

EAST LONGMEADOW SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES



District Mission

"Our mission in the East Longmeadow Public Schools is to promote achievement and accountability in all endeavors as we educate today for the challenges of tomorrow"

DATE: April 5, 2021

TIME: 6:00 P.M.

WHERE: Superintendent's Conference Room

Meeting called to Order by : Gregory Thompson, Chair

THIS MEETING IS BEING HELD REMOTELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS' MARCH 12, 2020 ORDER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN MEETING LAW MA G.L.c. 30A, SECTION 20.

Roll Call: Antonella Raschilla, Greg Thompson, Gordon Smith, Superintendent of Schools, Sarah Truiolo, William Fonseca, Pamela Blair, Asst. Superintendent for Business, Kathy Celetti, Recording Secretary (Remote)

Absent: Elizabeth Marsian-Boucher

Approval of Minutes

2.1 Approval of the March 22, 2021 executive session meeting minutes.

William moved to approve the March 22, 2021 executive session meeting minutes, Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? All those in favor say aye (4), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (4-0)

Opportunities for Visitors to Address the Committee:

Committee/Sub-committee Communications :

Sarah: I had the pleasure of stopping in at two out of the three elementary schools this morning. Seeing students start to arrive back as both cohort A and cohort B, rejoined, it was a pleasure to see that and to see how patient everyone was and to be able to begin even more forward progress towards reopening our schools, fully, so it was great to see folks this morning. I appreciate that, so thank you.

William: The Meadow Brook Principal Search Committee, met last Thursday. We went over the questions, whittled down the candidates, and we will conduct interviews this coming Wednesday and Thursday, and forward candidates onto the next round.

Gregory: Excellent, that is a good group. I am part of that as well. I would like to acknowledge that we do have, at least our K-5 back in school, at least the option to be in school full-time. It seems to be somewhat of a turning point, I just want to acknowledge a little bit of what we have been through with COVID, staff, families and community members. I just want to take a moment to reflect on those that we have lost, throughout our community. (Moment of Silence) Thank you, I just felt the need, we took a turn today for the better. It certainly has been a trying year for many folks.

Presentations

Superintendent 's Report

5.1.1 Discussion on Local Health Data with the Director of Public Health and Medical Advisor

Mr. Smith: At the beginning of each month we meet with the Dir. of Public Health and Medical Advisor to discuss local health issues. As we expand to in-person learning this week with our elementary grades, and expand how many students are in each classroom and so forth, we wanted to make sure that we continue to discuss local health data and what we are seeing. We are not seeing any transmission happening throughout our schools. We have had positive cases, but the transmission seems to be happening out in the community, not necessarily in the schools. We know that the masking, hand hygiene and physically distancing whenever, wherever possible to keep us successful.

Chair: Dr. Clarke, do you want to give us an update on some of the variants you are potentially seeing. Or changes in the status from the last few weeks as we move into a more in-person learning.

Dr. Clarke: It seems to be pretty stable right now. I don't know about the variance, we don't test for them individually with each test. They do test a certain percent at the state level. We are never notified of which person actually has the disease, just the amount of it that they are seeing. They have seen all the variants throughout our state. Our numbers are not going up. However, we do have a few more cases than we would have expected at this time.

Chair: What are you seeing for turnaround testing time? Has that stayed consistent, is it readily available?

Dr. Clarke: Yes, it is vary available, the turnaround time is 24 hours. Some cases if you are testing very early morning, you could have your results by the evening.

Chair: You still recommend the Stop the Spread sites, Eastfield Mall.

Dr. Clarke: Yes, they are the easiest, if you have the time to sit. It's really not that long, like it was during the first outbreak. For pediatrics, you need to be scheduled.

Chair: Speaking of pediatrics, some of our students are 16 and older, there will be an opportunity for vaccinations in the next couple of weeks. Can you let us know what you have heard regarding vaccinating 16-18 year olds?

Dr. Clarke: Like the adults, I don't think their problems with the vaccine have been any different, I think their immunity has been better. Even with the Pfizer vaccine going down to age 12, they found that they have a better response to the vaccine than the older and elderly. It's still recommended that everyone be vaccinated. It could go as low as 5 years old.

Chair: Kelly, do have any updates from today in terms of the elementary schools. How they did from your nursing staff, if they saw anything.

Kelly LaBombard: I did notice from some of the nurses that parents were calling in to say that their children have been exposed to positive individuals. In March we had 27 students that were positive, 11 of them were remote and 4 were staff members. I would like to commend the parents because they are calling or emailing the nurses and principals and letting us know if students are being exposed to positive individuals or if they have a positive COVID themselves. Not too much of a difference today, other than parents calling in. It's wonderful, 95% comes from the parents, which is wonderful.

Chair: Kelly, can you share with us for those that are watching, what you would respond to these parents who are calling to say my child was exposed to someone who has a positive test result. What are you telling them?

Kelly LaBombard: We are asking them if their child has any symptoms, have they been exposed to somebody in the house that is positive or a somebody outside the house, we are telling them that their child needs to stay home, the amount of time they need to stay out, when they should get tested. You should wait until after five or more days after exposure to be tested. Who in the household is positive, who has been tested. When it goes through the household, it could be a long time, unless they are isolated, their own bathroom, bedroom, and not mingling with other household members.

Chair: So the protocol would be, 15 minutes within a 24 hour period within six feet, are we calling a direct contact?

Kelly LaBombard: Yes, they have not changed the definition of a close contact. It is still the 15 minutes cumulative, less than six feet, mask off when eating. If you can say a child is within six feet, wearing their mask, keeping their distance, then they are not going to be considered a close contact. We are telling parents as soon as your kids are symptomatic you should get them tested. If they are close contact and they don't have symptoms we want them to wait at least five days and get tested on day six.

Mr. Smith: We need to remain vigilant and on a daily basis we need to self-evaluation for symptoms. Our families have been fantastic in doing that.

Chair: Dr. Clarke would you mind running through those symptoms that we should be looking for?

Dr. Clarke: Headache, fever that is over 100.5, sore throat, cough, nasal congestion, loss of taste and smell and extreme fatigue.

Sarah: Are we still feeling comfortable with, how the health rooms are set up, given that we now have more elementary school students back in the building. Staffing is appropriate for that right now, and are there any concerns around how those are being managed at this point and time?

Kelly LaBombard : No, the nurses actually reach out to me, if they are dealing with a lot of COVID questions, follow-ups, we hired four per diem nurses that I call on a needed basis. So if I can call in a sub nurse to cover the health room then the school nurse can follow up on phone calls. I do have a grant from DPH, so I hired a nurse to be a liaison between the school and the Board of Health in EL. She will also help the nurses navigate through this so that they can run their health rooms and do everything they need to do regarding COVID, close contact, calling parents and following up. So I think we are in a very good situation.

5.1.2 The ELHS expansion of spectators allowed at athletic contests was presented by Mr. Magee, Athletic Director. Currently the ELPS spectator policy for home outdoor athletic events is (2) adults per home team, plus (2) siblings with (0) visiting spectators. MIAA/EEA recently relaxed the outdoor sports spectator guidelines. "The cap of (2) adults and (2) siblings per participant attending has been lifted, however, the capacity guidelines must be followed. The expectation of six feet social distance and wearing a mask still remains". PVIAC has decided to leave it up to school districts to determine the policy that they want to set regarding home and visiting fans. The six feet social distance between family units and wearing a mask will occur by all spectators.

ELHS Stadium Spacing:

- Home side bleachers have 42 designated socially distanced spaces available
- Visiting side bleachers have 16 designated socially distanced spaces available
- There are 145 socially distanced fence posts around the outside of the track. Spectators can bring folding chairs if they do not want to stand for the entire game.

Roster Sizes:

- MIAA limits football game rosters to 45 participants for each team
- ELHS will have 13 cheerleaders for home games
- There will be similar numbers of track participants compared to football participants.

ELHS Athletic Director's Recommendations are:

- Home Team = (4) total spectator passes will be distributed to each home participant. These passes should be used only by family members or close family friends (siblings attending the game would be required to have a pass). The home team fans would utilize the home side bleachers and fence posts.
- Visiting Team = (2) total spectators passes will be distributed to each away team participant to be used by the participant's family members. The visiting team's AD will provide a list of the family members that will be attending, and fans would utilize the visiting side bleachers and fence posts.

William moved to approve the recommendation of (4) home team spectators passes and (2) visiting team spectator passes for the floating season football and track, Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, a ll those in favor say aye (4), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (4-0)

5.1.3 Mr. Smith gave an update on the expansion to full in-person learning at the elementary schools.

Mr. Smith: The best way to describe the day as a whole, was that it was high energy and high excitement. I visited with each of the elementary schools this morning as students were arriving and parents dropping off, you had a lot of excitement with the students and the teachers. We are still working on the carline, our hope is that we will see more families take the bus (transportation). The principals are reporting that the day went well. Today, was a day for making sure that students understood how we were going to operate and routines were reviewed like lunch, arrival, dismissal and recess? Each building is opening up their fields and equipment and working on how we manage that in making sure that we are keeping students safe. Last week we had some great news around state testing. I the Commissioner is going to propose to the legislature to allow the current 11th graders to not have to deal with the assessment, that window is opening May 3rd. Also allowing for families to continue to have their students stay remote and they are connecting to our classrooms through live-streaming. We can now put together a schedule for them to take the MCAS remotely as well. Also they extended the testing window to June 11th, we have that option. I can't say enough about the town and the entire ELPS community. They have really done an exceptional job. Our staff has been incredible in adjusting and learning new things. It really wouldn't be successful without all that coming together. I would like to thank our families, staff and our administrators for making sure that we have strategies and protocols that make sense to keep people safe. We are preparing for Monday, April 12 when we see our 6th - 12th graders come back. Hoping the rest of the spring has that feel of retuning to a bit of normalcy.

Chair: Turning that corner, feeling a little bit of normalcy. We are still following procedures. We still have a long way to go, social distancing, masking fully, six feet distance if unmasked. We are on our way.

Sarah: Our son and daughter took the bus today and watching the precautions go into place on the bus was terrific. Seats were labeled, kids were welcomed and greeted. Watching our kindergarten get on the bus for the first time in a very unique situation, she was confident and comfortable and ready to take on that challenge. It speaks to that same type of collaboration with the collaborative around busing and ensuring that all mitigation processes are being held regardless of whether it's transportation, in the classroom or at recess. That's a huge testament of the work that's gone into preparing our district as a whole to continue to welcome more students back.

William asked if the tents have been set-up yet at the schools.

Mr. Smith: Yes at some them, we are working with the other schools. We have them all ordered, it just a question when they get them up.

Assistant Superintendent of Business Report:

5.2.1 Ms. Blair presented the One8 Foundation Grant for the OpenSciEd Massachusetts Program for Birchland Park.

William moved to accept the OpenSciEd grant in the amount of \$34,800, Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, a ll those in favor say aye (4), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (4-0)

5.2.2 Ms. Blair presented the high school gift donation for the ELHS Campus Beautification Program.

William moved to approve the gift donation in the amount of \$200 for the ELHS Campus Beautification Program, Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, a ll those in favor say aye (4), those oppose nay (0), motion carries (4-0)

Old Business:

New Business:

William moved to adjourn at 7:05PM, Antonella seconded the motion.

Chair: Any further discussion? Hearing none, a ll those in favor say aye (4), those oppose (0), motion carries (4-0)

Chair: Thank you Mr. Maki and Jamie

For a more detailed version of this meeting , go to: www.eastlongmeadowma.gov (ELCAT)

Minutes Recorded by: Kathy Celetti

Respectfully submitted by: Superintendent Smith