

Quincy, MASSACHUSETTS – April 13, 2020

Special Meeting of the Quincy School Committee

A special meeting of the Quincy School Committee was held on Wednesday, April 13, 2020 at the Coddington Building at 6:00 p.m via teleconference. Superintendent DeCristofaro called the roll and present were Mayor Thomas Koch, Mr. Paul Bregoli, Mr. Douglas Gutro, Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Mrs. Emily Lebo, Mr. Frank Santoro, and Mr. Anthony Andronico, Vice Chair.

Special Meeting

Vice-Chair Presiding

Also present were: Dr. Richard DeCristofaro, Secretary; Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk; Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mr. Robert Cavallo, Mr. Michael Draicchio, Mr. James Mullaney, Ms. Maura Papile, Ms. Erin Perkins, Ms. Madeline Roy, and Mr. Keith Segalla.

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Mayor Koch opened the meeting with an overview of COVID-19's effect in Quincy to date.

City of Quincy COVID-19 Update

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Mr. Bregoli made a motion to approve the minutes for the March 4 School Committee Meeting, the March 4 Executive Session, and the April 1 Special Meeting. Mrs. Lebo seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Approval of Minutes

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Dr. DeCristofaro opened the Superintendent's Report with an update that the School Nutrition Department has been awarded a grant to purchase nine salad bars so each elementary school will have a permanent salad bar going forward. Meal distribution at school sites during the school closure period has continued to grow with just under 17,000 meals distributed to date. A recent story in the *Patriot Ledger* profiled Quincy Public Schools custodians deep cleaning and sanitizing school facilities.

Superintendent's Report

Remote Professional Development is a component of the Memorandum of Agreement with the Quincy Education Association, 60 offerings from March 12 through April 6 with over 1,000 signups (educators could participate in more than one session). The second set of offerings is being rolled out this week with 56 options for Academic Classroom and Program Teachers and Academic Support Staff.

Aspen Support has been provided for 600 students and parents to reset passwords; Google Classroom, 2800 requests for support; and Chromebook

Distribution, 900 requests with 500 distributed to date and 400 scheduled for pickup this week. Requests for these services are through the online links found on the Quincy Public Schools Website www.quincypublicschools.com. Thanks to the IT staff and school secretaries and principals for responding to these requests.

Mayor Koch is interested in providing Chromebooks for all middle and high school students during this spring and next fall, utilizing the stimulus funding in a plan still to be finalized.

Dr. DeCristofaro noted that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has confirmed that there will be no MCAS testing in Spring 2020. Commissioner of Education Jeffrey Riley will provide further guidance for seniors who had not yet passed MCAS and whether this graduation requirement will be waived.

The Student Opportunity Act deadline is now May 15 or later and further information is to come from DESE around the submission requirements.

Blue Cross Blue Shield has offered to donate \$7,500.00 to the Quincy School~Community Partnership in lieu of their sponsorship of the Community Service Learning Breakfast. The funds potentially will be used to purchase Chromebooks for homeless and unaccompanied students.

Mr. Santoro asked about Chromebook loans for teachers; we have provided them on request, about ten staff members to date.

Mrs. Hubley asked about the breakfast and lunch distribution, Dr. DeCristofaro clarified that families may choose to take one or the other or both.

Mrs. Lebo said the food distribution numbers are significant, last Tuesday, 10% of students received breakfast and/or lunch.

Mr. Gutro requested that video be broadcast for upcoming School Committee meetings. Mr. Gutro asked about continuing the educational packets distributed at the school lunch sites now that the remote learning has been expanded. Ms. Perkins said that many families utilize both.

Mr. Gutro asked about the Google Classroom access, who are the staff members assisting. Dr. DeCristofaro said that the six Instructional Technology Technicians are assisting with this, these are the staff members who are in our school buildings daily.

Mr. Andronico clarified that the Student Opportunity Act deadline is moved to May 15 at the earliest. If social distancing is still in place, we will need to develop a forum to interact with the Special Education, English Learner, and other high needs group parents for their input.

Mrs. Lebo asked whether the Student Opportunity Act funding will still be available, given the needs for emergency funding at the state level currently. Mr. Andronico said this should be clear by the next School Committee meeting.

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Mr. Andronico noted that Open Forum participation is through the Quincy Public Schools email QSCOpenForum@quincypublicschools.com. At this time, there were no emails for Open Forum.

Open Forum

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Mr. Bregoli introduced School Committee Policy 11.12.1 Criteria for Approval of a Private School, which was discussed at the March 4 School Committee meeting and is eligible for vote at tonight’s meeting.

Old Business

Revision to School Committee Policy 11.12.1 Criteria for Approval of a Private School (Vote)

Mr. Santoro asked for clarification about the approval process. Mr. Mulvey said that the Superintendent will provide an opinion and recommendation which the School Committee will act on.

Mrs. Lebo made a motion to approve the revision to School Committee Policy 11.12.1 Criteria for Approval of a Private School. Mrs. Hubley seconded the motion and on a roll call vote, the ayes have it, 7-0.

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Mr. Bregoli reviewed that School Committee has two options for revisions to the QPS 2019-2020 School Year Calendar: that one option will be for teachers to continue engaging with students through the previously scheduled April break and the last day of school would be June 17. The other option is to observe April break and the last day of school would be June 23.

New Business

Proposed Revised QPS 2019-2020 School Year Calendar (Vote)

Mr. Santoro noted that Monday, April 20 is a state holiday, Patriots’ Day.

Mrs. Lebo made a motion to accept Option A, continuing remote learning through April vacation. Mr. Gutro seconded the motion.

On the motion, Mr. Gutro noted that students, parents, and teachers seem in agreement on this. The structure provided by the remote learning is important to families at this time.

Mrs. Hubley said that several parents have requested to remain in school through June 23 in addition to working through April break.

Mrs. Lebo has also heard this from parents and requested that the Quincy Education Association weigh in on this. Mayor Koch said that extending the school year until June 23 might require impact bargaining.

Mr. Andronico said he has heard this as well, but that is not one of the options tonight. Executive Session will follow this meeting and a discussion of possibly extending further can be had there and at a later date.

Mayor Koch said there are financial ramifications, not just for teachers but all of the other employees, such as paraprofessionals, bus drivers, food services, and clerical staff.

Dr. DeCristofaro said there are preliminary discussions underway about more extensive summer programming that will serve as an extension and review of the students' current grade levels.

Mr. Bregoli asked Mayor Koch asked about the assumption that schools are re-opening on May 4. Dr. DeCristofaro said the current calendar before School Committee indicates a planned return to school on May 4.

Mr. Andronico said that in conversations with QEA President Allison Cox, the QEA position is to continue the momentum with remote learning through the April break. Mr. Andronico said a Yes vote is in favor of Option A.

On a roll call vote, the ayes have it, 7-0.

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Dr. DeCristofaro reviewed that DESE requires an annual vote to withdraw from School Choice, a regulation under which school districts accept non-resident students. Quincy Public Schools traditionally does not participate in School Choice in order to maintain the School Committee Policy on class size.

New Business
School Choice
Participation (Vote)

Mayor Koch made a motion to for the Quincy Public Schools to withdraw from School Choice for the 2020-2021 School Year. Mrs. Lebo seconded the motion and on a roll call vote, the ayes have it, 7-0.

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Director of Business James Mullaney reviewed the FY2020 3rd Quarter Budget report, which assumes that services currently suspended will resume delivery for May and June. For salaries, a total of \$440,000 surplus is anticipated in the salary line. For academic expenses, there is a projected surplus of \$600,000 for the Special Education tuition line. For non-academic expenses, a surplus in natural gas will be offset by a deficit in electricity, with a net surplus of \$77,000.00.

New Business
FY2020 Quarterly
Budget Update

Mr. Bregoli asked if there are additional savings anticipated due to extended closure. Mr. Mullaney said if schools remain closed there will be significant savings on electricity.

Mrs. Lebo asked about the Transportation deficit of \$150,000, these are for out of district transportation which is may be offset by a surplus in the salary line. Mr. Mullaney said that there are ongoing discussions with DESE about continuing payments without service delivery, which is counter to current regulations.

Mr. Gutro is concerned about the FY2021 budget, given the drop in tax revenues for the March-May period. Mr. Gutro asked Mayor Koch about anticipating a decline in state funding for this year. Mayor Koch is not anticipating cuts for this fiscal year, but there will be adjustments for the next fiscal year. This is difficult to model as an unprecedented economic situation. Mayor Koch would like to have a budget presentation in early May.

Mr. Andronico requested information on whether the surplus would be a potential funding source for the expanded summer programming. Dr. DeCristofaro said this might be possible, will continue to consult with Mr. Mullaney, Mr. Mulvey, and Mayor Koch. Dr. DeCristofaro said there also may be grant funding available for summer programming.

Mayor Koch said that the City may be looking for surplus funding to be returned to the general fund, but that stimulus funding will be available to support summer programming.

Mr. Gutro asked if the surplus funding would go to the City’s Stabilization Fund and Mayor Koch agreed as this may protect from potential mid-year cuts in FY2021.

Mayor Koch made a motion to approve the FY2020 3rd Quarter Budget Report. Mrs. Lebo seconded the motion and on a roll call vote, the ayes have it, 7-0.

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Senior Director of Student Support Services Maura Papile reviewed that in addition to the technology and nutritional supports being provided to all students, teams from each school site are working to ensure student engagement.

New Business

Remote Learning and Student Access & Engagement

At the high school level, a referral form has been created for teachers to indicate when students have not engaged with Google classroom and their academic teachers. Follow up phone calls surfaced issues about Chromebook and internet access and as many as possible have been resolved. At this point, there are fewer than 20 families that have not been successfully contacted, some have language barriers. The high school Assistant Principals are taking the lead, supported by Deans, Guidance Counselors, Health Interventionists, Attendance Officers, and the

Athletic Directors. The Quincy community has been generous in supporting families, including gift cards for groceries.

At the elementary and middle school levels, Principals, Assistant Principals, and Guidance Counselors are emailing and calling students, supported by the Attendance Officers. Tremendous progress has been made to ensure that all families are reached.

Academic Program Teachers, including Health and Physical Education teachers have grade-level specific Google classrooms, supporting social-emotional learning and provided needed supports. Student Support and Health Services staff have also created Google Classrooms and are supporting the Academic Classroom and Program Teachers and families. High School Guidance Counselors have grade-level specific Google Classrooms with goals and milestones for each class.

Ms. Perkins said that the elementary school teachers are collaborating with school administrators to ensure that students have access to technology, providing technical support where possible, and rolling out remote learning schedules for students and families. Students have options for submitting work to teachers for review and comment through the Google Classroom. Teachers are collaborating on strategies for individualized learning, in some cases creating targeted packets and delivering them to family.

Ms. Roy said that the high school Principals, Assistant Principals, and Department Chairs have worked diligently to roll out the remote learning schedules (different for each high school to match their regular scheduling) and content. As with other levels, high school teachers have documented student needs for technology and other assistance. Academic Program staff have created online resources for Media and Art, accessible for all students. At the middle school level, schedules have been rolled out, many classes have met virtually and online participation ranges from 75 to 100%. Several middle schools are holding virtual spirit weeks and high schools have created parent newsletters.

Mr. Bregoli asked about the percentage of students engaged consistently. Dr. DeCristofaro said he will follow up with this as we are still actively involved with ensuring students have the tools they need during this week. Mr. Bregoli asked if Professional Development supports Google Classroom and other technology supports. Dr. DeCristofaro said there are technology options available for staff to increase their confidence in using these tools.

Mr. Santoro said that he appreciates all the hard work, is hearing only positive comments about the interactions.

Mr. Gutro thanked the Principals and school staff for their work in reaching out to all students. At some point, Mr. Gutro would like to see data and analysis on student engagement broken out by school and grade. Mr. Gutro asked for a

comparison between the original technology survey and the distribution of technology. Mr. Gutro is looking for metrics around engagement, how would that be measured and what are the levels of engagement and are there schools or grades that need more supports.

Mr. Andronico asked for clarification on what the difference between connecting and engagement. Mr. Gutro said that the difference between a single contact with a family versus student participation in academics. Mr. Gutro is looking for parallel engagement around assignments across schools.

Mrs. Lebo thanked everyone at the high school level for their determination in connecting with families. Mrs. Lebo is interested in data around students signing in daily. Mrs. Lebo said that the schedules are robust, very impressed with the teachers, the Literacy, Special Education, and OT, PT, and Speech. Mrs. Lebo would like to see Professional Development narrowed to focus on technology, not all students currently have live access to teachers.

For the next meeting, Mrs. Lebo would like to address the calculation of high school GPAs and the Grade 5 APP program. Dr. DeCristofaro said that the high school principals can be part of the next meeting. For the APP program, if school resumes, the test can be given at the school sites in May. If not, the test can be given in September.

Mrs. Hubley asked for families who may have first responder parents and attendant anxiety issues. Ms. Papile said many parents are dealing with a lot of issues, students will need to be supported for a variety of reasons. Mrs. Hubley asked for clarification on the funding for Chromebooks for homeless and unaccompanied youth, these are for students at all grade levels. Leslie Bridson has remained an important contact for all of the identified families and the list will continue to grow. Dr. DeCristofaro clarified that this donation just happened this morning, will continue to work with Ms. Bridson and Ms. Papile to identify the student recipients.

Mr. Gutro asked for clarification on the screening for the Grade 5 APP program. Ms. Perkins said that students are identified by their Grade 3 MCAS scores, the top 20% of scorers district-wide are then assessed in a proctored exam. Mr. Gutro suggested that students who are qualified for the proctored exam be notified.

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Special Education Director Erin Perkins has been meeting virtually with all staff one to two times per week as the rollout of services is underway. All schools have had virtual IEP meetings, and all students have been contacted at least once. Parental notifications are required to be delivered in writing prior to the resumption of services. Students who were in the process of testing are being assisted to provide supports until the testing can be done in person. The BCBA's

New Business

Special Education
Remote Learning
Update

are providing parent training, creating schedules, reinforcing self-care and academic skills, organizational and time management skills.

Mr. Santoro asked about Out of District placement students. Ms. Perkins said those schools have the same mandate to provide remote services and the Special Education Team Administrators are assisting to coordinate these.

Mr. Gutro is also looking for data around connections and engagements for Special Education.

Mrs. Lebo said that the Special Education Department is providing outstanding services to families.

Mrs. Hubley asked about the parent training, is the information on the website. Ms. Perkins will add it to the Special Education blog.

Dr. DeCristofaro said that Quincy Public Schools is tremendously fortunate to have the staff we do, so many people are working hard to support students and families remotely. Thanks to the Principals and SLT, the families for adapting to this remote model. The leadership and commitment to children is evident and we will keep learning as we go.

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Mrs. Hubley made a motion to adjourn the meeting to Executive Session at 8:15 pm.

Adjournment

On the motion, Mrs. Lebo requested the next meeting date. Mr. Andronico said that he will collaborate with colleagues to set the next meeting date as we want to have regular check-ins,

The motion was seconded by Mrs. Lebo and on a roll call vote, the ayes have it. School Committee did not return to Regular Session.

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