

BOE Regular Meeting

November 09, 2020 7:00 PM

PPMS Gymnasium

1. Call to Order

Dr. Nugent called the meeting to order at 7PM. George Carver, Cindy Luty, Deborah Burke-Grabarek, and Tom Turner were also in attendance. Dan Harris and Charles Raymond participated virtually. Also in attendance: Dr. Roy Seitsinger; Superintendent, and Gloria Homiski; Recording Secretary.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

1. Dana Abshire; elementary school parent, sent in an email expressing concern about the number of people who will be in each classroom if all students return face to face at PVMS.
2. Johanna Thibdeau; PK parent, also sent in an email asking if PK payments could be made electronically.
3. Denielle Sandoval; an elementary school parent, participating virtually, stated that she supports grades 3, 4, and 5 returning to school 4 days a week.

4. Consent Agenda

Dr. Nugent stated that CABA will not hold their annual convention this year due to COVID-19. Instead, they will host 4 different webinars.

The consent agenda was accepted as presented.

5. Superintendent's Report/Updates

More than 50 parents of grades 3 through 5 students met with Dr. Seitsinger and Mr. Bernier virtually last week. The majority of the participants want 4 day a week, face to face instruction for their children. Schools are structured environments whereas the community is unstructured. We can attempt to control structured environments. This is the argument for keeping schools in session.

Preston Public Schools follows strict social distancing, handwashing, and masks are worn by all. When the school had a positive case at the end of September, the schools went remote temporarily. We are prepared to do so again if the need be.

Most important is the physical and mental health of our Preston staff and students. Being in school promotes a sense of normalcy. Therefore Dr. Seitsinger recommends that grades 3, 4, and 5 cautiously re-enter school, face to face, 4 days a week beginning Monday, November 16th.

It is the hope that Preston Plains will be able to follow suit sometime after parent-teacher conferences in December. Preston Plains is TEAM

oriented and the management of programs is more complicated than at the elementary school. Staffing could be an issue. We always need to be prepared to pivot.

Board discussion followed.

Patrick McCormack; Director of Uncas Health, participated in the meeting virtually. Dr. Seitsinger asked him for his opinion. Patrick stated that communication is the key. More often than not, the problem with re-opening is due to staffing. There is more COVID-19 related illness at the high school level due to sports and after school activities. Preston is a CT town that continues to do well and remain healthy.

Cindy Luty asked how many students will be in grades 3, 4, and 5 classrooms if everyone returns to school. Mr. Bernier reported the following:

Grade 3: 20 and 20
Grade 4: 15 and 16
Grade 5: 20 and 20

The numbers remain lower because some students remain as Distance Learners or homeschoolers.

If EVERYONE returned the numbers would be as follows:

Grade 3: 23 and 24
Grade 4: 19 and 19
Grade 5: 21 and 21

At this point there is no need to hire an additional teacher.

Moved, to bring students in grades 3, 4 and 5 back to school, face to face, 4 days a week, beginning on Monday, November 16, 2020. Burke-Grabarek/Luty. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

On October 27th Superintendents received a letter from the Commissioner stating that Superintendents can decide whether or not a snow day is a true snow day or a virtual instruction day. Dr. Seitsinger stated that he would like to see the first 2 snow days be true snow days. During that time schools will assess the possibility of snow days being virtual learning days.

Following Board discussion, they agreed that the first 2 snow days should indeed be true snow days.

Dr. Seitsinger stated that he has already expressed the need for further technology expenses with the BOF. The state donated equipment but we must maintain it. In order to meet the proper obligation to faculty, staff, families and students, the fulfillment of technology needs must be first and foremost.

Dr. Seitsinger is pursuing information on the Trauma Informed Classroom. Social-Emotional training and programming is being pursued by the district.

Discussions regarding racism and equity are also being pursued. Dr. Seitsinger is part of a small group that is studying under the guidance of Yale University's Dr. Marc Brackett.

Dr. Seitsinger also recently completed a mini Artificial Intelligence course through MIT.

Dr. Seitsinger read the Principals' and Special Education Director's Reports:

PVMS: Mr. Ray Bernier: We have been in school for 48 days and other than one full virtual week, we have been able to maintain a hybrid model of instruction. The importance of mask wearing and hand washing is understood by even the youngest students. School pictures and parent-teacher conferences will soon be upon us. Many parents have expressed their support to re-open PVMS for 4 days a week for all students. Jessica Boucher; the new School Social Worker has hit the ground running. She is doing a great job supporting our students.

PPMS: Dr. Davis-Tomczuk also recognized the great effort and enthusiasm shown by Jessica Boucher; School Social Worker. PPMS students are engaged in SEL through Safe Futures. They are participating during their Advisory time and are learning resilience and coping skills. Both PPMS and PVMS are tracking attendance for face to face learners and virtual learners on a daily basis. This is being required by the CT State Department of Education.

Special Education: Mrs. Ann Perzan: All special education students met the standards of target areas according to the state performance profile for 2018-2019 that was recently published.

Gym Usage: Parks and Recreation asked if the schools would open up the gymnasiums for youth basketball. At the current time, this request has been denied. Tom Turner is also on the Parks and Recreation Board and stated that the Director has a proposal she would like to discuss with Dr. Seitsinger. The Board agreed that Dr. Seitsinger should listen to the details of the proposal and then make a decision. Dr. Seitsinger discussed the possibility of setting up a committee to review the proposal. He would invite Tom Turner, Amy Brosnan and Eric McGlone to join him on the committee.

Calendar Revisions: Other school districts are revising their calendars to incorporate more time off (or more virtual time) at Thanksgiving and Christmas. He asked the board members for their opinions. A lengthy discussion followed. Ultimately it was decided that Preston should not make changes to the holiday breaks on the calendar at this time.

Dr. Nugent explained why administrators and some board members were participating virtually. With the Governor's roll back from phase 3 to phase 2.1, we cannot have more than 10 people at an in person meeting.

6. Expenditure/Projection Reports

John Spang presented his monthly reports virtually. We are currently spending less money because there is very little busing on Wednesdays and also no after school activities. There may be additional expenses if the middle school comes back face to face (additional staff, portables). Mr. Spang is going to talk to the Town Treasurer about the possibility of PK payments being made electronically. Mr. Spang also rolled out a draft of the FY22 Budget Meeting Calendar.

Dr. Nugent stated that the BOE Finance Committee would begin to look at the FY22 budget at their next meeting in December.

7. Adjournment

**Moved, to adjourn the meeting at 9:06PM. Burke-Grabarek/Luty.
Unanimous. Motion Carries.**