

Carlisle School Committee

Minutes

Friday, April 17, 2020

8:30-9:45 a.m.

Remote Meeting Via Zoom

Present Via Zoom – School Committee: Christine Lear - Chair, David Model, Eva Mostoufi, Sara Wilson, Shannon May Lavery.

Present Via Zoom – School Administration: James O’Shea, Superintendent; Matt Mehler, Middle School Principal; Dennet Sidell, Elementary Principal; Lori Bruce, Director of Student Support Services; Susan Pray, Business Manager; Nancy Anderson, Assistant to the Superintendent.

Meeting Documents:

Minutes of April 10, 2020		
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Note: Per Governor Baker’s order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20, the public was not allowed to physically access this School Committee meeting. Members of the Public were able to access this meeting via live stream at

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/321756655> Meeting ID: 321 756 655

Public comments were posted via the chat box. Questions/Comments were read and answered by the School Committee via live stream.

I. Call to Order

Chair Christine Lear called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. Ms. Lear announced that the meeting is being recorded.

II. Communications/Correspondence

Ms. Lear shared two pieces of communications. One was from Comelia Rosca, who had shared information with several members of the public. She asked that her information be added to the packet. The following information was among what was presented in her documents: School Choice is a self-selection not a random selection; each student brings \$5000 to the receiving district; there are no costs associated with school choice; there is no cost to Carlisle should these students go on to attend CCHS. It was also stated in Ms. Rosca’s correspondence that all surrounding districts have socio-economic and racial diversity differences. Ms. Rosca encouraged Committee members to make decisions based on facts not opinions. Heather Huntress shared her correspondence. Ms. Huntress thanked Ms. Rosca for her hard work but shared that she does not believe this is the right time to institute a change such as School Choice in Carlisle. It’s a challenging time to implement a significant initiative at this time. She added that our students need the small class sizes and as much support as possible at this time, and there is a need to catch up on academics next year.

III. School Choice Hearing

Ms. Lear opened the School Choice hearing. She stated that the School Committee will be hearing comments from people who want to speak for, against, or neither for or against School Choice. New comments will be accepted and capped at three minutes in length. The public is invited to comment but not engage in dialog with the members. Ms. Stacy Lennon was recognized. She stated she is in support of School Choice for reasons already stated; acknowledging that school enrollment has been a challenge. She appreciated Ms. Huntress's comments about the timing not being ideal, but said that there will always be a reason to say no. Mr. Chrisanthi Bethanis is opposed to School Choice; he said there is no historical reference to districts that have implemented School Choice and no references from parents, teachers, or administrators of these schools. He questioned how we can guarantee the value to our children when there is zero justification and rationale in terms of economics. Due to the fact that there is no data on the value of the program to teachers, students, or the school, he is not in support of School Choice. Ms. Carrie Patel spoke in support of School Choice and the previous statements made by Ms. Rosca and Ms. Lennon. Mr. Peter Karle supported Heather Huntress's comments about not favoring School Choice. Ginny Lamere asked what Carlisle spends now per pupil and wanted to clarify the financial decisions in relation to School Choice, but Ms. Lear said the Committee could not answer questions at this time. Ms. Rosca added that the framework exists for Carlisle to determine how many students to accept and in which grades they can exist, and that there is no cost to the school if this is done appropriately. 188 districts are implementing school choice. She referenced a google folder that she urged all members of the community to access. Citizens can email her at camelia@gmail.com to get access to the folder. Having heard all comments, Ms. Lear asked for a motion to close the hearing. Mr. Model made a motion to close the School Choice hearing; Ms. Lavery seconded the motion. Discussion ensued and Mr. Model asked Ms. Wilson to comment on DESE information that might be in conflict with Ms. Rosca's documents. Ms. Wilson had reviewed the same DESE documents, and noted conflicts in the information previously shared. One conflict referenced the number of students that were participating in the program from Lowell. Ms. Wilson will share the correct numbers and correspond with Ms. Rosca about the discrepancies. The following votes were taken in roll call: Lear, aye; Model, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Lavery, aye; Wilson, aye. The hearing was closed. The School Committee then entered discussion about School Choice. Ms. Lavery appreciates all of the effort made by community members to make this a thoughtful decision. She added that she did additional research about numbers, students transferring back and forth to districts and how School Choice is working. She believes School Choice is designed to address inequities in our schools, however, she believes this mechanism to address inequity is not addressing the root cause of the problem. Also, while 188 districts participate, they are not all having the same experience. Some small towns benefit, but in larger, urban districts like Brockton and Fitchburg, School Choice can exacerbate some problems. She is willing to experiment and try School Choice by allowing a few students into the Carlisle School, but right now timing is difficult, because we are already in an involuntary experiment with the school closure, so she is not in favor of it at this time. Ms. Wilson followed up on her discussion about the numbers of students participating. Lowell students go to schools in adjacent towns, but some towns like Lowell have ensuing budgetary problems, so School Choice can harm the district these students are leaving. Ms. Mostoufi added that we are in tricky times and will be looking at solutions to the current situation, such as how to distance our children so they can be in the classroom. She would not make the choice to add more students to our district at this time. Ms. Lear asked Mr. O'Shea to

confirm what would happen with School Choice students when they graduated from 8th grade and he confirmed that CCHS does not have to take those students. Mr. Model believes that the economics presented previously are not correct; School Choice would definitely be a cost to the District. He believes in social equity but does not believe School Choice would achieve it. He agrees that there will always be an excuse not to participate, but added that Carlisle has never experienced a situation like the one it is in right now. He appreciates that dialog about School Choice has been taken further this year. He agrees that this is not the time for a change. Ms. Lavery added that it's very clear from Visioning work that our town values diversity and wants to embrace and increase it. She hopes we will continue to generate ideas around diversity because it is a town value. She looks for more deep discussion about opportunities to create diversity for the School. People want children to develop tolerance, and there is a need for creative ideas to achieve such goals. She cited the increased efforts to address diversity that have already happened at the School such as multi-cultural events and the Chinese New Year celebration. She concluded saying that this is not the end of this conversation because we do embrace these values. Ms. Lear added that in the current COVID environment, now is not the time to implement School Choice. She hopes the dialog will continue. Ms. Lavery made a motion to reject School Choice for the upcoming year; Ms. Mostoufi seconded the motion. The following votes were taken in roll call: Lear, aye; Model, aye; Lavery, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Wilson, aye.

IV. Information/Discussion Items

- A. Student Presentations. Linda Vanaria shared a picture of the second grade team planning lessons. She explained that most of the lessons are presented on See Saw. An example was when students were asked to go on a "shape hunt" around their homes. Some students drew pictures, some created their own shapes. There is great work going on at home. Students also listened to author Kate Messner read her book about saving the coral reefs. Students were asked to do a non-fiction project, and in one case, a student wrote notes and observations about orcas, generated questions then answered them. Ms. Vanaria added that students are still celebrating birthdays: now all students are putting birthday cards in their journals and recording happy birthday songs. Dr. Sidell added that SeeSaw has been wonderful. Parents are seeing how easy it is; once assignments are done, parents push one button and student work is sent directly to teachers. Dr. Mehler introduced Valerie Thomforde, Music Teacher, who explained that she tried to do a concert live on YouTube, but it didn't work, so it is happening tonight at 7. She will share a link so people can view and listen. She acknowledged that technology and Zoom are amazing, but it is not possible with the audio lag for students to all sing at the same time. She continues to connect and make creations with the choral group. Some students called seniors and sang to them. Ms. Thomforde shared that some of her students wrote songs about the pandemic. Student Skylar MacDonald joined the meeting and sang her song thanking health care workers. Ms. Lear said the presentation was amazing and added that the teachers are doing great work. Mr. O'Shea thanked Skylar, Ms. Thomforde and Ms. Vanaria for their presentations.
- B. Update on School Closure. Mr. O'Shea said he is waiting for the governor to announce if the school closure will continue. There will be a joint meeting with

the School Committee and the Finance Committee on Monday. The school is realizing some savings now. The Committees will also explore what the budget will look like for FY21. The School has identified funds for a summer program that will be offered to all general education students. Administration will work with faculty and staff to see who will participate. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will identify Power Standards on which to focus if students return to school or if distance learning continues. There are a lot of unknowns. Next week is April vacation, and because staff and students have been engaged in teaching and learning since March 13, it was decided that teachers will not hold Zoom or class meetings. Enrichment activities will be posted on the website; and be available for parents and students to access. Up until now, School Committee has been meeting on Friday mornings. Discussion ensued about if Friday meetings should continue or if meetings should go back to Wednesday evenings once a month. Ms. Lavery is happy to continue to meet on Friday mornings. Mr. Model said if the Committee meets every week he would like to cap meetings at an hour. Ms. Wilson is happy to continue with Friday meetings as well and knows more changes might be coming with the governor's decision on possibly extending the closure. Ms. Mostoufi supports Friday meetings as well. The next School Committee meeting will be on May 1.

- C. Discard List. Susan Pray reported that Scott Heffner submitted this list because he is trying to clean up space and lots of devices including iPads and are dated. Once approved by the School Committee, this list then gets submitted to the Selectmen at Town Hall. Ms. Mostoufi shared that Emerson Hospital is looking for iPads; and asked if the school look at sending some there. Ms. Pray will contact the hospital. Mr. Model moved to waive the usual practice of talking about a subject at one meeting and voting on it at the next; Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The following votes were taken in roll call: Lear, aye; Lavery, aye; Model, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Wilson, aye. Ms. Mostoufi moved to approve the Discard List; Mr. Model seconded the motion. The following votes were taken in roll call: Lear, aye; Model, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Lavery, aye; Wilson, aye.

V. Members'/Committee Reports as Needed

Ms. Lear reported that the Local Emergency Planning Committee is starting to look at finances and long term solutions.

VI. Warrants

- A. Payroll Warrant #7720; \$380,840.49

VII. Review/Approve Minutes

Ms. Mostoufi made a motion to approved the minutes of April 10, 2020; Ms. Lavery seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The following votes were taken in Roll Call: Lear, aye; Model, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Lavery, aye; Wilson, aye.

VIII. Action Items

There were no action items.

IX. Public Comments. Cynthia Sorn said that the School donated iPads from the Discard List to House of Hope last year and was wondering if that was a possibility this year. Sue Pray will check in with Ms. Sorn about this.

X. Adjourn Meeting

Mr. Model made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Mostoufi seconded the motion. The following votes were taken in Roll Call: Lear, aye; Wilson, aye; Model, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Lavery, aye. The public meeting was adjourned at 9:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Anderson".

Nancy Anderson
Assistant to the Superintendent