



Framingham Public Schools

Robert A. Tremblay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Adam Freudberg, Chair • Tiffanie Maskell, Vice Chair • Priscila Sousa, Clerk
Jessica Barnhill • Karen Dempsey • Geoffrey Epstein
Beverly Hugo • William LaBarge • Scott Wadland
Yvonne M. Spicer, Mayor

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SCHOOL COMMITTEE: OPEN MEETING MINUTES

DATE AND TIME: March 18, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Remote

MEETING CALLED BY: Chair Adam Freudberg

PRESENT: Jessica Barnhill
Karen Dempsey
Geoffrey Epstein
Adam Freudberg
Beverly Hugo
William LaBarge
Tiffanie Maskell
Priscila Sousa
Scott Wadland
Mayor Yvonne Spicer

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Robert Tremblay, Superintendent
Nicholas Small, Student Advisory Committee Chair
Lincoln Lynch, Executive Director of Finance and Operations
Anne Ludes, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education
Amy Bright, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education
Inna London, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Joseph Corazinni, Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Diversity
and Community Development
Anne Mariano, Director of Technology
Judy Styer, Director of Health and Wellness

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He noted that this meeting was being held fully remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 20, is being broadcast live on The Government Channel, and can be viewed Live on Facebook on the Framingham Public Schools Facebook Page. He said that public comment will be through emails sent before and during the meeting as well as through Facebook Live.

Coronavirus Update

School Schedule. Dr. Tremblay said that the attendance requirements under law are for districts to have 180 school days, and have to complete the school year by June, including any days that have to be made up for snow days. He said that with the Governor's new ruling, the days missed due to the Coronavirus do not need to be made up going forward. Dr. Tremblay said with this, at this time the District is only making up five school days with the last day being June 24th. He said that enrichment and opportunities to extend learning are being created to send out, even if it is not required. He said they are anticipating being back to school on April 6 or 7th at this point as they are following state guidance, but that may change. He said that there is not a need to make up days during vacations or religious holidays, and April vacation is still on as scheduled.

Dr. Tremblay said that there are no expectations that there is virtual learning, and cannot replicate what happens face to face in an actual classroom. Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Anne Ludes said that they need to look at how to provide access to education for all of our students, and that can be a challenge for some, as some of our students do not have access to internet or a device, English Language Learners need specialized support, and students with IEPs have a wide range of needs in terms of services and accommodations. She said that if the District does not have a plan to address all of those needs, we will not be providing a free and appropriate public education to all. She said that enrichment opportunities were sent to families, and they tried to make sure they are free, that they can often be done on their own by students, and that they protect students' identities. She said that they are looking to create a page on the website for all families to get resources. Director of Technology Anne Mariano said that teachers have been reaching out to parents and families to see what devices or access to the internet they have at home to see if the District can do anything to help them access enrichment opportunities. Dr. Tremblay said they are working to get Chromebooks to students, and work with Comcast for affordable solutions or hot spots in the house, the first step is seeing who needs it. Executive Director of Finance and Operations Lincoln Lynch said that they have purchased an additional 1,000 Chromebooks and 75 hot spots using the current operating budget, the budget projection shows a little bit of additional funds at the end of the year so they do not need to ask for another budget appropriation.

Dr. Tremblay said they are following the direction to cancel all international field trips. Ms. Ludes said that a large group of Superintendents are looking to send a letter to some of the companies that sponsored these trips to apply pressure to them for compensation or reimbursement to families who have already paid for these now cancelled trips. She said that a lot of events in the United States are also being cancelled, such as the VEX Robotics

Competition in Kentucky, and she anticipates any trip in the next month or two are likely to be cancelled by the organizers. She said that as long as schools are closed, the school field trips will also be cancelled. Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Amy Bright said once school is back in session they will look to see what opportunities still exist and can align with the curriculum.

FPS Employee and Vendor Payroll. Assistant Director for Human Resources Inna London said that the goal is to keep all employees fully compensated at this time. She said that the first three days that were off due to the Coronavirus were treated like snow days, so those will need to be made up, every day since March 17th they are treating it like a regular work day. She said that they have been working collaboratively with the FTA, the FAA, and the custodians and food services union. She said that long term substitutes will continue to get paid, and per diem substitutes will be paid for any of the shifts that they have already been scheduled for. She thanked City Payroll for working hard to ensure that any employee who does not have direct deposit received a live check sent to them by mail. She said that the Human Resources Department has been updating the website regularly with frequently asked questions, and encourages employees to utilize the confidential Employee Assistance Program during this time. Mr. Lynch said that the recommendation is for Durham and VanPool to continue to be paid by the District, so they are able to pay their employees. He said that there is a concern across the state if districts stop paying vendors and their employees are not getting paid, they could lose drivers and companies could go bankrupt, which could lead to not having a bus company when school is back in session. He said he has checked with legal counsel on this as there is no set state guidance. Mr. Epstein asked if there is some guarantee that they will pay their employees after we pay them. He added that there is a concern about a big drop in state revenue, which could lead to a drop in the circuit breaker and impact the Student Opportunity Act, and could bring financial trouble to the district in the future. Mr. Lynch said that both Durham and VanPool have made the commitment and guarantee that they will pay their staff members. He said that they are looking at the specific payments to these companies being reduced, as with vehicles not being used, the lack of fuel costs would make payments lower.

Advice to the FPS Community on Staying Safe, While Engaged. Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Diversity, and Community Development Joseph Corazinni said that they are coordinating with the City and community partners, such as Daniel's Table and the Foundation for MetroWest, among others, to help with identifying vulnerable populations, and possible new vulnerable populations, for example the effects of childcare centers closing. He said that they are identifying existing capacities and facilitating the process. He said that the District started the lunch and breakfast program today, which is available for any Framingham family, and had 200 families receive this service. He said that they are continuously updating where resources are to get food through social media and press releases. He said that they are looking to see how they can utilize services to help transport food to those who need it, such as using vans or staff. He said that the YMCA is starting a collection and distribution site for toiletries, and working with organizations to get those resources out to the community. Ms. Dempsey asked if they are reaching out to families of students with disabilities, as they are a vulnerable group, and disability groups, specifically the MetroWest Center for Independent Living. Mr. Corazinni said that they have reached out to organizations that help with citizens

with limited abilities, and the Chair of the Disability Commission has been involved in planning meetings. Ms. Sousa said that there is a group on Facebook called Framingham Coronavirus Community Outreach Group helping families that would have fallen through the cracks otherwise and matches them with people who can help out. She said there is also a group on Instagram called Super Parents, that provides daily activities for parents for students with varying degrees of special needs.

Director of Health and Wellness Judy Styer said that the capacity to provide confidential mental health services for students is a complex area of services that would require a lot of intervention on part of the district; including being able to bill for insurance, liability insurance, and HIPAA compliance. She said that they do not currently employ any clinical staff who could provide confidential mental health services. She said that they are relying on partners in Framingham and the MetroWest including Wayside, who is the main provider of clinical mental health services for our students and families. She said that they are continuing to provide those services and have made quick adjustments through Telehealth. She said that our own support staff met today and are developing protocols around how staff are going to be reaching out to families and responding to inquiries. She said that they need to see if they can give appropriate services, and need to be able to sustain them, as we don't know how long we will be able out of school. She said that they have a team of people who are working on gathering and organizing social emotional related learning activities, and they will be added to the Canvas platform so resources are available to families. Mr. Freudberg asked that the list of community partners and services be added to the website and distributed, to be able to let families know what services are available. Ms. Sousa asked what capacity the community partners have during this situation and how much additional traffic is being sent their way in absence of the school day and resources the District provides. Ms. Styer said that Wayside continues to provide psych emergency services, have a variety of drop in centers that are now available for young adults and families that are available on appointment only basis, and they are continuing in home services through Telehealth. Mr. Epstein asked if crossing guards are going to continue to be paid, as they are paid out of the City budget and not the district. Mayor Spicer said that they will continue to be paid. Mr. Epstein said that we are first approaching schoolwork as enrichment for a few weeks, but if this goes to the end of the school year do we have a plan to switch to remote instruction as much as possible. Dr. Tremblay said yes as much as possible, right now the State and MTA is not recognizing fully remote public education. He said that the technical problem can be addressed as well as internet, but they cannot replicate specialized services, such as for English Language Learners, students on IEPs, and students in gifted programs, all who need different approaches to learning. He said that if school closings go longer, it should be discussed across the state how to provide instruction to be equitable for every child, and that is a question that has not been answered yet. Mr. Epstein said that we should get to everyone we can digitally and bring up to speed as much as possible, and then can deploy greater resources to those who we didn't get to, that way we are only catching up some students and not all.

Dr. Tremblay said this time off is not like a snow day where students have play dates or crowds gathering. He said that they need parents to be a partner on this one, and not have sleepovers or gather on playgrounds, etc. Mr. Lynch gave thanks to the staff who are providing food

service distribution; they are wearing masks, gloves, and delivering the food on a serving tray to maintain the six foot distance. He said that they are trained to keep the distance, how to provide the food, and what equipment to wear. He said that they are providing breakfast and lunch to any Framingham student, including McAuliffe Charter and St. Bridget. He said that Clean Harbors came out last Thursday for twelve hour shifts to clean Potter Road and Hemenway; they disinfected, fogged, deep cleaned, and bagged books and papers. He said that the other thirteen buildings and the Transportation Office were deep clean by custodial staff.

Public Comment on Non FY21 Budget Topics

Dr. Tremblay went through public comments that were submitted via email or Facebook and responded to all of them. This included information about the calendar for next year, and moving the start date depending on what happens for this year. As well as reiterating information from earlier in the meeting regarding online learning, the lunch and breakfast program, and getting technology to families. Ms. Ludes said for the Summit Program it is important to know they are not telling parents to not go online and review or access education, but without teacher input and direction, anything that is on the sites students may be able to reach a certain point on their own, but also may reach a point where they become frustrated without teacher support. She said that this and other programs can also make the opportunity gap in our community even greater if not careful during this time. Mr. Freudberg said that there is a need to remember this is an ongoing process and is constantly being looked at. Ms. Maskell said a public comment came through asking if books could be provided to students, possibly coordinating with lunch and breakfast pickups. Ms. Dempsey suggested checking with families for feedback on what would work best for their student; such as paper or computer based. Dr. Tremblay said individualizing remotely is nearly impossible, and they are trying to prevent the sharing of the virus, so with passing of books need to be mindful of that.

Superintendent's FY21 Budget Recommendations Presentation and Presentation on the FPS Plan for the Student Opportunity Act

Mr. Freudberg said that they are still looking to get the budget to the Mayor by the Charter deadline, with a vote scheduled on April 1st. He suggested we be thoughtful, have public comment that night by phone, and with budget action add the caveat of how some funding may change due to State Aid and the Coronavirus. Mr. Lynch presented the FY21 budget presentation and highlighted things that had changed from the last presentation. He said that the budget has increased with the addition of local contribution, which was not in the last draft, previously the increase was just the Chapter 70 increase. He said that tutoring money and additional salaries were moved to the salaries line, which is a change of \$21,000 from the last presentation. He said that the risks that are included in the budget are even riskier now, due to state revenue at this point. Mr. Wadland said that one point that came up during the Joint Finance subcommittee is that 6.4 percent increase from last year is unusually impacted this year because of the Student Opportunity funds, and confirmed by asking that included in the budget book is a visual that shows the percentage increase year over year of the school budget, of local contribution, and of Chapter 70 funds. Mr. Freudberg said that the final budget book will also need to have details on what the money from the Student Opportunity Act will be used for. Mr. Epstein said that the average new local contribution over the last 7 years was 2.7 million and in the last three it was the lowest it has ever been. He said that the proposed

increase this year should be read as being targeted for certain students to increase performance. He said that if the local contribution is \$1.9 million it would be about \$66 in people's tax bill. Ms. Maskell said during this crisis one can see how important schools are, and how important and vital it is to fully fund our schools. She said that schools are the center of everything that is happening in the City; it is where we are seeing food for families being picked up, and we can all see how our teachers are so vital to our kids and community.

Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget

Mr. Freudberg read into the record two public comments that were submitted on the budget; from FTA President Chris Mulrone and Bob Bolles. There were no additional comments specifically on the budget on Facebook Live or emails.

Remarks from the FPS Student Advisory Committee

Student Advisory Committee President Nick Small said that most teachers have contacted students regarding expectations over the next few weeks, and suggestions on what to do to stay on track. He said that a lot of long term assignments have been cancelled that were due in the upcoming next few weeks.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Tremblay said that the feedback he received on the Junior Privileges Program is that they are monitoring it and it is going well; he said that kids often step up when given the opportunity to. He said that the recommendation is to continue it, and it will be detailed in the High School Handbook. Mr. Small read over the requirements of the program. Ms. Barnhill suggested that it be more clear regarding the attendance requirements.

Mr. Lynch said that the five year lease proposal for Central Office in Perini was rejected by City Council, so he has been working with the City's Chief Procurement Officer to put together a revised Request for Proposals (RFP) to go out again. He said that the City Solicitor reviewed it, it was finalized and sent it off to City Officials and elected officials looking for feedback; he wants it to be a collaborative effort. He said that the goal is to have it finalized on Friday, to post and advertise on March 25th, and two weeks after that the bid will be opened on April 8th. He said that the Central Office's current lease in Perini is until June 30th. He said that this will come back to the School Committee and City Council to vote on, and before the Mayor for next steps. Mr. LaBarge made a motion to allow Mr. Lynch to submit the RFP. No second, and discussion continued. Mr. Freudberg said that the Committee does not have to vote on this at this time if we do not wish to. Mr. Wadland sought and received confirmation that the RFP requires a future School Committee vote, in addition to a City Council vote to finalize a lease.

Mr. Lynch said that the FY20 Budget YTD looks good, but could be affected by the next few weeks with what happens. He said that they will continue to have departments look over their spending which will help with projections. He said that the next budget narrative will be in the second meeting in April. He said that the Food Services Negative Balance Report now includes Woodrow Wilson's negative balance from last year, in order to see the comparison as this year they are part of the Community Eligibility Program. He said that they will get back to sending out reminders to families about negative balances once school is back in session, but due to the

current situation felt now was a good time to pause those notifications. He said that the Business Operations Department will pay bills biweekly and bring staff in for two days to process bills; he said that they are trying to bring them in as little as possible. Mr. Freudberg suggested thinking about how the projected end of year surplus could be used to support new mental health services he believes the coronavirus situation will require.

Mayor's Update

Mayor Spicer said that she wants to empathize coordinating and communicating across the City. She said that she has a phone call meeting with Senator Warren and is staying closely connected to the moving pieces. She said that it is important that families are not out and about; the City can do its very best to keep people safe, but need to use our wisdom to keep ourselves safe as well. She said that Framingham's Director of Public Health Dr. Wong has been a champion for us, and Framingham will be a recipient of some of the \$5 million funds the DPH has designated to helping communities. She said that libraries are closed, the Callahan Center is closed, and there are teams of people working with the most vulnerable populations. She said that Framingham is ahead of the curve on closing schools, and one of the most important things is mitigating contact. She said that grocery stores and pharmacies will remain open. She said that services are still happening at City Hall, and if people need something they can call. She also suggests that everyone sign up for alerts to push out information from the website. Ms. Barnhill asked if the City is looking at making places available for testing, and if there is a way to increase testing other than going to the hospital. Mayor Spicer said that she is having discussions with Dr. Wong, and hospitals are looking at changing some of their protocols around testing. She said in regards to tents and drive ups which are trying to mitigate some impact on hospitals, it comes with the challenges of protective equipment which is in limited supply. She advises the public to call their doctor prior to going to the hospital, and they are looking at teleconsulting with medical professionals.

Subcommittee Reports

Mr. Epstein said that two warrants were signed. He said that while we are in this crisis, the warrant signing process has changed; they do not get the packet of invoices anymore because they are paper. He said that if the Committee wants to retrain the oversight process, there is a need to start getting some of these invoices digital. He asks that the Finance Department start looking at at least having some digital.

Ms. Maskell said that Policy JICFB: Bully Prevention is up for a second reading; the attorney referred this policy to be updated to align with Title IX requirements.

Motion: To approve the second reading of Policy JICFB: Bullying Prevention.

Moved: Ms. Sousa **Seconded:** Mr. Epstein **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Dempsey, Wadland, Freudberg, Sousa, Epstein, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)

Ms. Hugo said that the Teaching and Learning subcommittee will go on as scheduled on March 30, 2020 but will take place through Zoom.

Public Comment

Dr. Tremblay said that there were no new emails, and read additional facebook comments. He said that he will have to get clarification on if Special Education Evaluations can be done virtually.

Mr. Freudberg thanked the Resiliency for Life Board for their donation to the food security fund maintained by the MetroWest Health Foundation. He thanked Mr. Wadland for all of his help with setting up to have this meeting via Zoom and be broadcast on Facebook.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Moved: Mr. LaBarge **Seconded:** Ms. Dempsey **Roll Call Vote:** Unanimous (9-0-0)
(Yes: Hugo, Dempsey, Wadland, Freudberg, Sousa, Epstein, Maskell, Barnhill, LaBarge)
Meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Meeting Materials

Agenda

FY21 Budget Presentation

FY21 Draft Budget Book

FY21 Budget Book Detail

Draft Central Office Lease RFP

FY20 Budget YTD

Food Services Negative Balance Report

Food Services Negative Balance Notifications

Warrants

Policy Summary

Proposed Policy JICFB: Bullying Prevention

Mental Health Resources

Facebook Live Comment Compilation

Letter from FTA President Chris Mulroney for Public Comment

These minutes were approved by the Framingham School Committee in Open Session on April 15, 2020.

These minutes were sent to the City of Framingham for posting on April 16, 2020.