

FRONTIER REGIONAL/UNION #38 SCHOOL COMMITTEES
JOINT MEETING Minutes
Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING

Frontier Regional School Committee:

Present: Chair Robert Hall, Robert Decker, Keith McFarland, Damien Fosnot, Philip Kantor, Mary Ramon, Judy Pierce and Olivia Leone

Absent: Lyn Roberts, Ashley Dion and William Smith

Union #38 School Committee:

Conway School Committee

Present: Elaine Campbell and Philip Kantor

Absent: Ashley Dion, Michael Merritt and Denise Storm

Deerfield School Committee

Present: Kenneth Cuddeback, David Sharp, Mary Ramon and Carey Etchells

Absent: Trevor McDaniel

Sunderland School Committee

Present: Gregory Gottschalk, Maisie Shaw, Keith McFarland, Peter Gagarin and Jessica Corwin

Whately School Committee

Present: Katie Edwards, Robert Halla and Maureen Nichols

Others Present: Superintendent Darius Modestow, Director of Business Administration Shelley Poreda, Frontier Regional School Union President Alison Walters and Union #38 Union President Emily Tynan

Chair Robert Halla opened the Frontier Regional School Committee at 6:05 PM.

Chair Kenneth Cuddeback opened the Union #38 School Committee at 6:05 PM.

Superintendent Modestow talked about last weeks' cancelling of trips, basketball tournaments and Annie and how Friday was back to back conference calls. The decision was to close school for two weeks. After an emergency conference call with the Commissioner of Education on Sunday, the determination by the State was to close schools for three weeks.

Superintendent Modestow wanted to thank our School Nurse Leader Meg Burch, and both Curriculum Directors, Kim McCarthy and Sarah Mitchell for their hard work and being ahead of things. He also thanked staff members across the board, administrators and teachers.

With the State closing schools for 3 weeks, our last day will be the 185th day, or June 18th. Three days of the first week of closure (3/16-3/20) will be considered snow days. This is scenario 1. All of this is pending on a 3 week closure but this is subject to change if school is closed to May 1st. Second scenario. MCAS was brought up and Superintendent Modestow said that DESE may issue a waiver. Currently 10th grade MCAS is postponed. The 3rd scenario would be a school closure for the remainder of the school year.

Superintendent Modestow instructed everyone attending the virtual meeting on how to ask questions and the process for answering.

Meals Systems. Superintendent Modestow said that the district has opened up breakfast and lunch to all four towns. He thanked all the School Secretaries for calling all families. Delivery of meals is offered and any child 18 and under is eligible for meals. This service was also offered to anyone in the community who is in need of food and to all senior citizens. The cost of breakfast is \$1.12 and lunch is \$1.47.

Katie Edwards was curious if we should or will cancel April break. Superintendent Modestow said that he feels we need to wait as things may be much worse in 3 weeks and that the 3 week closure may really be the beginning of a longer closure and that teacher contracts are involved. We are waiting to see how this pandemic goes. He stated that the custodians have cleaned all the buildings and that there were no cases in Franklin County yet but that could, and most likely will, change.

Superintendent Modestow next spoke of the Continuing Education Opportunities at home with regard to the Elementary and Secondary grades and emphasized that this is not a replacement for a full school day but that this is more of an extension of school to try to get the kids to do activities at home for continuing education. There will be fun activities as well as reading activities that will cover Pre-K to AP Courses. Alison Walters stated that AP testing was on hold. Superintendent spoke about the various technical capabilities, differences in grade levels, family assistance and families' access to technical devices. The district may need to hand out iPads to students and he stated that many internet companies are offering very low rate packages due to this crisis.

Jessica Corwin stated that there are now 5 presumptive cases in Franklin County as of today according to the Recorder. Superintendent Modestow acknowledged that and thanked her for letting him know. Alison Walters said that AP College Board will be releasing information on the 20th. Some extensions may be granted or alternative testing sites may be discussed.

Seniors and Graduations were brought up. Superintendent Modestow said that we would have to wait and see. This is a fluid situation.

The March 16th meeting of the school committee chairs was discussed in that the chairs have let the superintendent take care of the first week of closure. It was decided to pay everyone for the week.

Next item discussed was the draft MOA between the districts and the teacher and instructional assistants (See attached). Paid administrative leave if under quarantine, or if the work place is closed, were discussed. Superintendent thanked both union presidents for their leadership and especially their availability. Ken Cuddeback thought that the draft as presented (MOA) seems to cover most bases and makes things clear for all involved. Superintendent Modestow said that questions were raised by non-union employees as to the use of sick time if they have a family member in their home who is under quarantine therefore putting them also under quarantine. Superintendent said that needed to be looked at. He stated that teachers would be doing 4 hours per day of remote work. There were no questions on the MOA. Superintendent talked about closing the district down on Friday, March 20th so that those still working would be able to rest after the hectic week and to spend time with their families. He suggested that beginning the week of March 23rd that the non-union employees still working be put on a rotating schedule of 3 days on, 2 days off, and paid for the full week.

Keith McFarland was wondering about the consistency in Non-PTS teachers in years one and years two will step to the next year but teachers in their third year working in the district will not advance to Professional Teaching Status. Superintendent Modestow said this is not affecting a lot of teachers and that the Spring of the 3rd year is when the decision is made for teachers going to professional teaching status within the

evaluation system. Once you receive professional teaching status, the level of evaluation for non-renewal is like that of tenured or non-tenured and it is far more difficult for a school to move on from that teacher. We don't have the spring so they would have the 3rd year again. This could be looked at as an extra year of probation or an opportunity to move forward with that. Both Unions agreed that based on the number of teachers involved we are not able to move forward with that. Superintendent Modestow will follow up with this.

Jessica Corwin asked for clarification of the last sentence for the second item for custodians. "The days in which they do not work will be held against paid time off." Do they have to use their personal accumulated paid time off? Superintendent said that was a typo and was being corrected as they spoke by Shelley Poreda. Shelley said they are paid for the two days they are not working and it is not held against their paid time off.

Custodial staff will be working in shifts so as to keep in step with social distancing. Cafeteria staff will rotate days preparing lunches and breakfasts. All will receive full pay.

The Out-of-School Time Program was discussed. The issue is that the program is tuition based and there is no tuition coming in now. The salary cost for a 3-week period is \$21,000. Most staff are not full-time but there are a few full-time, with benefits. This will need to be looked at.

Discussed next were the 10-month secretarial positions and if they will be paid to not work. Administration will be looking at this again; possibly a rotating schedule. There are also the part-time staff to consider, ie. Tutors, crossing guards, anyone under 20 hours.

Superintendent Modestow asked Grybko Transportation if they were still paying their staff. The cost of fuel needs to be discussed. Superintendent will be discussing this with the bus company.

Damien Fosnot talked about e-learning or distance learning for kids. Superintendent Modestow emphasized that this Continuing Education Plan was not in place of a school day and that we cannot hold students accountable for participating in the activities offered but our job is to motivate families' participation. If we are looking at a longer closure then we may need to look at other options keeping in mind that technology needs vary among families.

Jessica Corwin stated that she was concerned, going forward beyond the closure, about community members with medical vulnerabilities who may need to remain isolated until a vaccine is made available. This is both for staff (can they use sick banks?) and students (will we need to figure out how to educate some children—likely with special needs—from home and how might that impact the budget?). She said she didn't expect answers tonight, but hopes that we can start thinking for the future. Superintendent Modestow stated that the administration is aware of this and especially if we do not have a vaccine in the near future.

Katie Edwards asked if some of the non-union employees can be given new responsibilities to support the teachers and others as needed given the fluidity of the situation. She stated that perhaps the principals could help manage by building as needs will likely be different. Superintendent Modestow discussed the possibility of using the Instructional Assistants in new ways. He spoke about other non-union employees and using them in different ways, i.e., librarian assistant putting together book orders.

Ken Cuddeback stated that he finds the Elementary School document quite comprehensive, especially given the short timeframe to put it together. A lot of thought is evident in the document.

Superintendent Modestow said that a meeting will need to be scheduled to vote on the MOA and the Agreement (non-union work requirements). He said that a Doodle poll will be sent out.

He then addressed an earlier question by Judy Pierce. “When the school is open again this spring will the use of Friday PD days for the rest of the year be re-evaluated? I guess you could lump this in with the April vacation question.” Superintendent Modestow stated this could be a possibility and will need to be looked at further once we know for sure the return to school date.

Keith McFarland stated that these were unprecedented times. He appreciates all the work and communication. “It seems due diligence so far. Most decisions and directions mirror my district. Things seem to change every day.”

Olivia Leone said that she agreed with Judy and asked if it was possible to spend more time on learning over the second half of the Early Release Fridays to make up some of the time if it comes to that? The Superintendent spoke of trying to get everyone computer access; possibly to do a lunch chat.

Ken Cuddeback asked if we should vote on the Work Requirements as well and the Superintendent said that yes at the next meeting.

Katie Edwards thanked the Superintendent and his Team for all that they are doing and would like them to keep regular communication with families and students so they feel and stay and connect to the schools as much as possible during this scary time. Superintendent Modestow said that more robo calls will be coming from the building principals and also from himself as he receives updates from the state. He encouraged all members to reach out to him with any ideas, concerns, etc.

Ken Cuddeback adjourned the meeting at 6:55 PM

Robert Halla adjourned the meeting at 6:55 PM

Documents:

1. Union #38 Continuing Learning Activities
2. Continuing Learning Activities Secondary
3. COVID-19 Work Requirements (non-union)
4. MOA Coronavirus UEP

Transcribed from Meeting Recording of 3/17/20

Donna Hathaway
School Committee Recording Secretary