

**Farmington River Regional School District
Otis/Sandisfield
555 Main Road, Otis MA 01253
School Committee Meeting #407
Monday, October 4, 2021, 7:00PM
via ZOOM**

The meeting was called to order by Carol Lombardo at 7:05 P.M.

Community Participation: Aimee Magovern from Otis spoke up and asked when a discussion about the decision that Sandisfield has made to look for alternative schooling for their district is going to happen. She would like to know what the plan is moving forward. There was no response made to Mrs. Magovern.

Guests: None

Members Absent: Jess Drenga

1. **Approval of minutes #406:** Submitted minutes #406 were voted on and unanimously approved by all School Committee Members.
2. **Principal/Superintendent updates:** Tom Nadolny started with asking the Committee's thoughts on having parent/teacher conferences in-person rather than ZOOM. There are only a few teachers that do not want in-person meetings and would like to conduct the meetings via ZOOM. Those select teachers will be conducting their ZOOM meetings in school rather than from their homes. Arlene Tolopko feels this is a crucial step for parents to regain trust and being comfortable towards teachers again. She feels everyone knows of the protocol of social distancing and precautions, so this is a great idea. Carl Nett asked if the teachers agree with the in-person meetings. Tom said the majority wants to be in-person. Carl agrees with Arlene's feelings supporting in-person parent/teacher conferences.

Tom overviewed the MCAS scores. Laurie Flower will be in next month to give her presentation of the overall MCAS results. Tom summarized that Grade 3 hit a homerun all around. Thanks are due to Mrs. Silk and Mrs. Oleksak for their hard work. There were no students in the category of does not meet expectations. The growth was amazing. There was a substantial increase to the exceeds expectations category.

Grade 4 has some improvement as well. Fourteen percent out of fourteen students, did not meet expectations. Twenty-nine percent were partially meeting expectations and forty-three percent met expectations. There was a jump in students exceeding expectations, which we did not have in the last testing cycle in 2019 and 2018. Great job to Mrs. Mielke.

The data for 5th Grade is not available. Tom thinks the reason for the lack of data is the number of students in the class. They usually do not record data until the class size is ten and up, there are nine students participating in 5th Grade. With that said, what we do know is Grade 5 all around did not have great scores. Jana Bush and Laurie Flower are going to work alongside Mr. Keller with the students who need extra attention in Math. Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Flower will also assist students that could use the enrichment programming.

Sixth grade had 10% of students not meeting state expectations. Thirty percent were partially meeting state expectations, which is a reduction from the previous testing cycle. The big jump was in ELA. The students increased from 29% to 60% in meeting expectations. In 2018, ELA was at 48%. Twenty percent did not meet state expectations in Math, 70% partially met state expectations, and 10% met expectations. The previous testing cycle was at 14% for meeting state expectations.

We are looking into getting students into the category of meeting or exceeding expectations. Tom likes to look at student growth percentiles. He looks for at least 55% growth for students. Mr. Foster did a great job with a student before the student moved on to 7th grade this year. This student grew 98% by the end of 6th grade.

Laurie Flower will go over more information next month with her presentation on MCAS.

Mr. Nadolny wanted to share comparisons with other districts' MCAS scores. Overall, the state percentage for met or exceeded expectations for ELA was 49%. Farmington River scored 51%. Math we are at 27%. The state is at 33%. In the previous cycle we were at the bottom of the state percentile for meeting and exceeding expectations. Farmington River made great growth this past year. We are one of four districts that showed growth. Many of our remote students last year exceeded expectations. Which means the teachers did a great job in keeping the remote students involved with the curriculum. Carl Nett stated with agreement of Tom, that once the testing results come back for 5th grade, the percentile could go up depending on how well the students tested. Tom feels we still need to improve on our math curriculum, but we are improving. Jen Hibbins asked if we should continue with Go Math, or if updating would be a better approach. Tom stated that he changed the scheduling around so there is more focus on ELA and Math. The schedules are block schedule times. ELA and Math are each 90 minutes long now. Paraprofessionals are going to help during the scheduled time for ELA and Math. Tom feels the reason students did so well this year is due to being in school all last year. Tom stated that a new Reading and Writing Programs are needed. We can try to purchase a new program next year if possible. New programs usually take around 3 years to see the benefits of the curriculum.

Arlene asked Tom if he shared the information with the Sandisfield residents. Tom stated that he has not because he wanted to go over the information with the School Committee first. He will send out something soon. Arlene then stated that the residents should know the outcome because they were told how dismal Farmington River School is, and it is not

true based on the MCAS scores this year. Arlene did not feel as if the meeting that the Sandisfield School Options held was truthful. There has been improvement. Tom wants to stay out of the middle of that topic between members and towns, but he does want to confront a few issues. Most of the issues come out of the Sandisfield Times. Tom has been in touch with a reporter a couple of times providing corrected information, which is not being published in the Times. Tom is frustrated. People think he is slacking and spending money like an open faucet, saying he is not concerned with the taxpayers of Sandisfield. This is not true. One complaint was why curriculum is so outdated. Why don't we buy better material? Tom stated that new curriculum is expensive. When you have to present a budget to be passed through towns and you must cut back, big budget items need to be cut like curriculum. We cannot cut teachers. This has been an issue for years. When you start reading information in the paper that is not true, factually incorrect, it is frustrating. For instance, "When the school underspent the budget by some \$450,000 leaving cash strapped Sandisfield to believe the taxpayers will get half the sum refunded instead the financial team of the school without consultation to spend all that money on repairs to the building and a new parking lot prompted a fierce response from the Sandisfield school committee." Tom agreed with that, but went on to state and read, a committee member complained to the state, "the malfeasance was illegal and due course the state agreed and wrapped the school administration over their knuckles." That was not true. The state never wrapped the administration over the knuckles. The state said everything was fine. It is a gray area to use that money to pay for the paving, so a change was made. Tom did ask the reporter to attend the last meeting because of the bad information he was given in hopes to get correct information out to the public. The incorrect information was printed anyway. An email was sent to the reporter by Tom stating discussions and debates are more than welcome. That is what Tom expects from the towns. Tom also wrote back stating that he received incorrect information which was then published and should be corrected in the paper. The people of Sandisfield need to make informed decisions on facts. Then the Sandisfield Times posted more incorrect information on the COVID cluster. The paper stated that we did not transport the middle and high school students. This was not true. Tom drove a van himself to get students to school. There were countless hours trying to find transportation for the district. Information like this does not get printed in the paper.

The comments about the teachers from the Sandisfield Options Committee's meeting makes Tom furious and makes the teachers furious as well. They come to work and teach their students with their best ability every day. After all their time and work, they were referred as lousy teachers. The comments are far from the truth. Tom did apologize for ranting, and he feels he should not have been so vocal, but someone has to say something about all the incorrect information at some point and not sit back and let this happen. Tom will send a rebuttal back to this committee with all the inaccuracies from the presentation. Tom is planning to review all the slides. This way the parents of Sandisfield can make an informed decision based on correct information. The Sandisfield Options Committee talked about how bad Farmington River School is (a Level 2 school), but the school that was being referred to send our students to is under targeted assistance by the state. They are ranked lower than Farmington River. Carl Nett asked Tom if he knew why they are under targeted assistance. Tom stated because of participation and MCAS

scores. Carl agreed. Carl asked Tom if he wanted to have a discussion on the MCAS results now, in this meeting or wait? Tom does not want to have a discussion at all. Tom said he will present everything to the parents, so the parents can make an informed decision. The level of the school was never brought up. Carl stated that every shred of information that was given was taken right from the DOE website. The information was stated as being the 2019 results because the 2020 results were not out yet. As far as The Sandisfield Times goes, no one tells that reporter what to write. He picks his own words. Carl then stated it is hard to push back against the data from the DOE website, and Tom needs to deal with the reporter as far as the Sandisfield Times goes. Tom does agree that the MCAS scores do need to improve. There was a brief debate between Tom and Carl concerning what the Sandisfield Times posted and quoted. After, Tom suggested they need to speak to the reporter about what was printed.

Arlene Tolopko stated that there was not one positive word coming from the Sandisfield Options Committee. They made it seem as if Farmington River was the worst school in the state when they ranked sixth. Why could they have not said anything positive like we were one of six schools that stayed open to teach our students, or Tom driving the vans for our students to get to school. Carl stressed that the data that was presented was from 2019. Nothing new is available yet to report. Arlene would like Carl to come back with a report of the positive aspects of the school. Carl did mention that there are positives in the new data set. Arlene thinks that the meeting was a travesty, and it effected every parent and resident in Sandisfield and Otis. Many people are upset over this because they love Farmington River School. Carl commented that the data showed steady deterioration since 2014.

3. **Financial updates.** Eric Jesner asked the school committee for their vote to authorize him to sign a new 5-year contract for the leased office copier. Eric explained how the copier company to which we are leasing from now; the contract is up. The contract is usually a 5-year contract. We are paying approximately two hundred dollars a month for this copier. Eric is trying to eventually get all the copiers and printers under the same contract, but he must wait 2 years for the second copier's contract to expire.

Carl would like Eric to bring up items to be voted by the School Committee sooner in the future so there is time to research or look over the information presented. Also, Carl feels the process would be simpler or clearer if Eric presented the costs at the time of voting. Eric mentioned that he does not need the vote this evening, he needs the vote by November's meeting that is why he is asking for authorization tonight. Eric also explained that he is only asking for authorization from the School Committee to sign the 5-year contract, not approval of the cost of the contract. He would hope that the School Committee would trust that he is doing his job and making decisions appropriately for the benefit of the school. In the past, the Business Manager has always taken care of the contracts. Eric found out that any contract over 3 years needs to be authorized by the School Committee, therefore he is presenting the topic to School Committee. Eric wants to make sure he follows the correct protocol.

Carol Lombardo motioned to authorize Eric Jesner to sign a 5-year contract for the leasing of the front office copier. Roger Kohler seconded the motion. All were in favor of authorizing Eric to sign a 5-year contract to lease the front office copier.

Eric asked for another vote along the same lines. He is asking for the authorization from the School Committee to sign a 5-year contract with Otis Elevator Company for services and maintenance of the elevator. The contract would save on services that are needed yearly and the contract is with the same company that installed the elevator. Deb Fogel motioned to give the Business Manager authorization to sign a 5-year contract with Otis Elevator for servicing the elevator at Farmington River School. Arlene Tolopko seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously passed.

Eric moved on to a discussion on the ESSER II Grant. Eric shared a report with the progress of where we are at with the ESSER II Grant after the summer. Roger questioned why we are not spending any money on custodial supplies. Eric explained they haven't applied money to that account yet, but there are plans to purchase cleaning supplies. Jennifer Hibbins asked if money could be allocated for after school programming. Eric said potentially yes. Tom spoke up and said that the after-school programming is listed under the ESSER III grant. The programming will include enrichment, tutoring, physical education, wellness, and photography, to name a few. The programming will begin as soon as we have the funds to support the programming. Tom must first post the positions for staffing the programming.

4. **Discussion on continuing ZOOM meetings.** Tom spoke to Laurie Flower about continuing ZOOM meetings when we return to in-person meetings. Laurie will be able to help set this up. Carol will get in touch with Laurie to see about setting up ZOOM meetings when the time comes for in-person meetings.
5. **Adjournment.** Roger Kohler motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 P.M. Deb Fogel seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted:

Teresa DellaGiustina, School Committee Secretary

tld