

ROCKPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING
Wednesday March 26, 2020
Via Zoom

Chairperson Michael Kelley called the regular meeting of the Rockport School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Present were Nicole Altieri, Colleen Coogan , Richard Drost, Michael Kelley, and Cathy Reilly. Also, present were Superintendent Robert Liebow and Recording Secretary Amanda Osier.

I. Opening of Regular Meeting

A. Approval of Minutes

Motion: Nicole Altieri motioned to approve the regular minutes from February 5, 2020.
Seconded: Richard Drost seconded the motion.
Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

Motion: Richard Drost motioned to approve the regular minutes from March 4, 2020.
Seconded: Cathy Reilly seconded the motion.
Vote: The motion carried 4-0. Colleen Coogan abstained.

B. Personnel Actions N/A

II. Community Participation

A. Student Advisory Representative N/A

B. Public Participation N/A

III. Discussion and Recommended Action

A. Update on Covid-19 and effect on schools

Rob Liebow publicly thank the Rockport Teachers Association for working hand in hand with administration for the betterment of the students allowing us to move forward in the spirit of what is truly Rockport and has really impresses me. The Administrative group have worked feverishly since the onset of this situation, to work on a future plan that makes sense. Our student reps are here and should be thank along with the Rockport community for being patient. I am very proud of the partnership that has happened community wide.

One of the challenges is access to the technology being sorted out for students to be able to participate in learning remotely. If we were not able to provide the technology there would be an unequitable playing field that would not be allowed to happen. Director of I.S. & Technologies Monty Hitschler reported that the department reached out to families to find out who needs hardware and/or internet connections, found there are about 11 homes that rely on phone connections to the internet and 45 families with no connection. They secured about 12 hotspots to provide internet to those homes that require internet service. Mr. Hitschler has also reached out to internet providers for free or reduced rates. Go Guardian will provided content management for service outside of Rockport. IT Support Technician/Technology Integration Specialist Mike Montgomery reported that deployment of Chromebooks and iPads, from the Town Annex, to families will be tomorrow and that they will research who is still in need.

Superintend Liebow presented Remote Learning Recommendations from the MA Department of Ed. Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley. The state requires that all students have equability of provided resources, including students with IEP's and 504's and our English Language Learners. Mr. Liebow also provided and highlighted, a letter, to just the superintendent's, with additional guidance. The recommendations, from the state, do not constitute a requirement for any district or school. The state encourages districts to view as a baseline or starting point, which can be modified in collaboration with local stakeholders to fit unique contexts, capacities and needs. Mr. Liebow went through each bullet. Chairperson Michael Kelley wanted

to point out that this is the first real input that districts have received from either the federal or state level. It's not a case of the Rockport schools being slow to get their act together, regarding remote learning, but that issues of equity issues that have to be taken into account to have in place for all students.

Elementary Principal Todd Simendinger wanted to acknowledge all the hard work that his staff is putting in for this new way of learning, along with the custodial, food services, technology, administrators, support staff and especially the RTA in working to resolve issues. The elementary school has worked to provide online enrichment opportunities across the curriculum, social interaction with students, holds weekly staff meetings, community outreach and preparing for transition to distant learning.

Middle School Principal Amanda LaMantia also wanted to thank the all the groups mentions and that it's been a learning curve for everyone. Staff has asked when they can do more for the kids. Currently they are offering online enrichment across the curriculum, reaching out to students through Zoom, offering Zoom training, weekly staff meetings, created a structured schedule for staff and planning for return.

High School Principal Amy Rose wanted to acknowledge the 24 hour a day effort on the part of many people to get this up and running and really appreciate the staff and kids are doing at every level. Hands have been tied over the last couple of weeks but the high school has offered online enrichment opportunities across the curriculum, providing training to faculty for online approach to learning, class level outreach through Zoom, SPED outreach, staff meetings prioritizing most essential standards and next year's curriculum, and checking in with seniors.

Director of Student Services Martha Wright wanted to thank the educators who jumped in right away and is in awe with what has been pulled together and put up online. The SPED department has had SPED educators collaborated with general educators regarding enrichment opportunities, developed systems for tracking data related to communications, outreach to families, class level outreach to provide academic support, offer PD for remote learning, weekly staff meetings, identify student learning needs using guidance from DESE, develop protocols for IEP meetings remotely and identify and adjust schedule needs for the provision of direct services. Specialist and Paraprofessionals will be assigned to co-teach and facilitate online learning. Ms. Wright is reaching out to other districts to collaborate and to see if we can share resources. She is regularly in contact with legal counsel to be sure the district is following all laws.

Elementary Principal Todd Simendinger is looking forward to have lessons be level appropriate, actively engaging the students, and providing meaningful connections throughout the day. Students will access a couple of courses along with a special each day, counselors and SPED supports. This will be a process and will look for feedback to see what works and what doesn't.

Middle School Principal Amanda LaMantia is looking at a co-teaching model to focus on certain skills and learning experiences that will be discussed by each department and developed mini lessons which would be put out on a weekly schedule to parents. She wants students to be able to connect, and is trying to put together structure but allow families flexibility,

High School Principal Amy Rose is also trying to balance the structure along with flexibility. Next week would be a more block type schedule, remote check-ins on a more block basis where teachers could post videos or enrichment and students could actively work on them on their own and will work in some Zoom time to build connections. Mrs. Rose will create a calendar for check-in but with flexibility if a student can't attend at that time. She will continue to hold weekly assemblies through Zoom. She knows that it's not going to perfect but will continue to reassess and change deemed appropriate. At the high school level grades, credits, accountability and transcripts are important and given the guidance and conversations with other Cape Ann principals who are going back and reinforcing standards already covered, students can rwork on un-mastered skills and work on a real life project based application of the content. There will be focus on the social/emotional welfare of the kids and moving forward.

Rockport Teachers Association (RTA) President Whitney Swanberg reported that it has been a really collaborative and refreshing effort between the administration and the RTA. The teacher are really excited that work is being done to get remote learning started. The group met several times a day, to try and design what can be done, even before the states recommendations came out.

Rockport Teachers Association Negotiator Jodi Goodhue reported that the hold up in developing a plan has been mostly due to legal issues and they are working really hard to figure out how to connect teachers and students as soon as possible.

Support Staff President Allison Vanderpool is working to figure out how to get the paraprofessionals involved with the remote learning. The IT department is getting technology out to the support staff because they are eager to get started too.

Student Advisory Representative Nathaniel Kirby stated that it is a very unusual time for the students and wanted to thank administrators, teachers, and the technology department for working so hard. There are social/emotional issues along with isolation that are stressful for students. A couple of things to consider are classes in the high school should be pass/fail with qualitative feedback and not focused on grades. Students would like flexibility with class time, and have scheduled blocks that are recorded and posted, so that students can attend when they are able. They would also like small group time with teachers. Patrick Morin stated that it is important to students to also think about what comes next for them, will we return this year and if not how will students transition from school to school next year. Amanda Verga personally feels that structure is important especially for younger students how need more guidance.

Amy Rose reported that the 3rd quarter will not end this Friday and it's still unclear how grades will be handled and the 4th quarter will be a Pass/Fail grade. Will have to wait until it is decided if this is the end of the school year or not and then assess if this second semester would be pass/fail instead of quarterly grades. Cape Ann principals have a consensus to use credit vs no-credit and they will do what it takes to get the seniors the credits they need for graduation. Grades did not seem like a direction that any other district was going.

Whitney Swanberg reported that the tour company for the NYC 8th grade trip has not cancelled yet and there is still time for families to purchase trip insurance.

Robert Liebow reported that Spring sports could not start until late May at the earliest. The last day of school is scheduled to be June 19, 2020.

Todd Simendinger stated that there will be a combination of direct instruction from the teachers along with parent supported activities at home.

All counselors and staff are available through the school email system.

April vacation is not cancelled.

The online classrooms will continue to receive support from the paraprofessionals.

Our goal is to be looking at content, up to the closing, and reviewing key content so we wouldn't be expecting the students to be progressing beyond the closure date.

The middle school model will have structure and times, families and students will have choices as to when they jump in on scheduled lessons.

AP exams have been drastically reduced to a 45 minute online version. Looking to see if the cost of the exam will be reduced and considering waiving the current policy requirement of taking the exam if enrolled in an AP course. More information will be coming.

MCAS have postponed the first section and if we don't return by May then it is thought that there won't be any accountability testing this year.

There are a lot of varying factors regarding AP tests. Will students get credit or not and that there will probably be varying flexibility. The guidance department will get that information out to students as soon as they know.

Principal Rose Zoomed with seniors and noted that Prom and Graduation have not been cancelled. Not sure what prom would look like if rescheduled but there was a strong feeling that the students want that honor of

tradition, what everyone else has been able to do and can it be done in August or September or whenever we can do it and Principal Rose told them she would do everything in her power to have graduation.

Mr. Liebow will be making arrangements for teachers to enter the building safely and retrieve materials that they need to work from home. Music students will be able to pick up musical instruments tomorrow at 3pm.

Students attending online classes will be difficult to monitor and this form of learning has many unknowns so it will have its challenges determining if a child passes a class or not.

This weeks MCAS tests have been postponed but have not heard anything officially from the state that the MCAS tests will be cancelled. Our feeling is that they will be cancelled or drastically modified to accommodate the loss of new instruction time.

There is not update on when town meeting and town elections will be held. If there was new budget then July would work on a 1/12th budget based on the current.

- B. Student Opportunity Act (SOA) (Reschedule date TBD)
- C. School Committee Goals Review (Reschedule date TBD)
- D. Superintendent Evaluation (Reschedule date TBD)
- E. School Choice Vote

Motion: Richard Drost motioned to continue participating in the school choice program.
Seconded: Cathy Reilly seconded the motion.
Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

- F. Community Preservation Funding support consideration
- G. Warrants and Payroll

IV. Information and proposals

- A. School Council Update N/A
- B. Donations N/A
- C. Updates

D. Other Business

V. Correspondence

VI. Future Agenda Items

- A. Superintendent's Evaluation
- B. School Committee Self Evaluation
- D. School Start Times Recommendation (TBD)
- E. Superintendent's Report/FundFlow

VII. Calendar

- A. April 1, 2020, Regular Meeting
- B. April 15, 2020, Regular Meeting
- C. TBD, Town Meeting

VIII. Executive Session

Before closing Nicole Altieri spoke as a school committee member and as a parent wanted to thank the ATeam, the staff, and the RTA who have been working so hard around the clock to get everything up and running, wading through unclear recommendations, as quickly as they could. She is proud to be part of a community that is carefully planning this all out. Seconded by Rick Drost, it's only been a week and a half and the reconnection has been tremendous, all this work is laying groundwork for the next time. Colleen Coogan was pleased to hear the continued emphasis on the kids and the social/emotional aspect. Mike Kelley wanted to acknowledge the cleaning crew and their work that keeps the kids and all of us safe.

Motion: At 8:49 pm Cathy Reilly motioned to adjourn the regular meeting.
Seconded: Richard Drost seconded the motion.
Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Liebow
Superintendent of Schools