

WINTHROP BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

JULY 17, 2020 10:00 AM

REMOTE PARTICIPATION (HOST: WINTHROP PUBLIC SCHOOLS TEAM TWO)

MINUTES

PARTICIPANTS:

BOARD MEMBERS: Chair: Bill Schmidt; Member: Susan Maguire.

TOWN of WINTHROP: Lisa Howard, Superintendent of Winthrop Public Schools (WPS); Lori Gallivan, Executive Director of Curriculum, WPS; Meredith Hurley, Director Public Health and Clinical Services; Julie Barry, Winthrop School Committee; Brian Perrin, Winthrop School Committee; Jennifer Powell, Winthrop School Committee; Tara Beuoy, Winthrop School Nurse.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS: Not identified.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Schmidt called the Board of Health meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT: none

PURPOSE of MEETING: At the request of Superintendent Howard, the Board of Health convened the meeting to discuss the plans of the Winthrop Public Schools Reopening Task Force for the coming school year in light of COVID-19.

DISCUSSION: Per Superintendent Howard, the task force was interested in getting feedback from the Board of Health on two time-sensitive issues: Returning to

School in September, and the Graduation Ceremony scheduled for July 23, 2020.

GRADUATION:

- Superintendent Howard provided the background of the plans considered for the graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020 given the constraints posed by the COVID-19 epidemic.
- Due to the recent spike of COVID-19 cases in Winthrop (46 cases since July 4, 2020), should the current plan to hold the ceremony outside, allowing each graduate (128) five (5) tickets per family, as well as faculty and invited guests in attendance be revisited? The alternate plan would host the ceremony virtually and graduates would receive their diplomas via a 'drive-through' procession.
- Ms. Hurley reviewed the current number of COVID-19 cases in Winthrop, noting that there were 100 test results still pending and not entered into the DPH system from last week, due to the backlog with labs.
- Chairman Schmidt acknowledged that despite any recommendations the Board of Health might have, the Superintendent has the authority to make the final decision. Chair Schmidt suggested allowing only the graduates to attend the ceremony. There were concerns however that the graduates might have difficulty maintaining social distancing.
- Ms. Maguire asked if the Department of Education might advise the team. Superintendent Howard has been in discussion with the Commissioner.
- The Board of Health commended Superintendent Howard for her concerns and willingness to revise the plans for graduation in order to ensure the health and safety of the students, families, and community at large. The Board gave their full support to the decision the Superintendent ultimately makes.

Action Steps: It was decided to wait for the daily reports from DPH re: new COVID cases to determine the final plans. Superintendent Howard will make a decision on Monday, July 20, 2020 at which time families will be notified.

WINTHROP PUBLIC SCHOOLS REOPENING TASK FORCE FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR IN LIGHT OF COVID-19:

- Superintendent Howard provided a comprehensive review of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) Reopening Guidance as they relate specifically to social distancing, i.e., student desks must be positioned no less than three (3) feet apart in classrooms (six feet when feasible) and students in grades two (2) thru twelve (12) must wear face coverings. Pre-K through first grade must be positioned six (6) feet apart. All staff must wear face coverings at all times.
- Schools must submit three plans for reopening with the main priority to get as many students as possible back to school full time. The three plans are:
 - 1) Full in-person learning; 2) A hybrid of in-person and remote learning; and 3) All remote learning.
- Challenges:
 - May be able to bring almost all grades two (2) thru (12) students back with distancing of three (3) feet. However, lunch period and mask breaks require six (6) feet distancing.
 - Unable to accommodate all Pre-K and first graders who require six (6) feet distancing.
 - As many as 10%-15% of staff may not be returning.
 - Awaiting results from Family Survey regarding the feasibility of the three options. Surveys are due back by July 21, 2020.
- Ms. Maguire stated that she found that the DESE Guidance document quite prescriptive and satisfied the scientific evidence to support the minimum standard of three feet distancing for grades 2-12 which would also require face coverings.

- Ventilation: The Middle and High Schools HVAC system brings outside air in through RTU filters, equivalent to HEPA filters, and considered 'top of the line' after HEPA.
- The Board members acknowledged the task force efforts and consideration of all possible means to bring as many students back in-person in a safe manner and in accordance with state guidelines.

Document referenced: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) Reopening Guidance

Action Steps: Families will be notified of the plans for reopening on August 10, 2020.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 11:15 am.

ADDENDUM: Following the meeting, Ms. Maguire noticed an email received at 9:59 am prior to the meeting for Public Comment from Town Councilor Demarco. The email was forwarded to Superintendent Howard.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Maguire