created a need for improved HVAC systems and indoor air quality. The buildings and grounds directors are examining the systems in their schools and see if we can use these funds to improve our HVAC systems. Highgate may be able to take advantage of using funds from their bond in addition to the grant funding to make good improvements in their building. Devin Bachelder thought that this sounded like a good opportunity to make improvements with these funds.

Next Meeting

The board has scheduled their next board meeting for August 4th at 6:30pm via Google Meet.

Adjournment

Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Steve Scott to adjourn the meeting at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Conly, Board Clerk

Submitted by Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary