Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Date: July 30, 2020

Held via Zoom videoconferencing

Present: Chair: Christie Storniolo (CES),Vice Chair: Secretary: Alyssa Ross (AR), Michael Gendreau (MG), Bob Hawkes (BH), Christine Miele (CM)
Staff: Chris Smith (CDS), Jessica Wachsman (JW), Erin Balfe (EB)
Regrets: Debbie Kruzel (DK)

CES called meeting to order at 5:40pm

General

This is a special session to review the plan to return to school for the 2020-21 school year. It will review the reopening proposal and the financial impact.

This meeting is taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic; we are holding the meeting via videoconferencing software. The public was notified and invited to join. We will have a public comment section, which must be done via live comment. Each person will have a maximum of 3 minutes to speak.

CDS presented the plan. See related document:

- The Birches Academy Re-Start Plan

Board questions:

- CM asked about what the HVAC consultants said. JW said they recommended a higher grade filter which has been installed. Also, we will run the HVAC each night to consistently clean the air. CES asked a follow up question about if the landlord has been cooperative in making the changes; JW confirmed.
- CES asked what it will look like if the school has a positive case. CDS said a student we know of was exposed that child would have to stay home; if they are asymptomatic then they will stay home and the class is likely informed but not necessarily quarantined but then we need to look at other factors such as if that student has a sibling at the school.
- MG asked if someone tests positive during school hours what happens. CDS said there is a designed isolated area with a separate filter and the child would go there.
- CES asked about entering/exiting the building during the school day. CDS said they are still ironing this out but there will be a specific procedure with help from the staff.
- CES asked if we have heard from the Salem School District with respect to busing. CDS said 2 students per seat max, with masks. CDS recommends if possible for student to not bus.

- CES asked about specials - will students move to the specialty rooms or will those teachers go to the classroom. CDS said looking for a maximum of 2 art classes per day, plus a cart - so students working on a special project can have that opportunity and others can do projects on a cart and materials can be cleaned in between. CDS added that teachers will have radios so they can communicate about when a class is moving around the school and hold the other students to avoid more than one class in the hall at a time.
- CES asked where teachers will stand in classrooms and what PPE they will have. CDS said in some measure teachers will be able to decide, including based on teacher and/or student health. We have face shields (with cut outs to see lips) and face shields for all students.
- CES asked when parents will be notified about their cohort. CDS said if the Board approves the plan today then parents will get the plans to review tomorrow then there will be a parent night on August 4. Then parents can elect in person or remote. Once we have that information, then cohorts will be assigned.
- CM asked JW about cleaning. -JW we have the electrostatic cleaner and we are working with the cleaner on a schedule for deep cleanings.
- CES asked if teachers will be in the building on Wednesdays. CDS said yes, so they can help each other learn from one another about what is working for them.
- AR asked about nurse duties. JW said the job description is ready, pending Board approval. They will be here from opening until 12:30pm and will assess students who are sick, not the teachers to make the determination if the child is not well. CDS added the nurse can do some training for the staff.
- AR asked about handwashing stations. CDS said it is grade dependent and will have hand sanitizer in a fixed spot. There will be training for staff.
- AR asked about travel restrictions, since it was stated that any travel outside of NH is to be reported to the DOS who can decide. AR pointed out many parents work/shop just over the border in MA. CDS said it will be looked at case by case based on the state of travel and this can evolve as the hot spots change.
- AR asked about substitute teachers if both lead and TA are out. CDS said we don't want to pull parents in because of potential exposure. If we run into this situation we may go full remote for a time.

Finance impacts:

- Finance committee has assembled a list of requirements based on opening plan.
- Biggest requests: hire a part time nurse, take our Night Owls lead to be a TA to help, and give TAs August hours to help set up classrooms, supplies, lesson plans, etc. Also will buy 500 containers of disinfecting wipes, air filters for each classroom, carts for specials teachers, desk partitions
- All just under 60K.
- JW is working with FEMA on grants to get things covered. About 15K looks to be covered if we get the grant, and we can continue to tap into it if we are approved. We can't count on this money, but it does look promising. Also got some money from the CARES act, but also won't offset the entire cost.

- Some items are per year, others are one time costs..CES would like to add $2500 to buy another electrostatic cleaner. CES recommends we round up by another $2500 so JW can buy a little more as needed without having to come get Board approval.
- CES says we have other areas from which to allocate the budget and next finance committee will review this.

Public comment:

- Donna Wells - thanked everyone for their work. If you have a child who stayed home with a fever of 99.5 or high how can they return to school? Do they need a negative COVID test? Also - other than designated Mask Breaks, are there times when the children will be permitted to remove masks? (Will be addressed during August 4 meeting)
- Paige Duncan - thanks everyone for their work. What date do you need to make a decision to be 100% remote? Can CDS outline more specifically in next week's meeting what it looks like on the remote learning days and what Wednesdays look like. (Will be addressed during August 4 meeting)
- Julie MacFarland - wants to understand more about what remote learning looks like, both if full time and in hybrid (Will be addressed during August 4 meeting)
- Janet O'Connor - appreciates everyone's work. If a child does have to isolate for any reason (travel, COVID symptoms) can the child remote learn during that time? CDS addressed right away saying yes they can do remote learning during that time.
- Donna Wells - will the Board be voting for how to vote for return to full time in person learning? CES confirmed we will not revote about full time reopening, that will be at the discretion of CDS and leadership team based on criteria of state.
- Rachel Knapp - thanks everyone for everything they've done. Because of the suggestion about not coming to school when you have 1+ symptoms of COVID, and since those symptoms can overlap with many other illnesses, there may be a mass exodus of kids; how will that impact decision making? CDS confirmed he will address during August 4 meeting. Also asked: could there be any exceptions to start full online could there be an exception if the student was not learning well due to the technology before the January 4 opt-in. CDS said no because it will impact resource allocation. but that the staff will work hard to help with technical help. Also commended the PPE suggestions with desk barriers, but wants to better understand mask policies as desks.
- Alison Fitzpatrick - imagine that many parents will struggle with technology and CDS was a help with all of that, but said if we can find other parents who are tech savvy (as she is) to create a small help desk to support CDS.
- Pam Sarantis - reiterated her appreciation like others did. Wants to better understand staffing to help with remote learning. (Will be addressed during August 4 meeting)
- Julie MacFarland - if my student starts on hybrid, she can go full time remote? CDS confirms yes but then the student can't move back until the January date.
- Lisa Coscia - thanks everyone. Wondering if the Board will reconsider all remote decisions being binding until January because it's hard to commit knowing to what will happen in October. Asks the Board to consider reentry on October 13.

CM calls for a vote on reopening plan with a hybrid model starting September 8 and move to more in-person learning by October 13. CM motions to adjourn. BH seconds. All agree.

CM calls for a vote on revised budget to add $65K of COVID-related expenses. CM motions to adjourn. MG seconds. All agree.

CES thanks all committee members for their hard work and deep research considering multiple options.

No non public session.

CM motions to adjourn. AR seconds. All agree. 7:07pm meeting adjourned.