

## Andover School Committee Minutes of April 1, 2020

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Participants from the School Committee: Joel Blumstein, Shannon Scully, Tracey Spruce, Susan McCready, and Paul Murphy.

Also participating: Shelley Berman, Sandra Trach, Paul Szymanski, Sara Stetson, and Nicole Kieser.

### **I. Regular Meeting**

#### **A. Call to Order/Moment of Silence/Salute to Flag**

Chairman Blumstein called the Andover School Committee to order at 7:00 P.M. and opened up the Regular Meeting through a Virtual Meeting broadcast by Andover TV on Comcast Channel 99, Verizon Channel 43, and live streamed at [www.andovertv.org](http://www.andovertv.org). **Public Participation is available via email: [scremote@andoverma.us](mailto:scremote@andoverma.us).**

Alison Phelan and Shelley Berman will be screening the emails.

Chairman Blumstein asked that we all pause to remember people who are struggling during this time.

#### **B. Recognitions & Communications**

##### **1. Superintendent: Update on APS District closure**

Dr. Berman thanked all administrators and staff who have been doing extraordinary work in a short amount of time and are working to define a path forward. Principals have been leading the work at their schools and finding creative ways to keep spirits up. Schools will continue to be closed until May 4<sup>th</sup> and if extended we will have to think differently how we are working. Based on guidance from DESE, until now, we have provided enrichment and review activities, but beginning on Monday we will move into a more robust Phase 2 of learning. We have put in place systems and procedures that will enable our teachers to have a productive engagement with students and to have learning that goes on in homes and manageable for parents. This is a work in progress, and we will refine our methods of learning over time.

Sandy Trach shared what learning looks like at the elementary and middle school levels.

Focus is on teacher directed activities working on priority standards for this period of closure. Both levels will use Google Classroom and Google sites for learning activities which include a diverse selection. Feedback at both levels will be given for work completed by students. Work is voluntary but extremely encouraged.

Elementary students will use at-home templates that will be sent by classroom teachers to each child outlining standards and activities. Elementary grades will only reflect student progress up to March 13<sup>th</sup> and, in place of Parent-Teacher Conferences, teachers will reach out to parents by email. Standards for the Middle School students will be released on Monday, and grades for Middle School students will be available on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Teachers will provide feedback to students for completed work.

AHS Principal Phil Conrad reported that they have setup a schedule of their blocks so if students/teachers want to have activities they will have time for that, and an opportunity to organize and make sure synchronous activities don't overlap. Day 3 is an office hours day, and students will be able to sign up with teachers using the enriching student software.

Teachers were asked to come up with two prioritized learning goals per week. The goal is for students/teachers to interact synchronously and asynchronously or to work through Google Hangouts/Google Chats, etc. Teachers will follow up on students they have not had contact with and asked to keep attendance weekly to keep an eye on who is participating and who is not. Quarter 3 will end April 13. Letter grades will be used for the first 3 quarters and a pass/fail system for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, but this will not be part of the student's grade point average. Phase 2 runs from Monday, April 6 to Friday, May 1, 2020.

Sara Stetson reported on Student Services. They will soon be releasing an At Home Learning Plan which will be a companion document to Regular Education and available on the APS website. The plan will include information about key learning tools, and documents for permission forms, etc.

Student Services personnel have been working very hard to provide learning for our 1,200 students with special learning needs, supports and services, and they have developed a model for an individualized at home learning plan. Every parent will be contacted to discuss the plan for their child. Lessons will be as accessible as possible and they have developed two websites to provide examples for teachers. They have secured services of an expert security technology consultant to develop a virtual backpack for Special Education teachers to assist students. On Friday, they are hosting a virtual professional development day to train teachers on using virtual backpack tools, Orton/Gillingham training, Chromebook Accessibility Tools, and more. They are also looking at a virtual management system.

They developed a new set of procedures for mental health, and procedures for tele-therapy and speech language procedures are in play. OT/PT are largely hands-on so these therapies will look different. Shawsheen has taken a team approach to develop a plan that parents and children can participate in. Special Education teams have been working to develop skills and activities and at-home learning tools for students who are not able to access digital tools and applications (BRIDGE/EXCEL). They are also developing activities for the program for students in the TOPS Program.

Steve Chinosi spoke about the professional development planned to take teachers to the next level. Joanne Najarian's Team has been working on all Digital Platforms teachers have access to and Digital Learning Coaches are offering 3 drop-in sessions per day. There has been a request for internet access and devices. IT will be distributing 250 Chromebooks starting tomorrow to over 160 families and working with over 70 families who have asked for help with internet access.

Food Services had been delivering 150 meals each day but the count is now up to 300-350. Paul Szymanski said changes will be made in the distribution route because staff is concerned with transfer. They plan to setup remote kitchens (AHS, DMS and West El) and using an on-line

application process with food distribution days on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Families will be able to place their orders on-line at the beginning of the week.

Staff will have masks and the online program will include a training video, and schedules for pickup and deliveries. Elder Services will be providing assistance from the Senior Center Staff working out of the High Plain Elementary Kitchen and following the Serve-Safe requirements. Collaboration between school and town and staff has been extraordinary. During April Vacation, staffing will be minimal but they will keep this program going and adding Saturdays. Families will be able to place their orders on-line at the beginning of the week.

The School Committee is appreciative of the efforts of everyone and all that they are doing.

Comments/Questions from the School Committee:

Susan McCready is concerned with the contact with elementary students. Sandy Trach explained that they are in contact via email, IT platforms, and phone calls. Teachers have had very strong communications with homes and will continue to reach out if they don't hear/see from a student. Care and concern of their students is their top priority.

Shannon Scully: It is her understanding that the School Committee's role tonight is to vote on the AHS Handbook, not to provide feedback into the programming being implemented. Question on three levels of Pass/Fail: Phil Conrad explained that students would get a pass / incomplete in the grade section and in the comment section there could be pass/exceeds, pass meets, pass/incomplete. Shannon also asked for clarification on how students could improve their grades for quarter 3.

Paul Murphy: Concern is with the anxiety level of teachers at middle and high school. This crisis has forced us completely into the curator model basically without proper framing. What is happening is nothing short of miraculous and success will look different in all kinds of ways. We need to have patience with teachers, whose jobs have changed overnight. The success of the District will boil down to what happens in each individual classroom to continue to incentivize learning. Consider concerns about teacher training and teacher buy-in.

Tracey Spruce: Thank you to everyone who has been working so hard on this, it is amazing what has been done in such a short period of time.

Have the issues of privacy and recording some of the live instruction/engagement been resolved? Shelley said there have been issues around privacy and violations of privacy. The recording does not get used if there is something problematic; it is not used to observe students or faculty, but is a way to guarantee that if there is an issue there would be a recording. A permission form for students to participate in video conferencing went out to families today. Video conferencing allows for synchronous and asynchronous viewing so that if students are not available when a teacher is recording, students would have access to the class at a later time. Also, an equity issue.

What is the status of April Vacation? A number of districts plan to teach during April vacation and end the school year earlier. Shelley said that people have been working incredibly hard to get this on-line learning up and running and it has been exhausting. Keeping April vacation will give people time to think about some of the issues and how to resolve them.

Status of Communications to Families and Staff:

We have held off communicating with Staff until the School Committee approves the changes in the AHS Handbook. Once the Committee votes, instructions will go out to faculty, websites will go out live, and instructions/communications will go out to parents by Friday. A survey will be sent out to parents/staff for their feedback on how this is working at a later date.

It seems like a short period of time for staff to get up to speed and to be ready to launch on Monday. Shelley said there is an eagerness on part of the faculty and parents to move into a different phase; they will move forward slowly.

**C. Public Input and Responses /E-mail questions:**

1. Inconsistency and plans to move forward: previously answered
2. Why is the last quarter pass/fail? What does that say about perception of online learning, and which grades are pass fail?  
Response: Pass/Incomplete, following guidelines of Commissioner, doesn't reflect anything on the value of online learning. This is for April-May phase only.
3. What is the coverage for liability protection for teachers using video lessons.  
Response: Teachers are and will be well-protected.

**D. Education**

**1. Changes in AHS Handbook & Policies related to closure**

Tracey Spruce moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the recommended changes to the AHS Handbook as presented. The motion was seconded by Susan McCready. Roll call vote: P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y, T. Spruce-Y, J. Blumstein-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**E. Continuing Business**

**1. Discussion/Vote: Superintendent's Recommendation on pay for hourly employees through May 1, 2020**

Dr. Berman is recommending to continue to pay our personnel. The vast majority of staff have continued to work and everyone is really engaged. Two groups of employees not working at this point are the ten AHS Hall Monitors and the thirteen Crossing Guards (a number of whom also work for Food Service). Shelley recommends we continue to pay these employees. If we were to layoff the employees we would pay unemployment insurance and they would continue collecting health benefits from us, so the savings would be quite modest. The Town has offered to cover the health insurance costs for the food service employees.

Shannon Scully moved that the Andover School Committee vote to adopt the recommendation of the Superintendent that, during the closure of the Andover Public schools between April 6, 2020 and May 1, 2020 caused by the COVID-19 crisis, all hourly employees of Andover Public Schools who have been directed not to work because of the closure continue to receive the wages that they would have received but for the closure. The motion was seconded by Susan McCready. Roll call vote: P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. Scully-Y, J. Blumstein-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

## **F. New Business**

### **1. Discussion/Vote: MOA with Andover Education Association**

The AEA Leadership requested to negotiate a MOA to set parameters around a number of issues regarding the closure. Shelley and Joel have held several good conversations with the AEA Leadership Team. There was one issue they could not reach an agreement on, and that was the use of live video conferencing by teachers. The AEA has concerns around privacy issues and believes that live video conferencing should be optional on the part of individual teachers. However, there are some areas in which we would not be able to deliver services without live video conferencing. Also, if we found the technology viable and useful in some situations, we didn't want to rule out the possibility of requiring it. The conversation with the AEA is on-going. The Committee will not vote on the MOA at this time.

### **2. Transportation**

Dr. Berman reported on an advisory from the Department of Education stating that we should continue with payments to the bus companies. There is a negotiation being taken with multiple districts and we are waiting for clearer guidance. Paul Syzmanski has been working with the bus companies and the Town's Purchasing Agent. Any School Committee member who wants to be involved in the negotiations should work with Paul Szymanski. The Town's Purchasing Agent and Finance Director are requesting a vote from the School Committee to enter into negotiations with the bus companies.

Shannon Scully moved to authorize the Town of Andover's Purchasing Agent and the Andover Public School's Assistant Superintendent of Finance to enter into negotiations with NRT/Trombly Bus Companies, with the goal of reaching an agreement on a contract adjustment in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, to reduce the School Department's monthly obligation while maintaining continuity of the contract when school is back in session. Any negotiated reduction shall not exceed period ending June 30, 2020 and shall require School Committee approval. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: S. McCready, P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. Scully-Y, and J. Blumstein-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

### **3. Discussion/Vote: Recommendation of related Historic Mill District Town Meeting Articles**

Town Clerk Austin Simko, Planning Director Paul Materazzo, and Lisa Schwarz provided information on the Warrant Articles listed below.

Shannon Scully moved that the Andover School Committee vote to recommend approval of:

Warrant Article 20: Sale of Town Yard Property and Portion of Lewis Street;

Warrant Article 21: Discontinuance of a Portion of Lewis Street as a Public Way,

Warrant Article 22: Taking by Eminent Domain of Town Yard Property and Discontinued Portion of Lewis Street. Motion seconded by Susan McCready.

Roll call vote: P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y, T. Spruce-Y, J. Blumstein-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**H. Consent Agenda**

**1. Grants/Donations to District - None; School Committee Minutes of Feb 6, 2020.**

Susan McCready moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Paul Murphy seconded the motion. Roll call vote: P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y, T. Spruce-Y, J. Blumstein-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

**I. Adjournment**

At 9:49 P.M. Paul Murphy moved for the School Committee to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Susan McCready. Roll call vote: P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y, T. Spruce-Y, J. Blumstein-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Respectfully submitted

Dee DeLorenzo  
Recording Secretary