

The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn
119 Gorman Road
Brooklyn, CT 06234

Mae Lyons, Board Chair
Keith Atchinson, Secretary
Tana Jolley

Melissa Perkins-Banas, Vice-Chair
Justin Phaiah
Carolyn Hackbarth

Mission: The Brooklyn Schools will foster a drive for learning within each student to reach his/her greatest potential. To achieve this mission, the school will continually improve its educational programs and services to meet this community's expectations for a quality education for all.

The Brooklyn Board of Education held their monthly meeting virtually on May 27, 2020 via Zoom. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Atchinson, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Jolley, Mrs. Hackbarth. Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, was also present.

1. Attendance, Establishment of a Quorum, Call to Order

Quorum established. Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

2. Public Comment

Questions and comments are to be sent in by email.

No comments by email.

3. Approval of minutes

a. April 22, 2020 BOE Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of April 22, 2020
(Perkins-Banas/Hackbarth)
No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve.

4. Correspondence and Communication

a. Retirements

Mrs. Buell stated that Susan Leahy is retiring from her preschool position. She has taught preschool for 22 years. Susan loves working with the children and is going to miss Brooklyn Elementary School.

Mrs. Buell stated that Dianne Socquet is retiring after 40 years. Dianne's letter stated being a part of the Brooklyn Middle School has been a true gift, and one for which she is extremely thankful. She will miss the staff and students greatly.

Mrs. Buell stated she appreciates both retirees' service to Brooklyn and they will definitely be missed.

b. Resignation

Mrs. Buell stated that Allison Woods is resigning her position as Special Education Teacher to spend time with her family.

c. Donations

Mrs. Buell stated that she sent out several thank you letters for acts of generosity/kindness since covid-19 for the following donations:

- Brooklyn Parks and Recreation donated a case full of chocolate Easter bunnies to many Brooklyn families that were distributed the Friday before Easter throughout the Food Services CERT program.
- Target made a generous donation through our PTO with a Gift Card to a Brooklyn family in need.
- Target made a generous donation of Easter candy to TEEG and Brooklyn Public Schools was one of the recipients.
- King Arthur Flour made a generous cookie donation. Brooklyn Public Schools received 1,600 individual desserts, which were distributed to many Brooklyn families throughout the Food Services CERT program. The desserts were a big hit.
- Spectrum provided free internet access to many Brooklyn families that allowed children to participate in distance learning.
- Verizon Wireless assisted with securing two iPads for families in need.
- Guida's Dairy made a generous milk donation, which Brooklyn Public Schools was the recipient of 240 gallons out of 1,800 gallons of milk that was donated to Northeast Connecticut through TEEG. Brooklyn Public Schools distributed the milk throughout the Food Serves CERT program to many Brooklyn families.

- The Ice Box made a generous donation of two gallons of hand sanitizer, which will be a great help with preparing to safely reopen Brooklyn Public Schools.
- TEEG for securing 240 gallons of milk from Guida Dairy as well as the Easter candy from Target, which were distributed throughout the Food Services CERT program to many Brooklyn families.
- EASTCONN for their support with the Food Service Program, which provides breakfast and lunch to Brooklyn students seven days a week. They are also now helping with delivering meals three days a week to Brooklyn families.
- Mrs. Buell stated she has received a letter with a generous donation from the Beagery Charitable Trust to the Brooklyn Public Schools for the 2020 Emergency Donation to Food Services in the amount of \$15,000. The donation is to offset the expenses of Food Services to ensure that the Brooklyn families are being fed.

5. Brooklyn's Best

BES

1. We have hired 2 outstanding candidates for our special education vacancies and the interview committee is in the process of interviewing our other vacancies.
2. We had great participation with our Virtual Field Day.
3. Our first PD day was well received. Groups are made from one member of each grade level and other certified staff to ensure consistency between the building.
4. Our kindergarten team is holding their first virtual orientation and have created a user friendly site for families to learn about our program. 5/27/2020
5. Grade 4 promotion planning is underway to celebrate our students moving to the middle school.

BMS

1. Working to plan alternative activities for Grade 8 students.
2. June 1st delivery of care package to all 90 8th grade households.
3. Planning a virtual NJHS ceremony.
4. Weekly morning announcements with student volunteers.
5. Bitmoji student contest to identify staff members.
6. Devi Patel-Gandhi won first Place in the Connecticut State Elks Association Grade 5 Drug Awareness poster. She also won first place in the local lodge.

6. Administrative Reports

a. Budget Updates

- i. Create an account called Town Reserve and transfer \$200,000, which is a result of transportation savings

Mrs. Buell stated she would like to ask the Board in creating an account called the Town Reserve to transfer the \$200,000 to be put into it from transportation savings.

Motion to transfer \$200,000 from the transportation line item to the Town Reserve line item.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve

- ii. Transfers between objects will occur next month as we get closer to the end of our budget cycle

Mrs. Buells discussed some of the transfers between object lines that will be happening next month and they will discuss more next month.

- iii. Very high expenses in legal and audit this year will be covered with other areas that have funds
- iv. There is excess in the substitute line that will be used to cover the payout of unused sick time for those retiring

b. Discussion about reopening schools

- i. 25%, 50% and Recent Option

Mrs. Buell stated that we know that schools are closed for the remainder of this school year and next year we hope to open in September. There are guidelines and recommendations being made by the Governor and many groups that are working on reopening schools in coordination with executive orders and medical professionals.

Mrs. Buell stated that tomorrow evening, Thursday, May 28, 2020 she plans to have a forum/discussion on Zoom that will allow Brooklyn parents to share some thoughts and concerns for next year and what it'll look like.

There has been discussion about returning 25% of students to school each day for four days. There has been discussion about 50% of the students returning to school. Mrs. Buell stated that the most recent option is something that is being considered is sending elementary students to

school and middle school and high school students will continue with distance learning. Elementary students will go to school for four days and on the fifth day, middle school or high school students who need assistance will be able to go to school to receive intervention or support. They want to have students returning to school so parents can return to work. They believe that middle school and high school students have more ability to work independently.

Mrs. Buell stated to meet all the guidelines, we're looking at 10 students in a classroom with a teacher. In order for that to happen, everything will be doubled. There's still a lot of discussions happening. There will be more guidance from the state. Mrs. Buell stated that in order to follow the guidelines and to educate elementary school students, both schools will need to be utilized for some of those classes. We can't double our teaching staff. There's been discussion in allowing non-certified staff to manage classrooms, lesson plans being provided by certified teachers. Mrs. Buell has spoken to Mr. Ives about working in coordination with the town and Brooklyn Parks and Recreation if this model happens for before and after school care and the fifth day of care for elementary school students due to parents returning to work. This is just one piece, there are many pieces out there and Mrs. Buell will keep the Board informed moving forward with guidelines and recommendations from the state.

Mrs. Lyons asked for parents that want their children back in school and their families aren't at risk, is there any informed consent? Mrs. Lyons stated she knows we're going to be guided by the state, but she feels that parents should have more say in what happens with their children. Mrs. Buell stated she's had a lot of questions in regards to liability and risks. The risk factor is to the staff that deliver the instruction, nursing staff, and paraprofessionals, in addition to the students. As for the liability, as long as we follow the guidelines established by the state, we're doing our due diligence even if there is an outbreak. Mrs. Buell stated if we're making our best effort and following guidance, we're covered. The conversation about masks, is there informed consent? Mrs. Buell stated masks are to protect other people. If a child comes to school without wearing a mask, there's more concern about that child being a carrier and getting other people sick.

Mrs. Buell stated that the state is trying to get funding to cover this model, which could potentially cost \$300,000,000. The towns would be held harmless to get students back to school, the state wouldn't do this without trying to get funding to support towns.

Mrs. Buell stated that there's a question, what about middle school students? Mrs. Buell stated that grades 6, 7, and 8 will potentially continue

with distance learning until students can be in classrooms without the 6 feet between students. Grade 5 is going to be considered as elementary level.

Mrs. Lyons asked about the bus guidelines, how will we be getting students to school? Mrs. Buell stated she spoke to the bus company and under the guidelines by the state, 12 students will be allowed on each bus with a bus monitor who will be taking temperatures as students get on the bus and monitoring where students sit in every other seat, unless multiple children in the same family could sit together. If 40% of the students are dropped off and picked up by parents, there's still over 300 students that would need to be put on buses, 12 students per bus. With this scenario, we would need 27 buses to transport students to school, we have 15 buses. There's been discussion of scattered start times and end times to get all students to school.

Mr. Atchinson asked what is the date that we have to decide what we are doing, is it the end of July? Mrs. Buell believes we should be getting more guidance from the state beginning of June to allow time to plan. With area superintendents for the northeast region, they've decided that they need to make a decision by the end of July or August 1, 2020.

There was discussion that things could change either way with the state starting to open up. There's a possibility of another outbreak when the flu comes around and possibly another shutdown.

Mrs. Perkins-Banas asked if any of the proposed openings even seem feasible? She stated that the transportation alone doesn't seem feasible. You can't really count on parents transporting their children everyday, we still have to provide transportation for every student. Mrs. Buell stated she's going to find a way to do this. They're trying to have several plans in place to try and make it work.

Mrs Perkins-Banas also asked if there is going to be more direct guidance from the state about parameters for the school day for a shortened day or half day that helps get students in without needing two buildings? Mrs. Buell stated that in some communities they're saying you need to work with your town to share buildings.

Mrs. Buell stated she was seeing some comments coming in on Facebook. What about middle school students? What about high school students? Mrs. Buell stated that the recommendation to date is for them to continue with distance learning and potentially coming in one day a week for group assistance if needed. Can middle school students maintain distance learning? Mrs. Buell stated these are the latest recommendations from the

state. Some of the recommendations are going to be a challenge. She stated that she's trying to equip the buildings and the staff so we're prepared to meet the needs as the guidelines come in.

Mrs. Jolley asked if we're looking at the middle school students and high students today, what is it going to look like for students with 504 and IEP plans getting the support and services they need? Mrs. Buell stated that some students can receive services or special education instruction through distance learning, some students it's more challenging.

ii. Tomorrow evening: Parent Discussion

Mrs. Buell stated there will be a Parent Discussion that will be a Zoom Meeting tomorrow evening, Thursday, May 28, 2020 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. on reopening schools.

c. Grade 8 Promotion

Mrs. Buell stated grade 8 Promotion is scheduled for June 17, 2020 and that they are working with the Department of Public Health and following the guidelines and executive orders regarding social gatherings.

d. Grade 4 Promotion

Mrs. Buell stated grade 4 Promotion is scheduled for June 18, 2020 and they are working with the Department of Public Health and following the guidelines and executive orders regarding social gatherings.

e. Distance Learning

Mrs. Buell stated we have 16 days left of distance learning and we will be collecting devices and returning items that were left behind. Students, staff and families are working hard.

f. Extended School Year

Mrs. Buell stated special education services will be offered via distance learning. We just don't have a solution to meet the guidelines as they exist at this time.

7. Board of Education Committee Reports

Mrs. Perkins-Banas reported that the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation unfortunately had to cancel the summer camp program due to covid-19. It's devastating to the staff that return annually and are truly invested in the children of Brooklyn. The safety of the staff and the children have to come first, a very difficult decision to make.

Mrs. Lyons stated that the Board of Finance is meeting this evening as well. She stated that the Board of Education budget presented by Mrs. Buell to the Board of Finance went well.

Mr. Atchinson asked if we expect to hear anything further from the Board of Finance if they're expected to pass the budget onto the town after tonight's meeting? Mrs. Buell will expect to hear something and will let the Board know. She stated that the Town Hearing is scheduled for June 10, 2020.

8. Board Representatives to Other Committees

None to report

9. Old Business

a. PV Projects Update

Mrs. Buell stated that on June 2, 2020 there is a meeting at DAS. The building committee will need to meet virtually to review the plans.

10. New Business

None

11. Public Comment

Mrs. Buell noticed some comments on Facebook Live. She stated there were some comments in regards to the discussion of school, 6th grade is difficult and insufficient for distance learning. Other comments stating we have our hands full. Distance learning isn't proper learning, there are so many parents that can't stay home.

12. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:02 p.m.
(Perkins-Banas/Jolley)
No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,
Donna L. DiBenedetto
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Board Clerk