

**Andover School Committee
Minutes of August 10, 2020
Virtual Meeting**

Participants from the School Committee: Shannon Scully, Chair; Susan McCready, Vice Chair; Tracey Spruce, Paul Murphy, and Lauren Conoscenti

Others participating: Superintendent Shelley Berman, Assistant Superintendent Sandra Trach, COO-Stephen Nembirkow, Director of Communications Nicole Kieser, Director of Innovation Stephen Chinosi. Director of Data-Hannah Tolla, AHS Principal-Caitlin Brown, AHS Asst. Principal John Norton, WHMS Asst Principal, Linda Croteau, Director of Nursing-Rita Casper; Former Transportation Director, Mary Lu Walsh; Transportation Director, Cindy Button, Director of Facilities Janet Nicosia; Mechanical Engineer-Andrea Schreck.

I. **Regular Meeting**

Call to Order/Moment of Silence

Shannon Scully called the Andover School Committee meeting of August 10, 2020 to order at 7:00 P.M through a Virtual Meeting Broadcast by Andover TV and on Comcast Channel 99, Verizon Channel 43 or via streamed: www.andovertv.org

Public Participation via email: scremote@andoverma.us

Susan McCready and Shelley Berman will monitor the email box.

Ms. Scully thanked everyone on the Task Force in particular to Dr. Berman, Ms. Trach and Dr. Stetson for their leadership in putting together a task force and plan for the school reopening. It is the goal of the SC to vote on a plan for submission to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education this evening.

D. **Public Input**

All emails submitted at this point in the agenda are about school reopening plans. Questions not answered during the presentation will be addressed as time permits.

E. **Education**

1. **School Reopening Plans Presentation**

Dr. Berman thanked everyone who has spent many hours on this. He acknowledged town and school staff at this meeting, Hannah Tolla, Rita Casper and Tom Carbone, and others who will participate in this presentation. He also thanked Susan McCready for categorizing and keeping track of all the community questions that have come in through the SCremote@andoverma.us email.

Ms. Trach began the presentation with a broad summary of the plans, most of which had been presented at previous meetings. See APS Return to School 2020-21 presentation dated Aug. 10, 2020. The first slide showed the 3 models that need to be submitted to DESE.

Hannah Tolla stated that there were 3877 survey responses.

61.3% of parents would pick in person model and 38.7% would pick remote model; If the choice was between a remote and hybrid model, 77% of parents would select the hybrid model vs. 22.9% who would choose the remote model. In regards to transportation, 64.5% would find alternate means of transporting their children and not pick the bus; 27.5% would choose the bus; 8% say their student can drive themselves. Dr. Berman stated the district normally transports 4000 students (K-12 including private schools in town) so it is ¼ of that number at this time who want to use transportation services. For Prek-5 parents, that number is 27.4% who would be interested in bus transportation.

In Person Learning Model (K-8)

Ms. Trach spoke of this model – estimated costs just under \$90,000 – to achieve the 3' distance mostly at the elementary level. Breakfast, snack and lunch will need to be at 6' in cafeterias, gyms and other

large spaces; rented furniture is needed, plus tents - cost estimated at \$21,000+. Student transportation must be changed from 2-4 tiers, school start times and work times would all be affected.

Elementary In-Person at 3' and 6' distance

Ms. Trach explained the K-2 student enrollment can be seated in K-2 classrooms at a 3' distance – furnishings would need to be removed; new furnishings brought in. At a 6' distance, ½ the K-2 students can be seated in a classroom. Bringing all K-2 students back requires 34 additional teachers; bring all K-5 students back requires 66 additional teachers. Transporting K-2 in person and 3-6 hybrid would require 4-tiers of bus transportation; staggered school and dismissal times.

In Person Learning Model: AHS (3' distance)

Full in person enrollment would require significant modifications to meet DESE guidance. Use of Collins Center (for lunch spaces); no bus transportation; concern w/physical distancing at arrival/dismissal, parking and traffic; hallways and passing time, restrooms, etc. Arrival and dismissal times for students and teachers would need to be staggered.

Ms. Spruce wanted to understand the costs associated with full in person learning. Hiring 34 K-2 teachers would add over \$2m to the budget, and the likelihood of hiring that many new teachers would be challenging according to Ms. Trach. Ms. McCready questioned about using outdoor space. Ms. Trach responded the district has an interest in pursuing tents, but it is a seasonal item. The district is open to outdoor learning, but it's only one part of the overall puzzle. Mr. Nembirkow said there's a limit on state biddings and also tents are in high demand right now. Smaller ones seem more accessible, but also limited.

Hybrid Learning Details –

Ms. Trach explained in this model, students are divided in 2 cohorts; (M/T – A) Wed – all remote; (Th/F – B). All will use digital schedule/resources posted in the Learning Management System (LMS). Both will follow a similar time and academic schedule. Specialist and IA staffing will provide additional support for students. These are not the students and teachers who are in the Remote Learning Academy.

On Wednesdays – A and B will be taught synchronously until lunch time and students will be asynchronous in the afternoon; teacher and staff will be in professional development. Deep cleaning will be conducted in all schools – no one is to be at schools on Wednesdays.

The goal is to keep K-5 siblings together in same cohort; they may also share the same bus seat. However, not likely to happen if siblings are at different school levels and APS won't be able to accept family requests for their children to be part of a specific cohort. This does maintain a similar bus costs to a normal year which is ~ \$2M+ with no busing for Grades 7-12.

Ms. Scully asked if the six graders will be transported with elementary; response is no – they're on their own buses, but same time. Ms. McCready asked if everyone is out of buildings on Wednesdays. Ms. Trach said they would like to do a deep cleaning between the cohorts so they prefer staff/faculty to be out (exceptions specialized classrooms that may need to meet on Wed). Teachers would teach remotely AA and BB cohorts online synchronously on Wednesday morning. Dr. Berman added synchronous opportunities may arise (i.e. morning meeting, book club group) could come together online on Wednesdays as well.

Although there will be an adjustment period, Dr. Berman said there will be standards set up to have more consistencies among the levels. The 10-day professional development days will help with this schedule. Ms. Spruce expressed her concern at the high school in particular of students in hallways/passing each other to get to class. Principal Ms. Brown responded that there will be one way signs posted; she'll work with the faculty to move students in the right direction and with minimal contact. Ms. Spruce also had a question about the H Block. Ms. Brown said synchronous learning

would be done in the morning; afternoon would be asynchronous learning assignments. There won't be an H Block on Wednesday.

Mr. Murphy asked about devices and how much they will be used at home and school. Ms. Trach and Principal Jennifer Hunt said that they will be used at both locations as learning tools in both the home and classroom. The schedule was made to keep fluidity between 3 models, different types of level interactions with their teachers, peers, although, the elementary schedule will look different from middle and high school. Ms. Conoscenti asked about student absences because of sickness especially for remote academy students. Ms. Trach responded the assignments won't be disconnected from what they are doing in school. If students are out for a period of time, they stay in their cohorts and we will provide those assignments so they can keep up. They would allow make up time just like in regular times. Student would use the LMS. If there becomes a quarantine or closure period, the Superintendent and the Nurse Director would give the direction on what to do. Ms. Trach also stated in terms of specialists, we will use those who don't have specific classrooms to support younger students. Also IAs will help with IEP students or any students with specialized based needs.

Ms. McCready was concerned about the level of support a student would receive when they're home. At the elementary level, Ms. Hunt said they would create cohorts for different levels of needs. These supports systems are built into the schedule for the students. Data was also collected from the spring to see where students are – how many times they logged in, asked for help, etc. The younger students will learn how to use their devices in classroom and will be able to use them (iPads for youngest students).

Remote Academy:

Ms. Trach said this is another option for families to select as per DESE. Students will have their own teachers for Remote Academy – separate from the hybrid model teacher. In some select cases, mainly at the middle and high school, students in the hybrid model and or Remote Academy may be provided a Virtual High School, Commonwealth Approved Virtual Course or independent virtual course option. Students will use the LMS and follow a similar time and academic schedule. Attendance will be taken, and the feedback and grading system will be the same as in house. Instruction would be online, full school day 5 days/week taught by APS faculty, Wednesday afternoons would be asynchronous to allow for teacher PD. Benefits: there's no transportation costs; no learning environment change costs, daily remote instruction with a dedicated teacher. Regarding class sizes, Ms. Tolla indicated that these could stay pretty close to a typical size. For the Remote Academy, that would differ based on grade level and school. Remote academy teacher would have up to 25 students; most situations in K-5 smaller classes can be accommodated (i.e. 20 or 10 and 10). Ms. Trach also stated that HR will work with principals to identify staff who want to teach as remote teachers.

Ms. Spruce felt that for Remote Academy there seems to be no "out days". Ms. Trach responded if students were opted into the Remote Academy, then they would have peer to peer interactions. There would also be opportunities for interaction with their teachers and with their Hybrid cohorts. There isn't a significant difference at the elementary level for synchronous instruction. But by keeping the schedules similar, it allows teachers under both models to collaborate for synchronous learning and planning across content areas.

Athletics

The MIAA supports whatever the local school district decides. Both AD, Bill Martin and the Superintendent believe if we are in a hybrid model with a remote academy option, then students will be able to participate in sports with SC and Superintendent approval. However, if the district is in a full remote learning modality, it is still not clear if students will be able to participate in sports. The MIAA and/or the Commissioner may still need to make that determination on this question.

Transportation slides

Ms. Trach showed the DESE fall reopening guidance on transportation which shows that 32% of a 71 passenger bus would be filled (23-25 students). APS will transport K-6 students only. This will require a 2-tier bussing model which require staggered school start and dismissal times.

The Chair stated they have reached out to Andover legislators for assistance with the transportation issues/costs and to other districts to see if they'd join in an appeal to the legislature, however other districts don't seem to have the same challenges with transportation. Dr. Berman responded that other districts have limited buses for various reasons. But he is aware that other districts have also had to limit transportation to K-6 students. Other districts are planning on having parents register for transportation to have a better idea on numbers.

Ms. McCready also wanted to reinforce that the school start times for this year are not permanent and are completely independent from discussion on start times initiative for permanent changes.

Ventilation:

Ms. Nicosia, Director of Facilities, said the buildings have very well-maintained HVAC systems; meet standards, and are under a tremendous robust, maintenance program – checked every 3 months for various issues. She further explained how her qualified staff is equipped to do this whom she is very proud of. The buildings meet the MERV rating of between 8-13 which are in compliance with DESE guidelines, as well. MERV relates to the level of filtration that a filter can provide. Wherever possible, we will move to higher filtration. The changes that may be proposed and needed adherence to DESE guidelines will come at a cost which is in the operating budget. Ms. Andrea Schreck, mechanical engineer for the Town of Andover, explained the HVAC systems throughout the schools. In general, the schools' classrooms have unit ventilators – individual units/classroom that bring in fresh air through an exhaust system. We monitor the CO2 levels to ensure proper levels are maintained and to make sure we are getting the most volume of fresh air into the classrooms. All of our spaces do have ventilation. DESE guidance indicates that we should provide the maximum amount of fresh air into the buildings. Also, this year we will be flushing the air earlier in the day and will continue the ventilation after the students leave to flush out the air. A report on the HVAC system will be available. Question on HEPA filters came up. Ms. Nicosia stated HEPA filters only cover a small area and wouldn't cover a full classroom without buying so many/classroom and they also take up space in classrooms. UV light is also a problem to have – can't have people around it and it is prohibitively costly. They will shut off all school bubblers and looking things like plexiglass and other safety features to be utilized throughout the schools with Steve Nembirkow.

Ms. Schreck addressed proposed negative pressure isolation spaces in each school. She's working with Rita Casper and Hannah Tolla on what would be the best scenario for these spaces. There will be some spaces that are good and other options where there may be modifications to the space. The air in these spaces would have an exhaust directly to the outside and not to another space in the school.

Health & Safety: Ms. Casper stated a decision that all students will be required to wear masks in schools, recognizing that some students will have difficulties. They will work with these individuals on wearing their masks. Also, for those w/medical reasons, the school will talk with the parent on options. Mr. Carbone, Andover Board of Health Director, stated Andover numbers are low. He feels the community is doing a good job at protecting themselves and expects as society opens up, there may be more cases. When the question of masks and immunizations came up, Ms. Casper responded she will be asking for all students to be up to date on immunizations and to start encouraging parents to teach their children to wear masks. She will request parents send their children to school with two (2) masks. On the protocols of quarantining students, the district will follow the Board of Public Health (DPH). Different guidelines will be done, depending on the case – positive vs symptomatic. Anyone who comes to school and has COVID symptoms, will be sent home and asked to be tested. If negative, then they can come back after the symptoms go away, fever free for 24 hrs., no other issues, then they come back. If positive, they need to be quarantined 14 days and do a contact tracing. They can get tested after 4-5 days, but still stay in quarantine. Mr. Carbone further stated that they do have nurses

on staff that will help out as much as they can. Ms. Casper said they will help identify students who are high risk and their close contacts who then manage those absences accordingly. DESE guidelines varies by grade level: If it's elementary class, then the whole class is considered close contacts. But at middle and high close contacts are different because of 6' distancing, who's within the 6' or less.

Questions from staff:

Ms. McCready stated they had heard from a number of teachers. Some are operational questions that the Superintendent can respond to. Dr. Berman stated that once a decision is made on the models, they will have a better sense of faculty assignments.

Mr. Sean Walsh, Fine Arts Coordinator, said the committee will work with the specialists once the model has been chosen so there is full integrated arts throughout the district. Ms. Trach said there will be training and Professional Development to provide direction and support to the staff.

Responses to some questions:

They were not comfortable with 3 foot guidelines and not feasible. The district felt 6 feet was a safer solution and provide a quality program for all students.

Kindergarten: There won't be an option for a half-day kindergarten now that we are offering ADK tuition free.

Remote v Hybrid: Families may switch but only at certain times – most likely at the change of terms. This policy is still being worked on. If picking the remote academy, students will be grouped by schools. Next steps; The administration will submit the plan this week to DESE. Then families can begin to make their choices if the district picks hybrid vs remote. Next week they will start to look at transportation and parent selections.

Special Ed: The district will continue to make sure our special ed students will have 4 days of learning. Priority is their safety; but their hope would be to have them in full time by October according to Ms. Heather Eigen, Student Service K-8 Program Head.

Substitute Teachers pool: Ms. Trach stated all substitute teachers would go thru the same screening. We do have an active pool and will use those subs. It will be the district's responsibility to make sure there is a qualified teacher to fill in a long-term absence just like in regular times.

The Chair asked the Superintendent for his recommendation to the SC for the district plan to submit to the DESE. Dr. Berman thanked the task force for all their work in particular, Ms. Trach and Dr. Stetson, co-chairs. He said the task force didn't vote on a particular model, but just worked on producing the best plan options. He will offer a Superintendent's recommendation tonight. He sees education and educators as essential employees and their work as important for society. They hope to put the pieces back together again. It is so important for continuity of learning for all students, it's important to have direct and personal contact between teachers/students. In hybrid model this is somewhat compromised, but still better than in a remote model. The data indicates positivity rates in Andover are low. He's been impressed with all town departments, the Health Department, the P&F department to have healthy and safe buildings. He's pleased that the SC committee gave them the ten (10) days before school begins for teachers to prepare. Dr. Berman recommends the hybrid model and pledged that APS will do the best we can in health, safety and education. Ms. Trach also supports the hybrid model. It is the most operationally viable model, offering students in person and offering social emotional learning support is important. She's been very impressed with the staff/administrators that she's worked with this summer. Recognizing there are still many questions to answer, she will work to make sure those questions are answered. But given all things considered, the hybrid model is her recommendation.

The Chair thanked both Dr. Berman and Ms. Trach for the recommendations. She further stated that there are 2 considerations to vote on tonight. One on the motion to approve a district plan to DESE that was presented tonight. The second on a consideration from the Committee on which model to start the year with.

Ms. McCready asked about the plan to DESE and whether the plan would be at 3 feet at all levels except at the high school; Dr. Berman said that would be the case. A clarification to note is the plan that requires all three models stays in place for the full year. This plan would be in place, so if all students could return to school should the opportunity arise (for instance if a vaccine is in place, etc) during the school year. Ms. McCready said that not everyone is going to be satisfied with the decision tonight, and thanks everyone for all their work. She will abide by the oath she took as a SC member to represent all students and do what's best. She's isn't comfortable with the in person 3' option, the cost of it, it's not ideal education for children. When she thinks of a teacher trying to teach a full class of students, it concerns her that the quality of learning may not occur. She feels that the faculty are very dedicated and passionate about their students. The all-in model takes so much away from it. In terms of remote, she's concerned about the no in-person connection. Again, even if it's a limited amount of time, it is crucial for students. She feels there have been great strides made in remote learning, but she is worried about not having the in-person connection. She likes the hybrid/remote choices for families to choose what's best for each family.

Mr. Murphy thanked everyone; he is so impressed with the details of the hybrid model. He is troubled by the fact that Andover is not an impervious bubble; not everyone lives in Andover (staff). He worries about opening up and what may happen if there's a rise in numbers. He feels the remote experience can be so much better, feels it would be better than the crisis teaching that occurred in Spring. He feels the learning process can occur in a safer way for all and wonders if we should have a remote opening with a phased-in hybrid model after the first few weeks.

Ms. Spruce thanked the Task Force for all their work and the incredible results of the models. She doesn't support the all-in learning model. None of them are experts in these things and it is difficult because of conflicting guidance at the state and federal level. The feedback from parents is the opposite of what the AEA and teachers would like to see. We need to find a balance and do the best for the students. She has looked at data and student well-being and there is a conflict. In person learning is much better for their mental health, school is the only safe space for some students, but at the same time there's no data that all the precautions we will have still work in large numbers. She worries even if everything is done right, there's something new to learn every day and she worries about people getting sick. It seems inevitable that this fall at some point, we will close schools. So maybe it's better to start all remote and concentrate on working on the all remote so it's the best we can have. But she also likes the phase in idea, starting remote and then whether we can bring in small groups of students to bring back in. She would like to think of a way for students to meet their teachers at all levels. At this time, she supports an all remote model with a phased-in approach at some point.

Ms. Conoscenti thanked everyone on who has participated in the process. She has also gone back and forth. She keeps coming back to why we want a hybrid and that is because they all believe an in-person experience is best for the kids. But no one disagrees that there will be more cases in the fall. The guidance is changing too. Knowing that a whole classroom could be quarantined if someone tests positive, she feels that is can be very disruptive. As a working parent, she knows what other working parents have gone through when the kids don't have school and the planning involved. To some extent a remote start allows families to plan accordingly and to know that there's no abrupt pivot to scramble to find child care. Predictability, routine and structure are really important too. Hybrid is a choice, but if we are convinced that schools may be closed in the near future, then it feels like a false choice. Like Ms. Spruce and Mr. Murphy, she feels they could start remote and phase into a hybrid approach. She feels it's unfair to offer hybrid when there's so much uncertainty. She'd like to take the first month of school and strengthen the remote learning at this time.

Ms. Scully recognizes that this has been a difficult decision for everyone. The idea of starting remote doesn't feel like a phase, but it will be the answer. The metrics in Andover are exceedingly low. She feels if they don't start in a hybrid model, there won't be an opportunity for this later. She understands a lot may change, but feels the data at hand is what you base the decision on. She thinks they will only go in the direction of more cases. Starting with the model that has some in-person learning is important

because she believes that there will be a need to go into a fully remote mode at some point. This is our best shot to begin on September 17 with a hybrid model. This decision represents the community's view = nearly 80% are in favor of a hybrid model. She wouldn't feel good about taking the option away from the community. She believes our Health advisors (Ms. Casper and Mr. Carbone) will help with the decision on when and whether the district needs to shut down. She also doesn't feel comfortable with the 3" model, the 6" model is a safer choice. She also recognizes that four tiers of busing would be very tough to navigate. She is grateful to all the work done by the Task Force done on this summer.

Ms. McCready noted the survey has been very helpful. She thinks that the hybrid along with the remote academy gives parents some choice for in person learning. It's the chance of getting the in person at a reduced risk.

Committee members continued to deliberate the options. Ms. Scully stated that MASC data points in the direction that many districts will be teaching hybrid. Mr. Murphy asked the Superintendent if having a remote with a phased in model would be reasonable. Dr. Berman said there are some districts that are planning on doing this – with groups of students. They haven't planned that, but they could look at that option and make that work. Ms. Trach said yes they could do a remote with a phased in model.

On a Motion made by Susan McCready and seconded by Lauren Conoscenti, the Andover SC voted to approve to submit Andover Public School's 2020-2021 School Year plan required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, including overview of three (3) school reopening models: hybrid learning, remote learning and in-person learning as presented. On a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0.

On a Motion made by Susan McCready and seconded by Lauren Conoscenti, the Andover SC voted to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to offer both a Hybrid learning and a Remote Learning Academy as the District's reopening plan which will commence on September 16 2020 for the 2020-2021 school year as presented. Susan McCready-Y; Lauren Conoscenti-Y; Tracey Spruce-N, Paul Murphy-N, Shannon Scully -Y. The motion passed 3-2.

On a Motion made by Susan McCready and seconded by Tracey Spruce, the Andover SC voted to adjourn the August 10, 2020 SC meeting. On a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0.

F. Adjournment

At 11:05 P.M. the School Committee adjourned from Regular Session.

Respectfully submitted,
Alison Phelan
Recording Secretary