



## Winchendon Public Schools

Date Approved/Released: 2/3/2022

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School Committee Chair: L. Murphy

### School Committee Meeting

January 20, 2022 - 6:00 pm.

Town Hall - 2nd Floor Auditorium

1. Call to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance

#### Attendance:

Larry Murphy, Chair; Ryan Forsythe (via telephone); Greg Vine; Mike Barbaro, Thad King, Superintendent

L. Murphy reads audio visual disclosure.

3. Public Comment: None

4. Welcome Mike Barbaro, New School Committee Member:

L. Murphy welcomes new school committee member, Mike Barbaro.

M. Barbara gives brief remarks about his years of service to Winchendon, thanks the committee for their trust in him.

5. Student Representative Report: None

6. Consent Agenda: None

7. Superintendent's Report:

- a. Teacher and Staff obligations during a physical altercation on school grounds

G. Vine begins by stating that he requested that the Superintendent discuss this issue after a rash of assaults on teachers and teachers being injured during altercations on school grounds. L. Murphy follows by stating that Winchendon Public Schools has not had these issues.

T. King states that G. Vine is correct that the media had publicized this issue across the country, but it has certainly not happened in Winchendon. T. King references Winchendon School Committee Policy JK, A, which addresses the restraint of a

student, not necessarily physical altercations. He clarifies that teachers and staff are trained to attempt to de-escalate situations that may result in altercations between students but never are they required or expected to put themselves in harm's way. Adult visibility is one of the greatest deterrents to a physical altercation.

G. Vine thanks the Superintendent for the information.

R. Forsythe asks if the policies surrounding this issue are school based or district wide. T. King replies that they are school specific, as each grade level requires different procedures. Each building principal would create an emergency response team to fit their individual building needs.

M. Barbara briefly discusses the current communication and mental health issues and the need for social skills to be improved.

b. COVID Update:

T. King references the COVID dashboard which reflects daily snapshot of COVID numbers for the district, reminding that these numbers are not cumulative. Memorial and Toy Town Elementaries were closed on Friday due to a dramatic increase in COVID cases in the staff. This extra day seemed to help calm the spread and the district started the week with mostly full staffing.

The Commissioner introduced a new testing protocol, which would eliminate test and stay protocol and contact tracing. Instead, anyone who signs a consent form will receive a home COVID test every week, then they are expected to report the results to the school nurse if the test is positive. The district recommends that it does not participate in this new protocol due to the necessity of consent forms and given the fact that the community is not a highly vaccinated one. The district would like to continue with its current plan, which includes test and stay and contact tracing. This decision was made after consultation with the nurses and the school physician after reviewing the numbers and the details of the community.

G. Vine makes Motion that the school committee endorse the testing and return to school protocol as presented by Superintendent King. Seconded by M. Barbaro. Vote is unanimous.

c. Budget Update:

T. King wishes to address questions from the previous meeting regarding the budget. He discusses the timeline of the ESSER grant. He also states that the majority of the previous ESSER grant money was used to update the Toy Town Elementary building with proper ventilation, as well as transportation costs. A

presentation will follow soon with the details of the COVID grant expenses.

He suggests that a joint meeting with the finance committee take place in March to discuss the FY23 budget.

M. Barbaro asks questions about the Special Education Transportation costs. T. King replies that the district is in a normal routine in that regard.

**d. Monty Tech Representative:**

Ms. Ward will be stepping down as Monty Tech Representative, effective May 2, 2022. The vacancy will be filled by a joint meeting with the board of selectmen, school committee and town moderator. According to the district agreement, the town will announce the vacancy some time in March, and the appointment can be made at a meeting scheduled in late April with the appointment effective May 2, 2022. The person will be filling the balance of the term, which would expire on June 30, 2025.

**8. New Business:**

**a. Vaccine statement:**

G. Vine gives the following statement regarding the COVID vaccine:

Every parent in Winchendon looks forward to the day their children will no longer need to wear masks at school. But in order to reach that goal, we need to see more students vaccinated against COVID-19. The Winchendon school committee strongly urges residents of our community to follow the recommendation of the Winchendon Board of Health that all eligible residents roll up their sleeves and get vaccinations for themselves and their children for the sake of themselves, their children, their neighbors, our schools, our entire community. The school committee along with our district's administrators, educators and support staff look forward to the day when keeping COVID at bay in our schools comes to an end and masks will no longer be necessary. That they will come when we evolve on our part.

M. Barbaro makes Motion to support the statement Mr. Vine read. Seconded by G. Vine.

G. Vine briefly discusses the need for community members to get vaccinated. L. Murphy calls for vote. Vote is unanimous.

**b. Virtual School Committee Meetings:**

G. Vine makes Motion to table and keep on the agenda for the next free meeting. Seconded by M. Barbaro. Vote is unanimous.

**9. Old Business: None**

**10. Future Agenda Items: None**

**11. School Committee Closing Comments:**

M. Barbaro thanks the maintenance staff for getting the schools ready to go, getting the roads and sidewalks cleared and looks forward to the day when masks are no longer required. He hopes that mental health is addressed in the future.

R. Forsythe welcomes M. Barbaro and thanks all the district staff for keeping the schools running during the pandemic.

G. Vine also welcomes M. Barbaro and thanks him for his closing comments.

**12. Adjournment:**

G. Vine makes Motion to adjourn. Seconded by M. Barbaro. Vote is unanimous. Meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:



Liz Latoria, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents Attached: None