

Carlisle School Committee
Emergency Meeting
Minutes
Tuesday, November 24, 2020
8:45 a.m.
Zoom Remote Access

Present – School Committee via Zoom: Christine Lear, Amanda Comperchio, Jack Huntress, Eva Mostoufi, Sara Wilson

Present – School Administration via Zoom: Jim O’Shea, Superintendent; Lori Bruce, Director of Student Support Services; Nancy Anderson, Assistant to the Superintendent.

Per Governor Baker’s order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A sec. 20, members of the public were able to access this meeting via live stream at:

<https://carlisle-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/87656661642?pwd=QS9wTVM0SjhsU3ZSS0cxNEJrbmsxQT09>
Meeting ID: 876 5666 1642
Passcode: 8SiG7%

I. Call to Order

Ms. Lear called the meeting to order at 8:47 a.m.

II. Massachusetts State Positivity Rate and Impact on Carlisle School Community

Superintendent O’Shea said that in August, metrics were set to guide when the School would move from one learning model to another. Since then, the School has consulted with health professionals about the metrics. Last week at the Carlisle School Committee (CSC) meeting, it was decided that when the state positivity rate for COVID reached 3%, a meeting would be convened with relevant personnel including health professionals, the CSC, the chair of the CTA and administration to discuss how these numbers impacted the Carlisle Public Schools. The state positivity rate is currently 3.06%. Tricia McGean, the public health nurse, members of Board of Health, and Lauren Sawyer are all on the call today. Mr. O’Shea thanked all of the staff members who are working incredibly hard, and added a special thanks to those who are covering for the people who are out. He also expressed gratitude to all of the people who worked on contact tracing this past weekend. Mr. O’Shea noted that the State has changed the report on the dashboard and removed the numbers of tests for college and university students. He noted that there will be a significant increase in the overall percentage because those students are no longer being tested and aren’t included in the State data. Tricia McGean, public health nurse, said it is important when we discuss metrics to look locally at the cases. We had three cases at school, with two from same family. Currently there are seven active cases in Carlisle in isolation, one is in another location. Of the 6 in Carlisle, 4 are from one household, 1 is from another household, and 1 is from another household. One of the cases in school was not a Carlisle resident. She acknowledged that it is very stressful with the first identified case in School. Lauren Sawyer did a great job communicating with the families. Ms. Sawyer added that everyone she contacted was very understanding and willing to do whatever we needed them to do. Everyone wants to keep the school safe. All families have been open helpful and on board. She said we will work

through this together. Ms. Lear thanked Ms. Sawyer for using her weekend time to contact families. Ms. McGean cautioned on having a blanket approach of changing instructional models based on a 3% positivity rate in the state. Once she is aware of a case, people are isolating correctly. She has not seen any close contacts test positive except in families. The procedures are working. She will reach out to Mr. O'Shea immediately if she sees something concerning. Mr. O'Shea noted that we have not seen community spread in school. We are tracking that internally. Ms. Wilson asked for clarification on the college student data as it applies to the state positivity rate. Mr. O'Shea explained that college students are going home so they are no longer included in the state data. The positivity rate has been low due to the amount of testing, and negative results, college students have had. He said to be prepared to see a rise in the state positivity rate. Ms. McGean noted that the numbers are also increasing due to the number of tests taking place due to holiday travel. Mr. Huntress said the framework was established to be helpful; now we have more information on what is going on in schools, including what other schools, such as Concord, have done to limit the spread of COVID. It is important to listen to professionals and use the information in the best way. Ms. Mostoufi added that Concord had positive cases coming from households and through protocols, people were kept safe. Ms. Comperchio said that her thoughts echo what others have said today. Ms. Lear added that people should be prepared for the increase in numbers that we will see in the next week and a half. When asked how the teachers are feeling, Mr. O'Shea answered that they are exhausted. Dr. Mehler added that it's been a challenging year, people are stressed, we now have cases in school and as much as we understand there is no in school transmission, it is still anxiety provoking. Mr. O'Shea noted that there are people showing up every day, standing in front of classes and smiling. Ms. Vanaria added that our staff is a phenomenal bunch of people who are working hard so students can be in school, people are tired and frightened, and getting tested is a problem because of Thanksgiving which adds to anxiety. People are driving long distances to get tested; everyone is doing the best they can under these circumstances. She is grateful to this team of people. Rachel Levy added that she agrees that our teachers are amazing. Mr. Huntress asked if, moving forward, we can ask Ms. McGean to let us know when the group should be having another conversation. Ms. McGean said that was appropriate. She will let Mr. O'Shea know if there is cause for concern. Mr. O'Shea said Carlisle will align its responses with Concord, and the next few days will inform and educate us. He thanked Ms. McGean and will continue to communicate with her. Ms. McGean and Ms. Sawyer will collaborate and look at data to inform next steps. Ms. Sawyer added that the School is tracking anyone who has been tested, monitoring data and will report any in-school transmissions. Mr. O'Shea said the cases were in school on November 16 and haven't been back in school since. Mr. Huntress was not aware of other towns that use a state metric; Ms. McGean said people can use metrics as a guideline but it is more important to know what is happening locally. Ms. Mostoufi reported that Concord does not have a metric. Ms. Lear said she was grateful to have had the framework to go by, but said the state metric is now obsolete. She asked if the CSC was comfortable with dropping the state metric, leaving the school open and continuing to work with Ms. McGean and the health professionals to inform decisions. Mr. Huntress said he is comfortable with the plan. Ms. Comperchio added that we are getting more clear information from Ms. McGean and the focus should be on what's happening in Carlisle. She added that it's important to realize that closing the school would be a disruption to students and teachers. Mr. O'Shea summarized that the state metric will not be used as a trigger for a meeting, but we will continue to monitor it, and continue to talk with Ms. Sawyer and Ms. McGean. Mr. Huntress made a motion to no longer

use the state test positivity rate as a trigger for an emergency meeting; Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The following votes were taken in roll call: Huntress, aye; Lear, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Wilson, aye.

III. Public Comments

Christina Campbell said that she is very proud of our School. She noted that her son is a recent cancer survivor and her family is very familiar with social distancing. She said regardless of the state metric, cases are going up. She asked if during the holidays, in the next month and a half, would the School consider going to a hybrid model proactively. She is very proud of how the school is dealing with the pandemic and is glad Carlisle was highlighted by Governor Baker. However she is concerned about going into the holidays with the growth of the germ community and teacher strain. A hybrid model could ease some of that strain. She added that having the metric in place makes her feel safer, and she likes to see that data being respected. She voiced appreciation to everyone. Glen Patashnick expressed concerned about hearing that there are three cases in School but no in-School spread when the time from exposure to positive tests could be weeks. He said people are in School and spreading it to more people. He said you can make a good decision to go hybrid, otherwise you are gambling with other people's lives. He said not to play with our children or our teachers' lives. Kim Boschi spoke about the decision for middle school FCR students to come back on December 9 and asked if that should be postponed; does it make sense to put kids in school for a week and a half. Ms. Mostoufi wanted clarification about the ease of process should a family decide that they want to put their child into FCR. Mr. O'Shea confirmed that process would be easy; the School can make the arrangement and families would be in remote for the next trimester. Jenny Sandoval asked what will happen when visitors from the red states come to Carlisle. Her family moved to Carlisle from Connecticut. Her state turned red, testing was not easy to get, and it might get worse. She noted that if someone is relying on getting tested it is not an easy process. Lee Stevens seconded the idea that we have another decision point for FCR families to return in January. Amy Molten said she is proud and grateful for how objective the community has been; she said we are taking a risk in a way that is using science to measure and make decisions. Concord has shown that cases exist then go away. Carlisle has excellent procedures in place, including wearing masks and increased cleaning. She believes we will see a surge after the holiday, but our success to date shows that what we are doing works. It is effort and a risk but a benefit to our children. Bethany Richman asked how will the students returning from FCR influence the 6 foot distance in classrooms. Mr. O'Shea noted that is a challenge. The School has some capacity to bring some students back and maintain distancing, but the School can't accommodate a large number of students returning and keep the present distancing in place. There is not the capacity to expand all classroom spaces. If some classrooms move to 5 feet distance, it increases the capacity. He noted that the School will consider feedback and decide if December is the best time to transition additional students into school. The data will inform the decision. Right now it's speculation, and when the School has the facts, information will be shared. He asked families in FCR to please fill out the survey.

IV. Adjourn Meeting

Mr. Huntress made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Wilson seconded the motion. The following votes were taken in roll call: Huntress, aye; Lear, aye; Mostoufi, aye; Wilson, aye. The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Anderson".

Nancy Anderson
Assistant to the Superintendent