

**Farmington River Regional School District
Otis/Sandisfield
555 Main Road, Otis MA 01253
School Committee Meeting #401
Monday, June 7, 2021, 7:00PM, via ZOOM**

Community Participation: None

Members Present: Carol Lombardo, Jennifer Hibbins, Deb Fogel, Jess Drenga, Arlene Tolopko, Roger Kohler, and Carl Nett

Absent: None

Jess Drenga started the meeting off at 7:02 PM. Jess wanted to thank Billie Pachulski for her years on School Committee. Billie did a wonderful job. Jess also wanted to welcome Carl Nett onto the School Committee, with the anticipation that he will see how much dedication to the school and students the Committee has. Jess handed the meeting over to Tom Nadonly for the reorganization of the School Committee.

Tom asked for a nomination for Chair. Jess Drenga nominated Carol Lombardo. There were no other nominations. Carol won the vote unanimously.

Tom asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Carol Lombardo nominated Jennifer Hibbins. Roger Kohler seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations, Jennifer won the vote unanimously. Tom turned the meeting over to Carol Lombardo.

Carol welcomed Terry Gould, the new member to the Selectboard in Otis.

1. **Approve minutes #399 and #400.** Jess Drenga motioned to approve the minutes as submitted. Arlene Tolopko second the motion. The vote was unanimously approved.
2. **Principal/Superintendent updates.** Tom started with Nature's Classroom. The 5th and 6th Grades participated on May 24th (5th) -May 27th (6th) at Isaac Walton Field in Otis. Due to COVID, Nature's Classroom was nice enough to come to us rather than the students going to them in CT. They all enjoyed themselves and had a great time participating in the outdoor programming.

The 6th Grade when on the field trip to a ropes course in CT, that was approved by the School Committee. That too was a great time by all.

June 4th and 5th, the students put on a musical produced by Ms. Catullo (Art Teacher). The musical was called "The Cowhands and Aliens Rescue Earth" The musical was very well attended. A big thank you to both Otis and Sandisfield Cultural Councils for the

grants given to help the production out financially. The students and Ms. Catullo did an amazing job. Hats off to all who participated.

6th Grade graduation will be held in the gym due to rain on June 8th. There are 10 students graduating.

Field Day is June 9th. Thank you to the PTA, who puts field day on.

Friday the 11th is the last day of school. It is a half day. Tom stated that it is hard to believe the year is at its end. It has been a tough year being one of the few schools that stayed open. It has been a team effort and Tom stated that he could not have kept the school going without the help of a great team. He thanked Mike Saporito, Laurie Flower, Eric Jesner, Jeff Gray, Teresa DellaGiustina, and Paula Subklew for all their efforts.

- 3. Michael Saporito to speak about the Summer Program.** Mike Saporito joined the School Committee meeting to explain the Summer Program and how it will run. Summer School historically has been in place to help the regression over the summer for students who need extra help or are in special needs programming. The district's responsibility has always been to provide specialized services to prevent regression. Through Title 1 funding, there was a program called Explorations. This program was for exploration of topics in Science and Social Studies for ELA and writing. The past 2-3 years it has been limited to regression prevention activities. Last year being one of the most challenging years due to remote learning or house visits to teach. This year a unique opportunity from funding by the government through grants called ESSER Grants were set up in hopes to ease some of the more difficult challenges the schools may face. ESSER 1 helped drive our remote services for those students who could not come to school. ESSER 2 was granted to us to fund a Summer Program, so we have the opportunity to create learning recovery opportunities for children due to the lack of instruction from last March until June. Also, the grant is to help with the recovery from hybrid learning and remote learning. One hundred percent of the cost of the Summer Program is not from the Towns' pockets. The funding is from the ESSER 2 Grant and the Rural School Grant. The ESSER 2 fund does not pay for transportation. The Rural School Grant does offer transportation for student's that are entitled (IEP Students) for the service of transportation. So, between the two grants, the Summer Program is fully covered. Mike thanks Teresa DellaGiustina for providing the students with the need for transportation. We will be using the school's vans for pick up and drop off for the days of service. This also includes the needs for the middle and high school students that we need to provide transportation for as well. Eric Jesner did a great job figuring out the maintenance of the building. He worked alongside of Jeff Gray to come up with a plan to continue to do the deep cleaning and maintenance as usual in the building during the Summer Programming.

Kendra Rybacki and Candy Chaffee were a huge help in setting up lunches for the students throughout the summer programming. They are making sure the students' daily needs for nutrition are being met.

The students will be placed in 5 cohorts:

- Pre School Cohort-----consists of 14 students.
- Kindergarten Cohort-----consists of 8 students.
- 1st Grade Cohort-----consists of 8 students.
- 2nd & 3rd Grade Cohort-----consists of 7 students.
- 4th-6th Grade Cohort-----consists of 13 students.

All cohorts will be staffed with a certified Teacher accompanied by a certified Special Ed teacher so a fully differentiated model can be implemented period by period. This will ensure everyone's needs are being met. The periods are broken down into 45-minute blocks with time built in for snack breaks. The program ends at 12:00 PM. Vans will pick up the students who are eligible for transportation. A Paraprofessional will be staying to cover dismissal and will be available in the morning for drop off as well. The program is from July 6th – August 5th, Monday through Thursday.

Mike stated the cost is less than half of the ESSER Grant. If the Summer Program works, there is enough money to continue for two to three years. At that point, some other funding will need to be provided. Carl Nett asked Mike if the teachers for the Summer Program are our own teachers or, did we have to contract out? All teachers are our own except for a contracted Reading Specialist. Carl then asked if next year will be easier than this year as far as staffing goes? Mike is confident that it should get easier. This year teachers were tired and burnt out. That is why the days are until noon and four days a week. Mike is happy with who is staffing and thinks the program will be successful. Jennifer Hibbins would like to know if there is enough money in the ESSER Grant to continue with an after-school program concentrating on tutoring in reading. Mike and Tom both said they would like to see the Summer Program continue, but at some point, the grant monies will run out and money will need to be appropriated in the budget presented to both towns.

4. **Vote and discuss the Superintendent's evaluation process:** Roger Kohler spoke for the sub-committee who researched the Superintendent's evaluation process. Roger shared a composite of information and a document of an evaluation form. A blank form was sent to all School Committee members to fill out as a test run. Roger reviewed the feedback and presented the responses for a guide for everyone to see. Some areas need to be filled out a little differently to match the Superintendent's goals. It is still a work in progress, but it was a good trial run. The evaluation next year may be a little different, but overall, the form was a great guide. A copy of the evaluation will be available upon request. Carl Nett asked if Roger could explain the process moving forward. Carl does not understand the timing of the process. How can they release a new evaluation before the state accountability data becomes available for that

evaluation period? MCAS results do not come in until the following school year. Roger stated that was a consideration and discussion with this sub-committee. This was a trial run that needs tweaking. Jess Drenga agreed with Roger and said that this was in fact a first-time evaluation and a trial run. The timing is to sync with the elections each year. They felt the evaluation should be completed by the School Committee that presented the goals.

5. **Vote to approve the FY22 School Calendar.** After looking over the school calendar, a vote was conducted. Jess Drenga motioned to accept the FY22 School year calendar. Deb Fogel second the motion. The vote was unanimously voted to approve the FY22 School Calendar. A copy will go on our website and presented to our parents and guardians.

6. **Financial updates.** Eric Jesner was in to discuss the FY21 budget, an amendment to the FY22 budget, and the IFB for the paving project. Eric started by reviewing the FY21 budget. He showed all accounts and answered questions on the savings and overages in each account. He explained that this year we have a bigger savings due to COVID grants and special education programs and transportation that did not occur due to COVID as well. Also, tuitions with Lee Middle and High School and Berkshire hills were a both big savings this year for special needs services, since the students were not there. There is a projected surplus of \$394,000. Eric suggests that we use some of that money to fix the school's street lights out on Route 8 in front of the school. They are broken. The only quote he received was \$21,000. We need new stair treads throughout the building. The cost is approximately \$10,000. Eric would also like to purchase a new van to replace the oldest van left on our lot. That cost would be estimated at \$42,000. Some money that was spent out of School Choice for ELA curriculum, can be transferred into the General fund to be used against the General Fund instead of using School Choice funds. The paving project can be paid by encumbering the money out of FY21's budget. Then there is the paving project estimated to cost \$260,000. We will have \$160,000 in the Stabilization Fund come July 1, 2021, and in the FY22 budget we have \$100,000 in Capital Funds. The lowest bid that we received was \$273,000 for everything, so this will allow us to do the entire paving project this year. If we did not encumber, we would be using FY22 monies and we would have to cut some of the paving project back. Our oldest van could also be replaced with the money from this year as well. The total cost would be \$382,000, leaving us with \$11,980 which can be put into E&D account. Carl Nett asked Eric if anything was budgeted into FY22 budget. The paving project was the only budgeted item. Jennifer Hibbins asked what will happen to the money that is budgeted for FY22 if we use monies from FY21. Eric replied to Jennifer's question with the money that was budgeted is not enough for the whole paving project, but by following Eric's suggestion, FY22's budgeted money can be applied to fix the gym ceiling and FY21's surplus can be applied to the paving project. The last bid done for the ceiling was \$50,000. Carl asked to go over FY22 before they vote on the distribution of money from FY21. After reviewing the FY22 budget, Carol suggested a vote to approve the paving project and the FY22 budget, so Eric can move forward. Jess Drenga stressed

how important the paving project is for safety issues. The van was questionable per Jennifer Hibbins. Purchasing a van was just a suggestion by Eric. He did state that the van is a 2016 and has over 100,000 miles of back road driving. Carol asked if there is a motion to approve the lowest bid for the paving project. Jess Drenga motioned to pass the bid for the paving project. Arlene Tolopko second the motion. The vote was approved 6 votes to 1 vote. Eric also wanted to know now, how the Committee would like to pay for the project. There is his suggestion of encumbering the money from FY21 or use FY22 appropriated money of \$250,000 and then figure out where to pull money from to pay for the difference. Eric feels we should utilize this windfall of money from the government to take care of projects that have been put on hold due to lack of money, so the towns do not have to help with funding these projects. Roger and Carl feel that taking the money out of the windfall to pay for all the projects except purchasing a van is a suggestion. That way some respectable money can go back to towns. Leave FY22 as it is. There is plenty of money to work with in both fiscal years. The consensus was to use FY21 money to pay for the streetlights, stair treads, and the paving project. This will leave out transferring money from School Choice funds for ELA curriculum and purchasing a new van. They will continue discussion next month.

Eric and Jennifer Hibbins wanted to talk about vocational schooling. Eric has found out that the expense and transportation for any vocational student is paid by the municipality not the school. Since Eric has uncovered this information, Otis was informed and paid the costs for their 3 vocational students who attended school this past year. Jennifer then spoke about the past years' payments Sandisfield has been paying partially for the Otis vocational students that have attended a vocational school. She would like to know how Sandisfield can get restitution on the portion they paid for the Otis students. The amount is \$46,662 that Sandisfield has contributed to the vocational education. Eric did not know at this point how to give restitution back to Sandisfield. Eric will investigate this topic and get back next month with some helpful answers. Eric is going to talk with his contacts at the state about restitution and vocational transportation reimbursement.

Jennifer then brought up the topic on where to send our vocational students. She would like to set up tuition with a vocational school like we do with middle and high school. Eric and Tom explained that we can not do that. Not every vocational school offers the same classes. The district must accommodate the student to which school they choose since we cannot provide them with the vocational education they want or need. Also, the state sets up the tuition for vocational schools, not the districts.

7. **Adjournment.** Carol suggested the Committee adjourn. Arlene Tolopko motioned to adjourn. Deb Fogel second the motion. School Committee unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by:

Teresa DellaGiustina, School Committee Secretary