

**Farmington River Regional School District
Otis/Sandisfield
555 Main Road, Otis MA 01253
School Committee Meeting #397
Monday, March 1, 2021 7:00PM
Via Zoom**

Meeting called at 7:04 PM

Community Participation: Meaghan Martin wanted to thank the School Committee for their generosity. The acknowledgement and gifts to all staff were very much appreciated.

Guests: list attached

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

Absent: None

Meeting called to order by Jess Drenga (Chair) at 7:05 PM

1. **Approval of minutes #396 & #395.** Jess made a motion to approve minutes #396 & #395. Carol Lombardo seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve both minutes.
2. **Principal/Superintendent updates.** Many people have inquired information about their children returning to school come April. Five students are returning to full time. A couple of new students have registered to start soon as well. Our total number of students has increased since the beginning of the school year. We are roughly at 120 currently.

Preschool procedures are beginning for the fall. Screening will begin at the end of May.

No real change in MCAS. There will be some form of MCAS taking place. The testing will be reduced but will still take place. The testing will be tough due to losing in person learning for some.

Mr. Flower is sending information out on some youth concerts performed by Boston Symphony Orchestra. It is Read Across America week. Unfortunately, readers were not able to come in and read to the students this year. But there will be fun things to do with the students.

Students and staff are staying safe from COVID. The distancing and handwashing are still going strong. There has been a reduction in cold and flu illnesses this year too.

Jennifer Hibbins asked an enrollment question about 1st Grade. She has heard the class is getting bigger. First Grade is up to 20 students. Seventeen students are in person and three are remote. If the class gets any bigger, Tom may have to move them to the library for distancing purposes.

Roger Kohler asked Tom about benchmarking. Roger wanted to know what benchmark we use. Tom stated AimsWeb. Tom explained that AimsWeb is tricky, but it is nationally normed. Tom wanted to stress that all the new curricula should have been starting to show results this year, but with COVID upon us, we should see progress by next year.

3. Financial updates, including grant monies and a vote on the FY21 School budget.

Eric wanted to know if anyone had a chance to read all the journal entries and the current year's expenditure report. Roger wanted to comment on how he could not believe how transparent the report is. Even entries for \$3.10. Eric stated that all the money no matter how small needs to be accounted for. Roger thanked Eric.

Eric wanted to go over the ESSER Grant. This grant is through the Federal Government and will be applied to next year's budget. It is an entitlement grant meaning we are guaranteed that money. We are receiving \$99,924 plus an additional \$10,000 for mental health. The Governor's proposal states that the district is allowed to use up to 75% of the money to offset the assessments to the membered town of the district but the amount that they can offset can only go up to the limit of the increase of the minimum contribution for this year. This proposal is not set it is in the Governor's budget. The total amount that we can apply for both Towns is \$41,641. This is based on the formula that is given, Otis would receive \$9703. Sandisfield's amount would be \$31,848. Eric will keep you posted with any confirmation on this topic. \$58,000 will still be able to be used for operational purposes. There are still many regulations as to what the money can be spent on. Roger asked how the ESSER funds are doing. Did we spend that money yet? Eric stated that we are still in the process of using that money, but there are other grants received due to COVID that had to be spent by December 30, 2020, so Eric has been keeping track of a timeline as well to when they need to be used by. Laurie Flower and Mike Saporito have been discussing with Eric about way to utilize some of the money. A suggestion concerning buying more Chromebooks, so every student is assigned a Chromebook at the beginning of each school year. This way they can work from home on assignments. Talks about updating technology has been discussed as well.

Eric proceeded to talk about the FY22 School Budget. There are some issues on the budget that Eric wanted to address. Regional Transportation aid we will be able to add more money to that, but until the end of the year comes, and we understand which process we are going to follow, Eric feels the total should remain where it is right now. Eric also talked about E&D. The \$100,000 that we are applying to the budget right now is based only on the revenue side of the budget right now. Once the expense side is

applied to the budget, there could be a chance of more money to add to the budget. Potentially we could have more revenues to lower the expenses which can lower the assessments to each town. Eric feels we should keep the numbers as they were presented at the Public Hearing. Jennifer Hibbins asked if we could have the most accurate budget on the warrant for the Towns. This way the Town will be informed of the cut in the assessment. Eric explained if he were to go off the possible changes and they changes do not happen, then the Committee would have to find a way to carve money out of the budget.

Jennifer asked if there are plans for a foreign language teacher to come in. Eric stated that he did not budget for one, but that is something to discuss with Tom. Tom commented that he could put out a stipend position in house or put an ad out to fill a part time teacher for that.

Carol Lombardo asked about a reading teacher as well. Tom stated that would be up to the Teachers and Mike Saporito to figure out the need for a teacher. Most students visit the Special Education Teachers for help in reading. Tom will look into this with Mike and the Teachers.

Eric asked if anyone has anymore questions on the budget, if not he needs a vote on the approval of FY22 School Budget.

Jess asked for a motion. Arlene Tolopko made a motion to approve the FY22 School Budget. Billie Pachulski second the motion. The vote to approve the FY22 School Budget was approved unanimously.

4. **Discuss the Superintendent's evaluation.** Roger Kohler wanted to review the process of conducting the Superintendent's evaluation and what focuses need to be evaluated. Tom explained that in the past, there where no evaluations on any Superintendent. Tom is not opposed to having an evaluation. This topic was brought up two years ago and the School Committee has been trying to establish something appropriate, but COVID prevented the move forward last year.

Tom did ask if he could make some suggestions for his evaluation, especially this year because MCAS scores are usually the main goal. Since COVID, it is not fair to evaluate on students having to adjust themselves to different learning systems that has been difficult since last March. Jennifer and Roger feel that some sort of evaluation should be done this year. Tom commented that if we could put together goals for this year, and then start the evaluation process as should be by DESE next year. He explained that a sub committee needs to be selected first, then sit with the Superintendent to come up with goals. They work together. Then go back to the School Committee with the goals and the evaluation to be discussed and voted on.

A community member, Carl Nett, strongly encourages a source of metrics in which you can look into the size of the school and one with percentages with special populations. Mr. Nett found 11 schools to compare with Farmington River School. The state provides

the schools to compare. Roger Kohler spoke up stating that MCAS are great with breaking down subgroups in schools statewide. They look at growth as well as passing or being proficient. Roger thinks that Aimesweb should suffice, but maybe we should be looking at a more comparable benchmark. Principal Nadolny stated that sometimes what looks comparable on paper is not the reality of the case. For instance, one school stated to be comparable to Farmington River is not since the other school's special education is subbed out to another district. So, the numbers are in fact not accurate. Carl did state that no set of metrics will be perfect. There are pitfalls, but that is something that needs to be investigated better. Carl continued saying that he is disappointed with the lack of formal performance evaluations over the years. The principal role of the School Committee is to hold the Administration accountable for the functions of the school. Farmington River is unique in that Tom holds both roles (Principal/Superintendent). The School Committee needs to commit that they will conduct an evaluation on a yearly basis moving forward. Roger agrees as well as Tom. Tom does ask if the modified version for the evaluation be done since it is already March. Roger feels to be fair a timeline needs to be created. Usually, the evaluation is done before May when potential new members are elected to the Committee. Tom agrees with Roger. Tom is going to email the School Committee goals for them to look over and agree upon.

Jess asked for a motion to go into executive session for an unexpected personnel issue. Roger motioned to move into the executive session only to adjourn after the meeting to go back into School Committee meeting to adjourn. Carol second the motion. All were in favor of the motion.

Roll Call: Carol Lombardo—yes, Billie Pachulski—yes, Jennifer Hibbins—yes, Roger Kohler—yes, Arlene Tolopko—yes, Deb Fogel—yes, Jess Drenga—yes.

5. **Adjournment.** Billie Pachulski motioned to adjourn the executive meeting only to return to School Committee meeting to adjourn only. Meeting was unanimously voted to adjourn. Meeting Adjourned at 9:05 PM

Respectfully Submitted

Teresa DellaGiustina
School Committee Secretary

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