

# CARVER SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Saturday, March 28, 2020

3:00 p.m. OPEN MEETING

Online Video Conference

This meeting is being held virtually in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 20. Members of the Public can access the meeting online with the following information.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/525494834?pwd=ZfVpYmlpSUZ4RUtzQW12TVVZN2s2QT09>

## **School Committee Present:**

Andrew Cardarelli  
Jason Greenwood  
Stephanie Clougherty  
Andrew Soliwoda  
James O'Brien

## **Also Present**

Scott Knief, Superintendent  
Brad Brothers, Chief Operations and Finance Officer  
Meredith Erickson, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Technology

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**Meeting Opened:** Andrew Cardarelli opened the meeting at **3:08 p.m.** following the roll call announcement of each participant led the pledge of allegiance.

### **I. Comments from the General Public:**

None

### **II. Comments from the EAPC:** EAPC Vice President, Tammy Johnson

Mrs. Johnson acknowledged the many ways that educators, the union, and the community have worked hard to serve one another during this time and noted that she is proud to be part of a community that has pulled together for the safety, health and social needs of each other. In regards to the Memorandum of Agreement, she said that all worked very hard to come to an agreement through the Joint Labor Management Committee with a common goal to provide best opportunities for students during the stressful time and that she appreciated the hard work.

### **III. Reports from the Superintendent:**

#### **A. General Update on School Closure**

Mr. Knief provided the committee with an update on the school closure noting that when the schools first closed, the guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DES) was to provide students and families with a list of resources that they can access to maintain skills and review previously learned content. The district developed such a list and published it the first Monday we were closed. The message sent to students and teachers, which followed the DESE guidance, was to encourage but not require students to do any specific work. Some of our teachers went beyond that standard but not all did, for instance, teachers were reaching out to students on their own to check in, hosting web conferences with their classes via Zoom or Google, reaching out to families, as well as connecting and providing recommendations for curriculum.

Mr. Knief continued that when it became evident that we were going to have a longer term closure the district began to plan for a more robust system. In planning, administration began to meet with teachers and staff to discuss what remote learning would look like, basing the remote learning plan on the guidance from DESE which was released on Thursday, March 26, 2020. DESE has given autonomy to schools to figure how they feel best to do these things per their district. During the past week, the EAPC requested the development of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

In preparation for a formalized remote learning plan, the district has also distributed over 130 chromebooks and i-Pads to students that need them to access a remote learning platform. Mr. Knief recognized the work of the technology department for preparing and distributing those devices on Thursday and Friday of the past week.

He reviewed the Letter from the Commissioner of Education which focussed on a few key points: support student safety and wellness; have teachers maintain connections with students; students should be engaged in meaningful learning for approximately 3 hours a day; and should focus on reinforcing and deepening skills already taught. A number of these things have already been done at both schools. Connections with students have been made through virtual classrooms and lunches, as well as meetings with the senior class as a whole and student organizations like the student council. In regards to the 3 hours per day of learning, Mr. Knief referenced the Commissioner's speech given last week prior to the extension of the closure noting that remote learning is not always synonymous with online learning and that students can learn in a variety of ways at home with their families, ie. making a meal or baking, planting flowers, doing yard work, etc.

Discussion centered around the focus that educators should be reinforcing and deepening skills already taught. Mr. Knief stated that for the development of the MOA and for remote learning, a joint group had already been formed consisting of members of administration and teachers in preparation for the May 4th extension and beyond if necessary. Where perhaps it would be easier to reinforce or deepen skills at the Elementary level especially based upon literacy or math, they believe it would be more difficult for a Middle High School math or english teacher to do so without introducing new skills. For instance, reflection and analysis of COVID19 would be new material but based on a current-event.

Mr. Knief also noted that the challenge is also to ensure equity for all students. Although chromebooks have been distributed to families in need of an at home device, there is still a learning curve of how to access and use these remote learning platforms and materials and the district is actively helping families to do so, as well as assisting with the connection of internet for those who don't have it at home through Comcast's essentials plan. In addition, he said, there are different circumstances and needs for families, some who are still actively working full time as essential employees for instance, and all of these things need to be taken into account as we develop the plan.

Mr. Soliwoda shared his concern about the idea of reinforcement rather than the introduction of new material, feeling as though 10 weeks of review would leave students starting behind the mark for the next school year. Mr. Knief responded that he believes Carver teachers do a great job of meeting students where they are. Where he agreed this will certainly have an impact, the formal learning plan is yet to be finalized and it may be a balance in terms of what the plan is in order to move forward. Mrs. Erickson

agreed that this is an unprecedented experience for all and shared that there is significant research that talks about interruption in learning, even in the form of summer vacation and is looking forward to coming to an agreement to meet all students where they are at.

Mr. Soliwoda added that he is looking at it from the teacher's point of view as well, for instance how to engage all students and keep them motivated if only reviewing materials already learned. He also wondered if this model would put a lot of stress on teachers next year to catch up. Mr. O'Brien shared his perspective as an educator on the recommendation and offered that in the secondary level this would be much harder to accomplish. In the elementary level the curriculum is conceptual and building habits and consistencies are important building blocks. Secondary on the other hand is difficult because there is a lot of specific content they need to cover to move on and yet it is hard to give new content when all students are not accessible.

Mr. Knief said state and local levels are looking at what number of students will engage in a remote learning setting. In Carver they have seen varied experiences with teachers' zoom activities, where some have had great turnouts, others were not so strong.

Mr. Cardarelli allowed public comment at this time due to the circumstances of the meeting and welcomed Jacqui Perkins, high school english teacher at the Middle High School and Tammy Johnson, EAPC Vice President and middle school mathematics teacher to offer their comments.

Mrs. Perkins thanked the committee for allowing her to comment and specifically wanted to address Mr. Soliwoda's concerns. She shared that she has run an online remote class with students both last summer with her Advance Placement (AP) students and in the fall with her honors students. She has found that students don't have near the mastery than they would if they were in class. Her concern with new concepts is how to access these things in this new kind of environment. The exception would be for students that are in AP classes that have specific content and material. She noted that even those students' AP tests have been modified to only test on materials that should have been covered by March 1. She believes that DESE's guidelines for review are not catering to the lowest or bottom in terms of wealth and accessibility or academic performance and that ultimately it is about what is realistic expectations for all students. She said, every one of the skills taught all year can be used for learning between now and return to school and the focus is to keep skills sharp and keep students engaged at this time. Lastly, she shared that no matter what happens in September, all teachers will have to raise students up to the level no matter what and will. She wouldn't want her own kids' teachers to impose all kinds of new learning on them with the changes faced at this time and that everyone equally will have this glitch and they will do the best to minimize it.

Mrs. Johnson reiterated the line from the DESE recommendations that noted that remote learning cannot replace the school learning experience and as educators, we shouldn't expect that remote learning can replicate that. She acknowledged that it is an incredibly complicated situation and that together they will simplify as best they can and create an environment that is best for learning. She said, students will be learning valuable lessons outside of the curriculum and as an educator it will be an opportunity to do things differently and have students learn in a different way.

Following the commentary, Mr. Knief also noted that there has been a discussion about teachers providing feedback on a credit/no credit basis and that they are working within the Joint Labor Management Committee to finalize the remote learning plan to be implemented on April 6, 2020. He also reviewed the letter sent to parents about the learning expectations for students and families for the week to follow as well as the expectations for staff for the week of March 30, 2020. The goal is that next week would be a transition week prior to the implementation of the formalized remote learning plan.

The expectations for the Middle High School are as follows:

- Teachers will communicate to all students what work they need to complete Term 3 - this would not include any new assignments. Grades would be closed on April 7th. Teachers and special ed inclusion teachers will collaborate on prioritizing missing work and setting timelines for completion and support
- The work submitted would be graded and special ed will do term 3 progress reports
- Teachers will communicate their availability directly to students and parents and respond to questions/concerns in a timely manner during school hours.
- Teachers could offer enrichment/extension/connection opportunities to students
- Teacher's will participate in a team/departmental meeting - times and dates of meetings will be communicated with 48 hours notice

The expectations for the Elementary School are as follows:

- Teachers will communicate their availability directly to students and parents and respond to questions/concerns in a timely manner during school hours.
- Teachers should participate in a grade level meeting - the reading and math coach and special education inclusion teachers may join the scheduled grade level meetings
- Teachers and/or Grade levels will offer at least one class/grade level face to face communication opportunity, live or recorded. (ie read aloud, morning meeting, etc)
- By Wednesday teachers will communicate to students and families at least 4 assignments/activities for students to complete using current communication methods. The teacher will determine the content of the assignments
- Specialists will communicate 1 optional assignment/activity that students could complete during the week for each grade.
- Teachers will complete Term 2 report cards by special ed will complete progress reports by Friday April 3, 2020

Mr. Greenwood asked what happens if a child doesn't hear from a teacher and Mr. Knief responded that families should contact the building administration or himself.

Mr. Knief told the committee that for the district therapists, there is guidance at the federal level that states if you are not providing a full school experience, there is no requirement to offer special educational services. Without this federal guideline, districts would be open to litigation for the level of services provided or not. The recommendation from DESE is that districts should seek to offer some level of special ed services at this time and Mrs. Teichert has been working hard where therapists can do some online therapy with students.

In closing, Mr. Cardarelli explained that although he is not an educator, he understands the viewpoints of Mrs. Perkins, Mrs. Johnson and Mr. O'Brien and also understands Mr. Soliwoda's stance as well. He understands the need to offer new and review.

#### **IV. Recommendations from Superintendent**

##### **A. Memorandum of Agreement with the EAPC**

The memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the EAPC outlines the general expectations for teachers during the extended school closing. Mr. Knief briefly reviewed each key point of the document.

- Employees shall continue to receive their full pay and benefits and they will not have to utilize their leave time during this period of closure nor will they have to use sick leave if they are recommended or mandated to self-quarantine;
- Employees will not have any educational responsibilities during the planned April vacation.
- Those serving in stipended roles will continue their activities to the extent possible and receive their stipends as scheduled.
  - Coaches who complete all or a portion of an athletic season shall receive their applicable stipend prorated based upon the number of the weeks of the season completed. Coaches will not receive a stipend if no portion of the sports season is completed.
- The Formal evaluation process is suspended during the closure for teachers with professional status - unless they are on an improvement plan. The district will finalize evaluations for non-professional status teachers (NPTS) based on work completed prior to the closure.
  - Mr. Knief noted that the online environment is totally different from a teacher's performance in the classroom. Administration is asking everyone to do their best during the transition and the only caveat would be if someone wasn't doing it and even then it would be disciplinary rather than evaluatory. NPTS teachers go through a process and the committee elected to maintain their evaluations so they could continue on with the process to gain professional status and for an administrative standpoint, the district may elect not to renew a teacher during their non-professional status.

Mr. Greenwood inquired about teachers that may be on an improvement plan and Mr. Knief shared that at this time there are not any teachers on an improvement plan in the district.

- Teachers who had planned maternity leaves, based on working from home, may elect to end their leave and return to online learning and not use their accrued sick time.
  - Mr. Greenwood asked if in that circumstance a teacher would be expected to be back in school on May 4. Mr. Knief responded that the general thought would be that he would allow a teacher to defer back to their leave upon return to school if desired.
- Establishment of a Joint Labor/Management Committee that will meet regularly during the closure to evaluate how things are going and to respond to recommendations from the state or federal government.

**Motion Made to approve the Memorandum of Agreement with the EAPC about the current school closure:** Andrew Soliwoda

**Seconded:** Jason Greenwood.

Mr. Greenwood wanted to be clear on the language from #10 of the agreement that refers to “stay in full force and effect until the school closure order is lifted, or June 25, 2020, whichever is earlier” and asked if the school closure mentioned was regarding the statewide school closure, or a district specific closure decision by the Superintendent. Mr. Knief clarified that it would be either.

**Roll Call Vote:**

Andrew Cardarelli, Chairperson: **Yes**

Jason Greenwood: **Yes**

Stephanie Clougherty: **Yes**

Andrew Soliwoda: **Yes**

James O’Brien: **Yes**

**Motion Approved: 5 to 0**

**V. Reports from the School Committee**

**Jason Greenwood:** The Elementary School caravan was such a great idea and the sheer number of people was great to see. Kudos who set that up and participated.

Mr. Knief recognized Renee Demarsh for organizing the over 50 car caravan and also thanked the Carver Police and Fire Department chiefs for their assistance in organizing it. The caravan was originally scheduled for Tuesday, but was changed to Monday due to the stay in place orders. Mrs. Johnson added that Carver has been the model for the caravan and several districts have reached out to them to find out how to do the same thing in their communities.

**James O’Brien:** Both of my kids teachers have been very communicative and are reaching out, guidance counselors, etc. It has been nice for kids to have to check in as well. I appreciate everything everyone is doing. I have rescinded my resignation for last year and will stay on for the remaining year.

**Stephanie Clougherty:** I saw the caravan as well and it was amazing! It took almost 5 mins to go around our circle and it is great to see how committed our staff is and how committed they are to our community. I so appreciate how hard everyone has worked during this time. It is unprecedented, scary, and uncertain for everyone. I have two kids that have been homeschooling for two weeks and it has been a real struggle for us but we are committed to making it work. It is overwhelming, take a deep breath and we will all get through it together. If you have questions or need help, please reach out. We are stronger together and we are here for you.

**Andrew Cardarelli:** Thank you to all staff and teachers and everyone in the community. The uplifting stories of our community makes me warm inside. I saw it all over the social media pages, even the bear hunt in the community. Thank you to the administration, Brad, Scott, Meredith, and Gina. They are here for the community 110% and their dedication is something to be proud of.

**Motion Made to Adjourn:** Jason Greenwood

**Seconded:** Andrew Soliwoda

**Roll Call Vote:**

Andrew Cardarelli, Chairperson: **Yes**

Jason Greenwood: **Yes**  
Stephanie Clougherty: **Yes**  
Andrew Soliwoda: **Yes**  
James O'Brien: **Yes**

**Motion Approved: 5 to 0**

Meeting Adjourned at **4:32 p.m.**  
Minutes respectfully recorded and submitted by: Gina Marie Russell