Ashford Board of Education

Ashford, Connecticut

July 16, 2020

Regular Meeting Minutes – July 16, 2020

Electronic Meeting - Zoom

Chair John Lippert called the meeting to order at 7:14 pm. Present: Tess Grous, Marian Matthews, Al Maccarone, Tina Fradette, Shannon Gamache and Jane Urban. Also present: Dr. James Longo, Troy Hopkins, Polly Borysevicz, Cindy Ford, Karen Munroe, Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell and Jen Barsaleau, recording secretary. There were approximately 47 members of the public signed in via Zoom.

**Communications**

* John Lippert stated he was very impressed with the zoom meeting held the evening prior hosted by Dr. Longo regarding the reopening of school. He noted the presentation was well-prepared and complimented Dr. Longo and Mr. Hopkins for their depth of knowledge and collaboration in preparing for the meeting.
* Member Marian Matthews noted that CABE was hosting a webinar, “*The Toolkit for Safe Distance* *Learning”* on 7/17. She encouraged other members of the BOE to sign up.
* Member Shannon Gamache requested to read aloud a statement from a written communication she had sent to members of the BOE concerning mask requirements for students. Mrs. Gamache announced her resignation from the Board of Education effective immediately. She will provide written notice to the Town Clerk. Mrs. Gamache exited the meeting.

**Opportunity for Public Comment**

* Christina Davis sent a letter to Dr. Longo and Mr. Hopkins via myopinion@ashfordct.org in support of surveillance testing for COVID-19 in schools. She asked the board to investigate the cost of such testing for Ashford School.Jane Urban noted there is an alternative to surveillance testing called batch testing. It may be more cost effective. Dr. Longo will look into what the actual cost may be. Further discussion followed concerning procedures for the identification and notification to others should someone be diagnosed with COVID-19. Dr. Longo explained the concept of contact tracing, touching on personal privacy and how notification would occur.
* Kim Kouatly followed up on Dr. Longo’s comments about contract tracing noting that as a parent, she would want to know if there was a confirmed case of COVID in the school.

**Administrative Reports**

Dr. Longo discussed a communication from the CSDE dated 7/14 regarding a 3-day recommended reduction to the 180 day school calendar requirement for 2020-2021 to allow for staff professional development related to COVID which precipitated the following motion:

***Motion made by Al Maccarone to revise the 2020-2021 school calendar******as recommended with a starting date for students of Sept. 3rd and the last day of school moved to June 11th. Motion seconded by Tina Fradette and carried unanimously.***

**Administrative Reports**

* Dr. Longo provided a report to the board which included the latest COVID count from Eastern Highlands (EHHD).
* Mr. Hopkins reported that green tape has been laid down in hallways to create safe two-way travel lanes for social distancing. The custodial staff reported that many classrooms had obstructed air vents and they are moving any items that are causing this out of the classrooms and into the hallways. Staff can pick up those items or opt for them to be disposed of. Classroom spacing, lunch and specials were discussed.
* Mrs. Ford provided an update on Extended School Year (ESY), she discussed ESY hybrid learning activities noting they were very individualized for the student and their family based on what plan was best for their situation.

**Old Business**

**a. COVID-19 Update**

Dr. Longo addressed the FY 20 budget and approximate dollars remaining are not yet known as we are waiting for outstanding invoices from some vendors. Lengthy discussion followed concerning budget transfers and how the CARES Act funding would be applied and spent. Jane Urban inquired about the business manager search.

**b. Superintendent Evaluation**

N/A (item was supposed to have been omitted from the agenda prior to posting)

**New Business**

**a. Planning for the Reopening of School**

Ashford School nurse Martha Sibley-Jett shared that numerous touchless hand sanitizer dispensers have been purchased. She went on to discuss particulars about symptoms and response to COVID. Also discussed were water coolers and fountains.

**Opportunity for Public Comment**

* Tim Rhodes inquired if setting up Go Fund Me accounts or making monetary donations would be allowed.
* Kim Kouatly inquired about staffing for the start of school, were there any unfilled teacher positions?
* Jesse Burnham asked about class sizes versus what was reported in February. Dr. Longo responded that due to COVID class sizes are lower as more students will be schooled remotely and not present in the building.

8. Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

Discussion of agenda items/meeting format for Strategic Planning Meeting scheduled for August 6,2020 at 3 pm. Members shared ideas about several topics for the meeting. Agenda will be created by BOE chair and the Superintendent.

9. Adjournment

***Motion made by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting (9:47pm). Motion seconded by Tina Fradette and carried unanimously.***

Submitted by:

Jennifer Barsaleau, Recording Secretary