



**Mansfield School Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Thursday, April 2, 2020  
Town Hall, 6 Park Row, Mansfield, MA 02048, Room 3ab/Remote**

An **Open Meeting** of the Mansfield School Committee was held in room 3AB of the Town Hall and via Remote Conferencing on Thursday, April 2, 2020. The open meeting session was called to order by Chair Kiera O'Neil at 6:30 p.m. A roll call was taken of both School Committee members and Administration.

**Members Present (via phone):**

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)

**Administration Present (via phone):**

Edward Donoghue, Assistant Superintendent (Finance/Operations)

**Members Absent:** None

*Pursuant to Governor Baker's Emergency Order Modifying the State's Open Meeting Law issued March 12, 2020, this meeting will be held using remote participation via **Bridge Conferencing**.*

*Public Comment is temporarily suspended. However, written comments may be submitted to the School Committee at: [schoolcommittee@mansfieldschools.com](mailto:schoolcommittee@mansfieldschools.com) until 4 p.m. on Thursday, April 02, 2020 to be included as part of the public record for this meeting.*

*This meeting will be broadcast live on Mansfield Cable Access and then rebroadcast throughout the week. The video will also be available at [www.mansfieldschools.com](http://www.mansfieldschools.com).*

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

**Remote Meeting Access Authorization to use pursuant to the Emergency Executive Order Given by Governor Baker dated March 12, 2020**

Previously School Committee had not approved remote access by members. Per Governor Baker's order as well as directive from Town Manager, Kevin Dumas, Mansfield Public Bodies will meet remotely. Tonight the meeting was held using Remote Bridge Phone Conferencing. Chair Kiera O'Neil asked for a motion to temporarily approve remote meeting access.

**Motion** to temporarily authorize remote meeting access by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh

Lauren aye  
Linda aye  
Kiera aye  
Jenn aye  
Lynn aye

**Motion Carries 5 - 0**

**Meeting Protocol:**

Kiera will chair the meeting from home. Phones will be muted until required. Teresa Murphy and Michael Connolly are in the Town Hall along with Diane Nugent. Jack O'Neil is broadcasting on Mansfield Cable.

Order of 'seating' will mimic that of a regular meeting. Voting will take place from right to left and then on next turn from left to right.

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**Public Speak:**

Three resident comments were received via email from the public. They were read by Chair O'Neil.

Kate Flinn, 45 Old Elm Street, Mansfield, MA: Ms. Flinn's email stated the following:

Good Evening,

My name is Kate Flinn. I have two children who attend school at Jordan/Jackson. First I would like to say that this email does NOT reflect my feelings about the faculty, staff, and administration at the Jordan/Jackson School. Both of my children have thrived in this school. Their teachers are stellar and they are both so happy to go to school every day.

This week we received the email with Mansfield's "Remote Learning Plan." I am writing because I am looking for a bit more guidance with this plan. I appreciate the sites that have been shared and do see their value. And also I have had regular contact with my children's fabulous teachers and they have given me some helpful ideas as to how to proceed with their educations at this point. I sent an email to Teresa Murphy and Michael Connolly last evening looking for more information only to receive a response that said they were still handing out chrome books and more would come. But there was no indication that any virtual lessons were going to be provided. Also, when the original email with the remote plan was sent, we were provided with minimal information and basically told that this was the plan in place. So you can see where I would have more questions.

I'm hoping, as a school committee, you can answer my question: why are we not receiving virtual lessons in Mansfield? Going forward, is this the only content that the district is going to provide for the children? They have been out of school for 3 weeks and will be for at least another 4, so I don't feel as though what was given can sustain that length of time. I am a counselor in Rhode Island and we are already in week 2 of a distance learning plan that includes regular contact from teachers via their individual Google classrooms, zoom (with privacy settings in place) or Google meets, and daily virtual lessons. While not nearly the same amount as when we are physically at school, we are moving forward with the necessary curriculum our students will need to proceed to the next grade. As a Guidance Counselor, I have individual Google classrooms for each student I service as well as for each of the classes that I teach biweekly SEL curriculum to. I also continue to share helpful resources with our school's families regarding the social emotional health of our children during this time as many families are in dire need of help right now. We continue to hold IEP and 504 meetings via Google Meet and I meet face to face with students the same way as to honor their 504 plans as well. It is a huge undertaking, and we are working 10-12 hr days, but it has been successful and the district is confident that it is benefitting the students.

I recognize that these are unprecedented times and remote learning is a new entity for all districts across the country. But I also believe that we need to give these kids as much as we can. The structure of regular assignments as well as regular contact with their teachers and classmates not only benefits them academically, but emotionally as well. It connects them to school and provides some sense of normalcy. To me, both are equally important in the growth of a child. I am fortunate to work in the education field so I can properly guide my children, but the majority of the kids in the district don't have the same access.

So I ask again, why are the students in Mansfield Public Schools not receiving virtual lessons? I have seen distance learning plans in the surrounding towns and would like to know why Mansfield does not have a similar plan in place. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and seeing what else the district will provide for us.

Regards,  
Kate Flinn

Christopher Germain, 14 Camden Lane, Mansfield, MA: Mr. Germain's email stated the following:

Dear School Committee,

To say this situation is unprecedented is an understatement. While I appreciate the challenge the school board must be facing at this time, I am equally concerned with the lack of communication about a clear unified plan for the children. As a parent of two elementary students, the fact that a comprehensive plan has not been communicated to the parents at this point, has unfortunately created a lack of confidence for me in the school

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board itself. At a time like this, over-communication should be the norm. My frustration with the school board is as follows:

1. The District learning plan has not been communicated. I realize there are a tremendous amount of challenges with creating this plan, but as parents let us know about those challenges. Again, a lack of communication leads many of us to ponder if there is a logistical issue or an ineptness on the part of the board.
2. Some teachers have been reaching out more than others. Whatever learning plans that have been communicated, have been done so unequally.
3. I have to question why a town like Mansfield, that has similar demographics and resources to Foxboro, seems to be falling behind other towns with respect to the distance learning modality. Why are we not being as aggressive as other districts?
4. I am concerned that part of the reason for the lack of a plan, maybe due to the board's concern that they can't reach every student. I don't want to see anyone left behind; however, please don't let the inability to reach a few prevent us from doing anything at all.

Sincerely,  
Christopher Germain

**Doreen Comeau, 50 Pilgrim Road, Mansfield, MA: Ms. Comeau's email stated the following:**

Good afternoon.

First, thank you to all the school committee members, Superintendent Murphy, Principal Watkins & all the staff and teachers who are working hard to create a new way of learning for all the students. Appreciate all that you are doing.

With 3rd Quarter ending tomorrow, April 3rd, are final grades going to be what was reported on the recent progress reports? How/when will students be able to make up tests that were missed prior to school closing?

With regards to senior activities, I know that you all have the seniors in mind during this unprecedented time. In the event that school does not resume on May 4th, or if there are still restrictions on other school events, we need to think outside the box a bit to maybe provide some of the activities that were planned, so kids can feel some connection to their classmates. Even with remote learning, there is no interaction among the students; most have not seen any classmates for 3+ weeks. We have Mansfield Cable Access in town. Could we have live broadcasts for Senior Scholarship Night & Athletic Awards Night? Whoever runs those events can speak to the audience at home and announce recipients while keeping social distancing. For District-wide Art Show, have students submit their work and show on the cable channel. For the senior students who are involved in the spring concert, spring musical, and dance & percussion night, have them submit a video of themselves performing - to be broadcast on cable. Just some thoughts. Seniors are feeling totally disconnected and maybe hearing about their fellow classmates will help in some way.

Thank you!

Regards,  
Doreen Comeau

***Superintendent (Teresa Murphy):***

- The lunch program continues to grow in numbers. I want to acknowledge that the women in our Food Service program are putting themselves on the front lines to feed children and teens. We know the students that we have been providing lunches for, and are always prepared for them. The Food Service team actually prepares a couple of extra breakfasts and lunches each day, However, as the weeks progress, I ask that if anyone is going to be coming to us for the first time that they email [backpackbuddies@mansfieldschools.com](mailto:backpackbuddies@mansfieldschools.com) It's on the Food Support Tab. We just always want to make certain we have enough food prepared. Currently, we distribute on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10-11 at MHS parking lot.

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- School Nurses are also very public figures for us at this time. They are distributing the school bagged meals. In addition, some of the school nurses are also working with Fire Chief Desrosiers by rotating at the Fire Station to help with the management of the Covid-19 data. For example, they check in with individuals who are quarantined and they reach out to the close contacts of individuals. This is not work that is generally taken on by school nurses, but these school professionals are professional registered nurses and by helping with the meal program and with EMS they are performing valuable services to our community.
- Updates from Special education Director Jim Leonard:
  - The most recent directive from DESE is that school district's must provide FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) by remote learning.
  - We are scaling up special education services district-wide consistent with guidance from DESE
  - We will begin providing direct special education services during the week of April 6th. During the closure the frequency and duration of services will not match the established service delivery grid on active IEP's. The DESE doesn't expect IEPs to be revised to reflect the current level of service being provided.
  - With parent consent, we will begin holding virtual IEP meetings during the week of April 13th
  - The special education leadership team (names) will be holding virtual office hours for families beginning the week of April 13 for each school.
- HR Director Jocelyn Lemaire has posted information on the HR page on the district website for employees about rights that were established by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.
- Chrome Book distribution occurred during the past week. The chromebooks were available to J/J, QMS, MHS and evening school students. I want to acknowledge Lori Letendre and her technology team, custodians, school administrators, and facilities teams who pulled off this project. Principal Sankey has received a couple of inquiries about chromebooks to the Robinson students. At this time we have not gone in that direction for whole scale distribution for our younger students. However, if there are some students' families that do not have a device for their students to access the remote learning site, then they should email the school principal for help.
- I am thrilled to announce that the MA Teachers Association has selected our Mansfield Buildings and Grounds Association ---that is, our key team of custodians to showcase in their upcoming statewide newsletter. They are being recognized for the fine work they do and I would particularly add the outstanding commitment to our students and staff and schools that they have shown during the Covid-19 crisis.
- As you know, Governor Baker extended the stay at home through May 4. How that impacts schools' reopening was not mentioned by the Governor during his announcement. I know it leads to so many questions, and I hope that our community understands that we are asking and problem solving and coming up with scenarios for everything that they are wondering. One item that is on people's minds is April vacation which is still on the schedule. Commissioner Riley of the Depart of Ed has not given his guidance as of yet. In email dialogue yesterday, many of us are thinking he will set some boundaries while also keeping in mind the School Committee's role in creating the calendar. Once the DESE releases their guidance, I will inform you of that and we will schedule a committee meeting.
- I was informed yesterday that Town Meeting has been rescheduled to June 23. The Town elections are rescheduled to June 30.

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In a moment, I'm going to ask Assistant Superintendent Connolly to discuss the work that has been ongoing for the remote learning program for our students. His information is comprehensive, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention how diligently my faculty including school leadership teams, department chairs, teachers, technology team have been endeavoring to provide learning opportunities for students. I know that for some families we are not moving at as fast a pace as they would like. But, I have several thoughts. First, my philosophy is measure twice and cut once. Meaning, we may not be as fast, but we are creating solid. Second, we are not creating an online program of learning as some have requested. We are creating remote learning plans that will sometimes utilize digital tools. All tools will be vetted and approved for data security and student privacy. This is slow but so important to us. Finally, we are a high achieving district and it is our goal to continue to do the same while the world is experiencing this pandemic. I am confident that our educators will provide opportunities for students to continue to learn and grow.

**New Business:**

***Remote Learning- update and timeline (Michael Connolly):***

Assistant Superintendent Michael Connolly began by reviewing the time line of where we have been.

- Friday 3/13/20: Mansfield made the decision to cancel school for 2 weeks. This was in line with plans of other local districts. The first 4 days would be considered snow days made up at the end of the school year. We had been waiting for guidance from DESE but no state decision had yet been made on school. A call with DESE did review online learning potentials. Commissioner Riley emphasized that pending a closure any learning would be in the form of enrichment activities. Learning must consider equity and availability of resources for everyone. Grading will be voluntary. There was no guidance on EL students, IEPs, 504 plans. Additionally there was no information yet on MCAS testing or Student Opportunity Act.
- Week of March 16: Mansfield Public Schools started the initial high level planning enrichment activities and remote access with each school. Communication was sent to parents.
- Thursday 3/19/20: District updated its webpage to include a Covid-19 Resource page. The district will continue to update as new information is provided.
- Friday 3/20/20: DESE, Commissioner Riley held a virtual call with Superintendents. The Commissioner started to see a long term shutdown. However, he was leaving remote learning plans to the districts. Plans should start to go beyond enrichment but still be available to all. Still no guidance on IEPs, EL, 504 plans or teacher eval. Attendance items that have been waived: Student attendance for accountability will be based on attendance through March 7. No school days beyond the available snow days will be made up by districts. The district started to detail what remote learning would look like. Mansfield Public Schools began the process of doing inventory on chromebooks. Elementary Staff was invited to come to MHS to pickup chromebooks if needed. The plan would be to distribute to students asap.
- Monday 3/23/20: Met with MEA leadership to discuss the next level of learning under the vague guidelines provided by DESE. We need to start looking beyond enrichment. A Shelter in Place ordered by Governor Baker changed our plans for chromebook distribution. By the end of the day had a new plan in place. Administrators, facilities, and the technology department worked aggressively to pull apart chromebook carts for immediate distribution.

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- Tuesday 3/24/20: Notified parents that 2500+ chromebooks were available. These had been disassembled from carts, tagged, cleaned and bagged up with instructions for distribution. This was a long day effort.
- Wednesday 3/25/20: Distribution began via drive thru service at MHS for students in grade 6 - 12. Distribution continued for 2 additional days. It was determined that there would be enough to send home with grades 3 - 5 as well so those parents were notified. Met again with MEA to discuss updated plans for learning.
- Thursday 3/26/20: Principals met with department chairs and leadership to review expectations. DESE Commissioner surprised districts by providing updated guidelines at the end of the day.
- Friday 3/27/20 Administration re-engaged staff via virtual meetings to discuss updated guidance. District retooled plans based on new guidelines.
- Tuesday 3/31/20 Final distribution complete. Administration continued to work with staff. The Director of Digital Learning and the Director of Technology built remote training sites for staff. Communications regarding learning plans are going out to parents now. This communication from principals will continue on a regular basis.

During the 14 days of shutdown, DESE has provided 3 different sets of guidelines. Each time, the district has shifted gears. Originally the district had a three year rollout plan for chromebooks. Essentially, we drastically modified the plan and crammed it into 10 days in order to get chromebooks into the hands of students. We continue to train staff. One issue is that students left on Friday 3/13 and did not all take materials home. Teachers are adapting lessons to utilize new materials for students. We are also taking the time to vet online services for safety and data privacy. For example some districts that jumped on Zoom are now having issues. We realize that there are a thousand questions to answer. We are working through these and ask families to keep their confidence in us.

The most recent guidelines by the state include:

- Meaningful productive learning for 1/2 the normal school day
- Student - teacher connection 1 - 2 days per week
- Reinforcement of skills already learned
- Eventual introduction of new learning where possible. This will be based on subject, student age, student health and family access.
- Online learning must meet student privacy requirements
- Daily Physical and enrichment activity must be part of the half day of learning
- Educators must provide reasonable feedback on student work. At higher levels, need to consider credit issues.
- We are waiting for further information in writing from DESE

Chair O'Neil opened the floor for questions starting with Vice Chair Cavicchi.

Lynn Cavicchi: Parents of JJ and Robinson students received newsletters today. When will MHS and QMS students receive letters? Michael Connolly: Earlier this week, QMS had already emailed out a detailed plan. Late last week MHS, educators were updated and notification went out to parents. From both schools, further updates will be sent by the end of the week. Mr. Connolly then reviewed an update of each of the schools.

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Jenn Walsh: Can parents expect weekly communication from school principals? Parents can expect regular updates from principals. In the upper grades there may be additional, more frequent, updates from teachers. One of the things that the district is working on is how to 'not lose' those students who may not be able to keep up with the frequent updates.

Linda Fernando: It is good to hear that there is a plan in place. She urged constant and consistent communication from staff. Michael Connolly reported that we will continue to push notifications out including emails, newsletters and updates to the COVID-19 webpage. The district is constantly evolving with the changes; teachers are getting up to speed with new mediums; we are making sure we serve all students. However, we do recognize that the communication has been inconsistent.

Lauren Scher: Families might have connectivity issue with wifi. What outreach are we doing?

Michael Connolly reported that we are reviewing the list of families who did not pick up chromebooks and we are taking 'remote' attendance. As we determine that there are at risk students, we reach out to the families. Additionally, free wifi service fliers were sent home with students who have been picking up lunches. To anyone watching this meeting: If you know of anyone who is struggling please let us know. A reminder to anyone contacting the schools. Most staff are working remotely. Please email when possible. Lauren thanked everyone working on this effort. She asked if there was any update on MCAS. Teresa Murphy said that we have little information at the moment. The Commissioner applied for a waiver which must go to the Federal Government. We have received 'directional approval' but nothing in writing. The State Legislature will then act on the waiver. We are still waiting to hear. This scenario has made us realize that we may think that someone has the authority to make decisions but it is really someone else. In this example, we did not realize that the commissioner could not make the decision on his own.

Kiera O'Neil: She appreciates that all the changes from the state have been challenging. She appreciates all the effort the district has put in and our ability to pivot when needed. The chromebook effort was herculean. The school committee has certain roles. One is that of approving the budget. We approved a budget for technology but admittedly it is over multiple years which may have put us behind other districts.

***FY20 Budget- Financial Update (Ed Donoghue):***

Assistant Superintendent Donoghue reviewed the current status of our FY20 financials. Overall we tracked well through March. The boilers at QMS are having some issues causing maintenance costs to be high. Long term we have plans in place for replacing. Special education costs are currently high but we have not yet received the circuit breaker money which would offset some of those costs. Individual schools have trended favorable. Purchasing has slowed down significantly with the virus. Athletics is trending favorable. Overall there is approximately \$1 million available for the rest of the year. We should be ok.

Kiera O'Neil asked if there is any particular Covid-19 concerns. Ed Donoghue sees savings in some areas. Tomorrow there will be call with Connolly Bus to renegotiate payment for the closure. The buses still have some costs to maintain and we want to have them ready and available for when we return. DESE has provided guidance that we continue to pay Out of District tuitions. We will continue to do so which will allow us to maintain placements. The state is encouraging us to pay key vendors. We will continue to evaluate.

Lynn Cavicchi asked if we could pay in advance for anything we know for next year. Ed felt that we could pre pay some of the Out of District tuitions.

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**School Employee Payroll: Authorization of payment**  
**(4/10/20-4/23/20 paid on 5/1/20 and 4/24/20-5/7/20 paid on 5/15/20)**

Ed Donoghue reviewed the upcoming payroll dates. In way of a recap, he reminded the committee that they approved the last 2 payrolls during the closure. Some of the dates were not paid due to snow days. Teresa Murphy noted that the DESE Commissioner recommends that we continue payment.

**Motion** to approve payroll for 4/10/20 - 4/23/20 (pay date 5/1) and 4/24/20 - 5/7/20 (pay date 5/15) by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh

- Lynn aye
- Jenn aye
- Kiera aye
- Linda aye
- Lauren aye

**Motion Carries 5 - 0.**

***OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits): Authorization to use \$258,000 of the Employee Health Care Stabilization Fund to offset the healthcare cost subsidy of the pre-65 retiree population in FY21.***

OPEB requirements were presented at the last meeting by Steve Schoonveld. Policy was approved last time and this time the actual transfer of funds will be approved.

**Motion** to authorize \$258,000 of the Employee Health Care Stabilization fund to offset the healthcare cost subsidy of the pre-65 retiree population in FY21 by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh

- Lauren aye
- Linda aye
- Kiera aye
- Jenn aye
- Lynn aye

**Motion Carries 5 - 0**

**New School Committee Business:**

Chair O'Neil suggested that with the timing of the school closure we take a look at Teresa's evaluation. Typically evaluations are set prior to elections so that the members active during the school year can do the performance rating. The town elections are now scheduled for June 30th.

Kiera O'Neil proposes that we extend by 2 weeks. All members were in agreement. No vote required. Diane Nugent to provide new timeline.

It is possible that a meeting will be required next week to discuss April vacation. We are awaiting guidance from DESE. If a vote is needed by school committee we will shoot for Tuesday, April 7th at 6:30 pm.

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Approved 06-02-20

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

**Documents Referenced:**

Public Comment emails  
FY20 Financial Update  
Payroll Schedule for 2019-2020

**Motion to adjourn:** At 7:39 p.m., **Motion** to adjourn the open meeting by Linda Fernando / Jenn Walsh

Lynn aye  
Jenn aye  
Kiera aye  
Linda aye  
Lauren aye

**Motion Carries 5 - 0**

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