

**Tewksbury School Committee
Special Meeting
Thursday, August 6, 2020, 3:00 PM
TMHS 320 Pleasant Street, Tewksbury
Community Participation via WebEx**

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Keth M. Sullivan, Chairperson
James A. Cutelis, Vice-Chairman
Shannon M. Demos, Clerk
John R. Stadtman, Member
Scott D. Wilson, Member

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT

Christopher J. Malone, Superintendent
Brenda Theriault-Regan, Assistant Superintendent
David A. Libby, Business Manager

CALL TO ORDER 3:00 PM

Mr. Sullivan called the August 6, 2020 Special School Committee meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. Mr. Sullivan announced that the School Committee is being held virtual via webex. Mr. Sullivan announced that the School Committee and administration are meeting in a live meeting at Tewksbury Memorial High School and in accordance to CDC social distancing guidelines of six (6) feet apart. This meeting is being televised and recorded. To view live, tune into Comcast Channel 22, Verizon Channel 34, or www.YouTube/Tewksburytv.com. If the public would like to participate, please call 978-771-0819. Public input session will be available if you would like to participate.

Mr. Sullivan thanked all parents, students, teachers, staff members, the District Leadership Team (DLT), and the School Reopening Task Force for their input, insight, and understanding while working together for the best solution for all staff and all our students and families. I want to reassure the community that the School Committee members and the district administrators have the best interest for students, schools, staff, and the community. This decision will impact student academics and outcomes and impact our families, staff and the town as well. The School Committee, the Reopening Task Force and DLT will continue the diligent and responsible work with employee groups and stakeholders in what we believe will be to create a safe school environment for all students and staff for all three models as they may all be needed this year.

Mr. Sullivan announced to the public that if they would like to call-in, please mute your television and give your name and address for the record.

Mr. Sullivan requested that the Committee move the vote to approve the first day of the 2020-2021 school calendar vote up on the agenda.

Mr. Wilson motioned, seconded by Mr. Cutelis, to move the 2020-2021 Calendar vote agenda item forward.

Roll Call Vote: Voting Yes - Mr. Wilson, Mr. Stadtman, Mr. Cutelis, Ms. Demos and Mr. Sullivan. Unanimous Vote. Motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Malone clarified that the school calendar vote is for the first day of school for students. He reported that the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) reduced the number of student days from 180 to 170. The ten days will stay on the calendar for staff professional development opportunities. The first day for students would be September 16, 2020. Mr. Sullivan opened for questions and/ comments from his colleagues.

APPROVED 9-16-2020

SCHOOL CALENDAR - VOTE ON FIRST DAY OF 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

Mr. Cutelis moved, seconded by Mr. Stadtman, to approve the first student school day for the 2020-2021 school year as September 16, 2020.

Roll Call Vote: Voting Yes - Mr. Wilson, Mr. Stadtman, Mr. Cutelis, Ms. Demos and Mr. Sullivan. Unanimous Vote. Motion carried 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

At 3:07 p.m. Mr. Sullivan asked Mr. Dorrington if there any callers on the phone. Seeing none, Mr. Sullivan asked the Committee to consider to add a timeframe in which to take calls. Mr. Stadtman moved, seconded Mr. Wilson, to add a time limit for public comments. The Committee will take calls until 3:12 p.m. and move forward on the agenda.

Mr. Malone thanked all that have been involved in this process, School Committee members, the Reopening Task Force and the District Leadership Team. He reported that in mid-July DESE informed school districts that they would be responsible to decide on the model to use for reopening schools. Mr. Malone presented a brief overview of the guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to the school district to prepare a school reopening planning according to their guidelines. The district formed the Reopening School Task Force to assist in the development of the three models: All In-Person Model, Hybrid Model, and Remote Model. Working with the district administrators, plans were developed and public feedback was solicited. According to DESE, the School Committee must vote by August 10th on the best model to start school. It is important to submit the chosen model as part of comprehensive plan. We must consider all new information as it comes in from the state as we continue to develop the other two models, as we may have to move into them as we go. Due to distancing and safety guidelines, we have barriers in transportation in order to bus all students and food services with the ability to serve children lunch. The School Committee will determine the model in which the district will start school with on September 16th.

Mr. Sullivan checked in with Mr. Dorrington to see if there were any callers. Seeing none, Mr. Sullivan moved forward to the School Reopening Plan Vote.

2020-2021 SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN VOTE

Mr. Sullivan opened the discussion for School Committee members comments and questions. Mr. Wilson inquired if the district had more time, could a better model be developed. Mr. Malone commented that we need to be clear with the direction we are going today, keep the models we have and realize that we have to be ready to pivot if things change before September 16th. Ms. Regan stated we need to be proactive, we need to look at the situation around us, how the implementation is going, look at benchmarks, and where we are a few weeks in. In response to a question, Mr. Malone commented that there are pros and cons in every model however we have to be ready to implement all three of these models at any time. Mr. Malone reminded the Committee that they will have to vote on a reopening of school plan, to include all three models, and identifying the model the district will use to begin the start of school. Ms. Regan was in agreement with Mr. Malone. Mr. Cutelis had no additional questions. Ms. Demos would like to see a phase-in approach to opening schools, assess the safety of the buildings bi-weekly, and consider the high need students and kindergartners who may struggle with a digital platform. Mr. Sullivan echoed the sentiments from the Committee members. He realizes not everyone will like the outcome today. He commented that there are a host of things weighing-in on his decision today, safety, health, academics, family needs, vulnerable students, progression, after school clubs, and activities. He will take into consideration all the information and comments and make the best decision for the students. Mr. Sullivan asked what is the pleasure of the Board at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Sullivan accepted calls as they came in during the discussion on the Reopening Plan Vote. Public Comments are listed below.

James Davidson, 20 Long Meadow Road, Tewksbury - Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) and Tewksbury Teachers Association (TTA) are for students doing Remote Learning asking why this information has not been shared.
Caller identified as Jeff - Inquired about children wearing masks all day.
Conner Bourgoin, TMHS Teacher - Inquired if masks required.

John Stadtman commented that children learn best in a classroom with teacher and friends. Schools provide a safe environment for kids and provide critical services and school closures are disrupt services to families. Teachers want to get back to school just as much as children and have to feel safe in the schools. Mr. Stadtman commented on mask wearing and the difficulty it will be for children. He stated there is not enough data regarding children and COVID. He stated that the primary concern should always be the health and welfare of teachers and students. There are too many variables in public schools. He would favor a soft opening in Tewksbury.

Mr. Cutelis remarked that he appreciated the input of the Committee members. He stated that we will do what is in the best interest of the community and be guided by science. There are only six active cases in Tewksbury, that is a .05% positivity rate. Mr. Cutelis said that there are two things to take into account, positivity rate in town and adopting safety measures issued by the CDC. We do have to consider if we are able to safely bus the students and feed them safely. With the guidance we have, Mr. Cutelis supports starting with the Hybrid Model.

Mr. Cutelis motioned to approve the Hybrid Model as the reopening model to start the 2020-2021 school year. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion to approve the three model plan and to start school with the Hybrid Model for the 2020-2021 school year.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Wilson: AYE ; Mr. Stadtman: NAY ; Mr. Cutelis: AYE ; Ms. Demos: NAY ; Mr. Sullivan: AYE
Motion carried 3 to 2.

Mr. Sullivan stated the district will continue to develop the three model plan and start to focus on the Hybrid Model.

Mr. Sullivan announced the next School Committee meeting will be held on August 19, 2020.

ADJOURNMENT

At 4:02 p.m., Mr. Sullivan adjourned the August 6, 2020 Special School Committee meeting with a motion from Mr. Cutelis, seconded by Mr. Wilson.

Roll Call Vote: Voting Yes: Mr. Wilson, Mr. Stadtman, Mr. Cutelis, Ms. Demos, and Mr. Sullivan. Unanimous Vote.
Motion carried 5-0.

