

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Thursday, March 18, 2021
Virtual Meeting

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

Others participating: Interim Superintendent Dr. Claudia Bach, Assistant Superintendent Sandra Trach, Assistant Superintendent Sara Stetson, Chief Operations Officer Stephen Nembirkow, Director of Innovation Stephen Chinosi

I. Regular Meeting

Call to Order/Moment of Silence

Chairperson Scully called to order the meeting at 7:00 P.M. broadcast by Andover TV and on Comcast Channel 99, Verizon Channel 43 or streamed: www.andovertv.org. *Public Participation via email: scremote@andoverma.us or through live video comment with advanced WebEx registration.*

The meeting began with a Moment of Silence.

The Chair reported that an item has been added to the agenda under Education regarding vaccines for educators and staff.

A. Recognitions/Communications

Dr. Bach recognized the students in Kindergarten and Gr.1 who are the first group of students to return to in-person learning; thank you to all of the faculty for making this possible. Claudia is awed by the enormous amount of work that went into re-imagining learning over the past year.

B. Public Input

C. Response to Public Input

D. Education

1. Learning Models (Hybrid/Remote/In-Person)

In response to Commissioner Riley's mandate that all elementary and middle school students must return to school (Grs K-5 April 5th, Middle School April 28th), the APS Administrators presented an overview of the plans for return to in-school learning and timelines. Each presenter provided details on different areas: Transportation, Food Services, Music, Physical Education/Athletics, Health/Covid, Student Services, etc.

Sandy Trach, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning talked about DESE's distancing requirements, the importance of the online registration survey for students in grades 6-8, and logistics planning which is complicated and extensive. Their aim is to minimize teacher changes as well as team changes, but in some cases, these may be required. The hybrid/remote switch will end on March 22nd, parents should reach out to principals if they have questions.

AHS will remain remote at this time. The Administration is supporting principals to ensure they have proper staffing in classrooms and in remote academy. Thank you to Lenore Price (Andover Coalition for Education) for coordinating and spearheading the much-needed volunteers for the elementary and middle schools.

Sara Stetson, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services talked about the changes to the master schedule which required the schools to operate on Wednesdays necessitating multiple changes to students' special needs services schedules. The update also included information on provisions for mental health, social & emotional learning and health and safety protocols in nursing.

APS Principals from each level presented information specific to their grade levels, including distances for classroom seating and lunch, devices, integrated arts, arrivals/dismissals, classroom placement, and adjusting staffing based on enrollment for in-person and remote academy and logistics.

Steve Nembirkow talked about space which is an issue, especially when we need 6' for eating spaces and 3' for classrooms. In order to meet DESE requirements, tents will be purchased to use for lunches across the district, individual desks with individual seats for students, and at least 250 desks specifically for AHS. Plexiglass will be installed to provide collaborative learning spaces and safety measures. These are large and costly purchases being supported by the ESSER funds.

Hannah Tolla, Data & Financial Analyst, reported on the results of the registration and planning surveys. About 90% of responses received indicated that parents would like their children to return to in-person learning; the biggest shifts were at the elementary level from remote to in-person. AHS is remaining steady with remote and has the lowest response rate, 61% of MS families responses were to return to in-school learning. The registration and planning links will stay open until Sunday. Hannah will also contact Home School families.

a. General updates including Health and Safety

Director of Nursing, Rita Casper, reported that some in-school COVID testing has been provided for staff in the elementary levels this past week; there were no positive tests. The testing will be available to the High School staff beginning next week. Additionally, they have collaborated with the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center to sign staff members up for the COVID vaccine.

Food Services Director, Gail Koutroubas reported that meals will continue to be served at no charge until September 30th. Students in K-8 need to pre-order their lunch. Please go to <https://onlineordering.ling.com/> to preorder.

b. Transportation for 8th Graders

Steve Nembirkow, Transportation Director, Cindy Button and Sandy Trach, presented a proposal for extending transportation ridership to Grade 8 students in the district. Email blasts will be sent out to parents informing them of the process. Parents should let schools

know if students are going to after-school locations. Seats on busses will be assigned, DESE has lifted all restrictions.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve extending bus ridership to Grade 8 students without a fee as proposed. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0

2. Field Trip: Revised WMS Students to Galapagos February 2022

The School Committee approved this trip on February 4, 2021 for 20-30 students. The Faculty Sponsor and WMS Principal are requesting that the number of students be changed to 36 students due to increased interest.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the revised extracurricular trip for West Middle Students to Ecuador on February 18-25, 2022 as presented and in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Andover School Committee Policy entitled "APS School-Sponsored Trip and Student Travel Policy". The motion was seconded by Lauren Conoscenti. Roll call: S. McCready-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

E. New Business

1. Shed & Electric within Playstead (Janet Nicosia/Carlos Jaquez)

The DPW proposes to replace the existing storage shed with a new smaller vinyl shed in the same location behind the Doherty Middle School. Carlos Jaquez, Deputy Director of DPW presented this request to the School Committee.

Lauren Conoscenti moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the proposed plan for replacement of a shed with electrical service on the Doherty Middle School Fields as presented. Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, S. McCready-Y, P. Murphy-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

2. Fusion Academy Private School Application

Asst. Superintendent, Sandra Trach, presented a verbal update and report on the Fusion Academy Private School Application. A written summary will be forthcoming.

The Dept. of Education and MGL for private school applications states that private school instruction must be equal to public, and private school students making the same progress as public school students. Currently, Fusion is operating as a tutoring center, and if approved they will open as a private school for students in grades 6-12. Sandy visited the Fusion Academy site on October 6, 2020 and met with the Head of Schools. At that time, Fusion did not have a nursing clinic on site, but they have submitted some drafts for medication and nursing procedures.

Curriculum as related to student learning time: The question is, if the curriculum is equivalent to the local school system (APS) in terms of the content areas we know. Fusion

plans to implement a blended learning model with remote learning. A single course at Fusion consists of 23 hours of live instruction, per course per semester, with 23 hours of self-study and 4 hours of Focus Fridays. In comparison, Andover High School offers over 50 hours of live instruction per course. There are questions as a result of that difference in how students will be learning. Lessons are written by the Fusion Education System but we were not given access to that information. Fusion does not offer advanced placement classes. They make a number of statements in regard to earning high school credits; however, there are questions with regard to acceleration to finish a course in a shorter amount of time than an AHS student does and raises the question of equivalency or non-equivalency. They require 24 credits for graduation, however, the length of courses may vary in response to the individual pacing needs. Time on Learning is vastly different at Fusion than at AHS and raises the question of equivalency. Access to the digital platforms were not provided.

School staff criteria. Fusion teachers have a Bachelor's Degree with a teacher retention rate of 83% annually with a 16% attrition annually. The majority of APS teachers have a master's degree, are licensed, and Andover has a 98.9% teacher retention rate. This raises questions as to thoroughness and efficiency. Their evaluation system is formative in nature, Andover uses DESE's requirements which is rigorous.

Fusion has an organizational chart and job descriptions; however, a staff directory was not submitted with the application.

Student Services: Fusion develops a formal education plan for students and includes summary of assessments and modification information. Fusion turns to outside agencies for professionals to support students in a wrap-around model.

Code of Conduct: Vastly different than APS and would be a source of discussion around thoroughness and efficiency.

Student Learning Time: Fusion's School calendar is unique to students operating year-round with 23 hours of direct instruction and 23-hours of asynchronous instruction per semester. There were approximately 9 hours of core in-person instruction per week. DESE requires 25 hours per week of live in-person instruction. This raises questions about the compatibility to AHS instruction.

Time on learning. There is low to little direct instruction for learning in a multiple course curriculum. Study models will not make up for the lack of in-person time and is not aligned to the MA DESE Directive for Time on Learning. This low to little amount of learning time represents a difference to what is provided in Andover Public Schools.

If a family had an IEP for their child, this is a school that would not be implementing the IEP like a public school does, and are not required to implement the IEP, because Fusion is not seeking to be a Special Education School.

In summary, the School Committee is required to review to its satisfaction that the proposed private school instruction is equivalent to the public school. Commissioner Riley has directed a specific amount of in-person learning time as it relates to APS and to grades 6-12. DESE: live and in-person (i.e. with a teacher) Elementary K-8 requires 50 hours over a two-week period. Grades 9-12 calls for 55 hours of in person learning per 2 weeks or 27.5 hours per week.

The SC had several questions and will continue the discussion to the next SC Meeting. Susan McCready reported on a number of emails received and will forward them to the Committee and to the Administration.

F. Continuing Business - Hold

1. FY22 APS Budget

The presentation will be moved to the next meeting.

G. Consent Agenda

1. Grants/Donations to District; Minutes from SC Meetings

Grants/donations to report this meeting. None

School Committee Minutes of: February 4, 2021 and February 25, 2021.

Susan McCready moved that the Andover School Committee vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: P. Murphy-Y, L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

II. Adjournment

At 10:02 P.M. Lauren Conoscenti moved to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of Thursday, March 18, 2021. The motion was seconded by Paul Murphy. Roll call: L. Conoscenti-Y, T. Spruce-Y, P. Murphy-Y, S. McCready-Y, S. Scully-Y. Motion passes 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo
Recording Secretary