

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting
Minutes for Tuesday, March 17, 2020
Town Hall, 6 Park Row, Mansfield, MA 02048, Room 3ab**

An **Open Emergency Meeting** of the Mansfield School Committee was held in room 3AB of the Town Hall on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. The open meeting session was called to order by Chair Kiera O'Neil at 6:03 p.m.

Members Present:

Kiera O'Neil, Chair
Lynn Cavicchi, Vice Chair
Linda Fernando
Lauren Scher
Jenn Walsh

Administration Present:

Teresa Murphy, Superintendent of Schools
Michael Connolly, Assistant Superintendent (Teaching/Learning)
Edward Donoghue, Assistant Superintendent (Finance/Operations)

Members Absent: None

Per Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, section 20 b., this emergency meeting is posted as soon as reasonably possible.

Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A sec. 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access this School Committee meeting. Members of the Public will be able to view this meeting on Mansfield Cable Access the following day. The School Committee reserves the right to implement additional remote participation procedures and will notify the public of these procedures as soon as practicable.

Public Speak:

Comments were received via email from the public. One resident sent an email. It was read by Kiera O'Neil.

Frances MacDonald, 24 Bird Road, Mansfield, MA: Mrs. MacDonald's email stated the following:

Dear School Committee - Though we are dealing with a unforeseen shut down of schools here in Mansfield MA, what is being done to provide quality lesson plans and materials to the kids to continue education?

This is our children's education and just as many school districts around us had some alternative plan such as if there was a Blizzard or other Natural Disaster, what are we doing in Mansfield? Kids thrive on structure and providing the kids with at home assignments to continue learning is imperative.

Are computers being offering on loan to those who might now have them? Are internet services available for free for those families who need assistance? Are packages being done for those who can not access internet to pick-up at locations?

Please do not think it is enough to post a few links on the schools websites. What is the action plan? We can not have children losing weeks of classroom time as a community, we are better than this. Aren't we?

I look forward to the School Committee holding the schools accountable for a clear action plan.

1. COVID-19 Status Update**Superintendent (Teresa Murphy):**

- Prior to receiving direction from the state, Mansfield closed down schools for 2 weeks. This decision was made in conjunction with local districts. On Sunday this was extended to 3 weeks per order of Governor Baker.
- Teresa expressed her sadness on how this is impacting our students including the grade 5 play, field trips, percussion and color guard competitions, sports, etc. There are so many

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more not included on the list. Both the day to day learning and extra activities have a big impact on our students. We are starting to send home information to help parents with the social aspect of dealing with the virus.

- This week the schools underwent a thorough cleaning.
- The Mansfield Covid-19 Task force was created combing the efforts of all town departments. Meetings and communications have been frequent.
- The schools are working on a food distribution program for those students who rely heavily on healthy meals from our schools. Christine Dooling and Dawn Langtry partnered Kim Hoyer of Our Daily Bread, Dawn Saba of West Side Benevolent Society to prepare meals and coordinate distribution. On Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 - 12 noon, meals will be handed out at the MHS parking lot. Newsletters are going out now. Special Education bus drivers may also help with distribution.
- Carl Clemmey gave a sizeable cash donation to help with the food program. We are very thankful to Carl. We are unable to get federal funds because we do not exceed the 50% threshold of students who are on free and reduced lunch.
- Student medications can be picked up at the schools. School nurses are reaching out to parents with details.
- Teresa recognizes that there are A LOT of questions. We just don't have all the answers yet. Things change multiple times per day.
- MCAS: We are waiting for guidance from the state. It is hard to sit back and wait but we must wait for federal guidance before the states can take a position.
- The Student Opportunity Act had been a priority of ours but has now been put aside for now. We are waiting to hear if there is a change to the deadline. We will still look at when possible.
- Mansfield cancelled SATs for Saturday. It was the right decision despite the negative impact on many students. Other districts soon did the same and College Board then cancelled for both March and June.
- The district is doing frequent newsletters. Kiera wondered if daily newsletters would be better. Teresa was concerned that daily may be too much and parents would stop reading. We are working on FAQs. We will add to our website as soon as possible. The committee noted that it is important to acknowledge parent concerns even if we don't yet have answers.
- Our priority now is educational resources for our students. We are hoping for now that families are taking time to be together.

Director of Special Education (Jim Leonard):

- The district is constantly receiving guidance from DESE. On the days that the district is not in session, we do not count those toward IEP timelines and we are not required to provide special education services. If there are any evaluations in progress, these will be extended. IEPs that expired during the shutdown will remain in effect until school reconvenes for reviews. Lynn asked about out of district students. We are working closely with those schools. The last one closed today. Residential locations are still open.

Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning (Michael Connolly):

- The district is working on enrichment activities for students. The direction from the commissioner is to maintain student connections through enrichment rather than try to substitute for a full school day. Districts must evaluate equity and availability of resources.

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- Each principal will be sending enrichment activities home to families via newsletters and the website.
- We are considering this plan in phases. We are at the first step of a process that will expand remote learning. Staff has been working hard and has built a foundation for learning. Teresa reminded the committee that we are not a college and cannot seamlessly move online like some have.
- The Commissioner made it very clear that we have to provide EVERYONE with access regardless of an IEP, EL, socio-economics, etc. We cannot create a normal school day. The district will continue to work hard.
- We expect College Board to provide additional guidance on AP courses on March 20th.
- Teresa Murphy noted that staff has asked about evaluations. DESE is starting to review and we will await their guidance.
- Teresa noted that many districts piloted Blizzard Bags this year. These would be used so that snow days could count as a day of learning. The pilot was not successful so the state does not plan to move forward with this. However those districts are allowed to use some of that material for remote learning.

Lynn Cavicchi asked if there will be hard copy packets of online materials. Per Michael, the district is working on this and researching methods of distributing to homes. Teresa suggested that our special education bus drivers may be available for delivery. She also noted that Xfinity is offering free internet for those who need it.

Jenn Walsh noted that the district did a survey in the fall about accessibility. Can we use that information? Yes, we can get a sense of needs but the survey did not collect identities.

Kiera O'Neil asked if families can use any of our existing chromebooks. Teresa responded that we are actively looking at this. It did not make sense for a 2 week outage but as this expands chromebooks will be used.

Lynn asked if we had information available for EL students. Per Michael we are translating newsletters. There are a lot of layers to dissect and need additional resources to help. We are looking into. It should also be noted that PBS is broadcasting with close captioning and the state is working with Spanish television networks.

Kiera O'Neil reminded everyone that the first 4 days need to be made up at the end of the year so we have actually missed just 3 days of schooling at this point.

2. School Employee Payroll

Assistant Superintendent of Finance & Operations (Ed Donoghue):

There is a lot of concern from staff regarding payroll. We are looking for support to pay our hourly staff. (Teachers salaries are spread throughout the year and we are contractually obligated to pay.) Hourly staff includes part time paras, Little Hornets, CHAMPS, Bus drivers, Food Services, Monitors, Long term subs, Building subs, crossing guards, school offices. This Friday is a pay day for prior services and is not impacted.

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The next payroll is April 3rd for pay days 3/13/20 - 3/26/20. Mansfield was a regular day on 3/13. There were 4 "snow days" where hourly employees would not be paid as these days are added at the end of the year. We are looking to pay for 3/20 - 3/26. For the next pay date of 4/17 (payroll days 3/27 - 4/9) we are asking for everyone to get paid. The cost is approximately \$105,000 per week.

Lynn Cavicchi noted that she is in favor of paying but was curious what it would be like if we didn't pay. Teresa noted that there would be unemployment expenses for the town. Health deductions would not occur. There would be a significant ripple effect. The Commissioner is encouraging districts to us to pay hourly employees. Teresa has not heard of districts not paying.

Jenn Walsh is in support of paying employees.

Kiera O'Neil agrees but if this is extended we will need to revisit.

Linda Fernando agrees.

Lauren wanted to confirm that we are talking about just 2 pay periods? Ed responded yes.

Motion to approve payroll for 3/13/20 - 3/26/20 (pay date 4/3) and 3/27/20 - 4/9/20 (pay date 4/17) by Jenn Walsh and Linda Fernando

Motion Carries 5 - 0.

New School Committee Business: None

Other- Items not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours prior to this meeting: None

Documents Referenced:

Public Comment email from Frances MacDonald
Payroll Schedule for 2019-2020

Motion to adjourn: At 7:02 p.m., **Motion** to adjourn the open meeting by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh

Motion Carries 5 - 0

Respectfully Submitted,
Diane Nugent, Secretary to the
Superintendent & School Committee