

## **West Bath School Administrative Unit**

### Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

August 5, 2020 at 4:30 PM (Remote Meeting)

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**Members Present:** Keith Hinds, Robert McDaniel, Joanne Powers, Ashleigh Randall, and Mary Wallace

**Members Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Patrick Bowdish, Emily Thompson

#### **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 PM by Keith Hinds. A roll call attendance was taken.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

#### **Comments from the Chair:**

Mr. Hinds let the board and public know that nomination papers for the school board of directors are available at the town office. He said there are two seats available for election and November, and encouraged the public to take out papers and join the fun.

#### **Adjustments to Agenda:**

1. Item 7.1 was removed from the agenda.

#### **Public Comments:**

None

Mr. Hinds reminded the public how to submit public comment during remote meetings.

#### **Old Business**

1. Plan for Re-Opening of In-Person Instruction

Mrs. Thompson presented the board with the framework plan for the West Bath School. She said that it is a document intended for the board to show the alignment of the school with the requirements of the Department of Education and the Maine CDC. Mrs. Thompson stated the goals of the Collaborative Planning Team, and thanked the members of the faculty and community for the countless hours that were put into the Collaborative Planning Team and Instructional Planning Team. She said that Dr. Hanna,

the school's doctor, met with her and the school nurse the prior week and gave her approval of the plan.

She explained the 6 requirements from the Department of Education and the Maine CDC. She said that two weeks the guidance had shifted to requirements. She walked through the 6 requirements that all schools need to meet, and referred to them as non-negotiables. These included at home symptom screening, physical distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, PPE, and the steps for returning to school after illness. Ms. Powers asked if the app was something that West Bath School has as a requirement, as she had not heard about that for other schools. Mrs. Thompson said that schools are given the choice for how they want to certify that those self-checks are happening, and that could include paper/pencil survey or just operating on the assumption that parents are checking each morning. She said that at this time, the app feature makes the most sense for the school, for all students and staff, as it keeps the questions at the forefront every day for the community. She asked what would happen if a parent does not report. Mrs. Thompson said that the school will connect with the parent/child at the start of the school day to make sure the check-in has happened. Mrs. Thompson said that the at home self-check replaces the temperature check that was going to happen earlier in the process, and helps to ensure the parents and school are working together to keep the community healthy.

Moving into the second section, Mrs. Thompson explained the state's decision to create a local tool for determining what a community's risk level is, and that every two weeks, the counties would be designated as green, yellow, or red to give school boards information to act upon. She said that schools were asked to create an instructional plan for each color coding, underscoring that regardless of what color the county is in - green or yellow - the school must meet all 6 of the initial requirements for in-person instruction. She said that when this determination came out, it shifted the work of the committee slightly, as when the committee drafted the yellow plan, at 6 feet apart there was space to bring all of the currently enrolled students back to school. Because the school could already meet the requirements of distancing in the yellow plan, they struggled to figure out how to adapt the plan for green. She met with Commissioner Makin, who did say that that as long as all distancing can be met, it is appropriate to have the green and yellow plan be one in the same. She explained that the purpose of the hybrid is to reduce numbers in the school so that they can meet the physical distancing requirements. Mrs. Thompson said that Dr. Hanna also approved having the yellow plan also being the green plan. She said that if pieces 1-6 had not been required by the state, the plans would need to look different.

She stated that since June, the team put a great deal of time and energy into using parent and staff feedback to develop a strong remote plan, and then worked back to yellow and green. She walked through the school's plan for if the county is in yellow, and the in-person and remote options that were available for parents, and additional options for kindergarten families. She explained that the school would be working within a cohort model, and what that meant. She reviewed the expectations for students who were working remotely, and said that it could change slightly depending on how many students chose to attend school remotely. She then reviewed the remote portion of the plan if the county is in red.

Mrs. Thompson highlighted items in the in-person instruction section of the plan, that might be different than how school has run in the past. She started by saying that the school has always run with a classroom crew model, and in that way, having a cohort model is not that different than school has traditionally run. A difference will be that there will not be overlap with other classroom crews. They will be remaining separate at all time in order to maintain appropriate distancing. Specialists will travel to the classrooms, rather than having students attend specials in their classroom, although most specialists are planning to be outside when possible. She explained how mask breaks would work, as well as special education, gifted and talented programming, materials management, expert visits, and field work. She explained the rules around volunteers and visitors, and that school wide events would need to be held remotely for the foreseeable future. She discussed the work that Mrs. Cosgrove and her team have done to pre-think the social and emotional support needed for students, families, and staff. She explained how school nutrition services will look, and the availability of school meals for remote students. She said that recess will remain in cohorts, and cohorts will be given one of 4 spaces to play in, and those spaces will rotate each day so that in the course of a week, students will have been able to play in all spaces. She spoke about transportation, and said that the school will be using the ESY guidance as the guidance for transportation this fall, which allows for the usage of 24 seats, and for siblings to sit together. She said that if all of the students who typically take the bus each day continue to do so, they'd be about 4 seats short on the bus. She plans to ask parents who are able to commit to picking up and dropping off their children to alleviate bus concerns. If that does not help, they'll look at making changes for students who live close by, and commented that there needs to be a 15 minute disinfection process between multiple runs.

Mr. McDaniel asked what the plans for Chewonki and Maine Maritime are. Mrs. Thompson said that she had a proposal from Maine Maritime that she wished she had brought, but the board could discuss it at the next meeting. The museum had 3 proposals for the school to consider. In terms of Chewonki, she said that she and the fifth grade teachers had met with Chewonki in June, and they were able to move the October trip to June 2021, in the event conditions allowed for students to still participate. She said that they also have talked about using Chewonki in potentially different ways, by accessing some of their remote options, or even having Chewonki staff work with West Bath faculty on remote team building opportunities.

Ms. Powers asked Mrs. Thompson to elaborate on the second staff member in the classroom, and how that will work. Mrs. Thompson said that essentially what that means is that ed techs will not be crossing between classrooms to the extent possible, and will instead be assigned to a room for classroom support for IEPs. That person will also help to support lunch and recess, and will be a support system for the classroom teacher if the teacher needs to be out. Because there are not enough ed techs for each classroom, special education teachers and specialists will help by partnering with the other classrooms. She said the intent is not to have multiple adults going between classes. Ms. Powers asked if the staff has talked about introducing all of the safety protocols to the students on the first day. She said that it is overwhelming and kids have not been in school for a considerable amount of time. She asked if staff asked about doing half days for a week, and doing it slowly? Mrs. Thompson said she completely agreed. She said that later in the agenda she's requesting a change in calendar to allow teachers to have

more time to learn the procedures and protocols before turning around to teach them to students. She said that they are intending to create videos of the changes in protocols that would be sent out in advance so they have an idea of what these new procedures look like. She said she is also proposing that only 1/3 of the kindergarten students come to school per day for the first three days so that they can learn the routines of school. They had not had kindergarten screening or Ready, Set, Go. She said that if the board would like to expand upon that model for other grades, she was open to it, but the collaborative planning team had not felt like it was necessary to have a modified entry for the other grades. Ms. Powers said that she was feeling the anxiety of it all as a teacher. Mrs. Thompson responded that this a time of hard decisions - for parents, school board members, teachers, and administrators, and she would welcome the board conversation about re-entry as they move forward through the agenda.

In regards to remote instruction, Mrs. Thompson said that the updated school model is really driven by the feedback from parents had been about changes they'd like to see, in addition to staff feedback. She walked through the expectations from the state, and how the school outlined the remote program for each grade level. She discussed changes in technology, allowing every child to have a Chromebook, the use of Google Classroom and parent reporting, and the investment in LearnZillion for EL Education and changes in math program. She said the new model takes the responsibility off the parent for having to be the primary instructor. She also explained the role and purpose of the flex day on Wednesdays, and expanded on how services would be delivered remotely.

In the section of other considerations, Mrs. Thompson elaborated on ventilation. The state says that schools need to "adequate ventilation". She said that she and Mr. Bowdish completed a walkthrough with Siemens to evaluate the ventilation system and they determined that the ventilation in all instructional spaces exceeded adequacy. She's having a technician come in to set each ventilator to make sure that it is exchanging the highest amount of outside air it is capable of. Additionally, Siemens is putting together a proposal for roof top exhaust systems for office spaces that do not currently have adequate ventilation. In the meantime, those spaces will only be accessible to the individual people who work in that space. That work would be funded by the new federal funds. The school is also looking at ionization options and other filtration systems. She elaborated on the nursing space, the building cleaning schedules, and the protocol for quarantining if there is a positive space in the school per CDC recommendations, noting that she's expecting a more updated version of the quarantine rules shortly. The last portion of the plan presented discuss travel restrictions.

Mr. McDaniel said that he assumes there's no plans for a physical trip to Boston this year. Mrs. Thompson said that Boston has not been discussed yet. Mr. McDaniel said that planning a virtual trip takes advanced work and should be considered due to issues in Massachusetts.

Mrs. Thompson encouraged the board to consider the plan as presented, and think about items such as Ms. Powers' concern about starting with all of the students. She asked the board to also think about group size, and their comfort level with not reducing group size between green and yellow. She said she would also like the board to think about the green, yellow, and red recommendations for county, and what local considerations the

board might want to factor in for moving the school into the red before the state makes that determination. She repeated that this is not an easy process, and parents are going to need to make choices that are best for their families, and the school will be supportive of whatever those decisions are. She said that parents know that the school's plan is forthcoming, but they have not seen the plan, as she was not comfortable putting a plan forward without the board having input.

Ms. Powers asked Mrs. Thompson to repeat the number of minutes of exposure that need to be considered for others to quarantine if there's a positive case. Mrs. Thompson said that close contact is considered to be within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes. She said that she understood that Dr. Hanna recommended that the whole class quarantine, but asked what would happen on the bus. Mrs. Thompson said that it could potentially be that a whole bus run is impacted if it is the first child who gets on the bus.

Mrs. Randall thanked those who put the plan together. She said she is impressed with the thoroughness and attention to detail, and especially loved the part that mentioned that the faculty adores the students. She said that she really liked the all or nothing approach, and that hybrid is really complicating things for parents. If the school has the capacity to keep the green and yellow plans the same, as a board member and a parent that is what she wants to see. She said she also doesn't want to lose the idea that students are more resilient and adaptable than adults give the credit for. Mrs. Thompson reiterated that while the green and yellow plan are the same, really, the in-person plan was developed for yellow, there were just no changes to be made for green. She said the one caveat is if there is an unexpected increase in enrollment that interferes with social distancing. She also said that she had sent out the June survey to parents asking what model would work best for families, and that there was a high response rate. 81% of families who responded said that they were ready to send their students back to school when the health markers allowed, and the majority felt that hybrid made things complicated for families. Mrs. Randall thanked Mrs. Thompson for the hard work.

Mr. Hinds asked, if the state is updating the health markers every two weeks, what is the expectation if the school goes from yellow to green to red? How quickly does the school need to move into remote learning, or is there leeway? Mrs. Thompson said that the wording from the department that the green, yellow, red is recommendation for the school board to consider. She read the language from the state, and said that to her that means that the school moves to remote instantly. She said that more of her concern is within the two week period, how does the board want to locally make determinations for how to respond, and is there a different local threshold for moving to remote instruction?

Mr. McDaniel said that he would recommend that if a student or family tests positive for COVID, a decision needs to be made right then. As long as no student tests positive, this is a logical plan, that someone at the school or on the board makes the decision to move to remote, and not wait for the state. Mrs. Thompson said that she can ask Dr. Hanna to provide further feedback on local markers and the board can discuss it further at their next meeting.

Ms. Powers said that even though Sagadahoc County might be a different color, the board should take into consideration the proximity to Cumberland County. Mrs. Thompson also

said that because West Bath shares a zip code, the community does not get feedback on cases in the town. Additionally, because Sagadahoc County does not have a hospital, that is another missing data point within the metrics. Mrs. Randall said that she would be hesitant to base too many decisions on Cumberland County, because it's proximity to Brunswick that West Bath has, not Portland.

Mr. Hinds asked what the plan for vendors will be. Mrs. Thompson said that deliveries will all happen in the back of the building, and for the most part there should be no reason to have to enter the building. If it is necessary, they would be required to answer the same health questions as staff, and wear a mask, and socially distance. She said that she has seen other schools put a QR code to a self-check. The intention would be that people aren't coming into the building.

Mr. McDaniel asked if there were mandates on the type of masks to be worn? What types of standardization needs to happen? Mrs. Thompson said that there is not currently a requirement on the type of mask students need to wear, but that she would discuss this with Dr. Hanna and update the plan.

Ms. Powers asked what the protocol would be if a child does not wear a mask? Mrs. Thompson said that it is not an option to be at school without a face covering. It becomes a safety concern, and they would not be permitted to be at school. She said that she would work with the family to find out what the barrier is and try to work through that first.

Mr. McDaniel made a motion to approve the existing plan for reopening of in-person instruction. Mr. Hinds seconded the motion. Ms. Powers said she still has concerns about starting off full time with all of the safety protocols. Mrs. Thompson asked if she recommended that they start with 1/3 a day like is being proposed for kindergarten? Ms. Powers said that she feels that would be an excellent idea. It's going to be a lot for them to take on all at once, and for the teacher to teach all of those protocols. Mrs. Randall said that she felt that with first through fifth being familiar with the school and staff, in conjunction with sending information to families in advance, she does not want to further complicate things. She said she would feel comfortable with kids going back knowing there is advanced work being done. Vote (3-1(Powers)-1(Wallace))

## **New Business**

### **1. Request for Calendar Revision**

Mrs. Thompson presented a revised calendar for consideration, which moved the October and January professional development days to August, in combination of the two days that were already scheduled, providing staff with 4 days together to prepare for the opening of school and learning the new procedures. The calendar shifted the student start date from September 1st to September 8th. Additionally, Mrs. Thompson requested that kindergarten students begin the year on a reduced schedule, with 1/3 of the class coming to school for each of the first three days, and then all students coming to school on Friday, September 11th.

Mr. Hinds made a motion to approve the calendar revision. Mr. McDaniel seconded the

motion. Vote (4-0-1 (Wallace)).

2. Staffing Proposal

Mrs. Thompson requested a staffing proposal, increasing the school counselor by 1 day per week from 4 days to 5 day from September 1st through December 30th. This increase would be paid from federal funds that are must be expended by December 30th.

Mr. McDaniel made a motion to approve the position increase by 1 day per week from September 1st through December 30th. Ms. Powers seconded the motion. Vote (5-0).

3. Finance Committee Membership

Mr. Hinds explained that when the board approves AP warrants and payroll in some instances, warrants need to be signed by the finance committee or by board majority. Because of the pandemic, Mr. McDaniel had not been available for signing warrants, which then required the board majority for each warrant. He suggested that the board reconfigure the finance committee membership temporarily to remove Mr. McDaniel and add Mrs. Randall.

Mrs. Wallace made a motion to add Mrs. Randall and temporarily remove Mr. McDaniel from the finance committee. Mr. McDaniel seconded this motion. Vote (5-0).

**Public Comments**

None

**Set Next Meeting Dates and Locations**

1. Wednesday, August 19th at 4:30 PM - Remote Meeting - Regular Meeting of the School Board of Directors Meeting
2. September 3rd at 6 PM - West Bath Town Meeting at Bath Middle School

**Adjourn**

Mr. McDaniel made a motion to adjourn at 6:02 PM. Mrs. Randall seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote (5-0).

Submitted by,



Emily Thompson