

**Farmington River Regional School District
Otis/Sandisfield
555 Main Road, Otis MA 01253
School Committee Meeting #398
Monday, April 5, 2021 7:00PM
Via Zoom**

Meeting called at 7:00 PM

Community Participation:

Guests: list attached

Members Present: Carol Lombardo, Billie Pachulski, Jennifer Hibbins, Arlene Tolopko, Roger Kohler, and Deb Fogel. All remote

Absent:

Meeting called to order by Carol Lombardo (Vice Chair) at 7:00pm.

1. **Approval of minutes #397.** Deb Fogel motioned to accept minutes #397, Arlene Tolopko second the motion. Minutes #397 were unanimously voted to accept Minutes #397 as submitted.
2. **SPED and Title 1 updates.** Director of Student Services, Mike Saporito, was in to talk about the updates of SPED and Title I programming and student achievement this year. Mike started off by stating that the students have been doing well in achievement even though there were many headwinds standing in their way, such as staggered learning, busing changes, and overall, the process of school itself. The students have made remarkable achievements across the board. Everyone has worked hard towards their achievements. Teachers, parents, staff, and the students themselves have worked well together. Mike likes the program Aimsweb Plus, which is a sophisticated system and is nationally norm. This methodology comes out of the University of Oregon. Oregon is a lead University in reading for benchmark expectations. They have had 20 years of extensive research on benchmarking. Aimsweb tests different levels of learning. Our Teachers are conscientious about the data from Aimsweb. We have been focusing on placing Paraprofessionals to classrooms that have students needing extra reading help. Every Teacher and Paraprofessional have been working hard to keep our students at benchmark.
3. **Superintendent/Principal update.** Tom Nadolny started by mentioning that he had to close the school down due to a staff member and two children contracted COVID. Because of direct contact with the Administrative Staff, Tom made the decision to shut down. Without Administration present, the school can not stay open. There is no one here to run the school.

MCAS is still on, but testing will be abbreviated. The testing starts May 10th for two weeks. ELA and Math will be done. The Commissioner stated that there will be more guidance for the testing of MCAS for remote students coming in the next two weeks. Carol Lombardo asked if for some reason we must close for the week of May 10th, what will happen with MCAS. Tom mentioned that he will make it work. We get out June 11th but may have to go later so testing can occur. Arlene Tolopko asked Tom if there has been any objection from the Superintendents about carrying on the MCAS? Tom said they all are in objection, but at the Federal level stated that if you want the federal money then you will test because it is the law. The high school students get a waiver to graduate this year, but if you are going for scholarships, you will have to take the MCAS in the fall. Some scholarships are based on MCAS scores.

Graduation is coming up. Tom is intending on having one this year. June 10th in the gym is when it is scheduled. There will be pods set up around the gym for distancing. This goes for concerts and the musical as well. If we follow guidelines, we will be ok.

Nature's Classroom will be happening to a degree. They are coming here to the school instead of our students going to them for a week. May 24th -27th is the scheduled time. Activities will be provided for the students. This will be much cheaper so there will be funds left over to use if we decide to send students in the fall or spring.

Grants are coming up. Tom needs to speak with Mike Saporito about summer programming. There are grants for regression.

Blizzard bags are going to be discussed regarding to keep them or not. Further discussion will be done.

Travel restrictions are going out to parents with the upcoming vacation week. Tom wants everyone to follow the guidelines for testing upon returning from out of state trips.

Carol asked if teachers have been vaccinated? Tom knows that everyone except six staff members have been fully vaccinated.

Arlene asked about applying for Cultural Council. She was wondering if any teacher will be applying for field trips. She does not want anyone to miss out. Jenn Hibbins mentioned that as well. Sandisfield could possibly extend the grant if needed. With the restrictions some teachers would be asking for a second extension, so they are not sure if that can happen. Tom will let them know to get in touch with both Cultural Councils.

4. **Approval and vote for School Choice for the 2021-22 school year.** Tom explained that each year the School Committee needs to approve the acceptance of school choice both outside and coming into the school district. This past year Tom did ask School Committee to shut down school choice due to other school districts shutting down. Many people wanted to choice into Farmington because they wanted their children to continue going to school. We were at the top of our threshold at that point. Now that schools are open again, it would be beneficial to continue our school choice option for other towns. Arlene motioned to accept school choice for the 2021-22 school year. Deb Fogel second the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve school choice for the 2021-22 school year.

5. **Follow up on the Superintendent's evaluation.** Carol asked who would like to be on the subcommittee to monitor the Superintendent's evaluations. Roger Kohler, Jennifer Hibbins and Jess Drenga will be the members to follow through with the evaluations. Roger wants to make sure a timeline is set up for Tom to be fair to Tom for preparation. Roger would like to discuss the expectations in the June meeting since the Committee is short on time this year.
6. **Financial updates.** Eric emailed the current year's expense report. Eric wanted to discuss the ESSER 2 Grants. If the towns are allowed to access those funds offset assessments, the decision will not be made by the School Committee the decision will be made by the Select Board of both towns. Eric has not heard any updates as to where things are at. Otis will be able to access about \$10,000 and Sandisfield will be able to access about \$32,000.

Eric briefly went over the current expense report with the School Committee. For the majority of expenditures, most are on target. There are some line items that are over and under, but they can be adjusted at the end of the year. Some of the line items are down due to the closure of schools. An example would be Special Ed Transportation. The student going to school is now remote. Long term substitute line item is up due to a teacher on maternity leave. Eric does not budget for that line because we do not know what is going to happen during the year until it comes upon us. Jennifer asked Eric if the rates for health insurance are going up? Eric said he received the numbers and rates are going up roughly 1%. The retired teachers' health insurance is over due to the use of Medicare. It is hard for Eric to approximate those costs because Medicare rates flow on a calendar cycle not a fiscal year cycle, so it is difficult to calculate accurate rates. At this point, it looks like we will be looking at an approximate overage of \$124,000. Any money left over needs to go into E&D or go back to the Towns. The money can go towards the playground equipment, but we do have a grant for partial costs for the playground from the Rural Grant. That needs to be used by June 30th. We can encumber some of the \$124,000 if we have a purchase order dated by June 30th. The School Committee needs to decide what to do with the money before July 1st. Carol brought up using the money for the gym ceiling. Eric will start getting quotes to see how much it would cost for a new ceiling.

7. **Discuss playground equipment.** Jennifer has been approached by parents and students about the small size of the new playground equipment. They would like to have a couple of additions to the structure. Also, the pre school playground needs to be updated as well. Jennifer did reach out to Game Time, the same company for the new equipment purchased two years ago. The Pre School structures would cost approximately \$9,000, and to add an additional free standing slide costing \$6,000. This would include free installation. The Rural Grant would cover both projects. Jennifer feels the new equipment would be a draw to new families. Tom has set up a date for a sales representative from Game Time to come discuss both structures. He invited Jen to come to the school when he is here.
8. **Discuss a van for after school activities.** Jennifer Hibbins would like to see some type of transportation provided for students that stay for after school activities. Many parents, especially from Sandisfield, would find that helpful. Parents have offered to pay a fee for the transportation. Jess Drenga replied that she has been approached by Lee Middle/High School parents requesting the same thing. There used to be busing for both Lee and Monument Mountain, but that stopped about 9 years ago. Jen asked if the Committee could at least look

into this suggestion. The Tom will look further into the cost of providing after school transportation with Dufour. The ESSER Grant was brought up, but the issue with using a grant is the money eventually runs out. What happens when that day arrives? We will be back at square one.

Mike Saporito showed the Committee a few of the posters that they ordered for diversity within the school.

9. **Adjournment.** Arlene Tolopko motioned to adjourn, Deb Fogel second the motion. The vote was unanimous to adjourn Meeting #398 at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Teresa DellaGiustina, Secretary of the School Committee

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