

MISSISQUOI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD (MVSD)

Remotely VIA Google Meet

August 18, 2020

6:30 PM

Present: Board members joining the meeting remotely, Board Chairperson, Chris Shepard, Highgate, Don Collins (Swanton) Scott, (Highgate), Peter Magnant (Franklin), Joanne Johnston, (Franklin), Terri O'Shea (Swanton), Jen Chevalier (Highgate), Meaghan Conly (Swanton) and Devin Bachelder (Franklin)

Others Joining Remotely: Julie Regimbal, Superintendent of Schools, Lora McAllister, Business Manager, Dan Palmer, MVU Co-Principal, Jay Hartman, MVU Principal, Jennifer Desorgher, MVU Director of Teaching and Learning, Joyce Hakey, Franklin Principal, Yeshua Pastina, Highgate Principal, Dena St. Amour, Swanton Principal, Justina Jennett, Swanton Assistant Principal, Kosha Patel, MVSD Director of Instruction, Tyler Choiniere community person, and Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary

Call the Meeting to Order- Chris Shepard called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

Agenda Review-Julie Regimbal has two professional resignations to add under correspondence.

Public Comments-

Tyler Choiniere inquired regarding the Highgate school parking lot/driveway that has been repaved and lined. He asked why the walking path was not included in this project? Chris Shepard responded that when Tyler made this request to the Highgate Elementary School Board, the board's consideration was conditional on the school not losing parking places. Unfortunately, they could not make this work. There may be future projects that will be contemplated, and the walking path will continue to be considered and remain on the list. Chris explained that the road behind the building provided staff parking and access to the building over the summer when the parking lot was being torn apart. Tyler also asked about the board returning to in person meetings. Chris responded that the board would like to return to in person but the COVID status level at the schools will need to change before the board can change from online meetings.

Correspondence

Julie Regimbal reported that they had a .6 FTE Speech Language Pathologist resigned verbally from her position due to life circumstances. Veronique Krohn, new hire from the Agri Science Department, took another position in New York. This is a tough position to fill and the administration is disappointed.

Consent Agenda

Approval of the Minutes

Action: Terri O'Shea moved, seconded by Steve Scott to approve the August 4th, 2020 board minutes as presented. The board approved the minutes on a 9-0 vote.

Presentations (Information)

Superintendent/Administrative Updates Information

Julie Regimbal reported that the Strong & Healthy Start Guide was updated on August 11th. The new teacher orientation and In-Service days has started. The school calendar has been adjusted to account for the later student start date of September 8th.

Tomorrow morning is the big District Wide Welcome Back and keynote speaker. In the past, they have had 179 student days and 8 in-service days. With moving the start date to September 8th, the staff will have 12 in-service days before school begins with only 171 student days. The legislators have signaled support for a reduction in mandatory student days from 175 to 170. Some of the guidance is making sure hands are washed, wear masks and keep social distancing. Franklin and Grand Isle Superintendents worked together with Northwest Public Access to create a back to school Health and Safety video. It will be shared widely on Facebook and all our school Websites. We will be opening school in a hybrid model as planned. When conditions become favorable, routines and practices are well in place, physical space can be managed and staffing levels are stable, we expect to bring PK-5th grade students back for 5 days of in person learning. 6-12 will remain in a hybrid model in about four weeks.

The hybrid model has students in person 2 days a week with 3 days of remote learning. All students will be remote Wednesdays and focused on independent work. Students will have more hours of instruction remotely than last spring. There are minimum requirements set by the State. We also have a 100% Virtual online learning option that we have called Missisquoi Valley Virtual Academy or MVVA. This is being run through Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (VTVLC). We assigned eight teachers to this project as well as multiple part time coordinators. Students will be part of the program for the whole school year. We had just under 160 students enrolled. Julie wanted to thank the principals for all their effort to find teachers and coordinators to make the virtual learning opportunity come together for the students and their families. Kosha Patel reported on the challenges of tracking attendance from in person learning, to remote learning and virtual learning through VTVLC. Attendance for In-person Day will mark students *in-person* present or absent on that morning. On the remote days, teachers will mark students present or absent that day or the following morning if they do the following: log into a video chat with a staff member, participate in Morning Meeting, participate in a telephone call with a staff member, email a staff member, log into a learning management system (e.g. SeeSaw, Dojo, or Google Classroom) in order to

complete schoolwork or complete paper-and-pencil assignments and send a picture to the teacher. There is a strong connection between attendance records and students receiving meals. To help track attendance, students who receive multiple supports will be assigned an advisor/case manager. The case manager will check in with students/families after school or the next day if a student was "absent." They will check-in to see if the student made contact with a non-classroom teacher that day and communicate with the classroom teacher. Classroom teachers may change attendance from "absent" to "present" based on the case manager's information. Teachers could change an "absent" to "present" on a student's remote days if they submitted work on the weekend. If a student attempted all their assigned remote learning assignments, their teacher would mark them as present for all remote days. The state requires minimum hours of instruction per week.

Tania Hayes provided highlights of summer work where fortunately we did have some in person instruction. Questions being asked are where we have been and where are we headed. Major Considerations for Special Education as we transition back is fair and is a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and IEPs for students. How does FAPE look different in the new environment?

From April to June, special ed services were provided in distance learning plans. Individual Education Plans will need to be amended. We could not evaluate in a remote environment. There will be a number of evaluations that will need to be done when school is back in session. Following the Agency of Education and the Department of Health guidance, stage, 1, 2 and 3 planning, Special Education will need to respond and adjust accordingly. The IEP document will be reasonably calculated to ensure educational benefit in light of the child's circumstance and amend in the new environment that keeps changing. We need to offer methods, interactions, programs etc. ensuring the IEP is appropriate for about 350 students in our district that will need to be amended. There will also need to be assessment on what happened last year, what did the students miss out on and the district may have to supplement by providing Covid recovery services. Tania is contracting an evaluator because they are down a special educator at MVU. The following is the work involved between August 17th and September 8th: Building Based In Service and Collaboration with teaching teams, Case Managers will hold IEP amendment meetings, Meetings with Paraeducators, Prep for In Person and Remote support and instruction, Prep for Remote Only Instruction, 504's will be amended accordingly. Tania stated that the MTSS plans in the schools will play a role in recovery services for general education.

New Business

Facility Task Discussion

Chris Shepard stated that at the last board meeting, the school board wanted to discuss adding the formation of a facility board committee. Chris suggested that they

call it a task force instead of a committee so that they could try it out on a temporary basis. Don Collins raised the issue so that they could meet once a month similar to what they had done while he was at MVU where they met about a half hour prior to the regular board meeting. Don asked what is our role as a board around the facility? Peter Magnant would like to be involved earlier in these projects before they get to the point when they are brought to the board for an approval of a bid or quote. Terri O'Shea wondered about if the Directors of Buildings and Grounds provided the board with the facility plans and with the items listed prior to the approval of the budget, then it would not be a surprise. Don Collins suggested that the facility directors have a page in the annual report so that the community knows what the plans for the facilities are. There have been some changes with the plans because of COVID. Julie stated that we should have a process that is comfortable for all, know what the projects are being planned, when they are revised due to another priority or event, and then bring the bids to the board. Peter wants clarity but does not want the board to take over the projects. If there was a board task force, then the board could give ideas for the task force to review. Don felt it is worth a try to have a task force because it is important to be visible in the projects. Joanne Johnston is supportive of a task force and board members could serve on the different committee/task force that they may have a passion for. The board agreed to have Don Collins, Peter Magnant and Chris Shepard serve on the task force with Lora and Julie attending as part of the administration. They will schedule the next meeting for a different night than the board meeting.

Side Letters of Agreement

Lunch Coverage Side Letter

Julie Regimbal explained that teachers may need to eat with their students because students will need to remain in their classrooms during lunchtime to avoid mingling with other students as part of the COVID guidelines and re-opening framework. Because teachers are required to have a duty-free lunch equal to the length of the student lunch period, this side letter provides a provision allowing the teachers to leave up to 25 minutes early on that day.

Action

Don Collins moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to approve the lunch coverage side letter. The Board approved on a 9-0 vote.

Night Duties Side Letter

Julie explained that there are requirements to provide teachers with a night duty schedule prior to the start of the school year. Due to the COVID Pandemic, the evening activities taking place is unknown currently. This side letter waives the requirements, the parties agree to develop a procedure and provide as much notice as possible when scheduling night duties.

Action

Peter Magnant moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to approve the night duties side letter. The Board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.

Use of Sick Leave and FFCRA

Julie explained that the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) has expanded the family and medical leave which allows for 2/3 pay for an approved leave. The district is proposing that the Professional Educators (NEA Teachers' Unit) or the ESP Support Staff have the option to access 1/3 of their available sick time so that the leave is equal to a full day of pay.

Action

Devin Bachelder moved, seconded by Meaghan Conly to approve the Sick Leave and FFCRA side letter. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.

Support Staff Hours Side Letter

Julie explained that there are additional duties incurred as a result of the re-opening framework and health start guidelines that may increase the number of hours that the educational support personnel may work in one day and decrease it on another day especially on Wednesday when all the students will be remote. This side letter allows for the flexibility of their hours provided the employee and the administration mutually agree.

Action

Terri O'Shea moved, seconded by Don Collins to approve the flexible hours support staff side letter. The board approved the motion on a 9-0 vote.

Old Business**Board Goals and Superintendent Job Description (Update)**

Terri O'Shea stated that as a result of the board retreat, they want to do more of a proactive approach and be more strategic. Terri said that they did not get any feedback to date and would like to get the board goals completed. The board goals and the job descriptions are in the drive. She has color coded the goals so that if a board member wants to take on a color, then this would make it easier when broken down in smaller parts. She would like volunteers for the different goals. Joanne Johnston volunteered for the turquoise task force, Meaghan Conly volunteered for the green and Terri O'Shea volunteered for the yellow. Both Terri and Devin will continue to coordinate the goals. Don Collins suggested that with a very good superintendent job description template that had been drawn up by an attorney, it appears that the board would possibly only need to make small revisions and updates to the job description.

Facility Updates

Lora McAllister provided an update on the projects occurring in the different school buildings/sites at this time. In the Swanton Garage Renovation project, the slab is being poured in the next few days and the trusses have arrived. They had a final walk through for the Highgate Parking and Stormwater Project. It went well except there was one issue with one stormwater chamber and water reaching the drain. It was acknowledged by all and documented by the engineers and storm water representative. The contractors will correct this issue and they are confident that this will be resolved. The MVU rear entrance will commence work on Friday.

The district is applying for air quality grants. The funds must be spent before December 31st. It involves obtaining quotes from vendors and outline the projects based on the guidance. Different assessments have been going on in all the schools looking at HVAC systems. They need to make sure that systems are working properly, are being cleaned and bringing in outdoor air. Lora created a table with HVAC recommendations from Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for VT Schools. She broke the expenses down by costs of assessment/inspection, duct, coil and cleaning expense, adding portable air cleaners to the classrooms and proposed improvements. Items in red are immediate things that improve air quality. The schools need to have the ducts clean as a priority. They would like to purchase portable air filters for the classrooms. They will apply for state grants and attempt to get ESSER Funds to pay for as much as possible. ESSER Funds are supposed to help schools with the purchase of portable air filters. It will cost \$116,000 to clean the duct work and they would like the approval to move forward to do this.

Action

Don Collins moved, seconded by Peter Magnant moved to allocate up to \$116,000 to clean the HVAC duct work. The board approved 9-0.

Lora asked the board to consider purchasing the portable air cleaners. The portable air cleaners have HEPA filters and specifically filter out COVID. It will clean the air in a classroom 2.5 times per hour up to 52 times a day. It will clean bacteria such as flu, MRSA, and viruses. The facility directors would really like to purchase these for air quality in the school.

Action

Meaghan Conly moved, seconded by Devin Bachelder to approve the purchase of the portable air cleaners. The board approved the motion 9-0.

Lora is proposing that they increase temporary custodial positions by 1 FTE in Highgate, 1.5 FTE at MVU and 1 or 2 floating custodial positions that will float from school to school who needs assistance. They must follow disinfecting guidelines every day and to meet this requirement, they will need additional help to complete their regular cleaning tasks along with the additional disinfecting. The floater will fill in as people get sick or for the schools who fall behind. They anticipate the cost to be approximately \$157,000. They have put some expenses on hold which will allow for this additional expense. The Directors of Facilities would really like performance contracting to be explored further to help pay for capital fund projects in the future.

Covid 19 Expenses

Lora McAllister provided the board with unbudgeted COVID expenses in FY21 to date totaling \$28,953.84. Encumbered are PPE, sanitizer, plexiglass, and staff serving meals after school. In FY 20, they spent \$35,195.26 in COVID related expenses. Some of these expenses may qualify for CRF funds. Working with the State, they are going to apply to get these funds reimbursed. They have been billed \$40,000 in unemployment and have filed a dispute as the district should not owe this money. Obtaining substitutes is a concern for everyone.

Future Meeting Dates

The next school board meeting is scheduled for September 1st, 2020 at 6:30pm to be held virtually.

Adjournment

Action

Peter Magnant moved to adjourn, seconded by Terri O'Shea. Motion passed 9-0 vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:12pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Conly, Board Clerk

Submitted by Pierrette Bouchard, School Board Secretary