

**Mansfield School Committee Meeting
Minutes for Tuesday, March 23, 2021
Virtual Meeting using GoToWebinar**

An **Open Meeting** of the Mansfield School Committee was held virtually on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. The open meeting session was called to order by Kiera O'Neil at 6:03 pm.

Members Present:

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

Administration Present:

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

Members Absent: None

***** All votes taken by roll call vote *****

Roll Call:

Kiera O'Neil aye
Lynn Cavicchi aye
Jenn Walsh aye
Linda Fernando aye
Lauren Scher aye

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School Committee Statement regarding Asian racisms:

As we prepare to return our students to in-person instruction and as we reflect on the many challenges and changes faced by students, staff, and families over the past year, we must also acknowledge the increase in racist acts and violence against the Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities across our country since the COVID-19 pandemic began. These acts of hatred build on a long-standing pattern of anti-Asian racism and xenophobia in our nation going back more than 150 years.

As a community of learners, we stand opposed to the anti-Asian rhetoric that has been allowed to grow during this pandemic. While we are not aware of any direct actions against members of our school community who are of Asian descent, we are mindful that students, staff, and families may be processing the incidents of anti-Asian racism occurring across the country in personal ways. We acknowledge the fear and pain you may be feeling and encourage you to reach out to a teacher or counselor, building principal, and for employees, the Human Resources department, if you are in need of additional resources or support. If you or anyone you know has experienced harassment or discrimination within the Mansfield Public Schools, please contact the District's Title IX and Civil Rights Compliance Officer, Assistant Superintendent Michael Connolly.

We affirm our district's commitment to providing support for one another and to standing up and speaking out against acts of hatred, racism, and harm. We ask each member of our school community – teachers, staff, administrators, students, and families – to continue to work together to create a safe and inclusive learning environment, whether physical or virtual, that supports all of our students,

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employees, and families.

The Mansfield School Committee

Public Speak: Public Speak is open for 15 minutes for anyone who has registered via GoToWebinar.
None

Communications:

One email expressing concern over the seniors returning to in person learning.

New Business:

Consideration of DESE Commissioner's requirement to return to 5 days per week in-person learning for MHS:

Superintendent Teresa Murphy began with a recap of what we have done so far. DESE has set the requirement that students return for in-person/5 day per week learning. They have set dates as follows: kindergarten - grade 5 by April 8; grades 6 - 8 by April 26th; DESE will set a date for high schools with a 2 weeks lead time. Mansfield is returning as follows: kindergarten started on March 1; grades 1 - 5 on April 5; grades 6 - 8 on April 26; MHS proposing April 28. We can't wait for a last minute DESE decision; it is unrealistic to expect us to plan in 2 weeks. Hockomock area schools are all using similar timelines. MCAS is still scheduled to the best of our knowledge but we will monitor DESE plans.

Assistant Superintendent Michael Connolly spoke with 8 - 10 districts to see how they are handling quarantine learning. Many districts are still in negotiations. Other solutions range from live-streaming to pre-covid absence packets. There are many solutions.

Principal Mary Watkins spoke about high school plans. She feels very good about the planning and processes implemented to date. We know what needs to be done and in what order we need to execute. We want to give staff and students ample opportunity to practice new routines prior to the actual start date. Our goal is to create optimal classrooms for both safety protocols and best learning practices. Next, Mary will focus on prepping classrooms with new desks and equipment, finalizing lunch plans and parking changes.

She is working on communication processes for staff, students, and parents. Examples will be parent/guardian virtual meeting; student virtual assemblies now and again right before we start.

Comments from students vary: "Can I remain in VRC?" "Can I move into the VRC?" "Why are we doing this now?" "What happens if I need to quarantine and miss senior events?"

Regarding AP testing: The majority of tests will be taken at home so there will be little to no impact. For those classes that required in person testing, there will be makeup date opportunities. Unfortunately for seniors they will occur after graduation.

Students are not forced to change to or from the VRC.. However, high school guidance staff will work with each individual family and determine the best course of action. There is no guarantee that elective courses will remain the same but we should be able to honor core subject areas.

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Questions/Answers:

Linda Fernando: No questions; still need to process. She has concern about seniors who may need to quarantine.

Jenn Walsh: A lot of information to take in and still trying to process. The one concern is the traffic flow which can already be a nightmare. Will the high school be able to manage the increase traffic flow of student drivers and parents dropping of students? Mary Watkins and staff have already reviewed traffic and have a plan in place. They have worked with Matt Jacques and Ed Donoghue on the new traffic flow which will allow parents who drop off to use a separate path. Students who are parking will have another lane to drive through for parking. Staff will have access to their parking area.

Lauren Scher: Thank you; she wishes that the staff were working on other things but understands we have no choice. Is there any concern with credit loss if students switch from in-school to VRC? Mary does not have concern with credits. Our counselors will need to look at each individual situation to make sure grades are properly handled. Staff will take a really hard look at each schedule. Electives will be an issue since not all electives are available in the VRC. Per Mary, we can honor the requests of students to switch but it will be challenging. There are implications on what courses are available and the ability to transfer grades. If a student is in a year long course but must transfer what will the transcript look like? If a student needs to transfer from one class to another then the last course taken will be the one which appears in the transcript. Each student in the VRC has a very individualized education plan. Lauren didn't feel it was optimal but understands there isn't much we can do; hopefully colleges understand that changes along the way are likely due to the situation we are in. Lauren stated she was overwhelmed by the amount of things that the high school must cover but it seems that Mary has everything under control. Thank you to the high school for all their hard work.

Lynn Cavicchi: How realistic is it that a senior could move to VRC with 4 weeks left? Mary Watkins would definitely not advise it. However, if there is a health situation, we would work with the family to get them in and make it work. How do the new travel advisories impact us? Are there guidelines that can help parents? There is not a lot of change. Teresa Murphy noted that DESE has announced travel is now an advisory rather than a mandate as there is no form to fill out; no fine. Districts should work with their local Board of Health. Our Board of Health has advised that we continue to enforce the advisory. All this information is available on our website and newsletters will go out to families. Lynn Cavicchi noted that she is still trying to figure out what the DESE is trying to accomplish by forcing the seniors back. It does not seem beneficial to any of students. However, she appreciates all the efforts that MHS is putting into this change for our students as well as the work in planning for the Senior end of year activities.

Kiera O'Neil: Is there any point in time where we would pull the plug and stay or go back to hybrid or remote? Is there any chance the state decides not to force high school students back? Teresa noted that it is unlikely DESE will allow schools to revert to full remote or hybrid. He would be more likely to support a classroom, section or building wing quarantine. Superintendent Murphy reminded the committee that the commissioner has not set a back to school date and that he looked toward doing so some time in April. Due to the necessity in planning we want to move forward with our April 28th date. Our challenge is planning ahead for MCAS among other activities. Teresa

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and Mary have discussed the seniors for weeks and the challenges with their return. It is a difficult position for the committee because we are looking for a vote prior to DESE recommendations. At the same time we face criticism from families that we are not back in-person.

Motion to approve the return of Mansfield High School students to 5 day in-person learning on April 28, 2021 by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh.

Discussion:

Jenn Walsh asked if we have the option to defer the vote until we hear more information from DESE or is that too much of an impact on MCAS? Lauren Scher noted that we are voting on current assumptions; can we re-vote if these assumptions change? Jenn is worried about our seniors and concerned that if we vote tonight we are locked into a plan that cannot change. Chair O'Neil noted that there is a motion on the table and the committee at least needs to take a vote. She asked Mary Watkins if she can come back to the committee if we get new or changing information from DESE. Holding off on a decision tonight may force us into "no decision." Teresa Murphy noted that if we postpone the vote then we cannot move forward with our planning. We would have to plan for MCAS in a hybrid model and send all other students remote for those testing days. Jenn Walsh wanted to know if we are locked in with tonight's decision. Any change in direction can be reviewed and discussed by the committee. Lynn noted that we are in a constant state of pivot and administrators have some flexibility on decision making.

Roll Call vote:

Lynn Cavicchi	aye
Jenn Walsh	aye
Kiera O'Neil	aye
Linda Fernando	aye
Lauren Scher	aye

Motion Carries 5 - 0

Consideration of 21-22 School Calendar:

This is the second reading of the calendar. Assistant Superintendent Connolly reviewed the changes made since the last reading: Start date for preschool and kindergarten moved to 9/8/21. Full day professional development changed from 11/2/21 to 10/8/21. Half day professional development dates changed from 9/29/21 and 10/20/21 to 9/22/21 and 11/3/21.

Motion to approve the 2021-2022 School Calendar by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh.

Roll Call vote:

Lauren Scher	aye
Linda Fernando	aye
Kiera O'Neil	aye
Jenn Walsh	aye
Lynn Cavicchi	aye

Motion Carries 5 - 0

School Committee Business: None

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

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Documents Referenced:

2021-2022 School Calendar
Connolly Bus contract
Transportation Bus Rates for April 5
MHS Return to School Plan

Motion to adjourn: At 7:04 p.m., **Motion** to adjourn the open meeting by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh

Roll Call vote:

Lynn Cavicchi	aye
Jenn Walsh	aye
Kiera O'Neil	aye
Linda Fernando	aye
Lauren Scher	aye

Motion Carries 5 - 0

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