

**WILLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
Tuesday, August 11, 2020  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
**Via Online Public Zoom Video Conference**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Audio Recording: Yes

Video Recording: Yes

Notes Taken: Yes

**Members Present**

Herb Arico - Chairman

Elena Testa - Vice Chairman

Michelle Doucette Cunningham - Secretary

Ann Grosjean

Tracey Anderson

Donna Cook

Laura Rodriguez

**Members Absent**

**Also Present**

Superintendent of Schools, Phil Stevens

Members of the Public

**Chairman Herb Arico called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.**

Chairman Arico led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Present to Speak**

Anthony Dymkowski of 19 Ridgewood Road was present to speak. He stated my son and daughter are students at Center Elementary School, we had a meeting last evening with Superintendent Stevens and I would first like to say we appreciate all the plans and work that Superintendent Stevens and his staff have done. He has gone above and beyond and we greatly appreciate it. The fact that he looks out for his students as much as he does is appreciated by just about every parent. One of the discussions we had last night revolved around the inclusion of student teachers and students from the University of Connecticut and some concern was stressed that perhaps this might not be a good idea considering the typical behavior of the typical college student regardless of whether or not they are an education student. I think we can all relate based on what we have seen in the media of people in their 20s behaving in

manners that may not be the smartest regarding the current health pandemic. I just wanted to voice that concern and see if there is some way accommodations can be made so that students can opt out of classes that have those UConn students or if there is some way that this arrangement can be put off for this year. I understand Superintendent Stevens' concern regarding the agreement he made with the University of Connecticut, but I feel that under these unique circumstances with the current health crisis, that perhaps that agreement could be overlooked for this year or other arrangements could be made to not include these UConn students in the classroom.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Arico stated I'm pleased to communicate an update of the Willington Public Schools and services. The Willington Public Schools established a Reopening Advisory Committee and this evening the BOE and the Superintendent will review the plan they have developed. In addition to the challenges necessary to control the COVID pandemic, this year Willington Public Schools will make every effort to still offer high quality and cost education for its students.

### **Communications**

A communication was received from Michelle Cunningham regarding a discussion on the behavioral and mental health services for Willington public school students. That communication was emailed to all board members. The letter was dated July 30.

### **Superintendent Report**

#### **Staffing**

Superintendent Stevens stated food Services Director Don Castle needed to resign for personal reasons and we hired Stephanie Knight today.

#### **Grade 2 teacher:**

Superintendent Stevens stated we hired Clarey Pass today to fill our grade 2 opening. She was an intern at Center School last year and recently graduated from UConn.

#### **2020-2021 convocation:**

Superintendent Stevens Stated we are in the process of planning our school opening. Under normal circumstances we would have the schedule for you today, but it is not complete yet.

### **Financial Report**

#### **2020-2021 budget update:**

Superintendent Stevens stated we are still in the training phase of our new software and the balance sheet you have in front of you may not include all the purchase orders that exist. Tish, our accounts payable employee, is the only person entering PO's for the district at this time. Our last training was canceled because of the power outage and is being rescheduled. We encumbered the transportation account, but we will be getting reimbursements for Region 19. We will get into some of these accounts when we get to the COVID-19 expenses later in the agenda.

The only programs I wanted to highlight tonight was Center School and the remaining balance of \$163,000, one of the items there is our current enrollment is still around 30 for kindergarten and so we are not hiring a third teacher at this time so there are extra funds there. Program 4 the transportation appears to be in the negative, when we get money back from region 19 that will bring that balance back above zero. Hall School has the \$62,000 balance and we have not filled the spanish position so there's money there. Once training is complete you will have a nice clean report for September.

## **New Business**

### **Presentation: Willington Public Schools' Return to School Plan**

Superintendent Stevens stated I think the best way for me to present this is to walk you through a day. The State of Connecticut released their Adapt, Advance, Achieve Plan for school districts to reopen in the fall and they released it on June 29th. They didn't even give us a month to submit our response. It was due July 24th and the plan as you know is a 50 page document with extensive attachments and we are still getting additions and support documents. We created our Re-opening Advisory Committee with over 20 stakeholders including several parents and their task was to break off into sub committees and meet the requirements set forth by the state for re-opening. There are items that you have choice on and items you have no choice on. I want to take a moment to thank those parents who spent a lot of time with us and we are meeting again on Thursday. We also had a whole host of teachers and administrators who have put a lot of time into this plan. The plan is still a draft and will continue to be a draft because it is meant to continually evolve as we get more information. In this plan our number one concern is the health and safety of our students and right behind that is student learning.

Every district was required to develop three plans, a plan that was all in meaning all students on campus, a plan that was a hybrid model which was some students on campus and some learning remotely and the last was all students learning remotely. The intention of the hybrid model is to take 50% of your students and have much smaller class sizes. For example, group A goes to school two days a week, everyone would be remote learning on Wednesday, and then group B would go Thursday and Friday. The other point of the hybrid model is to have a much smaller group of students on the buses. The easiest way to explain our plan and to make it come to life is to walk you through a day on campus. Several items the committee is recommending have a price tag. The committee was adamant about several things and I will talk about what those things are.

Superintendent Stevens stated for any student who is taking transportation, we have done away with group bus stops for the year so we can avoid students being near each other and because we have a significantly smaller number of students who are being transported. When a student gets on the bus they have to wear a mask. When students load the bus they have to load back to front, there are no assigned seats so when they get on they can sit with siblings but we will have them load in a certain pattern so they are spaced as best they can. When a student gets on the bus the bus driver is doing a quick observation of them, they won't be doing temperature checks or asking questions but if they see someone that looks blatantly ill, they will call the school and ask that child to hold there with their parents. Every bus driver, staff member and parent is going to be responsible for completing what we hope to be a digital questionnaire every morning which is basically 4-6 COVID questions. We are trying to make this electronic so that it's quick and we are still trying to make it so that if the student gets to school and the parent has not completed the questionnaire we will be calling them. If you do not take transportation to school, and you are driven in, which is a large number of students, there is no early arrival this year to either of our schools. We have avoided any times in which students are congregating and in large groups where they are not in their cohorts. This means 7:25 A.M. starts drop off at Hall School and 8:25 A.M. at Center School. We know this is a pain for some parents, but it avoids the congregation and meets our contractual time for our staff. Students when they get dropped off would normally wait in the hallway or in the library but they will not do this anymore. They will go straight to their classrooms. We are working on procuring an app called

KidCheck which allows you to check a child into school, it's touchless so if a parent drops their child off we can check that student into school and we will also use this app as we dismiss students. It is done by telephone number and parents will be able to send in and say this is the person who is picking my child up, we can have their pictures on there if we want, we can match their phone numbers, it is meant to streamline the process. We may need to flip flop our arrival and dismissal procedures, the upper lot at Center School might be the bus lot and the lower lot might be the drop off because if we have 110 cars dropping off and picking up, we need space. Building access at drop off by parents is limited. We are really going to limit who comes into our buildings and any meetings during the day are trying to be held online. We will have a drop off for parents to use if for example someone forgets their lunch etc. Superintendent Stevens stated when a student gets into school they will be wearing a mask, when students get on the bus they will be wearing masks, and all staff members will be wearing masks. We purchased clear masks for all of our staff members so that students can see their faces. This was intentional as classrooms are looking a little plain and we want them to see smiles. When students enter into the building there will be hand sanitizer and they will sanitize. We are working on getting touchless hand sanitizer appliances outside every classroom, they are backordered for now we will put pump sanitizers at every classroom so they can sanitize on the way in and out. We are not using cubbies or lockers at either school so we are asking students to not bring any additional items unless it has to do with their school work. They will hang their backpacks on their chair or put them behind their chair. Students are all in cohorts which means those fourteen students stay together all day long and do not mix with any other cohort. If they have something they have to go to they do it as a group. Students are all assigned a desk and will all have a bin with their materials. We have purchased the bins which are about 9x12 and can fit a chromebook, sketch pad, pens, pencils, etc. All items will be in a bin for each student. We will also be providing a bin for students who are remote learning, because if we are going to ask them to do something their parents will have that bin and if they come back to school they are expected to bring that bin.

Superintendent Stevens shared a photo of a classroom holding fourteen students. Superintendent Stevens stated as you can see there are not a lot of materials and this is because most of the materials are stored. Teachers will have a little room for materials in the classroom but remember these students won't be sharing materials so we have put a lot of the materials away so the temptation isn't there. The teachers will have a desk where they can work with students. Each of the desks are four feet apart but if we had a classroom smaller than fourteen, we can stretch them out even more. Superintendent Stevens shared a photo of a classroom with nineteen students and stated there is the same 4 foot spacing for these desks. Superintendent Stevens also shared a photo of a middle school classroom with 21 students. He stated we will not have a classroom of 21 but this is just to show you how these look with the spacing. The National Pediatric Association states that the minimum spacing is three feet but I will tell you we will probably achieve six feet based on the number of students who are choosing remote learning.

Superintendent Stevens stated our survey data at this point came in with about 219 responses from our families. We have over 100 students who are choosing remote learning already, 10 are withdrawing to do just straight home-schooling, and of those students who are attending on campus over 100 will not take transportation at all and a large number of students will only be taking transportation one way. Our buses are going to be thinner and our classrooms will be thinner.

Superintendent Stevens stated I want to address why I don't think we need to go hybrid. You have probably heard on the news that a lot of districts are saying they are going to a hybrid model. The state forced us to make a decision last week about how we believed we would open. My response because of what I saw on the survey data, is that we would be opening in full. Opening in full still means we still have 100 students that are learning from home so our numbers might be 12 in a classroom as of right now. If you went to a different district, who normally have class sizes of 24 and went to a hybrid model they would now be in classes of 12 which is what we have in full. This is the reason I am not choosing to go hybrid at this point in time. The other reason is a hybrid model in my opinion really creates a hardship on parents. Students are

in the district for two days and remote learning for three. That means someone needs to be there with those children and if we can keep those students in school at the same numbers as someone else can do with hybrid, I think we should.

Superintendent Stevens stated students will have a schedule just as they normally would. The schedules are going to look different until this pandemic lifts. Our schedules will include mask breaks built in, our intention is to offer mask breaks every hour for about 5 minutes and we are building these breaks into our schedules so that they are guaranteed. There will be one mask break each day that is a little bit longer perhaps a recess and we are providing that pre-k through 8th grade. We are looking at purchasing what I call circus tents so that if it rains we still have a place for students and staff to go to get a mask break. I anticipate we will be doing outdoor instruction as much as possible because if we are outside, we decrease our risk. I know the staff will be finding spaces outside and will be working on identifying those spaces. Our unified arts classes will look different as most of them will take place in that cohort's classroom so that teacher would come into that classroom, sanitize, sign in for contact tracing purposes, and teach their class in that classroom. PE can happen in the gym with masks on or they can go outside. Music is one of the areas with more limitations with singing and playing an instrument because of the droplets that are released when singing or playing. I will say that Tracie Canestrari has done a boat load of research and pulled all the signage she can to safely do band while still following guidelines. For example, there are special masks for students who play the trumpet that go over the trumpet's mouthpiece so they can still blow into the instrument as well as a cover for the end of the trumpet. They also have greater spacing requirements and may have to do some of this outside. There will not be pullouts by instrument such as trumpet players coming from different classes. If she does a pull out group from a 5th grade classroom, she has to pull from that same cohort. The music program will operate the same way.

If a student or staff member needs to leave the classroom they need to sign out and they need to wash their hands. If a student is going to the bathroom they have to wash their hands before they leave the classroom. We have a limit on the number of students in the bathroom at any given time. The students will need to sanitize before re-entering the classroom. All of our buildings will have social distancing and other signage throughout.

Superintendent Stevens stated there will be no group lunches as they will be in the classrooms and this will be the only time students are allowed to take their masks off if they are taking a drink or eating in their classroom. He anticipates that there will be teachers who take their classes outside to eat lunch. We are provisioning wipes to clean desks as well as providing the classroom teachers spray bottles with disinfectant. They need to use these disinfectants before having students work one on one with them at the front table as well as in between each student visiting that table. The teacher has to wipe down the table and chair and allow it to sit for three minutes before having the next student sit down.

Superintendent Stevens stated recess will be done in cohorts. Recess is one of the most challenging areas that our committee is working on. This is because the majority of recess activities are hands-on. The playscapes will not be open as we do not have the personnel to wipe the playscapes down in between uses by each cohort. If there are two or three classes out at recess at the same time we will have to spray paint gridlines and each classroom will have to stay within their grid. We are working on creative solutions for recess.

Superintendent Stevens stated if a student is leaving the classroom with symptoms the teacher is to call the nurses office to let them know that the student is coming. At that time the nurse will be getting into full PPE. We have an isolation room in both nurses offices. It is a separate room from the nurses office behind a closed door but has glass so we can still observe the student. We are required to have the isolation room. If a student is going to be picked up from school, the parent will buzz and never actually come inside the building, we will escort that student out. They will again use the app to sign their child out.

Superintendent Stevens stated we are still waiting on clear guidelines for health protocols including how long you have to stay out, how many symptoms, who needs a test, if you get a negative test but have symptoms can you come back to school, etc. I have a conference call tomorrow with Eastern Highlands Health District. I am confident we will have this information by the start of school but we are still working to identify all the specific criteria that we will utilize.

Superintendent Stevens stated buses will unload one at a time and at dismissal they will load one at a time. We will do student pick up at the same time but we might have to start student pick up a little bit earlier and we need to make sure all of our students are out of the classroom at a certain time as required. Our committee is very adamant about hiring utility support people because the number of people it is going to take to do the things we need to do is significant. These are temporary people who could be bus monitors at the start of school, help clean buses in between runs, substitutes or paraprofessionals, etc. Every Superintendent right now is worried about substitute teachers. If I don't have a teacher for a classroom we are stuck and would have to have emergency closings. These utility people could deliver lunches, offer support in the nurse's office, clean touch points throughout the day, provide teacher coverage, etc.

Superintendent Stevens stated the state is working on guidelines as to what moves us from full in to hybrid to remote and they are looking at it regionally. We are on the very border of our region, Tolland is in a different region. Our region goes all the way out to the Rhode Island border so if they have an outbreak in Killingly we are lumped into that group. The Department of Health has said they are going to look at the number of cases per 100,000 as well as locally. If we are ok in Willington but there is an outbreak in Killingly, I will advocate that I don't recommend us going remote. If cases in our area or in Willington spike that is when I would suggest we change our model and we would have to consult with the State Department of Education, our nursing liaison, and Eastern Highlands Health District.

Superintendent Stevens stated we have a lot of students who will be learning remotely. We are working with teachers to be able to Zoom at certain times of the day so that if someone at home wants to receive live instruction they can. They will only see the teacher and they will not see their classmates or the other students on zoom. I am not requiring teachers to do this for a 60 minute lesson but we are working on small snapshots, maybe an introduction to a lesson with 10-12 minutes then they will pause it. If the student that is learning remote is not there for the Zoom lesson, that video will be posted later in the day. If we go fully remote it will be the same thing, a teacher could pre-record something for students or they can go live at a certain time with the video being posted afterward.

Superintendent Stevens stated a lot of places are starting with hybrid models and this is a challenge because a lot of our teachers live in other districts and now their children are only going to school two days a week. One of the things I've been working on with Parks and Rec, Human Services, and local daycares is trying to find methods to provide local and on site childcare for staff because if our teachers can't be here we can't have school.

Superintendent Stevens stated as you saw, part of our plan includes providing social and emotional support for both our students and staff. Our staff members were a little shocked when I showed them pictures of our classrooms and I know they will need support too. This is a challenging time for all so we are trying to provide strategies whether we are remote, hybrid, or full in.

Superintendent Stevens stated we have spent a significant amount of time and money planning and prepping for our cleaning protocols. Our bathrooms will be cleaned twice during the day. They will be closed for 10 minutes at staggered times and custodians will go in with their backpack sprayers and disinfect. They will be cleaning touch points throughout the day and also using the backpack sprayers at the end of each day to spray down everything including the classrooms.

Superintendent Stevens stated as you can imagine all of these changes will need some extra professional development for our staff so they can know and follow our protocols. I will be promoting some additional professional development days and adjusting our calendar accordingly.

Superintendent Stevens stated we must meet the Department of Health's requirements for ventilation. A reasonable way to do this that meets requirements is to open windows although this does not exchange air within the buildings. We hired Colliers International to come in and do an evaluation of our ventilation systems at both schools. I just got the report this afternoon but we are on the right track. Center School has an intake and exhaust system in the lower wing so we are making sure all of the fans and other aspects are functioning properly. Any areas that are air conditioned we will not be using when students are in the room. The upper wing at Center School has some issues. When they put on the new roof they sealed the intake and exhaust system and we were told we didn't need it. All of the duct work is in the upper wing and is closed off so we have a quote coming in to open up that roof and put in an exhaust and intake without voiding our roof warranty. Any class that does not have this by the start of school, we will put window fans in to blow air out of the classroom temporarily. At Hall School the 12 classrooms that students will be in were built in the 50s, they don't have any duct work and no intake/exhaust. I will be sharing the bill for getting these later tonight. We would put the temporary fans in these classrooms with the windows open as a short term solution but long term we will need a better solution.

Chairman Arico asked if students who are learning remote will miss out on the protocol discussed. Also if we purchase tents, are they only good while the weather is nice. Chairman Arico stated I believe we put in a lot of sinks at Center School within the classrooms so they are probably in good shape but Hall School is the opposite. How will we cope with that?

Superintendent Stevens replied the state is really pushing in person learning at this point. We are still required to educate students whose families are choosing to learn remotely and it may look a little different than what is in the classroom. The state has recently put out additional guidelines for this on their website and I will be going through them. I could not move on the tents because it is not a budgeted item. You would have to vote on it and I will say they are expensive. Every room we are putting students into has a sink at both buildings.

Ann Grosjean stated I heard an excellent suggestion on one of the Governor's reports about one district breaking arts, music, P.E, etc into blocks so students might have art first for six weeks then music for the next six weeks, etc. This decreased the exposure because these teachers are not going into every classroom every day. I don't know if this was something you considered.

Superintendent Stevens replied yes we are considering this and it's one reason we are looking at scheduling and trying to figure out shared staff to see if there is a way we can limit exposure.

Ann Grosjean asked, what is the comfort level of the staff? Are they comfortable coming back?

Superintendent Stevens replied they are feeling the same way families are feeling. There is a lot of information out there. They are worried. I have had three staff Zooms so far and they have been well attended. I think they are feeling more confident in the things we are putting into place but it is hard until you actually can see it and live it. This is why I say the emotional piece is just as critical for our staff as it is for our students. I'm trying to be as transparent as possible.

Ann Grosjean asked if there are options if someone cannot return health wise?

Superintendent Stevens replied there are very specific guidelines that are under a branch of FMLA where they would have to meet certain criteria. I have a phone call with the attorney tomorrow to look at some of the requests. If someone cannot be there we have to pay someone else to take their spot. This is why we are looking at things like childcare for our staff. I have to honor the act around this piece of the FMLA for

COVID if the person does meet the requirements.

Ann Grosjean stated what if the staff's children were allowed to come to Willington and attend school here. Superintendent Stevens replied we are looking at an option that other towns have offered where those families could come here for one year with no tuition. We are collecting data on ages because we don't want to overwhelm any specific cohort.

Donna Cook stated I really like Ann's idea of looking into the staff's children joining our classes. I was wondering about the long term ramifications of the hand sanitizer, will we be allowing kids to bring moisturizer?

Superintendent Stevens replied yes they definitely can.

Donna Cook asked if a cohort could possibly use the playscape 1 day per week then let it sit a couple days before the next cohort uses it for the day.

Superintendent Stevens replied I can look into that idea.

Donna Cook stated since there is going to be a decrease in bus riders, can we decrease the number of buses we have to save some money and help offset some of the other costs?

Superintendent Stevens replied we are looking into that right now and we are doing another survey in which parents will officially let us know how their child will be getting to school so we can finalize our routes and the number of students on each bus.

Donna Cook asked if it made sense to have the bus drivers wipe down and clean their bus instead of having a separate bus monitor to add to the number of people exposed to the bus.

Superintendent Stevens replied we may need bus monitors for the first couple weeks to make sure kids are wearing their masks and know their expectations when they get on the bus. Then after that we can look into just having the bus driver take care of these things.

Donna Cook stated I just heard about Owl which is an electronic device that goes in the classroom and what it does is while the teacher is teaching if a student raises their hand the kids learning remote can see that students hand and hear their question which makes it much more interactive.

Superintendent Stevens replied we have looked at a couple things but I am trying to spend money on things we can utilize long term instead of things we are never going to use again but I will definitely look at that.

Michelle Doucette Cuninghame stated it feels like it's a pretty heavy lift for teachers to be doing the teaching and doing the recording and monitoring/supporting kids who are not in their classroom. Is there any thought to redistributing staff so that a person that may be less comfortable face to face with students is doing some of the live learning and the other staff are doing the face to face.

Superintendent Stevens replied our staff are now all pros with Zoom. We have had conversations about this. I am trying to simplify it by asking them to hit record at the beginning of the lesson and then go about the lesson as they normally would. It is a little bit harder and if they wanted to pre-record themselves for the class and the students at home they could do that. I'm not expecting them to record the whole lesson, just the core instruction. There will be a learning curve but we will work with our staff.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated I am very concerned about staff and teachers who might be in the building who don't have health insurance or the option to get health insurance especially the utility people and bus drivers. I think it's very important to not have people who have an incentive to show up at work a little bit sick, we want them to be able to stay home and we want them to be able to go to the doctors if they are even a little bit sick. What plans do we have in place for this?

Superintendent Stevens replied I will discuss this when we talk about costs. I don't think there is anyone else in the building that does not have access to health insurance.

Ann Grosjean asked if everyone has adequate sick time so they wouldn't feel as though they have to come in or lose a day's pay.

Superintendent Stevens replied this is individual and it depends on what they have for sick time. They can still take sick leave; they just wouldn't be paid for it if they are beyond their days.

Ann Grosjean asked if there will need to be memorandums of understanding done with the different groups.

Superintendent Stevens replied yes. I shared the bargaining letter from the teachers union, we were supposed to meet last week but due to the storm we are meeting this Thursday to talk over some items that we have gone back and forth on and then they would need to be approved by the board. We are trying to do this without spending money on attorneys and a lot of their requests are in our plan.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated you have some control over what happens to students while they are in school but anything that happens outside of that. I might suggest providing teachers and parents with additional information on the importance of maintaining the cohorts. For example if you put someone with their neighbor who they are going to play with anyways, you reduce the likelihood of one of them spreading it to both of the classrooms. Same goes for people who are in the same after school or childcare programs.

Superintendent Stevens replied we can control what happens during the school day but we can't always control what happens otherwise.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated we have to educate the parents about these choices as well.

Laura Rodriduez stated I liked Ann's idea about unified arts as this was definitely a concern of mine because they are crossing cohorts as well as some of those teachers going to both schools. My other concern is the utility people who are going to be popping into different cohorts as either substitutes or paraprofessionals again they are crossing cohorts. I don't know how many people you are thinking of hiring but if there is a way to have them only working with certain cohorts to again minimize the exposure. Lastly, I know you must have teachers who are in the vulnerable population who may be uncomfortable with face to face learning. Have you looked at them switching to being responsible for the online learning that they could do without being in the classroom?

Superintendent Stevens replied we did look at that and the issue that we are finding is say I have three sections and thirty kids. Those kids would be in classes of ten but if I take away one of those sections they are now in classes of fifteen. Then if they start coming back from remote learning, I have to put them into the classroom with the teacher they were working with and they only need to give us one weeks notice.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated Hartford had two types of hybrid. One was the kind where they could come back in a week and the other was called a hybrid academy which was for the entire semester. I'm sure they have a lot more resources given their size but there may be some other districts that have

models we could look at.

Superintendent Stevens replied Ellington is doing a model where if the student opts out of in class learning they have to do the remote learning for at least the semester, however legally my interpretation was we need to allow students back to on site learning as they want.

Chairman Arico stated we have teachers, some students, custodians, and food service workers all in the building which is fine, but what about for example deliveries to the food service department. It's not just the staff and kids anymore. Also mentioned were UConn students or repair people. Even if we have these protocols in place, we still have a large number of people who have access to the schools.

Superintendent Stevens replied we have addressed some of these areas. Any deliveries we can take outside we will do so. If we have to have a repair man come in they or anyone else will have to be wearing a mask and we will be asking them the 6 question Covid questionnaire. Anyone coming into our buildings or working in our buildings has to follow our protocol. I'm glad one of the parents brought up the UConn students because we did discuss that a lot and it is on our agenda to discuss at tomorrow's meeting with Eastern Highlands. We are looking at a few interns and a few student teachers between the two buildings. We are meeting with the advisor for those students and we will be clear with them that if I see something that is alarming, I can request they not come back into the building. This takes a community effort, if we have one family that is not being safe and following protocol that's all it takes.

Chairman Arico asked what are the chances of them breaking down the regions so that Willington isn't grouped in with towns all the way to the Rhode Island border.

Superintendent Stevens replied they divided the regions in big chunks and I'm hoping that's only going to be one of the statistics. They did add secondary factors which are more local.

Ann Grosjean asked if Mansfield and Ashford are in our region.

Superintendent Stevens replied yes.

### **COVID-19 reopening expenses**

Superintendent Stevens stated the board got a rough copy of the cost estimate and as I mentioned this is always changing. The first item is the utility staff and this is for the six people the committee is recommending. If we don't need them for subs that day we would distribute them evenly 3 at Hall and 3 at Center. They would be working 8 hour days for what we believe will be 78 days. These folks would be bus monitors, cleaning support, duty coverage, substitute teachers, they would do it all. We had mentioned insurance and why would someone come in and do this job. Would they come in and do this job for \$12/hour which is minimum wage. If we offer benefits, I would like to hire these 6 people through the holiday break. I would like the ability to see what comes in for example if someone comes in with a bachelor's degree, they could substitute teach for us and I would like to hire them at a higher rate. If someone comes in with a high school diploma but could still do the work maybe that's a lower rate. I learned that because of the Affordable Care Act, the more you pay someone the more you can charge them for insurance. If we were going to hire these people through December, your salary cost for \$12/hour would be \$44,926 if you pay them \$13.50/hour it would be \$50,544 and \$15/hour would be \$56,160. A substitute with a bachelors is making around \$13.50/hour. When we talk about insurance, we are required to provide insurance for anyone working over 30 hours per week. If the person is still on their parent's or spouse's insurance we can offer a \$500 waiver for no insurance. I'm trying to match this to the WESS group to a degree. There is a law called the MERA law which requires that after 120 calendar days, I have to go back to the union and say we have to negotiate this if we want to continue. Their benefits would

match the union workers with an HSA deposit of 62.5% of the deductible. The board pays 84% of the insurance and those employees pay 16%. We could adjust that depending on how you want to do it. The Affordable Care Act is a percentage and it's a calculation based on salary. The HSA deposit for 6 employees if they were single would be \$780, if it's for the employee plus one or a family it would be \$1,560 for the six employees. The max cost for insurance for six people would be \$47,964 which is the 16% WESS rate plus the HSA deposit. I don't know how we would do this plan without these six utility people. If we hire these people we guarantee them work through December, is there work for them to do if our students are remote? My answer is yes. We would still be sending buses to deliver lunches, we could do a ton of painting in our buildings, we could have them tutoring students, they could substitute for a teacher who is out, there are a ton of things. If we shut down for 2-5 days due to a positive case, they will be there helping our custodial staff. Again myself and the committee think they are a critical piece of the plan.

Donna Cook asked what is WESS?

Superintendent Stevens replied it is the group of support staff including custodians, secretaries, nurses and paraprofessionals (Willington Education Support Staff). We would have to create a position within that union after 120 calendar days due to the MERA Act.

Donna Cook stated this seems like an incentive to find good people and hire them under one of the other sections and if it crosses over the 120 days it would be an incentive for them to continue because they get a lower insurance cost.

Ann Grosjean asked for an approximate total if we hired the 6 people.

Superintendent Stevens stated my initial ballpark was a maximum of \$100,000 to get us to December which would be \$56,160 if all six made the \$15/hour plus the \$47,964 for insurance.

Superintendent Stevens stated the other big ticket item that is not budgeted but critical to our plan is the tent. I have talked to several tent companies and we started looking into rentals.

Chairman Arico asked if the tents are open or do they have sides.

Superintendent Stevens replied it has to be open because as soon as you put sides on it, it becomes a building and you have to wear masks. The tents we have on the chart are 30' x 40' for \$6,500 each. It costs about \$500 a day to rent a tent that size. I talked to a company today that has seasonal rentals which I'm looking into. One of the things I asked them about is using the tents in December and the months following because even if the kids have jackets on we will still use them because they will enjoy the mask break. They said to me today, we can leave the tents up when there is snow, you just have to rake the snow off. I don't think Covid is going to just disappear so even if we go remote for a period of time, I think students will still need masks as they return so we will still have a use for the tents. When it comes to a point that we don't need the tents, I fully believe the town will want to keep them for various events. We can store them and use them or there is a huge market for used tents. If we purchase 6 tents which is what I'm recommending, this would allow mask breaks every hour for every class and also room for instruction. You could keep two and sell four when you're done.

Chairman Arico asked if the tents are secure safety wise?

Superintendent Stevens replied yes they are anchored down with commercial grade devices. I am concerned about the lead time on the tents due to manufacturing complications with Covid so if we approve this tonight I am looking to order them tomorrow but I can't guarantee they will be here for the start of

school so we may need to look into rentals for a period of time. You can lower them or take the tents off if you are having a storm. They would be on the soccer fields at Hall School and on the black top and fields at Center School.

Chairman Arico asked how many students can go in each tent?

Superintendent Stevens replied a 30' x 40' tent allows us to put 20 people in the tent remaining 6ft apart. If it looks like we only need to fit 16 people at a time we will purchase smaller tents which will save a little money.

Donna Cook asked how many people it takes to put the tents up or down? Are you hiring someone to come in and out them up? And what about needing to take them down quickly due to a storm?

Superintendent Stevens replied I have talked to our Public Works Director who has done this before and one of the options is hiring someone to help us put up the first tent with our Public Works team and custodial team so we make sure we know how to do it right. Then they would set up the remaining tents. We would need to stay prepared for storms because we would want to protect our investment.

Donna Cook asked if the different parts are labeled that way if they came apart we would know exactly how to put them back together.

Superintendent Stevens replied if they aren't already labeled we can do so.

Superintendent Stevens stated other costs we are potentially looking at include; tutors to balance the in-person instruction with the remote learning. This could be special education or intervention related along with providing the same quality education to students learning remotely. This is an hourly rate that is contractual. We estimated 100 hours which had a cost of \$3,417. Long-term substitutes are for if someone has to be out for over 40 days. We budgeted \$20,000 for a long-term sub for the year and I already have a long-term sub that I need to hire for one of our teachers. The other sub lines we have could be used up fast if we don't have the utility staff. Nurses are the one I'm most concerned about as they are always hard to find. If we don't have a nurse we would be closing the building.

Superintendent Stevens stated we were required to put in specific R-valued ventilation filters. R-13 is the minimum. Most schools did not have this and they are hard to find. We ordered a bunch of them totalling \$770, not a huge cost but something we wouldn't normally do. The inspection we had Colliers do was \$2,000. Their estimate for what it's going to cost to put the roof top unit back on at Center School and connect it to the duct work was \$11,000. I talked to the BOF Chairman Mike Makuch and some of these things would be going to CIP and this could be one of them, but either way we have to do it. The other ventilation item is bigger and it is for where there is no ventilation in the lower hallway meaning there is no intake and exhaust in those classrooms. The \$60,000 is a ballpark and it is about \$5,000 per unit. This is an item for CIP.

Superintendent Stevens stated one of the solutions for custodians at Center School was adjusting their hours to later in the day by changing our alarm set up. We are installing an addition to our key fob system that allows our custodians to come in at 8:15AM which pushes the afternoon custodian to later in the day. It will also upgrade the key fob software with more security. This item is \$1,000 which is far less than paying a custodian over time for even a month.

Superintendent Stevens stated as you can imagine custodial supplies is a big ticket item. We have spent almost our entire cleaning budget by December. This is an estimated total based on estimated usage.

Superintendent Stevens stated we had to purchase all sorts of PPE. We budgeted \$4,000 for nurses supplies, we have a 12 week supply that cost us \$9,600.

Superintendent Stevens stated cafeteria sales are on here because we are worried about a loss on a-la-carte items. We are trying to find creative ways for students to be able to order these items online and for them to be delivered. I put \$5,000 but it could be more or less.

Superintendent Stevens stated we included a ballpark estimate for individual supplies. We just purchased the bins for each student. This estimate is \$25 for each student totalling \$10,000.

Superintendent Stevens stated I was very frugal with desks. The ones I wanted would have cost \$21,000. We won an auction through GovDeals from Killingly Public Schools for 60 desks with a cost of \$616.16.

Superintendent Stevens stated staff masks could have been included with PPE but we did order clear masks for all the staff, 432 masks for \$1,200.

Superintendent Stevens stated we ordered lanyards for every student so they can click their masks to them to avoid dropping them or losing them.

Superintendent Stevens stated Kid Check was the app I mentioned for signing students in and out. The company has said if we go remote they will pause our subscription. Monthly cost is \$60 for both schools.

Superintendent Stevens stated we have not received a dime of funding thus far. We were told we were getting CARES Act money based on our Tile 1 money. We are supposed to get \$60,567 and they have talked about potential additional funding. Potential salary savings for not filling the kindergarten and Spanish Teacher positions is \$104,600. We have \$29,159 in our Medicaid fund that must be used for something special education related. We have \$29,460 in our non-lapsing fund account. My suggestion is when you close the books for 19-20 you should be asking the BOF for 2% of the money you are returning which would be \$173,700 which could be applied to the cost of our plan. Hopefully out of the \$226,300 that is left after the 2%, BOF sees some of the big important projects we have and can allow us to use this money to pay for them.

Chairman Arico asked if there is still an issue with water droplets in the air because the ventilation is moving them around.

Superintendent Stevens replied there is a certain number of air exchanges you are looking for every hour which works to actually get the droplets out.

Donna Cook requested the date be put on the reopening cost document since it will remain a working document.

**Donna Cook made a motion to give Superintendent Stevens the authority to purchase up to 6 tents up to a total of \$39,000 and he be authorized to hire up to 6 utility staff including insurance for a maximum cost of \$104,000.**

**Tracey Anderson seconded the motion.**

<b>Vote:</b>	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
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H. Arico	✓			
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			
A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

### Old Business

Superintendent Stevens stated the state has allowed districts to only go 177 days with permission. We had 182 student days and I would like to be able to announce now that we will go only 177 student days to provide additional professional development for planning, adjusting, and improvements. Teacher's contracted year would still be 188 days. The other portion that changed is I am requesting we start after Labor Day because we need as much time as possible to prepare for this and to provide our staff the professional development they need. Our first staff day would be August 31st and we would use that entire first week as professional development. Labor Day is the 7th, students would go to school for 4 days then we would put another staff development in on the 14th so that we can be prepared to pivot. The week of the 21st would be the student's first full week of school. My request is to update this calendar and for you to allow me to apply to the state to go the 177 days.

**Michelle Doucette Cunningham made a motion that we adopt the Willington Public Schools 2020-2021 calendar as presented and authorize the superintendent to work with the State Department of Education to allow for the lower number of student days.**

**Elena Testa seconded the motion.**

Vote:	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
H. Arico			✓	
M. Cunningham	✓			
D. Cook	✓			
T. Anderson	✓			

A. Grosjean	✓			
E. Testa	✓			
L. Rodriguez	✓			

Motion passes.

### **Present to Speak**

First Selectwoman Wiecenski was present to speak. She stated she wanted to thank the superintendent and his custodial staff including Matt Jensen for helping to provide a water source and charging station during the storm last week. It would not have gone as smoothly without their assistance.

### **Board Comments**

Ann Grosjean stated I would like to thank everyone who served on the committees. You did so much work to create what I think is an excellent plan. I would also like to congratulate Stephanie and Clarey on their new positions.

Donna Cook stated I want to let everyone know I appreciate tonight going smoother than anticipated. I'm thankful the school was able to be open during the power outage. I appreciate the time and effort that has gone into the reopening.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham stated I want to echo the thanks for the creative thinking that went into creating this plan. I think there are a lot of really good ideas as well as creative thinking about how to secure desks and some of the other items needed to start school. I think it's essential that we have community effort and we are all going to have to work together and educate one another about how we can keep kids safe not only during the school day, but all throughout the week. It's going to take a lot of effort to think about ways we can create recreation and exercise opportunities for our kids and other ways that they can socialize so we can stay safe.

Elena Testa stated I am really impressed with how thoroughly everything was thought through and I want to thank Phil and all the others who volunteered their time to this process. I see great things in how our town can unite.

Laura Rodriguez stated I would like to restate what everyone else has already said, to thank Phil and all those who served on the Reopening Committee and to congratulate Stephanie and Clarey.

Tracey Anderson stated I would like to echo everything that everyone said and add an appreciation for the parents who also get involved in the town meetings along with the people on the board.

Chairman Arico stated I would like to reiterate what everyone has said. Also I would like to make sure everyone adheres to the Freedom of Information Act and be careful about emails to all and letters to all committee members because it could be characterized as approaching a meeting which would be against our regulations. Also do not reply to these emails if you get them. We might want to think about having a retreat of this information in the future.

Chairman Arico adjourned the meeting at 9:45PM

\*Next regular meeting  
September 8, 2020