

## **APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

### **EPPING SCHOOL BOARD - LIVE/Zoom/Call In**

**Epping High School Gym 21 Academy Street, Epping, NH 03042**

**August 11, 2020**

**School Board Meeting - 7:00 pm**

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chair David Mylott called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm with the pledge of allegiance.

In attendance: Vice Chair David Mylott, Member Heather Clark, Member Ben Leavitt, Member Robin O'Day, Superintendent Furbush, and Business Administrator Bonnie Sandstrom. Chair Deborah Brooks was absent.

#### **SCHOOL OPENING PHASE DISCUSSION**

David thanked Superintendent Furbush for all his hard work, and he thanked the team that was involved with the reopening plan. Superintendent Furbush thanked the committee for the work that they have put in. He reiterated how diverse the committee is. He said that the recommendations he is making are based on the current conditions in the community. His recommendation is to start school in Phase 3. The information that details what Phase 3 is was emailed to school community members. School is still a couple of weeks away which gives the district time to make sure that the plan is concrete and to answer community questions. Superintendent Furbush went over the survey data.

#### **Survey Results**

**78%** of parents plan on sending their students back to school for in-person learning.

**55%** of students feel comfortable returning to school full time.

**60%** of parents would be comfortable with their child returning to school full time with reasonable safety precautions.

**49%** of staff would be comfortable returning to school full time with reasonable safety precautions.

Superintendent Furbush said that the data supports in-person learning. Parent conditions also support in-person learning. Overall conditions currently support the recommendation. Superintendent Furbush and the Reopening Task Force support this recommendation at this time.

He has been reviewing the CDC website and the map of current positive cases. In the Epping area, there are currently 1 to 4 cases based on the website. Surrounding communities where teachers may live have the same results or less cases. The local area is considered “suppressed” in terms of the virus.

He has looked at data from John Hopkins University of Medicine. He went over the different trends. New England currently has a flat line for new cases. He also talked about the weekly trends; 1.8% of all testing in NH is positive. The number of positive cases this week is down, and last week was down as well. New daily cases are also down.

The CDC said that schools in other countries can open with necessary precautions in areas that are fit. The CDC Director stated that it is in the kids’ best interest to start face-to-face learning again.

The level of community transmission equates to low mitigation.

Superintendent Furbush said that face masks for students and staff are required. He reiterated the expectation of home screening. The remote learning Fridays at the start of the school year are 9/18, 9/25, and 10/2. On those days, teachers will have professional development. Following those weeks, they plan on returning to a five-day week of in-person learning. There are remote options available. On Wednesday 9/9, it will be the first day of school for half of the students. On Thursday 9/10, it will be the first day for the other half of the students. On Friday 9/11, all students will attend. On 9/10 and 9/11, there will be Kindergarten screening by assigned appointments.

A FAQ page will be posted on the website.

### *Board Discussion*

David mentioned that after the decision is made it will continue to be monitored.

Ben asked how soon information about arrival procedures and class schedules will be posted. Superintendent Furbush said that there are links posted with information about arrival and dismissal. They are currently working on class schedules. He knows that no class will be larger than 19 students at the high school; no class will be larger than 18 students at the middle school;

and no class larger than 21 students at the elementary school. Those numbers are assuming everyone chooses in-person learning, so the numbers will most likely go down. The administrative team is continuously adding new links and information to the website.

### Public Questions

Superintendent Furbush said that he can't speak to Exeter's or any other districts' decisions.

#### **Question: Are the three PD days remote learning or just days off for students?**

Answer: They will be learning days for students. At the elementary school, they're trying to figure out how and if to send home Chromebooks versus sending home a packet. At the middle and high school, the students will be assigned work to do on their Chromebooks. The goal is for teachers to have time off to focus on professional development. They will not be instructing on those days.

#### **Q: Can parents request non-synchronous classrooms for their students?**

A: The district has asked the public to identify who will be remote or not. It will depend on the numbers. If there are enough students who chose the remote option, they will have one set online classroom. They will try to meet everyone's needs.

#### **Q: Can parents request a synchronous learning classroom, and have their student do a hybrid schedule?**

A: They will try to accommodate.

#### **Q: How is privacy being considered with synchronous learning classrooms?**

A: Parents will need to agree to a synchronous learning classroom and sign a waiver/form.

#### **Q: Will the bus to SST from Epping still be available?**

A: Yes. Superintendent Furbush doesn't know the schedule for SST yet though.

#### **Q: If Epping is in Phase 2 and SST is in-person, how will that work?**

A: Superintendent Furbush isn't able to answer that yet.

#### **Q: Does the district have enough custodial staff to keep up with the extra cleaning?**

A: They are currently coming up with a plan. The grounds crew will have more cleaning responsibilities. There are currently only 1.5 positions open for custodians.

**Q: How will substitute teachers and training work?**

A: They've talked to returning substitutes, and they've upped their training. The number of substitutes has declined. Anyone that is interested in being a substitute teacher should contact the district.

**Q: What are SST requirements? A parent believes that students coming and going from SST increases the risk factor. What if the SST bus is overcrowded?**

A: SST hasn't released specific information yet. The morning and afternoon bus runs have about 30 students on it which is not overcrowded. Additionally, SST is lessening student driver requirements. Superintendent Furbush will give an update about SST information after Friday's meeting if it is allowed.

**Q: What happens if buses are overcrowded?**

A: The district doesn't have plans for getting more buses. They are not sure how it will be until the first week. There is information about buses and safety on the website.

**Q: Will anyone be monitoring students to make sure they're wearing masks on the bus?**

A: There is no recommendation at this point to hire staff to monitor students.

**Q: What is the procedure if a teacher tests positive?**

A: DHHS will step in and help with contact tracing.

**Q: A parent expressed concern about 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grader hygiene.**

A: Superintendent Furbush has faith that students can learn these skills.

**Q: When will the next survey be sent out?**

A: The Reopening Task Force is starting to write more questions, so hopefully soon.

**Q: When will parents need to decide whether a student will be remote by?**

A: Once the plan is approved, they will give parents one week to decide. This will give parents time to review the plan.

**Q: If someone tests positive, what are the cleaning procedures within the school?**

A: That information is available on the website. There will be an isolation area set up at the school, and the student will see the school nurse.

**Q: Are teachers being tested and how often?**

A: They are not being tested unless they exhibit symptoms. They must be screened daily and have to follow safety precautions.

**Q: A parent stated that K through Grade 3 students need social interaction. Will there be an am and pm option to lessen the number of kids in the classroom?**

A: Superintendent said that it would be tough to do because numbers fluctuate so much. Parents need to register their students for Kindergarten.

**Q: Is the district planning on sending students home if they're sniffing?**

A: The guidelines are posted. There needs to be a level of common sense regarding this.

**Q: A parent voiced concern about staffing.**

A: The district has a very small number of teachers that are not returning. The staffing needs are being met.

**Q: Do staff have to use sick days if they get COVID-19?**

A: Yes, but Families First COVID Act may offer them additional time off.

**Q: A parent thinks that teachers not being tested is not right.**

A: The district is following DHHS guidelines. Superintendent Furbush has faith that the teachers will do the right thing and screen daily.

**Q: Will the slideshow from tonight be posted?**

A: Yes.

**Q: A parent is concerned that not all teachers are comfortable coming back.**

A: Superintendent Furbush isn't concerned about staffing needs. He has been reaching out to those teachers and has been in contact with them.

**Q: What will mask breaks look like?**

A: They still have to determine that. They're working on the language for that in the Reopening Plan.

**Q: A parent doesn't feel comfortable sending their children back to school. They asked what the psychological and mental impact will be on the children?**

A: Superintendent Furbush doesn't know what the impact will be. There are always pros and cons.

**Q: If a teacher tests positive and sees a bunch of students, do all students need to quarantine?**

A: It will depend on the situation and whether the student wore PPE. The district will follow DHHS guidelines. 10 minutes or more of unprotected conversation is considered at risk. He doesn't think that the majority of students in contact would have to miss school.

**Q: Has there been any conversations about band or chorus?**

A: Sean Meagher, NH music education coalition representative and Epping School band director, discussed some safety precautions that will be taken for those groups.

Heather said that committee has put in a lot of hard work, and she acknowledged that not everyone will be happy with the plan. She reiterated that the Task Force and the community are on the same page. Heather agrees with opening up the schools in Phase 3.

**Member Heather Clark made a motion to start school on 9/9/20 in Phase 3.  
Seconded by Member Robin O'Day. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.**

Heather restated that the Reopening Plan may change.

David said that their number one priority is the safety of the students, and a close second is their education. It was a difficult decision about reopening, but he thinks that it's the right thing to do.

Bill mentioned that he would like to have a Nonpublic Session for negotiating purposes.

If anyone has additional questions, there is a question and answer section on the SAU 14 website.

David thanked everyone for joining them. He also said that the next School Board meeting is Thursday 8/20 at 7 pm.

**NONPUBLIC SESSION: RSA 91-A:3, II**

(a. personnel, b. hiring, c. adverse reputation, d. property, e. legal, g. security functions, i. emergency functions)

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Vice Chair David Mylott made a motion to adjourn the meeting and go into a Nonpublic Session at 8:35 pm. Seconded by Member Heather Clark. VOTE: 4-0. Motion carries.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dagny Wilkins

School Board Secretary