



WHITTIER REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

A regular meeting of the Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School Committee was held remotely on **Wednesday, February 10, 2021** via ZOOM Teleconferencing per Governor Baker's Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20.

Members Present: Charlie LaBella Ron Fitzgerald Scott Wood
Richard Early Lisa O'Connor JoAnn Testaverde
Brett Murphy Johanna True Tony LeSage
Dave Irving Garry James

Members Absent: Paul Tucker, Ben Fichera, Chip O'Connor

Others Present: Maureen Lynch, Superintendent
Kara Kosmes, Business Manager
Chris Laganas, Principal
Alyssa Michel, Student Representative

Mr. Murphy stated that the meeting was being recorded and held remotely via ZOOM Teleconferencing. Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30A, Section 20, the public was not allowed to physically access the meeting. However, Public Comment was made available via email in advance of the meeting start time and/or prior to Public Comment. The meeting was available for the public to view live via: <https://www.youtube.com/c/WhittierTechHighSchool> Mr. Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:32 P.M. Mr. Murphy took attendance. Mr. Murphy began the meeting with the pledge of allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Murphy asked if there was any public comment. Mr. Murphy stated that he received three (3) emails that he read aloud and will be added to the record. He read emails from Allyson Dawkins, Maddy Dawkins and Victoria Thomson.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Dr. Testaverde to approve the Minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting for January 13, 2021 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

By motion of Mr. LeSage, seconded by Mr. LaBella to accept the Treasurer's Report for January 2021 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business posted.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Alyssa Michel, provided an update on student clubs. She reported that DECA had four (4) students advance to States which will be held virtually in early March. Any student that places at the State level will move on to compete at the international level. They are also organizing and distributing wooden roses for Valentine's Day. The Interact Club had great success with the greeting card distribution for the holidays. They are working with the Key Club and Student Government to get 800 Valentine's Day cards filled out and distributed to local assisted living facilities. In January, the Multicultural Club enjoyed hearing presentations from two (2) members about their recent Quinceanera celebrations. They also celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. day and took a virtual tour of Brazil, where two (2) members are from. They are currently making Valentine's cards to give to the contracted cleaning staff in appreciation for all they do. Chess Club is still meeting every week, which consists of lessons, in-house tournaments, and informal practice. Peer Leaders continue to participate in leadership training workshops. They will be learning how to lead online discussions by setting expectation norms, running icebreakers, and setting goals. They also continue to brainstorm ideas to help freshmen and WOA students. The Key Club is meeting regularly through Google Meets. They are working with the Interact Club and Student Government to do Valentine's Day cards for area assisted living facilities and some Meals on Wheels programs. The cards were designed by Whittier students and printed by the Graphics Department. They hope to do this again for St. Patrick's Day and Easter. GSA continues to meet on Mondays during week 1. They had 15 members attend this week's meeting. On February 9, 2021, seven students attended the GSA Leadership Council hosted by DESE. The Student Government is continuing to meet and discuss ideas for building school community and spirit. They are also working with Key Club and others to fill out encouraging cards for local assisted living residents for Valentine's Day. The UN Club met February 9, 2021 after school. They will soon begin preparations for an online conference sponsored by the United Nations Association of Greater Boston that they will be attending on March 20th. It is a conference on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and it will be virtual.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Personnel Action

The Superintendent, Maureen Lynch reported on the hiring of an electronics robotics/engineering instructor, a route bus driver, a teaching assistant - vocational, a special education instructor, an HVAC instructor LTS and CTI grant evening education instructors for spring 2021. She also reported on the resignation of a history instructor for retirement purposes.

Budget Update

Ms. Lynch reported that the Executive Subcommittee met February 10, 2021 and reduced the budget from 4.49% to a 2.42% increase for next year.

MCAS Update

There was no MCAS update.

Superintendent's Update

Ms. Lynch provided an update. On Thursday, January 14th, January 21st, and February 4th, she attended the remote MAVA Superintendents'/CTE Directors' meetings. On Friday, January 15th, January 22nd and February 5th, she attended the Mayor of Haverhill's Task Force virtual meeting on Public Health. On Friday, January 15, 2021, she attended the North Shore Superintendents' Roundtable remote meeting. On Thursday, January 21, 2021, she attended the virtual Ipswich School Committee meeting along with Mr. James. She reported that Mr. James was reappointed as the Ipswich Representative for three more years. On Friday, January 22, 2021, she attended the MAVA Board of Directors' meeting. On Wednesday, February 3, 2021, she attended the remote CVTE Waitlist Data Analysis discussion. She stated that there is considerable discussion across the State about ensuring all students have access to vocational programming and schools. On Thursday, February 4, 2021, she attended the MASS Chapter 70 Aid & Spending webinar along with Kara Kosmes. On Friday, February 5, 2021, she attended the remote North Shore Superintendents' Roundtable Drop-in meeting. This meeting was an opportunity to meet other Superintendents and discuss COVID 19 concerns in schools and learn from each other. On Tuesday, February 9, 2021, she attended the MVSA monthly remote meeting. There was considerable discussion regarding the vaccine rollout for teachers. Ms. Lynch reported for the past two Mondays sophomores and juniors have been back to school for their

vocational week. She reported there were a few minor adjustments in some shop areas and coordinating with bussing but there have been little to no problems with the transition. Ms. Lynch reported that after February vacation, students will be back to school for full days. Students will be assigned seating in the cafeteria with their cohort. There will be 5 lunches to make this happen safely and they will be eating in the cafeteria, lobby and gym. Ms. Lynch reported that Whittier was awarded grant funds through the Career Technical Initiative to run two career training programs for unemployed and underemployed people in Massachusetts. Whittier will be hosting a 200 hour welding program for 8 students and a 200 hour advanced manufacturing program for 10 students. The programs will begin on Monday, February 22nd and will run through the week of May 20, 2021. The programs will be a blend of in person and online training. The programs are instructed by Whittier day school instructors as well as former alumni who work in the field. The intention of the CTI program is to have all candidates employed full time in the industry by the end of the program. The grant funding is in response to the number of jobs lost in the State of Massachusetts as a result of COVID 19. As outlined in the CTI grant, MASSHIRE and Whittier worked together to recruit, train and place these students in employment opportunities. Whittier will be awarded \$90,000 upon successful completion of the programs. Of the \$90,000, \$63,000 will go to Whittier and \$27,000 will go to MASSHIRE. Ms. Lynch reported on extracurricular activities. She stated that it has been heartbreaking canceling the athletic seasons. Unfortunately, Fall Season 2 which is supposed to begin on February 22nd will be cancelled too. Ms. Lynch stated that she knows how important sports are to the students and parents but right now the priority is getting students back to more in-person learning safely. Ms. Lynch reported that Kara Kosmes will discuss MSBA and the next steps towards ensuring that the School Committee has voted on using funds for a Feasibility Project in her report. Ms. Lynch thanked Kara Kosmes and Beverly DeSalvo on completing the paperwork to get to this point. She stated that the following programs are being looked at for the future: Vet Tech, Power Equipment Tech, Marine Service Tech, Aviation Technology as well as Welding, Sheet Metal working to replace Metal Fabrication & Joining Technologies; and Construction Craft Laborer. There is also discussion on adding Medical Laboratory Technology and Operating Room Technology to the Health Occupation program. Mr. Williams showed the Committee the MSBA website that has been added to Whittier's webpage to provide community members with information throughout the process. Ms. Lynch reported that during February vacation there will be a Boot Camp for students who have been struggling academically. It will be an opportunity for students to make up work and continue to work towards school promotion. The Guidance Counselors and Assistant Principals have done significant outreach to the students and their guardians. Ms. Lynch stated that in planning for the summer they are looking at setting up a 2 week summer program in July for all of the vocational areas. This will allow students to have 2 weeks of intense vocational training to make sure they are prepared for the next school year. Ms. Lynch provided a COVID case update. There has been no transmission at the school.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Mr. Chris Laganas, the Principal provided a principal's update. He stated it is exciting to have students back in the building for five (5) days. The students are settling in nicely to being back on Mondays for their vocational in-person day. On Monday, February 22nd students will still come to school following the same hybrid cohort but they will now have lunch at school and stay until 2:03 pm daily. All students are completing mid-term exams this week. Term 3 will begin after February vacation and Term 2 report cards will be out February 26th. Guidance counselors have started interviews with all of the middle schools remotely, in-person and through google meets throughout this week and during February vacation week. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Kristine Morrison, Head of Guidance, is offering virtual information sessions. If you are interested, you can register online. Grab-and-go meals are still available at the end of the school day for students who wish to have meals available for their remote and weekend days. Remote Monday pickup sites for breakfast and lunch will continue to be available every Monday in February from 10 am until noon at the Poet's Inn entrance. Meals are provided for 7 days.

BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT

Ms. Kara Kosmes, the Business Manager stated that over the past 14 months, Whittier has been in the eligibility phase with MSBA for a school building project. She stated that this phase is coming to an end and she expects to move on to the next stage which is the feasibility stage. One of the requirements of this stage is for the School Committee to vote to authorize an appropriation to cover the cost of the feasibility study associated with the project. The first step is a vote of the School Committee to authorize the establishment of a Capital Projects Fund.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Dr. Testaverde to establish a Capital Projects Fund as outlined in the Business Manager's memorandum of February 4, 2021. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Ms. Kosmes stated that in FY21, the School Committee approved a capital outlay budget totaling \$695,000. She stated that \$395,000 was allotted for the final phase of the athletic field project with the remaining \$350,000 to be applied towards the cost of the MSBA feasibility study. The field project is nearly complete and the cost is not expected to exceed \$250,000. Additionally, because of COVID-19, the athletics budget has unused funds which can be used to cover the cost of the track. This would free up the entire Capital Outlay budget to be available for the cost of the feasibility study.

By motion of Mr. Early, seconded by Mr. Irving to approve a transfer to reallocate the entire \$695,000 Capital Outlay budget appropriation for the MSBA feasibility study. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Ms. Kosmes reported that the District has identified \$1,800,000 in funding that is available to cover the cost of the feasibility study. She requested that the School Committee vote to authorize a transfer from the Stabilization fund in the amount of \$1,105,000 and \$695,000 from the Capital Outlay fund into the Capital Projects Fund.

By motion of Mr. Early, seconded by Mr. LaBella to transfer \$1,105,000 from the Stabilization fund and \$695,000 from the Capital Outlay fund into the Capital Projects fund as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Ms. Kosmes stated that the final step of the process is for the School Committee to vote on the appropriation and authorization of \$1,800,000 from the Capital Projects fund to pay for the cost of the feasibility study.

By motion of Mr. LaBella, seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald to appropriate and authorize the amount of \$1,800,000 for the purpose of paying costs of the Feasibility Study for the Whittier Regional Vocational High School, 115 Amesbury Line Road, Haverhill, including all costs incidental and related thereto (the "Study") said amount to be expended under the direction of Whittier Regional Vocational High School Building Committee. To meet this appropriation, the District is authorized to expend said amount from the Capital Projects Fund under and pursuant to the District Agreement, as amended, or pursuant to any other enabling authority. The District acknowledges that the Massachusetts School Building Authority's ("MSBA's") grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any costs the District incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the District. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Mr. Murphy went over the annual agenda items for March.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Executive Subcommittee met January 13, 2021 and February 10, 2021.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Dr. Testaverde to approve the minutes of January 13, 2021 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

The Instructional Subcommittee met on January 27, 2021.

By motion of Ms. True, seconded by Mr. James to approve the minutes of January 27, 2021 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

The Plant Operations Subcommittee has not met.

The Salary & Negotiations Subcommittee has not met.

The Policy Subcommittee has not met.

MEETING DATES

The Budget Workshop is March 10, 2021 at 5:30 pm. The Regular School Committee meeting is March 10, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business posted.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session posted.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Mr. LeSage to adjourn at 7:33 PM.
Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Rand
Recording Secretary

February 8, 2021

Dear Superintendent Lynch and School Committee Members,

My name is Allyson Dawkins. I am a fellow educator in Haverhill Public Schools and the parent of two sophomores, Madison and Victoria. Madison is a student in the CAD program and Victoria is in health assisting. While both are high honor students and are part of the Skills USA and excelling academically, they are also athletes who play soccer, basketball, and track struggling with the decision that has been made to not play sports again this season.

As an educator and parent, I completely understand the importance of getting the students back into the classroom. I am extremely pleased to see my girls and their peers being able to attend school in person and seeing that Whittier Tech is also adding a day of instruction to the shop weeks and also increasing time to full days. However, while I am pleased with what is being done in the classroom, I am extremely disappointed to hear once again that sports are being cancelled for the Fall 2 season.

This decision has absolutely crushed my daughters once again, along with their fellow teammates and coaches. I feel like the message that is being sent to these kids again, is everything this year is not going to happen, from sports, to banquets, to possibly even prom and graduation. They feel so secluded and are mentally exhausted. These kids need sports and other extra-curricular activities. They need an outlet and some normalcy back in their lives! My daughters have been on the sideline for a year now, while watching their friends from surrounding school districts participate in sports all along. There are many safety measures that have been implemented to keep everyone safe on and off the field.

I would not be writing this letter as a parent, if I didn't feel comfortable allowing my daughters to participate. I think most parents also feel the same. If the administration is not comfortable with students participating, maybe the question should be what are we not comfortable with? What steps can we do to be comfortable? Is it because of the amount of students who they may come in contact with? One suggestion that I have is, could Whittier Tech look into pool testing all athletes who want to participate playing sports? There are many school districts that are doing this now, including Haverhill Public Schools, to help gather data to get students back into the classroom, why can't this be used to help our kids play sports?

However, if sports were to be reinstated and there were a rise in cases, I would totally support a pause or end to the season for the well-being of everyone involved. But, I ask why not try to give the students and coaches an opportunity to be successful in getting them active and their mental health back up?

As I said earlier, yes I am excited to see the steps that Whittier Tech has taken to get the students back into the classroom but, I am urging you to please reconsider your decision in cancelling sports once again! Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Allyson Dawkins

Hello Superintendent Lynch and school committee members. My name is Maddy Dawkins and I am a sophomore in CAD Drafting. I strongly believe that the decision about canceling the fall sports season was not the right decision.

As a student last year at Whittier, I can say that sports had a huge impact on my high school experience. Many incoming freshmen are nervous about going to a new school, especially in a school this size. In high school, it can be hard making new friends. This year, it is even harder. You have next to little social interaction with other students due to the fact we are in the same room with the same 10 or so students every day we are in the building.

School is so much more than sitting in a classroom. There is a reason that there are extracurriculars. Some students live for the joy of going on a bus getting hyped for games or can't wait to rush down to the locker rooms as soon as the last bell rings. All athletes want to get better and to see their teammates and play a sport they love so much they would do anything to do so.

Sports are more than just putting on a jersey and representing your school on a field, court, or track. Your team is your second family, there is no other bond like it. By playing soccer and basketball last year, I got to play with some amazing athletes. Some of those are now some of my closest friends. Sports aren't just a game you play; it is a way that you are able to escape everything in your life. When you are playing, it is like nothing else matters in the world, except the game. Students at Whittier who are on a sports team have been waiting for their chance since last year when we got shut down. And what about seniors? Do you know how many seniors won't be playing sports after high school? This should be their last year being able to do what they love but instead, the decision took all that away from them.

Another reason why this decision is affecting athletes is that other schools around us are playing. Whittier tech students are doing their part in following all COVID protocols. It shows that there is a way to stay safe and there can be a safe way to play. This should have some sort of an impact on the decision of the fall sports season and all other seasons that are going to be overlooked.

To conclude, I encourage you to consider allowing us to play this Fall 2 season. Even if we don't play against other teams, at least give us the ability to practice and stay together with our teammates and coaches. Sports are our second family, our second life, and we will not do anything to jeopardize it. Thank you.

---- Forwarded message -----

From: **Victoria Thomson** <11238@student.whittiertech.org>

Date: Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 10:42 PM

Subject: Fall 2 Sports Season

To: <mlynch@whittier.tec.ma.us>

Dear superintendent Lynch and school committee members,

My name is Victoria Thomson and I am a junior in Culinary Arts. I am writing this letter to you today because I believe that the Whittier Tech athletes deserve a Fall 2 sports season.

Ever since I was little I have been playing sports. It's a way to escape the stresses of school and personal life while also having fun and being with your teammates. I play soccer and I run track here at Whittier Tech. Although, soccer has always been my favorite sport. This year, due to covid, it has been taken from me. After having my spring track season taken last year and now my soccer season this year, it's a little frustrating. Sports is what gets me through my school day because I know that once the last bell rings that means I get to be in my element. It's not just me who is feeling this way, it's all the other Whittier athletes as well! I understand that Whittier's number one priority is our safety, especially during covid and I appreciate that! Even in my personal life I make sure to keep myself safe from the virus. This is why if we are able to have our Fall 2 season I would be completely accepting of any new rules or regulations such as wearing masks and altering the game.

Some friends of mine over at Haverhill High were able to have their soccer season, however, new strict guidelines were followed such as not heading the ball, no unnecessary touching, and no throw-ins. If we were able to have a season, these guidelines would be completely fair and I would have no problem following them. However, if the decision is to cancel our season, then I truly hope you would consider allowing us to hold practices with our coaches. I feel this is a safe option that allows minimal risk of spreading the virus because our team is small and can take the proper precautions such as wearing masks and social distancing on the field. I feel it is good to maintain some sort of connection between your teammates during these hard times while also staying in shape. As a student athlete I hope you consider what we have to say.

Thank you for your time and consideration,