



## WHITTIER REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

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A regular meeting of the Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School Committee was held remotely on **Wednesday, March 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   Chip O'Connor  
Richard Early   Lisa O'Connor   JoAnn Testaverde  
Brett Murphy   Johanna True   Tony LeSage  
Dave Irving   Garry James   Ben Fichera (6:41)

Members Absent: Paul Tucker

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 6:31 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. There was no public comment.

By motion of Dr. Testaverde, seconded by Mr. James to approve the Minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting for February 10, 2021 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

By motion of Mr. LeSage, seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald to accept the Treasurer's Report for February 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. The Multicultural club is designing a club t-shirt to promote the club and diversity at Whittier. They are making plans for a "My Name My Identity" campaign that promotes the correct pronunciation of names. SkillsUSA members will take the District qualifying exam on March 11th. Students who are in school that day, will be testing at Whittier and students who are not, will be taking their exam remotely from home. Results will be available in 2-3 days. Students who qualify by achieving a gold, silver or bronze place may have the opportunity to represent Whittier at the State Conference in April. Peer Leaders will be leading study groups for freshmen and WOA students that may need extra help with a specific subject area. They hope to have their first study group session next week. Chess Club is meeting virtually on Thursdays from 3-4 pm. DECA Club just wrapped up their state competition. They had four students compete virtually and they will receive results on March 18th. Students that place at States will advance to DECA International, which will also be held virtually. Interact Club will continue distributing cards to assisted living facilities throughout the District for Easter. They are also looking into hosting a virtual walk which will be open to all students at Whittier. They would have students sign up and ask for pledges. All donations would go to the Relay for Life community event. UN Club has been having virtual debates. They are preparing for an online conference on March 20th. The Conference, sponsored by the United Nations Association of Greater Boston, is focused on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Their next virtual club meeting is Thursday, March 11th at 3 pm. The Student Government is meeting regularly to plan upcoming events and activities. They are currently in the middle of Spirit Week with two different themed events: Decades Day and Class Color Day. Students are encouraged to participate by dressing up and earning points for their grade. Student Government is going to participate in the Easter Cards project with the Key Club. GSA has been meeting remotely on Mondays. They are in the process of finding another day to meet as the school moves towards more in-person learning. Key Club is working with the Interact Club and Student Government to hand out Easter cards in the community. They are also looking for other service opportunities.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

### Personnel Action

The Superintendent, Maureen Lynch reported on the hiring of instructors for the February 2021 vacation boot camp and evening school nurses for the CTI program. She also reported on the resignations of a route bus driver and electrical instructor.

### Budget Update

Ms. Lynch reported that a budget workshop was held March 10, 2021 and a budget was discussed which contained a 2.42% increase. The public hearing for the FY22 budget is scheduled for Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 6:15 pm.

### MCAS Update

Ms. Lynch reported that the DESE has announced that all grade 10 and 11 students will take the MCAS exam in May 2021. In addition, grade 9 students will take the biology MCAS exam in June 2021.

### Superintendent's Update

Ms. Lynch provided an update. On Thursday, February 11, 2021, she attended a remote meeting with Commissioner Riley where he discussed the need for more in-person learning for students. On Thursday, February 18, 2021, she attended a remote Early College Joint Committee meeting with Chris Laganas, Tia Gerber, Kelly Fay and Patty Lowell. On Wednesday, February 24, 2021, she attended a remote meeting with Commissioner Riley. On Friday, February 26, 2021, she attended the Mayor of Haverhill's Task Force on Public Health remote meeting. On Tuesday, March 2, 2021, she attended a remote MSBA meeting. She reported that the required MSBA documentation is complete and she is waiting to hear if Whittier will be at the April or June MSBA meeting announcing whether Whittier will be in the Feasibility stage of a building project. On Thursday, March 4, 2021, she attended the remote MAVA Officers' meeting, the Board of Directors' meeting and the General Membership meeting. On Thursday, March 4, 2021, she attended the Massachusetts Municipal Association's remote meeting on tracking federal relief funds to municipalities and school districts. On Tuesday, March 9, 2021, she attended the remote MVSA meeting. On Tuesday, March 9, 2021, she attended the remote Merrimac Finance Committee meeting along with Kara Kosmes. Ms. Lynch reported on Monday, February 22nd, all students began eating lunch at the school. The cafeteria, lobby and gym have been set up with student

desks so students can maintain 6 feet of distance between their classmates at lunch. Ms. Lynch reported that Fall Season II is on. She addressed some misunderstandings regarding the previous cancellation of Fall II athletics. She stated that at the time the decision was made, there was concern about covid variants, social distancing, and whether it was safe to move forward with athletics. She stated that a month later, covid numbers have decreased significantly, the rollout of vaccinations has improved significantly, and it is now time for Whittier to have athletics. She stated it has been a very tough year for students and she is glad that Whittier can start bringing students back for more in-person learning and extracurricular activities. Ms. Lynch reported that Whittier will have a vaccination clinic on March 25th. There are over 70 staff members that have signed up for the clinic. She stated the clinic is with Conlin Pharmacy in Methuen. Teachers will either receive the Moderna or the J&J vaccine. Ms. Lynch stated that on March 15th, on Mondays only, sophomores and juniors will return to academics in full-cohorts. In these classrooms students will be 4 ½ feet apart from one another. Beginning on March 29th, all vocational week students will return to school 5 days a week. On April 26th, all academic week students will return to school 5 days a week. Ms. Lynch reported that she has been addressing concerns that staff may have in this regard. The biggest concern is social distancing. Classrooms are set up with 4 ½ feet of distance between them. Some of the vocational areas are a bit tighter and they are working on providing barriers at work stations.

#### PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Mr. Chris Laganas, the Principal provided a principal's update. He stated that Whittier remains committed to slowly and safely bring back the regular school routines for students. Mr. Laganas reported that a WT Weekly Happenings tab has been added to the Hybrid Schedule to keep everyone informed of school announcements. On Tuesday, March 16th, freshmen will be in their selected shop areas during their vocational week. Guidance has just finished their middle school interviews and are now booked through next week with make-up interviews. Grab-and-Go meals will continue to be available at the end of the school day for students who wish to have meals available for their remote and weekend days. Monday pick-up for breakfast and lunch will continue to be available from 10 am to noon at the Poet's Inn entrance. Meals will be provided for 7 days. Mr. Laganas reported that during the live stream morning announcements they have been honoring "Women's History Month" with trivia questions thanks to Patricia Lowell. They have also been showcasing different vocational areas each morning by live streaming from those areas.

## BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT

Ms. Kara Kosmes, the Business Manager provided Amendment No. 3 to the Food Service Management contract with Whitson's Culinary Group for approval by the School Committee. The original RFP was for a five year period, however the State Bureau of Nutrition requires that the contracts be executed in one year increments, therefore this request is for year four of the contract. Ms. Kosmes thanked Whitsons and Kevin Welch, Whittier's food service manager, and his staff for their efforts over the past 12 months in ensuring that food was always available to those students and their families who were in need of it.

By motion of Dr. Testaverde, seconded by Mr. Irving to approve Amendment No. 3 to the Food Service Management contract with Whitson's Culinary Group as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Ms. Kosmes provided bid results for informational purposes for Electrical Equipment Repairs to Substation A and School Security Services. She reported that CE Power Engineered Services LLC was awarded the bid for Electrical Equipment repairs and Merrimack Valley Guard Service, Inc. was awarded the bid for school security services. The bid for the security services is for a 3 year contract with an option for a one year extension.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Mr. James to accept the bid results as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Ms. Kosmes reported that on February 2nd, the District received notification that its Excess and Deficiency Fund was certified in the amount of \$999,446 by the Department of Revenue.

## COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Mr. Murphy went over the annual agenda items for April. He reminded members to submit their self-evaluation forms before the next school committee meeting. He stated only six (6) have been received to date. Mr. Murphy reported that the Committee received a letter from the Superintendent notifying the Committee of her wish to commence negotiations for a successor Agreement.

By motion of Mr. LaBella, seconded by Mr. James to instruct the Chair to send a letter to the Superintendent stating that the Committee wishes to commence negotiations for a successor Agreement with the Superintendent. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Mr. Murphy asked for a motion to move the Annual Organizational meeting to April 14, 2021 at 6 pm instead of April 12th.

By motion of Mr. LaBella, seconded by Mr. James to move the Annual Organization meeting from April 12th to April 14, 2021 at 6 pm. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Dr. Testaverde asked that remote participation be put on the agenda for discussion in the near future.

#### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Executive Subcommittee met February 10, 2021.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Mr. LaBella to approve the minutes of February 10, 2021 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

The Instructional Subcommittee has not met.

The Plant Operations Subcommittee has not met. Mr. Murphy asked Bob Hardy, the Plant Facilities manager, to provide a quick update. Mr. Hardy stated that maintenance has been disinfecting and making the school safe. He also provided an update on the snow removal from the turf field that he did after researching the process. Ms. Lynch stated that Mr. Hardy and his crew have done a phenomenal job keeping the building clean and safe.

The Salary & Negotiations Subcommittee has not met. They will meet on Wednesday, March 24, 2021 at 3 pm.

The Policy Subcommittee has not met. Mr. Irving asked Ms. Lynch to send information on remote participation to the subcommittee for review. They will meet on April 14, 2021 at 5:45 pm.

## MEETING DATES

The Public Hearing on the FY22 budget is April 14, 2021 at 6:15 pm. The Regular School Committee meeting is April 14, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

## NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business posted.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Murphy stated there is a need to enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the School Committee and upon completion of Executive Session will adjourn.

By motion of Mr. LaBella, seconded by Mr. James to enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the School Committee and upon completion of Executive Session will adjourn. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

The Committee went into Executive Session at 7:09 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Lisa Rand*  
Recording Secretary