



## 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, August 12, 2020** 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   Tony LeSage  
Richard Early   Lisa O'Connor   JoAnn Testaverde  
Brett Murphy   Johanna True   Chip O'Connor  
Dave Irving   Garry James   Ben Fichera (6:46)  
Scott Wood (6:46)

Members Absent: Paul Tucker

Others Present: Maureen Lynch, Superintendent  
Chris Laganas, Principal  
Kara Kosmes, Business Manager  
Patricia Lowell, Dir. Pupil Personnel  
Tammy D'Entremont, Comptroller

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 6:30 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. An email was received for public comment from Audra Woitkowski of Haverhill regarding the opening of school (email is attached to the minutes). An email was received from Marie Katzen of Georgetown regarding the opening of school (email is attached to the minutes). An email was received from Dana Weightman of Georgetown regarding the opening of school (email is attached to the minutes). Ms. Lynch and Mr. Murphy stated that the plan will be online Thursday morning.

By motion of Ms. L. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. LaBella to approve the Minutes of the Regular School Committee meeting for July 8, 2020 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

By motion of Mr. LeSage, seconded by Mr. Irving to accept the Treasurer's Reports for June and July 2020 as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Mr. Murphy reported that Mr. Mahoney, the Treasurer requested student activity account authorizations from the School Committee in accordance with JFJ-Student Activity Accounts Policy.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Mr. LeSage to authorize the Principal to accept money for the following existing student activity organizations: Class of 2020, Class of 2021, Class of 2022, Class of 2023, Class of 2024, Field Trips, Gay/Straight Alliance, Journalism, Key Club, MultiCultural Club, Music/Drama, Peer to Peer, Ski Club, Student Council, United Nations, Skills, Yearbook, Cosmo Tips, Poet's Inn Tips, Robotics, Carpentry, Interact Club, and General Student Activities. Unanimously Approved by roll call vote

## OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business posted.

## STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

There was no student representative report. Mr. Murphy asked if there would be a student representative starting in the fall. Ms. Lynch stated she will try to have the student representative for the September meeting.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

### Personnel Action

The Superintendent, Maureen Lynch reported on the hiring of nurses to input data from Masterhealth to Powerschool, nurses to update student health records, two (2) history instructors, an English instructor, a vocational/technical coordinator and evening school secretary. She also reported on the resignations of an English instructor for retirement purposes and a cafeteria worker.

### Budget Update

Ms. Lynch reported that Chapter 70 funding for FY21 is \$10,835,866 which is an increase of \$631,007 over FY20. The increase is based on October 1, 2019 enrollment and includes an inflation factor of 1.99%.

### MCAS Update

Ms. Lynch reported that there is no MCAS update at this time.

### Superintendent's Update

Ms. Lynch provided an update. She thanked staff that participated on the task forces for the reopening of school. Ms. Lynch provided a school reopening update. She discussed the three (3) options for reopening school full in-person learning, hybrid learning and remote learning. She stated that for full in-person learning there will be academic cohorts of 20-24 students, each teacher's desk is outfitted with front Plexiglass shields and teachers travel to the students. For hybrid learning, all students will be remote on Mondays; Group A will be in school on Tuesdays/Thursdays and Group B will be in school on Wednesdays/Fridays. There will be cohorts of 10-12 students and vocational cohorts will be less than 12 students. For remote learning, all learning would be remote and students would follow their normal schedule. All teachers will be in school unless there is a stay-at-home order. Ms. Lynch provided results from the parents survey on what model(s) they are comfortable with sending their child back to Whittier. She reported that 96 wanted remote only; 348 wanted hybrid only; 226 wanted in-person only; 58 wanted in-person or hybrid; 24 wanted remote or hybrid and 5 were comfortable with all three (3) models. Ms. Lynch provided results from the staff survey on what model(s) they are comfortable with returning to Whittier. She reported that 14 wanted remote only; 34 wanted hybrid only; 15 wanted in-person only; 7 wanted in-person or hybrid; 15 wanted remote or hybrid and 17 were comfortable with all three (3) models. Ms. Lynch reported on social distancing. She stated that all desks

are 4 ½ to 6 feet apart; there are staggered arrival and dismissals; one way hallways where possible and limited numbers in classrooms.

She also reported that masks are required for all students and staff. There will be mask breaks. She reported on ventilation. She stated that all classrooms for student use have windows. Interior rooms will be used by staff as planning spaces. All classrooms will be equipped with a portable air purifier/sanitizer. Ms. Lynch thanked staff and administrators for their hard work over the summer on the task force committees.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Dr. Testaverde to accept all three models for the reopening of school as presented; approve the hybrid model to begin the 2020-2021 school year and with the ever changing pandemic grant the Superintendent the authority to change to a different model throughout the school year.

Ms. L. O'Connor asked why this is not separate motions. Mr. Wood stated that it should be separate motions as well. Ms. L. O'Connor made a friendly amendment to break it down into two (2) votes; first vote on the 3 models and 2nd vote on recommendation to open school with hybrid model. Mr. Irving withdrew his motion, Dr. Testaverde seconded it. It was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

By motion of Ms. L. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. LaBella to accept all three model plans for submission to DESE as presented. Approved by roll call vote - 1 Abstained (D. Irving)

By motion of Mr. LeSage, seconded by Mr. LaBella to approve the hybrid model to begin the 2020-2021 school year and grant the Superintendent authority to change to a different model as needed throughout the school year. Approved by roll call vote - 1 opposed (L. O'Connor)

Ms. Lynch reported that as part of the MSBA project, Whittier is required to establish a school building committee. She reported that in the School Committee packet a copy of the proposed school building committee was provided for review and approval. She asked to add Adam Gagne to the proposed Committee.

By motion of Mr. LeSage, seconded by Ms. True to approve the School Building Committee as set forth in the Business Manager's memorandum of August 5, 2020 with the addition of Adam Gagne. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

## PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Mr. Chris Laganas, the Principal provided a copy of the proposed 2020-2021 Student/Parent Handbook for review and approval. Dr. Testaverde asked if there would be a printed version or will it be on the website only. Ms. Lynch stated Whittier has been trying to use less paper over the years. The Student/Parent Handbook can be found on the website. Ms. True asked if face coverings will be added to the handbook. Ms. Lynch stated that there will be amendments to the handbook.

By motion of Mr. James, seconded by Dr. Testaverde to accept the proposed 2020-2021 Student/Parent Handbook as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Mr. Laganas provided a copy of the proposed 2020-2021 School Calendar for review and approval. This would replace the school calendar that was previously approved by the School Committee. Ms. True asked if freshmen orientation will be held in the building or online. Ms. Lynch stated it will be a hybrid model.

By motion of Mr. LaBella, seconded by Mr. James to accept the proposed draft 2020-2021 school calendar as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

## BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT

Ms. Kara Kosmes, the Business Manager provided the Variance Analysis for the FY20 fiscal year end and budget line item transfers in the amount of \$1,057,215.00. This transfer will bring all district accounts to a positive balance. The last column in the variance report shows what the ending balance in each account will be after the transfer.

By motion of Mr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Mr. James to authorize the line item transfers in the amount of \$1,057,215.00 as outlined in the Business Manager's memorandum of August 3, 2020. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Ms. Kosmes reported that there is a memo in the school committee packet for members to approve an appropriation of \$100,000 from the Transportation Revolving Account to purchase a new bus.

By motion of Ms. L. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Irving to appropriate \$100,000 from the Regional Transportation revolving account to purchase a new school bus as presented. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

#### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Mr. Murphy went over the annual agenda items for September. Mr. Murphy stated that the November meeting falls on Veteran's Day. The Committee moved the meeting date to Thursday, November 12, 2020. Ms. True asked to put the annual organizational meeting on the September agenda for discussion.

#### SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The Executive Subcommittee met July 29, 2020

By motion of Dr. Testaverde, seconded by Mr. James to accept the minutes of July 29, 2020 as presented. Approved by roll call vote - 1 Abstained (L. O'Connor)

The Instructional Subcommittee has not met. They will meet in October.

The Plant Operations Subcommittee met August 12, 2020. They will meet again in October.

The Salary & Negotiations Subcommittee has not met. They will meet September 2, 2020 at 6:00 PM.

The Policy Subcommittee has not met. However, MASC has provided policies that need approval from the School Committee prior to the opening of school.

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Dr. Testaverde to suspend the rules and have a first and final vote on the policies. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

By motion of Mr. Irving, seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald to approve the following policies for a first and final reading to be adopted for the 2020-2021 school year. EBCFA - Face Coverings; ACAB - Harassment; EBC - S. Unanimously approved by roll call vote

#### MEETING DATES

The Regular School Committee meeting is September 9, 2020 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. Early to adjourn at 7:49 PM.  
Unanimously approved by roll call vote

Respectfully submitted,  
*Lisa Rand*  
Recording Secretary



Lisa Rand <lrاند@whittier.tec.ma.us>

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## Comment for School Committee

1 message

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**Marie Katzen** <marie.katzen@gmail.com>

Wed, Aug 12, 2020 at 11:58 AM

To: lrاند@whittier.tec.ma.us

I am the parent of an incoming freshman to Whittier. To say that I am extremely disappointed in the communication from this district would be an understatement.

There has been absolutely no communication about the reopening plans except for one email that explained the state mandate and a survey. A small explanation of how hybrid would work was also included. Every other district in our area has shared their plans, had community forums as well as shared information on what they chose and when they would vote.

I learned about the meeting tonight by digging on the website and finding the agenda with the vote halfway down almost as an afterthought. I spoke with the principal who was very nice and answered my questions, but again did not seem to understand my frustration with the lack of communication. The fact that parents know nothing about the plans for next year - even if the plan is "we don't know yet". Obviously, we don't know everything yet and things can change in an instant, that is understandable. But to leave parents completely in the dark a month before school opens is unacceptable.

We were very excited to see that orientation was scheduled and that the re-opening plan would be discussed. I would hope that this is not the first time this will be unveiled to parents. Parents should have time to read the plan and be given a forum to ask questions. I'd prefer that not be during orientation where we should be learning about the school.

Maybe there are communication channels where this is being discussed and if so, freshman parents should be made aware of them. Not having these communications is causing unnecessary anxiety and stress on families that is not needed at this time.

Please advise as to how the information from tonight's meeting will be communicated to parents and how we can read the plans that are submitted to the state education department.

We are looking forward to our Whittier years and hope that this is not representative of your regular school year communications.

Thank you,

Marie Katzen





Lisa Rand <lrand@whittier.tec.ma.us>

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## Reopening Plan 2020

1 message

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Dana Weightman <gtownweightman@gmail.com>  
To: "lrand@whittier.tec.ma.us" <lrand@whittier.tec.ma.us>

Wed, Aug 12, 2020 at 11:17 AM

Good Morning,

I have two questions for tonight's school committee meeting:

**1. When will families receive written plan(s) for the reopening, so that we can understand what each option might look like in practice, as well as how it would work if we started in person (full or hybrid), but had to move to fully remote?**

**3. When does the committee plan to vote on their final plan?**

Please note that we do understand the moving-target nature of the situation, and I am not pushing for one approach or another, since it is so difficult to know what to do right now! We simply need more information and communication, as we feel very much in the dark and excluded from the general conversation. We had no idea school committee meetings were even happening until recently, and then only after having to dig around online. No email notices, no social media notices. No notices at all came our way. Perhaps the incoming freshman class is not on the email list?

Thank you!  
Dana Weightman



Lisa Rand <lrاند@whittier.tec.ma.us>

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## Fwd: School Reopening - Parent Concerns

1 message

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Audra Woitkowski <awoitkowski31@gmail.com>

Wed, Aug 5, 2020 at 12:43 PM

To: lrاند@whittiertech.org

Good Afternoon School Committee Members,

I was given your contact information from Superintendent Lynch following the email I sent to her on August 3rd (please see email below). I have concerns that the reopening of school is being held up by the MTA Union's negotiations that seem to be motivated more by politics than safety concerns. Ms. Lynch stated that the Whittier Tech teachers do belong to the MTA and that Whittier Tech's union and the administration are working well together. I understand that the Tech is under its own district but being a resident of Haverhill, I see that the Haverhill public school teachers also belong to the MTA Union and Superintendent Marotta stated in a letter dated 7/30/20 that they will pursue negotiations with all impacted unions to open school with a hybrid learning plan yet now that has changed to all-remote after the 8/2/20 vote to endorse the MTA's position of **"Until the point when districts and the state can meet these criteria, we will refuse to return to unsafe school buildings and we will use the 10 additional days at the start of the 2020-2021 school year before instruction of students begins to redesign learning"** (attached). What does "redesign learning" mean exactly? Does this also affect the Tech? How can this be viewed as anything less than political? It confirms my fear that the education system is being held hostage and our kids are being used as pawns. As I've stated below, I have great respect for the teachers and staff at the Tech. I do not mean to make the assumption that the teachers and staff are not acting in the student's best interest or that they will go along with everything the MTA demands, and I know they do indeed have the health and safety of all the students in mind, I just think the politics should be put aside and the focus be on getting the kids back *into* the school in the safest way possible.

I believe parents have the right to know that the opening of school is tied to both the DESE's recommendations *as well as* the MTA Union negotiations and parents should be made aware of their demands, those related to COVID-19 *and* their plans to "reimagine" the entire school system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Audra Woitkowski  
175 Kenoza Street  
Haverhill, MA 01830  
(978) 891-2621

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Audra Woitkowski** <awoitkowski31@gmail.com>  
Date: Mon, Aug 3, 2020 at 12:46 PM  
Subject: School Reopening - Parent Concerns  
To: <superintendentsoffice@whittier.tec.ma.us>

Good Afternoon Superintendent Lynch,

Thank you for providing us with the reopening update letter. Our family is from Haverhill, my name is Audra Woitkowski and my husband is Jon, our daughter Olivia will be a junior and our son Nathan will be a freshman this coming fall. I would first like to thank the teachers and staff at the Tech for doing all they could under these unprecedented circumstances. They did their best navigating the uncharted territory, and I have no issue with the way they handled the remote-learning as it was, however in my opinion, it will not work in the long-term. Remote-learning is nowhere near as beneficial as in-person learning.

I've read the letter and the guidance issued by the DESE and have a few questions and concerns:

Do the teachers and staff at Whittier Tech belong to the MTA? If yes, will returning to school also be contingent on the negotiations between the DESE and the MTA Union? I have concerns that if the MTA's demands are not met it will possibly delay the return to school. There are certain demands that, in my opinion, are not entirely based on the COVID-19 pandemic but rather their desire to affect changes in the curriculum that would otherwise need to go through the proper channels and procedures. I understand that the current national upheaval is a starting point to "reimagine" school's curriculum but it seems that the education system is being held hostage and our kids are being used as pawns in the Union's fight.

I've read that the DESE will allow the schools to reopen as late as September 16th, but I've also read that there are several demands that MTA is still trying to negotiate before they consider returning to school.

These are just two of the demands that concern me:

**"Cancel the requirement for fully in-person learning plans"** (1) (2) - does this mean the teachers are already planning to forgo in-person learning altogether? It seems that it's ok for hundreds of teachers to assemble, seemingly on a daily basis, to "protest" for their demands yet MTA considers it unsafe to return to in-person learning.

**"Resources must be moved away from security and policing and directed toward social, emotional, mental health and public health solutions"**(1) - does this mean that the school will no longer have either a resource officer or security team to protect our kids in the event of a dangerous situation? I agree that there needs to be significantly more staffing to deal with the emotional and mental health of *all* students, but I believe that should be in addition to, *not a substitute for*, security and policing.

I believe parents have the right to know that the opening of school is tied to both the DESE's recommendations as well as the MTA Union negotiations and parents should be made aware of their demands.

I understand the complexity of the situation and that you're ruled by the governor/state's guidelines, but I also know that you'll do what's best for our kids, teachers, and staff.

I fully support the teachers and staff, I have great respect for the jobs that they do and that they are underpaid, and often-times underappreciated. I've worked in the schools that my children have attended, and been involved in each school's PTO group so I am under no illusion that their job is anything less than difficult at the best of times. I just think there is a time and place for the union's negotiations that do not concern the re-opening of school as it relates to COVID-19.

I just wanted to go on record to voice my concerns and opinion.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Audra Woitkowski  
175 Kenoza Street  
Haverhill, MA 01830  
(978) 891-2621

(1) <https://massteacher.org/news/2020/06/reopening-and-reimagining-our-public-schools>

(2) <https://massteacher.org/news/2020/07/educators-gain-10-days-to-plan-resumption-of-learning>

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*Regards,*  
*Audra Woitkowski*

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*Regards,*  
*Audra Woitkowski*



Educators across Massachusetts miss their students and are eager to resume learning in person – as that is how education is supposed to be. Our greatest collective obligations, however, are to keep students, educators, families and communities out of harm's way and to prevent a resurgence of COVID-19 in our communities and across the state. Therefore, the districts and the state must demonstrate that health and safety conditions and negotiated public health benchmarks are met before buildings reopen.

The different abilities of communities to meet these standards reflect the profound inequality of our society by class and race. The legacy of structural racism through community disinvestment has left Black, Latinx and Indigenous students, educators and communities with higher risk factors and worse outcomes, all while depriving them of resources to meet these standards. Middle-class and affluent communities will be better suited to meet necessary health and safety benchmarks.

Until the point when districts and the state can meet these criteria, we will refuse to return to unsafe school buildings and we will use the 10 additional days at the start of the 2020-2021 school year before instruction of students begins to redesign learning.