

Carlisle School Committee

Minutes

Friday, May 22, 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 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; Rob Fortado, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds; Nancy Anderson, Assistant to the Superintendent.

Meeting Documents:

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Minutes of May 15, 2020 | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|

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://us02web.zoom.us/j/85377174635?pwd=eWY0QklZNllrKzIvK0tPZktubmEyUT09>

Meeting ID: 853 7717 4635

Password: 495434

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 8:37 a.m. Ms. Lear announced that the meeting is being recorded.

II. Review/Approve Minutes

Ms. Lavery moved to approve the minutes of May 15, 2020; Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The following votes were taken in roll call: Lear, aye; Lavery, aye; Model, aye; Wilson aye.

III. Information/Discussion Items

- A. Update on School Closure. Mr. O’Shea shared a PowerPoint presentation. Teachers continue to work on remote learning; Mr. O’Shea thanked everyone for their perseverance. Dr. Sidell and Dr. Mehler will prepare and send another parent survey to gather feedback on remote instructional practices. The last day of school is June 22. Student materials are being picked up under the coordinated efforts of teachers and the supervision of the principals. Lost and found items will be made available at a future

date. Medications have already been picked up by families. If anyone needs to access the building, please contact Dr. Sidell or Dr. Mehler. Building hours are Tuesday through Thursday from 8-11 a.m. Ms. Bruce is planning an in-person summer program with a Plan B for remote learning if staff and students are not allowed in the building. With the number of students in Ms. Bruce's program, physical distancing can be addressed. Work continues with the LEPC. The initial meeting of the Back to School Task Force (BTSTF) took place this past Monday. There are a lot of challenges in planning for the future of education in Carlisle. 8th grade graduation is scheduled for June 19. The State has come out with guidelines for graduations and the Carlisle School plan will be in line with these guidelines. There is continued discussion about the FY21 budget. FinCom is recommending there be no Town Meeting and the School adopt a 1/12 budget (use 1/12 of the FY20 budget per month until Town Meeting can occur in the fall). The Town still has to address the excess in the School's FY20 budget. The Facilities Department is working on improvement projects and will get an earlier start on summer cleaning. COA and RecCom have requested use of the School building and those requests are on hold for the present time. Ameresco will start digging in the parking lot next week, with a tentative completion date of July 17. Ms. Lavery asked why the summer program for students other than special education students is not happening. The idea for this program originated toward the start of the closure and would have been offered for students in need of additional supports. Mr. O'Shea answered that there was no guidance on the possibility of bringing that many students into the building; and the funding for such a program has not been identified. Mr. O'Shea added that there was hope to focus on those students but there is likely not the ability to do so. Remote education won't close gaps, and relies on family support at home. Mr. O'Shea acknowledged that this is a major challenge. Ms. Lear asked if the faculty would assess kids that might need additional support over the summer; or are kids done with online learning? Mr. O'Shea will work with the administrative team to see if the School can do identification and some outreach. He will explore if there is a program, or piece of a program, that might make sense. He also acknowledged that there is fatigue with remote learning; for students and teachers. Ms. Lear suggested providing a more robust summer packet. Mr. Model advocated for a program that would focus on more social emotional than pedagogy. Mr. Model asked if anything needs to be done by the School Committee if the 1/12 budget moves forward. Ms. Pray answered that payments will continue to be made, she will set up the July payroll, then if the budget passes, there will be retroactive pay. All increases in teacher pay happen in September. Ms. Pray will have conversations with the Town, and Mr. Model suggested she talk with Jared Stanton, the Business Manager in Concord. It was noted that there are not as many operational payments during the summer. Ms. Lear asked about the status of the new hires. Mr. O'Shea said these are unknowns and discussions will continue to take place. Mr. Model noted that FinCom owes the School guidance on if the School can prepay. Ms. Pray added that Out of District tuitions are due monthly. When the School prepays, it can pay 3 months by law. Mr. O'Shea added that if there will be a Reduction in Force (RIF) letters have to be sent by June 15. The Board of Selectmen (BOS) will meet on Tuesday with FinCom. Mr. Model reported that FinCom said the School could not do prepays with its extra cash at the present time.

- B. Open Space Document and Discussion. Ms. Lear recapped that David Freedman from the RecCom came to talk at the CSC meeting in March about the need for the School to draft and submit an Open Space document. Mr. O’Shea said the document references the different spaces that the school oversees and what plans are for those spaces moving forward. The School will continue to work with RecCom and align with its goals, particularly the renovation of Spalding field. The Committee will vote on this document next week.
- C. Dog Park Grant Assurance Letter and Vote. Ms. Mostoufi shared that the Master Planning Committee is looking at how Carlisle can add more opportunities for groups to gather, to help create a closer community. Carlisle is unique; there is a culture of volunteering and caring and we want this culture to keep growing. Ms. Lavery voiced her chief concern was the ongoing maintenance issue of such a park, but believed it was addressed because it would be part of town maintenance. Ms. Wilson made a motion that the School Committee write a Letter of Assurance voicing their approval to move ahead with the RecCom’s pursuit of a Dog Park grant; Ms. Mostoufi seconded the motion. Ms. Lear voiced concern that the construction of a dog park would lock down property that might be needed later. Mr. Model said the School can reclaim it if needed. Ms. Lavery added that with the growing requirement for dogs to be on leash, the idea there is a space dedicated as an off-leash place for dogs and also create a relief for conservation areas where people don’t always follow the signs is a good idea. The following votes were taken in roll call: Lear, aye; Lavery, aye; Model, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Wilson, aye. Ms. Anderson will follow up with Amy Smack on RecCom about the wording for the letter.
- D. EDCO Update. Mr. O’Shea shared that the School partners with a couple of Collaboratives; CASE (for transportation and a classroom in the school) and EDCO. EDCO provides professional development for teachers and offers programs addressing inequities for children. Earlier this year Mr. O’Shea shared that EDCO is experiencing financial difficulties. This year they are working with a budget deficit. Members, including Carlisle, have had to pay extra. Mr. O’Shea reported that Concord and Concord-Carlisle have decided to withdraw from EDCO. The process takes a year, so as of FY21 Concord will not be a member. Due to fiscal problems and the fact it looks like a deficit for next year, the member districts want to know if EDCO is viable. This year, it cost Carlisle an additional \$9,000 address the deficit; and the EDCO budget next year looks concerning. EDCO builds a budget on projections and is hoping to have a surplus. The EDCO Board of Directors will vote on June 4 if EDCO will continue to exist. If the collaborative dissolves, the member districts will still be financially responsible. Should Carlisle stay as a participatory member, and hope that EDCO recovers from the current financial situation, or do we remove ourselves and cut our losses? It is noted that as districts remove themselves, EDCO is less likely to remain viable. Does Carlisle want to be responsible for this outstanding liability? Ms. Mostoufi asked when the decision has to be made to withdraw. If you identify you want to remove yourself by end of June, it goes into effect at the end of June 2021. Even if you remove yourself, you still have liability that accrued during your membership. Ms. Mostoufi asked if there is data about the different scenarios; what happens if members remove themselves, what if they stay and continue to pay. She also asked if the School received guidance from counsel. Mr. O’Shea said we addressed the deficit this year and the Coronavirus added to the deficit. Mr. O’Shea has not yet spoken with counsel. It was noted that even if we dissolve the

partnership, the State would not allow EDCO to exit until the liabilities are addressed. EDCO is in its 51st year. Ms. Bruce noted that we currently don't have any students placed at EDCO programs. However, schools need collaboratives to stay viable because there are always students that can't be serviced in a general education setting. Ms. Wilson asked what percentage of member districts have decided to withdraw from EDCO. Mr. O'Shea knew that Concord, Lexington and Belmont were withdrawing. Nadine Ekstrom, EDCO Director, was on the call and said that 4 out of 16 districts have withdrawn. There was discussion yesterday that board members asked withdrawn districts to reconsider; as EDCO is working to make strategic plans. The cost differential is \$40,000. There are hoping to think in different ways and come up with part of that revenue. Ms. Mostoufi asked if districts remove themselves and then decide they need student placement at EDCO, will they have to pay a higher rate; Mr. O'Shea answered yes. We currently get significant discounts on costs of placements. Other benefits are the roundtable discussions and professional development. The broader question is will EDCO be viable. Carlisle is in for at least another year; and would hold responsibility for outstanding liability. Ms. Lear agreed that there are many benefits to belonging to the collaborative. Ms. Wilson would like to see projections on what would happen under certain scenarios, and understand the cost benefit. Right now, she doesn't feel informed to make a decision. Ms. Mostoufi would also like to know financial projections and wondered if EDCO is adjusting to provide more robust services to districts. Mr. O'Shea noted that Concord didn't feel the benefits outweighed the cost. He added that EDCO is always offering innovative programs. Mr. O'Shea will work with Ms. Ekstrom to create a list of pros of being involved and cons of not being involved and present it to the School Committee. Ms. Wilson asked if we opted out and then wanted to place a student at EDCO, would that be possible? Mr. O'Shea said that usually collaboratives do not refuse a student placement because the district is a non-member.

IV. Members'/Committee Reports as Needed.

Visioning Committee: Ms. Lavery reported that the Visioning Committee met yesterday and looked at a semi-final draft of its work. Mr. O'Shea and Ms. Lavery will work to finalize the wording on the document, resubmit it to the committee for approval, and then present it to the CSC. Mr. O'Shea thanked everyone who participated on the committee and noted people are working hard to reflect the input received. He feels that the document meets our needs.

CCRS: Ms. Mostoufi reported that the Region has formed a task force for school reopening. She will be observing and listening at meetings and share information with the CSC. She will note places where the two towns might collaborate.

Solar Project: Ms. Lear reported that Ameresco called Mr. DeKock and asked what color lights should be on the canopies. It was decided there would be white lights.

V. Warrants

- A. Accounts Payable Warrant #8520; \$163,925.82
- B. Payroll Warrant #8320; \$4,142.05
- C. Payroll Warrant #8620; \$410,494.95

VI. Action Items

There were no action items.

VII. Public Comments

Cynthia Sorn, Rutland Street, asked how many teachers will teach in the summer and when the summer session starts. Ms. Bruce noted that teachers volunteer to teach at the summer program; it is not required. The program starts on July 7, and runs Tuesday-Thursday for 5 weeks, ending on August 6. The staff who stepped forward to teach are all enthusiastic. Ms. Bruce is working with Lauren Sawyer, School Nurse, to address the safety of students and staff. It was noted there will be individual baskets of supplies for students. This is a test case for the BTSTF and will provide us with information about what a program might look like for more than 30 students. Carrie Patel, Tophet Road, shared that she sent out an email to all candidates running for School Committee. She said the PTO we will be doing a Zoom forum with the candidates and will share the date when it is set.

VIII. Adjourn Meeting

Ms. Mostoufi made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Lavery seconded the motion. The following votes were taken in Roll Call: Lear, aye; Lavery, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Wilson, aye. Mr. Model had left the meeting. The public meeting was adjourned at 9:58 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Nancy Anderson
Assistant to the Superintendent