

School Committee Meeting  
August 6, 2020

A meeting of the Wareham School Committee was held on Thursday, August 6, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. in Room 320 at the Multi-Service Center.

**Roll Call/Call to Order:**

Present from School Committee: Joyce Bacchiocchi, Michael Flaherty, Kevin Brogioli, and Apryl Rossi. Also in attendance, Dr. Kimberly Shaver-Hood, Superintendent, Dr. Andrea Schwamb, Assistant Superintendent, and Jamie Wiksten, Recording Secretary.

Absent: Mary Morgan

Chair Bacchiocchi called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. and lead us in the pledge of allegiance. Chair Bacchiocchi announced the meeting was being recorded live by WCTV and streamed live on WCTV.

Chair Bacchiocchi asked to move the approval of minutes to the next agenda, to keep within the time constraints of the meeting.

**Public Participation:**

Chair Bacchiocchi invited the public to speak to the School Committee.

**Dylan Turner a student from Wareham High School entering sophomore year** addressed the committee about his concerns with the return to school. He stated that if there will be no clubs, sports or extracurricular activities; he feels a return to the buildings would be a pointless risk. If teachers find a good system for online learning, that would be fine on its own. If there were an option to go to school or to learn complete remote, he would be fine signing a waiver for remote, because there are kids who are at risk and does not find it worth it to open the schools even for two days a week is pointless.

**Deanna Semple, WEA President**, recognized she represents over 300 staff members and the decision will impact staff, adults and students. She asked the school committee and please keep in mind that schools should not be compared to businesses, as schools are under resourced. Knowing the virus is air born, she is concerned about rushing into a hybrid model. The staff is concerned that there will be lack of funds for PPE supplies.

(Mary Morgan arrives at 4:04 p.m.)

Ms. Semple urged the School Committee not to listen to the media. Teachers are able to reach families and students via home. She asked the School Committee to put students, staff and families health at the forefront of their decision until our

buildings are safe. She reminded the committee that teachers do not want to be responsible for the health of our students. We need to consider that if someone gets sick, it will not be a nameless statistic.

**Caitlin Francese, Music Teacher at Wareham Middle School**, expressed her concerns about the reopening of our school buildings. Caitlin reminded the committee that with the closing of our buildings in March, education did not stop. She asked the School Committee if it was not safe to physically attend school in March, how is it safe to be in school today. She noted that the CDC guideline is 6 ft. between student desks, "urging schools to aim for 6 ft. when feasible, and 3 ft. is doable".

Ms. Francese stated to the school committee that her life is valuable and children's lives are valuable and not expendable. She has expected to be a human shield for her students in a fire, shelter in place and lock down. She shared that her students always ask about her safety in these scenarios, and she responded that she knowingly signed up to protect her students and now in the midst of a pandemic, teachers did not sign up to put their health and safety at risk. Ms. Francese's major concerns are social distancing, HVAC, PPE and when would these items would be disbursed, designated teaching zones, and if someone contracts the virus will the entire school quarantine? She asked the School Committee what would happen if a teacher or student does not recover. Ms. Francese continued that she has worked hard creating plans for all three models, and urged the school committee not to open our school buildings.

**Bridget Kearns**, parent of two students in Wareham is in favor of returning to school. She introduced herself as a community health care worker (OT), with a background in pediatrics who has worked with students. She feels the fear is bigger than the virus itself. She stated that when the pandemic hit the US, health care workers just worked. She explained to the committee that she has two bright students attending Wareham Public Schools, and remote learning in the spring was a disaster for her children. Her children who normally love school were disengaged. Ms. Kearns stated that remote is not a great option. When students return, she does not agree with masks in a classroom. Ms. Kearns shared that studies have shown that cloths masks were only effective if worn prior to any symptoms, as there is an increase risk, with cloth masks due to motion retention and micro growth within the mask, and health care workers are instructed to take masks off every 30 minutes. Reusing masks and not washing your mask, puts you at greater risk for respiratory viruses. Masks that are damp are increasing risk for viruses that children are prone to. Ms. Kearns understands that there will be training for students, but we need to consider safety hazards of wearing masks. Hospitals are different from a school. Education is being held hostage over the mask.

Ms. Kearns experience is that when you have risk factors you are looking at community hazards such as obstructed vision of feet, and the removal of masks. Ms.

Kearns feels we need to talk about hazards of walking with a mask on, and would be happy to support the school with some of her insights. Ms. Kearns will be teaching her own children how to self-rescue when wearing a mask. She added that dehydration is a concern. Ms. Kearns shared with the committee that after a zoom call with Ms. Sandi Ponte, Assistant Principal of Wareham Middle School, Ms. Ponte informed her that she had emailed DESE and if a child is 6 ft. apart from others, they could remove their mask. Ms. Kearns has offered her assistance again to our school district, and urged the school committee to consider the risks masks.

**Brian Fitzgerald, Grade 5 Humanities Teacher**

Mr. Fitzgerald opened by expressing his gratitude to the work that the school committee conducted under a public microscope and pointed out that they do not get paid, and this is a more difficult situation than usual. Mr. Fitzgerald pointed out that normally our school committee votes on policies and budgets, but today our school committee is voting on a life or death decision of thousands of people. He reminded the committee that just recently in the news, 344 students in Georgia contracted the corona virus, and 246 tested positive after a gathering of young people and people are dying. He reminded the School Committee that Indiana Public Schools did not make it to period three, and had to close their schools. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that Massachusetts DESE is not going to track cases, and our numbers are going up, with two thirds as many cases in Wareham as there were in March when we closed our doors. If teachers are enforcing guidelines, there will be no group partner work. Mr. Fitzgerald cannot use manipulatives, the library or shared materials. Teachers will share ventilation with classrooms down the hall.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked the school committee to establish clear guidelines, for if you start remote too late, students will fall behind, but if we start too early, we will die. Teachers can get a child caught up, but if a student spends the rest of their life carrying the worry they were a carrier and someone died, teachers cannot fix that.

Mr. Fitzgerald ended his remarks by asking School Committee to have full remote learning, as this is more personal than he ever thought. He does not want to ask his four-year-old daughter to attend a parent's funeral.

Chair Bacchiocchi announced that she gave the option to the public to submit their comments to the School Committee to be read into the meeting minutes during public participation.

*Ms. Rossi received a message from Wareham High School Student, Indiana Troupe, Grade 10:*

"Students have tons of concerns that aren't being heard by Administration. It seems like they just want to say "x" amount of students completed the survey and not listening to our concerns" .... "At the high school we wear lanyards in order to stop intruders. Some kids determined that they are too cool to wear (lanyards). Who's to say the same kids won't wear a mask because they are too cool for it?" ... "High

School is an experience, not just reading, writing, and arithmetic. With restrictions like no clubs, no dances, no pep rallies, no assemblies, distancing and masks, maybe no sports, is it even worth it going back for the students? All I hear adults in power saying is that kids want to go back, and kids want to be in school"..."kids just want to have a say in this"...so we deserve a large say in what happens as well."..."I hope that the administration and school committee come to an agreement on the safest, and also best overall plan, and continue to listen to student voices and our opinions on this matter."

*Chair Bacchiocchi received an email from Angela Morss of 448 County Rd, West Wareham, MA 02576:*

"I have a child going into the Grade 6,"..."I myself have been on a bus while wearing a mask, and it is hot. I don't see how kids are going to be able to wear a mask on the bus without passing out, (including) the bus drivers and monitors."... "Bus runs will be very long with only half the kids going"..."These kids will be in a mask anywhere from 5-6 hours with travel. How will we keep the buses cleaned? The buses do not have adequate supplies to do a deep cleaning. The bus drivers are not certified to do the deep cleaning. I feel we should do remote until January. I think by that time the flu and Covid-19 will have died down. The town does not have enough money to supply every bus with a monitor."

After the letter from Ms. Morss was read, Mr. Brogioli asked what the consequences of not wearing a mask on buses would be and are we prepared if a child passes out on a bus? Have the drivers been properly trained to clean? When questions like this are raised, I believe we need to stay remote and teachers report to their class.

*Mr. Flaherty read an email from Kyle Henderson of 4 Phillips Road Wareham, MA 02558:*

"Thank you for taking my questions into consideration during the public meeting.

1. Can Wareham public schools utilize the ball field on campus making 20x20 spray paint squares to conduct classes outside during Covid-19? This would mitigate the foot traffic and improve social/physical distance...

2. Can we utilize the college students from Bridgewater who are going for their teaching degrees to homeschool our students for college credits? This would be beneficial to both parties."

*A final letter was read aloud from Brooke Murdock of Wareham, MA:*

"I am a concerned parent of two children in the school system and I understand the strain and difficulty each district is facing during these unprecedented times"...the plan put forth is high injustice to our students, especially the younger ones who

have already been thrown into chaos since March when COVID first became a problem." ...

"With the proposal our children are getting a mere 8 hours a week of education, let's face it, parents cannot be the teachers at home while trying to work ourselves, and we can't expect day care facilities to teach our children either. If the kids are going (to school) 4 hours, they are already exposed, why cannot they get a full day in?" ...

"I reached out to Dr. Shaver-Hood seeking advice to what working parents could do not only the 3 remote days, but now the additional half days accommodations that will force many parents into stricter and difficult positions. Her response is we are reaching out to YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs to see how they could help accommodate these children. So if the exposure to the teachers is what we are worried about, why would we want our children subjected to even more people which puts the rest of the school and staff at risk?" ...

"I live in this town, work in this town, and own a home in this town and I have been able to watch my oldest receive a great education from the wonderful staff within all of the schools. However, my fear for my incoming Kindergartner is that we are setting them up for failure, we are setting these students up for a roller coaster ride because we cannot seem to grasp what other towns have." ...

"I hope you take these concerns and address them. I just ask that you honestly think about our kids, and do what is best for them."

#### **Acceptance of Gifts:**

The Superintendent recommended to the committee to accept a gift from WCTV, Adobe Software Creative Suite K-12 for \$2,445.00.

Mr. Flaherty moved to accept the gift, seconded by Ms. Rossi

5 - yea

0 - nay

0- abstain

VOTE: 5-0-0

#### **Transportation Fees:**

Jamie Andrews, Transportation Facilities Manager

Mr. Andrews gave a brief overview of the Transportation Fees:

- Bus Fees - if parents are to be refunded for FY20 (March – June) the bus company is looking at \$3000+ in refunds.
- Waiving the fees this year: Mr. Andrews informed the committee that fees have been collected through “My School Bucks” to secure a seat for FY21. If the School Committee suspends the fees, a reimbursement would be made and monies would be returned to all of the families who have paid the FY21 bus fee.

Dr. Shaver-Hood asked the committee to vote and suspend the transportation fees for the 2020-2021 school year, which would include reimbursements for the families who have already paid their bus fee for the anticipated school year.

Ms. Rossi moved to suspend the bus fees for the 2020-2021 school year, and reimburse families who have already paid the fee, seconded by Ms. Morgan.

5 - yea  
0 - nay  
0- abstain

VOTE: 5-0-0

Dr. Shaver-Hood addressed the adjusted school calendar that was submitted to the School Committee at the previous meeting. Wednesday, September 16 would be Day 1 of 170 days.

Chair Bacchiocchi noted that there could be other changes after the school plan is announced and if so, these changes would need to be brought forward.

Mr. Flaherty moved to accept the amended school calendar, seconded by Ms. Rossi.

5 - yea  
0 - nay  
0- abstain

VOTE: 5-0-0

### **Reopening of Wareham Public Schools:**

Dr. Shaver-Hood reminded the committee that the goal is to have a safe environment and to address the social-emotional and academic needs of our students.

Staff Survey Results:

14.7% Face-to-Face (students attend daily)  
38.1% Hybrid (students alternate between in-person and remote)  
45.7% Remote (all learning on-line)

Parent-Guardian Results: (752 responses)

29% Face-to-Face (students attend daily)  
35% Hybrid (students alternate between in-person and remote)  
36% Remote (all learning on-line)

Health and Safety Guidance, Procedures and Protocols, and PPE are to be fine-tuned in collaboration with the staff. Beginning in April, Wareham Public Schools has purchased PPE's. Dr. Shaver-Hood stated that we do not expect teachers to provide their own PPE's. Faculty, staff and students will be supplied with PPE's and custodial staff will be trained.

Dr. Shaver-Hood continued to list the work that has been done: Decals have been ordered, and electrostatic sprayers have been ordered. Nurses are going to need special PPE's as well. Special Education teachers will need specifics and she stated that it's our job to provide students and staff with what they need.

It is expected that everyone will need to wear masks, unless there is a medical reason, which will need supporting documents. Hand sanitization stations, no outside visitors allowed in the buildings, and additional furniture will be removed. Teacher desks and student desks will need to be spaced correctly. Traffic patterns will need to be created, with no mass gatherings of staff and students.

Social and emotional is critical for our students. Dr. Shaver-Hood informed the staff that Counselors and Social Workers have developed building plans to help students feel safe as they return to school this fall.

Dr. Shaver-Hood continues to report that DESE came out with guidelines for Transportation: one student per seat (bus 1/3 full). Bus monitors will take one seat, making one less seat available for a student. No one can be seated behind the driver. Everything a student has in their possession must fit on their lap. Wareham's bus fleet will operate at 32%.

Dr. Shaver-Hood informed the committee that we are at max capacity with our buses, and we are finding it difficult to accept variances, for if we accept variances, it would cost the district two of our busses, and we will be short 50 seats.

Cleaning and ventilation of the buses has been addressed with a plan in place. After student drop-off is complete, buses will be sprayed and cleaned, followed by a second run with our elementary students.

Dr. Shaver-hood presented the School Year:

August 26 - September 15, 2020 would be staff only days, providing professional development and preparing for our first day of school with our students on September 16.

WPS designed the plans per DESE regulations, met with our unions, conducted school committee workshops, ordered PPE's, and has created professional development, which will be on-going for the staff.

Dr. Shaver-Hood reminded the School Committee that on August 10, 2020 documents are due. The schools will reach out to parents and determine if the child will choose remote or hybrid, and we will continue with our back to school plans.

Chair Bacchiocchi acknowledged the hard work that has gone into the three plans and appreciates the opportunity to hear from the district for the past four weeks, and feels fortunate for the workshops.

Ms. Rossi asked if windows could be opened on the buses and how will this work during months with extreme weather.

Dr. Shaver-Hood responded that windows would be cracked to help move air through the buses.

Ms. Rossi addressed Dr. Shaver-Hood's response in a letter that was read during public participation regarding YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club, and asked how parents can access the YMCA without bus variances? Ms. Rossi also asked if staggered schedules have been considered, as it would increase the maximum number of students who can access the buses. Ms. Rossi continued by asking about Special Education Teachers who work in a sub separate classrooms, and how will we bring these teachers back into the schools?

Dr. Shaver-Hood responded that Special Ed students would need to come back three or four days per week, based on a student's specific needs and we will follow all guidelines at all times.

Ms. Rossi continued to question the superintendent in regards to the variance and asked if there was a way to grandfather in a variance to a family who has always used a variance.

Dr. Shaver-Hood recognized that working parents are dependent on variances, but we would have coverage issues at school if we were to run several bus trips using staggered times to accommodate additional bus routes for students with variances.

Ms. Rossi asked about mask enforcement and how it will be handled if a child wears a non-fitting mask. Dr. Shaver-Hood responded that it is a non-negotiable and students need to wear masks in the buildings. As for non-fitting masks, Dr. Shaver-



Hood announced that we have ordered child masks, and are fortunate enough to purchase these masks at a reduced rate from Soft as a Grape.

Ms. Rossi asked how the schedule would work for the Bridgewater State Dual Enrollment students.

Mr. Palladino responded that there will not be a conflict, and we will schedule accordingly.

Ms. Rossi asked where the money is coming from for the PPE supplies.

Dr. Shaver-Hood responded that we have been making the purchases, but the School Committee voted that we use the Covid-19 money for staff salaries. Our dilemma is how we pay for school supplies that are required.

Ms. Rossi's final question was how would we conduct mandatory fire drills and Alice training? Dr. Shaver-Hood responded that she has a meeting the following day to discuss these concerns.

Mr. Brogioli asked for confirmation if we can we accommodate all of the students in need of transportation?

Dr. Shaver-Hood responded that we have enough seats for the students who have signed up for transportation, but unfortunately if parents wait last minute, they may not have a seat for their child.

Mr. Brogioli addressed administration and asked if each administrator would like to see the students back in school, in front of their teachers?

Ms. Chandler responded that from the early childhood perspective it is about safety and relationships. Seeing a child face-to-face, and supporting a child is our top concern. The staff is participating in a Polly Bath training to support social and emotional support to or students. Literacy is the next priority for early education.

Mrs. Seamans responded for the Minot Forest students the biggest concern is content area. Mrs. Seamans knows we need to do the teaching on content while they are face-to face, and when students go home, unified arts would be conducted at that time.

Ms. Cote stated that the Middle School envisions the same as Minot. The two schools share unified arts teachers, and will have to collaborate with Minot Forest on a plan.

Mr. Palladino stated that all classes at the high school would run on an abbreviated schedule, as all classes are required for graduation.

Mr. Flaherty looked for clarification of the vote to be made by the school committee.

On behalf of the committee, Chair Bacchiocchi asked for clarification of the vote. Ms. Morgan responded that as she understood it, we were voting for the model (face-to-face, hybrid, or remote) to be implemented for the reopening of the schools.

Mr. Flaherty continued to ask for clarification of the vote.

Dr. Shaver-Hood confirmed that the school committee is to vote for remote, hybrid (starting with 3 weeks of remote) or face-to-face.

Mr. Flaherty addressed the principals and asked which option each school preferred?

Minot Forest: Ms. Seamans responded that each subcommittee worked on the three plans, and at first it seemed that hybrid was preferred. After the surveys, remote seemed like a better plan. Parents can choose remote regardless, this will reduce the number of students, and the hybrid model might be plausible for Minot Forest.

WHS: Mr. Palladino would prefer face to face, and 80% of his students who have voiced their opinion, want to return to school. WHS had a very good sense of hybrid. The task force met multiple times and felt strongly for a return, and WHS may have the best of both worlds with the plan that was put in front of the school committee.

WMS: Ms. Cote's stated that the task force met consistently, and most members attended consistently. WMS developed plans, keeping in mind that DESE recommends to bring back as many students as you can safely. Ms. Cote feels we can safely bring back half of the kids. Many parents are in favor of the remote, and many are in favor of the hybrid model. Ms. Cote reminded Mr. Flaherty that the surveys show the results of the Middle School.

DECAS: Mrs. Chandler informed the school committee that 16 members of the task force were excited about phasing in (hybrid with a remote start). In this model, we would begin with remote, which is a base line and phase children into the hybrid model.

Ms. Rossi noted that there was a significant number of staff member asking for remote learning. Ms. Rossi questioned if the school district foresees a problem with the union.

Dr. Shaver-Hood answered that we are currently in negotiations with WEA, but the phase in approach to meet the needs of students and staff in a safe environment, and she noted that a "safe environment" is the key phrase.

Chair Bacchiocchi asked the committee to move to a vote.

Dr. Shaver-Hood reminded the committee if they vote for hybrid, we would begin

remote, and at some point move to a hybrid model. The arbitrary date is October 5, but is not set in stone.

Dr. Shaver-Hood asked the School Committee to vote on a hybrid model, begin remotely, and at some point move into a hybrid model.

Mr. Flaherty moved to reopen the schools with a hybrid model, beginning with the remote model, seconded by Ms. Morgan.

Ms. Rossi asked about the sharing of the plan.

Dr. Shaver-Hood confirmed that the plans will be on the website – and schools will begin conversation with parents. Dr. Shaver-Hood shared that schools have been told by DESE that if a remote model is to be followed, schools will not have access to certain monies reserved for COVID, but hybrid and face-to-face models stand a better chance at accessing the money.

Chair Bacchiocchi reminded the committee that a motion had been made, and ask for all those in favor of the hybrid model, beginning with remote:

5 – yea  
0- nay  
0- abstain

VOTE: 5-0-0

### **Report of the Superintendent:**

Dr. Shaver-Hood asked that the committee approve the bills and payroll warrants listed in the Superintendent's Newsletter.

Ms. Rossi moved to accept the bills and warrants listed in the newsletter, seconded by Mr. Brogioli

5-yea  
0-nay  
0-abstain

VOTE: 5-0-0

Dr. Shaver-Hood expressed her thanks to the committee, attending several workshops in the summer, and appreciates their work and efforts.

**Other Business:**

Mr. Palladino announced that due to inclement weather, Graduation was moved to Saturday, August 8, 2020 in Spillane Field.

Mr. Flaherty made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Rossi

5 – yea

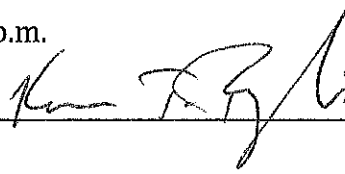
0- nay

0-abstain

VOTE: 5-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_



**List of Supporting Documents:**

Superintendent's Newsletter, School Calendar Draft, Minutes of June 18, 2020 and Minutes of July 2, 2020, Remote, Hybrid and Face-to-Face district plan, Return to School 2020, Emails and letters from: Brooke Murdock, Lisa Mayo, Lisa Jane, Thomas Johnston, Janelle Brangwynne, Wendy Andrews, Toni Thatcher, Kevin Buckley, Kyle Henderson, Melissa Avilla, Jacqueline Tricker, Thomas Tricker, Martha Schnorbus, Angela Morss, Indiana Troupe