

Record of the Marblehead School Committee Meeting

March 27, 2020

Zoom Web Conference 12:00 PM

Zoom Conference Call-Meeting ID:218 902 017

<https://zoom.us/j/218902017>

Members Present:

Sarah Gold, Meagan Taylor, Jennifer Schaeffner
David Harris and Sarah Fox

Also:

William, H. McAlduff Jr.-Interim Superintendent
Michelle Cresta-Director of Finance
Eric Oxford-Director of Student Services

I. Call to Order

Ms. Gold called the meeting to order at 12:05pm.

II. Discussion on Extended School Closure

Superintendent McAlduff provided an update on the extended closure of schools clarifying that the closure would be extended through May 4th instead of the originally planned date of April 6th. He shared that he had recently received guidance from DESE regarding implementing a remote learning plan and that the document would be posted online for reference. He explained that DESE had been in contact with various committees and organizations such as the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Teachers Associations and Parent Teacher Associations to develop recommendations for remote learning. Superintendent McAlduff noted that DESE had stated in their letter that prioritizing the health, safety and wellness of students and families remained a primary focus throughout the closure. He further shared that it was noted that remote learning could not replace the learning that takes place in school communities and that it should first focus on the holistic needs of the educational community.

It was mentioned that the task force created to develop an extensive remote learning plan would consist of the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent, Mr. John Moretti, the Director of Student Services, Mr. Eric Oxford, the Director of Technology, Ms. Kathy Hennessey, Union Representative, Joan Miller, the Director of ELL, Ms. Emily Dean, METCO Director, Ms. Jasmine Boyd-Perry and School Psychologist, James Slavet along with the Principals. Superintendent McAlduff explained that the task force would bring their developed remote learning plan ideas to the Superintendent by Wednesday March 29th for discussion and adjustments. Per DESE guidelines, the goal would be to implement the plan by early April which Marblehead would be on track to do.

Concerns were raised about school technology policies and privacy laws related to remote learning via Zoom and other video platforms. Discussions pertaining to the grading structure(s) that would be used and the social emotional needs of the students took place. Superintendent McAlduff explained that many of the School Committee's concerns were being looked into and reminded the committee that flexibility would be important as the remote learning plan was implemented and adjusted to accommodate the needs of the community. It was also noted that the Guidance Counselors and School Psychologists had been checking in with many families since the original closure began and that they would continue to do so during the extended closure period. He further mentioned that additional guidance could be expected from DESE and the Governor and that updates would be shared as soon as he had received them.

Superintendent McAlduff mentioned that limiting the number of platforms used to access remote learning curriculum should be a primary focus for consistency and ease of use across multiple buildings at the Kindergarten through Third Grade levels most specifically. Additionally, he confirmed that the plan needed to define the scope and components of remote learning while implementing guidelines for providing feedback to students.

Mr. Oxford confirmed that the Special Education piece of remote learning would be more clearly defined after Wednesday as more information was provided and gathered. It was noted that the possibility of compensatory services may need to be further explored and could also be discussed as more state guidelines became available.

A conversation discussing MCAS testing took place. It was explained that legislation could grant the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education temporary authority to modify, postpone or waive MCAS testing requirements. Superintendent McAlduff informed the committee that Massachusetts had applied for a waiver that is awaiting approval. He also shared that the Commissioner was advocating for school districts to continue to pay their employees along with O.O.D Tuition and transportation bills.

A conversation discussing the 185th day of school occurred. It was noted that the final day for students and staff was expected to be June 24th. It was further explained that there could be the possibility of having the final day fall on June 18th if school remained open during April break and that collective bargaining implications associated with the decision would need to be looked into prior to any voting that would take place.

Superintendent McAlduff also mentioned that the state would be expecting Federal Grant money going through legislation that could be used to address learning gaps that had come about from the school closure.

Ms. Gold confirmed that the next scheduled meeting would be April 2nd at 7pm.

Ms. Fox made a motion to open the meeting to public comment. A roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Gold-yes

Ms. Taylor-yes

Ms. Fox-yes

Ms. Schaeffner-yes

Mr. Harris- not present for the vote

Ms. Erin Noonan thanked the administrators and task force for “the resources provided in the midst of a crisis.” She shared that she had a 1st, 4th and 5th grade student in Marblehead and explained that she felt parents would be looking for more clarity on what their expectations would be. She mentioned that the organization and streamlining of materials would help the remote learning process feel less overwhelming. She also mentioned that hard copy packets would work well for the younger grade students.

III. Adjournment

Ms. Gold adjourned the meeting at 1:36pm and informed the community to please email any questions to schoolcommittee@marbleheadschoools.org

*Respectfully Submitted
Sarah Fox, Secretary
Marblehead School Committee*

Approved June 4, 2020