

Marblehead School Committee

August 6, 2020

7:00 PM

Zoom Conference - Meeting ID 95440284493 & Password: 039947

<https://zoom.us/j/95440284493?pwd=b2Ztc0VxTHITL0FPayt6SEZyNnNZZz09>

Dial In (415) 762-9988 with ID and follow prompts

Meeting ID 95440284493

I. Sarah Gold called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm

Ms. Gold noted the zoom had maxed out at 300 people and understood it was an open meeting violation.

II. Public Comment

Ms. Joan Miller introduced herself as the president of the Marblehead Teacher's Association, parent of two daughters who attended MPS and a community member. Ms. Miller stated she was speaking on behalf of all the educators in the district and that this was a very trying time for all of us as we navigate our way safely through the global pandemic we find ourselves in. Ms. Miller thanked the superintendent, school committee, administrators, parents and teachers all served on the reopening committees this summer. Ms. Miller noted this is work that everyone has taken seriously in order to find a safe return to school. Ms. Miller stated she was here tonight on behalf of the teachers of Marblehead to request we begin the year in the safest way possible, that is a full robust remote learning plan. Ms. Miller said she understood what was being asked of the community and parents but believed the risk of a premature return to the schools were not worth the reward. Ms. Miller said, as educators they were asking for a return to in person learning guided by science and only when it is safe to do so. Ms. Miller noted on March 12 we all left school thinking we would be back in two weeks, that two weeks turned into three months and teachers were left to build the boat while sailing it. Ms. Miller said as educators they were committed to building a remote learning plan that is as robust and engaging as possible to meet the needs of all students though they also recognize there is no substitution for a classroom full of eager students guided by an engaging educator. Ms. Miller reminded everyone that before being teachers, they are parents, grandparents, husbands, wives, daughters and sons and that the risk of opening prematurely outweighs the rewards. Ms. Miller stated the teachers want to get back to normal more than anything but believe that we should error on the side of caution.

Jeff Hoffman. Mr. Hoffman stated he disagreed with Ms. Miller and felt there were ways to return safely.

Samantha Nelson, Elm St. Ms. Nelson stated she felt, in just days, there had been a pivot from a hybrid model to a full remote model and she was struck with a sense of dread. Ms. Nelson said she was unsure how to tell her children they will not be going to school, not be interacting with other kids, not be experiencing new activities and that their world would be within the four walls of their home. Ms. Nelson asked how to tell her children that the fears of few were massively impacting the many and how to tell

them that ways to get them back into school had been developed but that we have turned away from those methods. Ms. Nelson also asked how to explain to her children that a “Not one more case” standard is impossible to achieve and it would likely mean not getting back to school. Ms. Nelson asked how to explain that a mitigate and manage approach that has been used in other businesses, hospitals and institutions somehow wouldn’t work in our schools and that their friends at private school and in other towns would go back to school but her children would not, continuing by asking how to explain to her children that those schools found a way to get back but we haven’t. Ms. Nelson stated it was very tough to tell her daughter who has been filled with joy at the prospect at her first day of first grade that she would be sitting at their kitchen table and her son that the failed educational experience he received in the Spring would somehow be miraculously better by the fall. Ms. Nelson asked how to tell her children that the education commissioner said that it is near impossible to teach kindergarteners and first graders to read over zoom but that somehow, we were going to do that. Ms. Nelson asked to make decisions with reason, facts and logic not fear, uncertainty and doubt. Ms. Nelson stated this was the moment School Committee members came here for, to stand up for kids and asked them to do so.

Kate Thomson, Bubier Road. Ms. Thompson read a letter unanimously signed by the reopening committee members. The reopening committee includes John Buckey, Nan Murphy, Brian Ota, Mandy Murphy, Donna Zaeske, Sean Satterfield, Matt Fox, Dan Bauer, Joan Miller, Eric Oxford, Todd Bloodgood, Michelle Cresta, Kathleen Hennessey, Sarah Gold, Helaine Hazlett, Kate Heasche Thomson, Caroline Laramie, Steph Callahan, Scott Solberg, Fiona Trimarchi and Sophie Hauck. The letter is as follows:

Dear Dr. Buckey,

“At your invitation the members of the Marblehead reopening committee have worked as a team over the summer to review, discuss and advise you on various aspects of the school reopening process. Throughout the safety and wellbeing of our community has remained at the forefront of our work. We have spent countless hours digesting the many reasons to reopen and considering the risks associated with a rush to in person learning. We have poured through the evolving safety protocols and considered the cost benefit analysis of remaining remote. We have gathered and analyzed feedback from our community including parent and staff surveys and listening sessions. We have observed the experiences of communities across the country who are wrestling with the same difficulties and we have considered the opinions of experts in the fields of education, child psychology, pediatrics, public health and more. This Thursday, August 6th, today, you will present your reopening recommendation to the School Committee for approval and on Monday this plan will be delivered to Commissioner Riley of DESE. Earlier this week, following careful consideration of the risks and benefits of a myriad hybrid approaches we as a team expressed agreement to start the school year in remote learning with the intention to get back to in person as soon as safe for our community. The decision was based on discussions with the Board of Health and it is our understanding through these discussions that Massachusetts is experiencing an increased rate in the number of new cases. We were also told that community wide and timely testing was not possible.”

Ms. Thomson noted that in the interest of time she was going to skip the next paragraph but continued “of paramount importance is that, as a nation and within the Commonwealth, we have not yet controlled the pandemic. We have not yet established reliable systems for testing or reporting, and we have not had enough time with the virus to understand its potential to spread within community groups like schools. We have reviewed the safety protocols and we do not yet see a viable path forward for in-person instruction that ensures the safety of our community members. However varied our in

our individual roles within the district, our love for the Marblehead Public Schools, our concern for the safety and well-being of our students, our staff, our teachers, and our desire to implement equitable and innovative re-entry approaches that meet the needs of all learners is ubiquitous. Therefore, we urge you to recommend a phased-in approach beginning with a fully remote opening.”

Ms. Gold asked Mr. Harris to speak publicly regarding what he had been texting her.

Mr. Harris stated that given it was unanticipated that we would exceed 300 people for the Zoom call, he felt there was an opportunity to take a 15 minute recess and speak with an administrative assistant in the town who may be able to increase the Zoom capacity as it had been done for a recent event and he felt may be able to happen again in order to allow people who are unable to enter the meeting to do so.

Mr. Harris made a motion for a 15 minute recess.
Meagan Taylor seconded the motion.

Roll call vote was taken

Sarah Gold	Yes
Meagan Taylor	Yes
Emily Barron	Yes
Sarah Fox	Yes
David Harris	Yes

Motion carried 5-0

Ms. Gold noted the meeting would not be reconvened until at least 7:35 pm.

Ms. Gold returned and stated there was no current ability to increase the meeting capacity at the time. Ms. Gold stated she felt it was best to adjourn the meeting and she hoped to increase the account to 1000 participants the next day.

Ms. Gold noted that Ms. Taylor had spoken to her during the recess and noted the Monday deadline for voting.

Several members of the community voiced displeasure with adjourning the meeting.

Ms. Gold restated the meeting was being conducted as an open meeting violation. Ms. Gold noted that no emergency meeting would be required, and a meeting could be posted within the 48 hour posting requirement for Monday evening at 7 pm. Ms. Gold asked the Committee members if they could all attend at that time.

Ms. Fox noted that would not allow for the 48 hours posting requirements and suggested it would need to be Tuesday. Ms. Gold stated this was correct.

Ms. Fox asked that the reopening recommendation and documents be released to the public as soon as possible to allow them to review them in the absence of the presentation that was on the agenda. Mr. Harris voiced he did not want to do this. Ms. Taylor asked if an emergency meeting could be scheduled for Monday evening.

Mr. Harris made a call for civility as noted that requests for live streaming on Facebook could not be met as the meeting was legally posted to be available on zoom. Mr. Harris noted he felt a 48 hours posting was the best course of action.

In response to a community question, Ms. Gold noted the plan was due by Monday, but Dr. Buckey has just received communication from the commissioner informing the date was pushed back.

Ms. Gold noted a request had been made for the reopening recommendation be made available and Dr. Buckey said that was no problem at all. Ms. Gold noted the document would be posted on ww.backtogethermhd.com right away.

Ms. Gold apologized again for the incident.

Ms. Fox addressed Ms. Gold, stating the school committee could certainly not discuss or deliberate the information at all, but asked if it was allowed to have Dr. Buckey still make his presentation so that the public that attended could hear what he had to say. Mr. Harris stated he felt the best course of action was to adjourn the meeting and continue at a later date. Ms. Fox noted she agreed that all who wish to be present should be able to be but was hoping to find a way to get the information to the public. Ms. Taylor noted releasing the documents would be a good compromise.

Ms. Gold asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting and reschedule for Monday, August 10 at 7 pm.

Meaghan Taylor moved the motion

Sarah Fox seconded the motion

Roll Call vote was taken

Sarah Gold	Yes
Meaghan Taylor	Yes
Emily Barron	Yes
Sarah Fox	Yes
David Harris	Yes

Motion passed 5-0

Ms. Gold apologized for lacking the foresight that more than 300 people would attend.

Sarah Gold adjourned at 7:52 pm