

Cohoes City School District - Board of Education Meeting - April 8, 2020

Transcription of Live Broadcast

Matt Nolin, Board President: I would like to Call to Order the Cohoes City School District Board of Education of April 8, 2020 Meeting at 6:02 p.m. Please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. At this time, I would like to take a Roll Call. Johanna (District Clerk) would you take a Roll Call.

District Clerk: Mrs. Giller - Here, Mr. Pascale, Mrs. Annely - Here, Mr. Jackson - Here, Mrs. Dion, Mrs. Carey - Here and Mr. Nolin - Here.

Mr. Nolin: I know we have everyone even though I couldn't necessarily hear everyone. We'll work through microphone issues and things as we go along.

Aaron Cagwin (Communications Specialist-Host): I have unmuted Mark and Sue if you want to give them another shot.

Mrs. Dion - Here and Mr. Pascale - Present

Mr. Nolin: I will now turn the meeting over to Dr. Spring to start the meeting.

Dr. Spring (Superintendent): I would like to thank all our attendees at the meeting tonight. It gives me great pleasure to unveil publicly the Cohoes City School District's updated governance framework - our blueprint for success which identifies what we value as a school district, what is important to us, what we believe in and what we are committed to doing. I commend our Board of Education for all of their work in this past year and for supporting the district and working to achieve these goals as we integrate them into the fabric of everything we do as a school district. While we are in the middle of a pandemic national crisis, we cannot forget about what is important to us as educators and as a community and preparing our students for success in tomorrow's world. We never could have imagined that when the Board was working on these revisions this past year in our pre-Covid-19 world that tomorrow's world would look very different. I am thrilled to be starting tonight's presentation with the Board's revised governance framework as it must serve as our compass during this crisis leading us forward in the months and years ahead. I'd like to start with our first slide Aaron. We love seeing our kids so that's definitely a great picture. We remember those days, and we will return to them soon. So the mission of the Cohoes City School District, a partnership of school parents and the community, is to prepare its students for success in tomorrow's world. And in times like these, our partnership with our parents and the community has never been more important. We are grateful to our parents and our community for their continued support as we navigate this health crisis and its impact together. Our vision is 2000 Empowered Learners. This vision statement is short, impactful and easy to remember. What does it mean to be an empowered learner? Empowered learners are curious and motivated. Empowered learners want to grow in all aspects of their lives to be what they can be both personally and academically. Next slide please. We believe in high expectations for all. Our commitment is all students will be prepared for post-secondary success and supported through personalized learning, achievement, academics and exposure to careers. So what's new here? The connection to post-secondary as an outcome for all students is

emphasized, personalized learning included as a strategy which means tailoring student learning to meet the different needs of students based on each student's strengths, needs, skills, interests and goals. An example of this is our new initiative of utilizing student success plans. Personalized learning also includes using digital content and tools in meaningful ways as an extremely positive benefit, and we would look to it as a benefit to the school closure is that our students and teachers have migrated to a virtual environment. For example, elementary is now utilizing Google Classroom, and the feedback has been very positive. While we would rather be in person and in our buildings that has been seen as a benefit. A focus on careers is also new. Our goal for post-secondary success is to support our students in their exploration and discovery of the world outside of school so they can successfully transition from school to a future career. Providing opportunities to support and expand their interest will give our students the confidence they need to aspire to something they never could have imagined. This will also help them to make informed decisions about which classes to take and which opportunities they should take advantage of. Next slide. We believe in a positive school climate and culture. Our commitment to all student staff and families will be engaged in an environment that promotes caring relationships, open communication, wellness and safety. This belief and commitment are completely new additions to our district's framework. The Board wanted to make sure that school climate and culture was front and center. The research is clear. Students who attend schools with a positive school climate have been found increase your self-esteem, decreased absenteeism, reduced behavioral issues and increased school completion. We know that positive and healthy school cultures and climate are the foundations for high-quality learning environment, and they create the conditions for effective teaching and learning. Another new addition is the emphasis on open communication which is critical to fostering trust and connectedness between the school district and all stakeholders. Next slide please. We believe in future ready knowledge and skills. Our commitment all students will be immersed in learning to become creative thinkers, lifelong learners, effective problem solvers, communicators and collaborators. This belief has been updated to include the work from last year's Profile of a Graduate committee which identified our 21st Century learning competencies. The next step will be to work with our teachers to operationalize and incorporate these competencies into our curriculum as we transition to the next-gen standard. Next slide please. We believe in the efficiency of our resources. Our commitment to the district will be innovative and maximizing the efficiency and equity of resources. Now, more than ever, we need to be innovative and efficient in how we use our resources. We also need to ensure that resources are distributed in an equitable manner. So before we move on to the next part of our presentation, again I wanted to commend our Board of Education for creating and for revising our existing framework into this. I thank their outstanding beliefs and commitments, and I'm excited to implement these. Are there any questions or comments from the Board? Aaron, I don't know how we do that if someone has a question or comment. Okay, thank you. Next slide please. New York State under Covid-19. As you know, the Governor has implemented a number of executive orders. New York State schools are closed until April 29 and according to the Governor's executive order, districts must provide continuity of learning for all students. Districts are also required to provide meals. So what is the 180-day waiver, and why is it so important? Schools are required to be in session for at least 180 days of the school year or risk losing state aid. That is why it is so critical that we follow the Governor's executive orders. As you recall, the district was closed on March 16 and 17. We will take these days as snow days. This brings our total snow day count this year to three. We have now exhausted our yearly allotment of snow days; but rest assured even if there

is a late spring storm, we don't have to worry about closing school. So we'll be fine in that regard. The first executive order closed school from March 18 through March 31. For these days, we do not need to use our snow or emergency days or vacation days. The next school closures were from April 1, and then at this point, to April 29. For these days, districts must use snow days and vacation days prior to getting the waiver. The budget vote and Board elections have been pushed back to June, and we are waiting for the Governor to update us and make the decision among the date and manner and the updated timeline. Next slide please. The Board of Regents has made some extraordinary decisions for this unprecedented time. They have placed the safety of our children, families and educators first; and we are grateful and we thank them. The New York State Education Department has canceled the New York State ELA and Math assessments in Grades 3 through 8 this year. They have also canceled the New York State Science test in Grades 4 through 8. And yesterday, the Board of Regents announced new, even bigger modifications to support our students. Regents exams are canceled for this June. We are currently working with our administrators, our counselors and our teacher leaders to determine what does that mean for each and every student? Graduation requirements will also accommodate the closure period. The accountability determinations remain the same as this current school year and will not change and the roll out of state assessments aligned to learning standards for ELA and Math have been delayed for one year. Next slide please. At this time, I'm going to turn it over to Stacy Mackey our School Business Official.

Stacy Mackey: Good evening this is Stacy Mackey. The state budget highlight under Covid-19 reflects flat projections for foundation aid. There is a caveat to this flat projection for foundation aid whereby the state is allowed to make periodic adjustments for certain measurement periods. The measurement periods are defined as April 1 through April 30, May 1 through June 30 and July 1 through December 31. Adjustments can be made if state projections for revenue are below 99% of the projections or if State expenditures are above 101% of projection. The plan is for the Department of Budget to create a plan, and once it's been identified and an adjustment is required, the legislation will have 10 days to take action. Also included in the state runs, there is a line item for a pandemic adjustment. The pandemic adjustment for Cohoes City Schools is just under \$600,000. The adjustment was based off of Title I allocations for schools, and the statewide adjustment was for \$1.1 billion. That adjustment is being offset by the federal stimulus money. That's a separate line item in the state runs, and it's called the Federal Cares Restoration. So for the 2021 state runs, the pandemic adjustment is completely offset by the Federal Cares Restoration. It is unclear if state aid will be impacted for the current school 2019-20 school year. There is state aid due in the months of April, May and June. We are hopeful that this year's aid will not be impacted. Next slide please. And Peggy O'Shea, our Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction will tell us more about the continuity of learning.

Peggy O'Shea: Good evening, as part of a regional collaborative led by Capital Region BOCES and input from our administrators and our teacher leaders, we prepared instructional guidelines during school closure. They were shared with staff last week and with parents on Sunday, and they include timetables how learning will be assessed during this time and what additional learning will look like during this time. As Dr. Spring mentioned, our elementary level Google Classroom was rolled out and teachers at the middle and high school level have been enhancing Schoology as their learning platform. I just need to mention Jen Sangiacomo here for the countless hours she spends preparing Google Classroom in the background and also presenting

professional development. And then also our teachers were so quick in learning new skills and adapting to a very different learning environment. Chromebook distribution by Sylvi Joseph, Director of Technology, thank you, and with some assistance from IT in Capital Region BOCES prepared 320 Chromebooks that were deployed. Some still need to be picked up, and they're readying for a second wave of Chromebooks in the near future. Also, our principals gathered numerous instructional materials, as guided by their teachers, sometimes through facetimeing and volunteers, to distribute not only the Chromebook but the instructional materials to our parents. All of our meetings have been held virtually--staff meetings, teacher leader meetings and grade level meetings. So, all of our meetings have been transformed to the virtual platform. Aaron Cagwin, thank you. He's been there 24/7 to help us communicate with our teachers and our families. And then as you've heard, we will be continuing to provide instruction during the originally scheduled break. This has just been a strong collaborative effort on the part of our staff, and so I know that Dr. Spring and Stacy are also going to mention contributions of some other staff members. Any questions?

Jennifer Spring: Thank you Peggy, this is Jennifer Spring again. So feeding our students, we are definitely outshining our neighbors. So during the March closure period, we served 9,914 meals to our students. This is impressive. We are a community that cares. I would like to thank our food service workers and all of our volunteers. We are still averaging 900 meals a day. At this point, we have sites that are open on Van Schaick and the high school. We also have four community sites: Roulrier Heights, Saratoga Sites, Manor Sites and the Venue. We are also continuing to provide meals during the originally scheduled break next week. We also provide more meals for a weekend so that families and our students definitely will have something to eat. I'm very proud of that. We've been able to achieve such a large number of serving our students.

Stacey Mackey: So essential staff was identified based from the Governor's definitions. We do have our custodial employees direct reporting. We have our food service employees direct reporting. So thank you very much to Jim Stapleton, the Director of Facilities and Brian Nolan, the Director of our Food Service Program and also our partnership with Whitsons. They've been excellent throughout this process. Also the relationship with our CSEA and partnership with the CTA essential staff. Thank you so much for all of your services and your dedication to the school district absolutely job well done. We're also reporting central office staff and our admin staff for coordinating on an alternative schedule in order to comply with the social distancing requirement, so we've been able to pay our bills and process payroll as we would normally. So again job well done. Next slide please.

Jennifer Spring: This is Jennifer Spring again. So as part of our budget process, again this is pre-Covid-19. We conducted a districtwide needs assessment, we met with those closest to our students, our administrators, elementary building leadership teams, teacher leaders and representatives from special areas to inform our budgetary priorities. We then circled back to the stakeholders for recommendations for reductions. Unfortunately, this process was then interrupted by the pandemic. So to bring everybody up-to-speed, as you recall our budget goals included continuing to maximize opportunities for students, evaluating our existing programs and the return on investment of these programs and identifying operating efficiencies. This was the only budget goal that was adjusted and that is limiting total budget growth 0%. Based on the new school aid runs, the tax cap shall not exceed the levy limit. No planned operating deficit

(fund balance) to reduce the use of reserves to improve our cash position and explore shared services and grant opportunities. Next slide please. And I'll turn it over to Stacy Mackey.

Stacy Mackey: So really, all local school districts are saving money today for the uncertainties of tomorrow. So we're currently operating under a hiring freeze. We will, for each vacancy or resignation, evaluate each on a case-by-case basis, look to promote from within and the potential to shift resources if it's available and if feasible. Before the Covid-19 break, we were under a spending freeze so that continues. It's really just safety items, cleaning supplies obviously and we are looking to purchase filters and replace air filters throughout the district. Unexpended allocations, so there is the potential to save in certain areas, and that will be different depending on the duration of the closure period. So we have already at the building level lowered the heating temps to the state minimum, we unplugged any devices, we're looking for energy conservation, we're looking districtwide to save on substitutes, certain operating expenditures such as professional development, tutoring, certain contracts. And then we're going to reevaluate the spring athletic contest to see if there's potential savings there as well. Next slide. So really the key takeaway for state aid is that it's really not assured. There's a lot of uncertainties around next year. So again the pandemic adjustment is just under \$600,000. That is offset by the Federal Care Restoration, but that is a one-year grace basically. Again, it is unclear whether the state aid will be impacted for the 2019-20 current school year. We are hopeful that it will not be. There haven't been any indications, but it's just an unknown at this time. And then there is also the language for the measurement period and the possibility of mid-year adjustments in the 2020-21 school year. And that is something that we haven't faced before. So it is really imperative for us to save any money we can this year in order for us to be in a better financial position for the upcoming school year. Next slide please. So at this time, we'll take questions from the Board.

Helen Annely: This is Helen. I don't have any questions. I just want to let the teachers know that they are doing an incredible job. I know how hard it is to do. We all know how hard it is to do lesson plans and then to switch it up so quickly and move to an online program is really something commendable, and I just want them to know that their efforts were not unseen.

Nadia Carey: This is Nadia Carey. I have a question about the conversation that we were going to have prior to the closure, and then we were going to circle back and talk to building staff and administrators about where they thought the deeper cuts could come from. Now that they're even deeper, will we be revisiting that?

Jennifer Spring: Well, I think that again there are still some unknowns. I think we need to talk to the Board about a few strategies; but absolutely we would like to circle back with our building principals and our teachers definitely to talk about what are some of the options to move forward. I think we all agree that in a post-Covid-19 world when we do get back to our classrooms, we are going to need every single staff member who we currently have because our students needs are going to be greater than we ever could have imagined with gaps in learning and also with the loss of connection that we will really need to address. I think social emotional needs as well. So I think that we definitely need each and every person who's on our staff, and I'm hoping we can figure out how we can achieve that.

Mrs. Carey: Thank you.

Matt Nolin: Just two things. One is for anyone that just came in late. If you have any questions or comments, you can send them to the board email which is boecomment@cohoes.org, and we'll try to get to those during our normal audience participation slots in the agenda. If for some reason we aren't able to, we will make sure to get back to you after the meeting. The other thing is I want to talk about is there's a lot of influx right now. Do we know where we're at right now with the budget? I don't know that we've been given any amount we're saving. Do we think we'll be worse off regardless or is there a chance that if the state doesn't revise their budgets mid-year next year that we'll be maybe not as bad as we had expected?

Jennifer Spring: Well I can start off, and then I'll have Stacy talk about it as well. So we were anticipating pre-Covid-19, a 3% increase in foundation aid. So that did not happen. We are flat. So already off the bat, we have a \$600,000 new gap. So we have to figure out how we're going to obviously close that gap. So then in addition to that, there could be some state aid take-backs. So it could be even worse than \$600,000. The gap would be worse. We are saving some here towards the end of the year absolutely, and I think Stacy we did talk about that. I want to say it's close to over \$200,000 would you? I mean, again at this point, this is assuming we don't come back this year.

Stacy Mackey: Mat. I think you talked to me about fund balance and cash position yes?

Matt Nolin: Yes, and what we might save for the end of the year.

Stacy Mackey: So yes, before Covid-19 when we discussed long-range planning, we were trending very unfavorably for our expenses. So we had made some mid-year adjustments as you're aware of and implemented a spending freeze, and we had made some modifications. Some examples, we had a capital outlay for an elevator, we elected not to go forward with that. So we had already made some adjustments prior to the Covid-19. So now that amount of savings would be \$250,000. A best case scenario is going to depend on a wild card. So it's going to depend on the duration of the close, and it's going to depend on our unemployment claim. So we've been monitoring unemployment, but that's going to be ever-changing because of the volume. So that's really hard to put an exact number on. So \$250,000 would be a best case scenario, but we are trending at break-even so that's good news.

Matt Nolin: Just my perspective, best case scenario is that we are \$400,000 less or more in the hole than we were a couple weeks ago, and that's the best-case scenario that we're looking at is \$400,000 worse off?

Stacy: Yeah. The exact number I think is \$438,000 yeah yes.

Mark Pascale: So Stacy the biggest difference is foundation aid maybe somewhat mitigated? So it's not a full \$600,000, and it may be less than that?

Stacy Mackey: At a minimum, in order to not grow the budget at all, the actual number... just bear with me for one second... is \$438,000.

Mark Pascale: Can I ask, at this this point, do we have our state runs complete to see where we'll be next year?

Stacy Mackey: They are.

Mark Pascale: So with the budget passing, we've established that state aid?

Stacy Mackey: We have. The only wild card Mark is that measurement period and the ability for the state to take back mid-year.

Mark Pascale: And that could happen this year?

Stacy Mackey: It could happen this year. We're hopeful that it will not, but there hasn't been any clearer definition of when the actual take back would occur.

Mark Pascale: So the gaps we're trying to close and the funding we're realizing for next year, appears to meet our growth goals, and we've been in the neighborhood of not quite a half a million dollars?

Stacy Mackey: Right. And the discussion with other districts is that they have similar goals. So most districts are capping their growth trying to save today for the answer and see if tomorrow is the same discussion. That's happening in most schools.

Jennifer Spring: Also districts are not finalizing their budgets until the next state aid payment is received, and that is April 30. So because that will be again we will have to make adjustments, but we're hoping that state aid stays as planned.

Mark Pascale: So has there been any more information from Albany regarding budget votes/school votes?

Jennifer Spring: Again, that's the Governor's decision, and we are waiting to see what that will look like and what will occur.

Stacy Mackey: I was on a call with ASBO this morning, and they said that the idea for school boards to be able to vote and pass the budget is going nowhere; and so it's likely going to be a public vote, and that it would occur after June 1. And obviously once the day is communicated, then the timeline will need to be adjusted with all the deliverables. But it's basically a walk back because everything is dependent on the actual budget vote date.

Margaret Giller: This is Margaret Giller. I have a couple of questions I kind of saved up. But I'm curious to know how many of our families do we feel like we haven't connected with yet? I mean do we feel like we're in a good place with technology and having them be able to access instruction? And are we making those connections? Just talking to one student, I know that you know this particular student hasn't done anything just because she's not being made to, so I'm just curious to know I what we're doing to try and connect with families?

Jennifer Spring: I can guess, and then we'll have Peggy chime in as well. So our principals and our teachers have worked together in their buildings to really identify those families who are in need of a device and also who don't have internet access. So that is one issue. And we now have a second wave of distribution of Chromebooks that we are now identifying the next layer of students who are in need. Again, they're only being providing one Chromebook per family. So you're talking about a different issue. How do we engage our learners and motivate them? And I think that is obviously a challenge. We're hoping that the new direction and guidelines from the New York State Education Department on what is it going to take to really receive credit for a high school student course credit. And we'll be going over that with our teachers to really try to appeal to students that if you want to get course credit, you have to master the learning that we have agreed upon and those standards during the closure period. So Peg would you like to add some of those points?

Peggy O'Shea: Yes, this was a topic of discussion both at an elementary principals meeting yesterday and secondary principals today; and we are looking at additional ways to connect families as having teacher aides closer with families that we haven't heard from and dividing lists. We're really trying to keep that connection now that almost all the Chromebooks are deployed. There is a different way and ability under Schoology and Google Classroom to see who is connected as well. So we talked about systems for teachers to report to principals on who they still haven't heard from and even go to another layer with those families. We are also hearing some stories about families who thought they were okay with devices and then finding that it's really hard to connect to with a tablet or some other devices. So we have not only our help button on the website, but we're also reaching out and talking about some of those families. It actually came up today at a BLT meeting in one of the buildings ways to make sure that even if they're connected, that what we're showing them on the classroom is accessible. Some more clear directions for parents for example how to run the video we have been trying to approach it from many different angles. We just finished the first round of the second round grade level meetings. We have teacher leader meetings tomorrow so this is always on the agenda. We'll keep reaching out and coming up with additional ways.

Margaret Giller: We're wondering if we know how many we're talking about. How many families that we haven't connected with? How many kids have not, you know, I'm just wondering if there's some kind of advocating that we can do on the Board's part to try and help out? I don't know.

Peggy O'Shea: I can get you that information. The principals told us who did not pick up Chromebooks or who did not pick up materials. So we have that and now that we talked yesterday about making sure there's a system about who's signing on and who's not, we can ask for further information. So we'll share that as soon as we get it. That's in the works, and we'll give you the numbers.

Jennifer Spring: Margaret, one principal has also said that she believed that she had some families move and that they weren't in school the week before the closure to follow up on, and we haven't been able to get in touch with them. So that's been a challenge with families who moved right around that time.

Margaret Giller: Is there something we could do to be able to get in contact with them? Would we be able to do a well visit to make sure that everybody is safe and healthy? I mean we've been 4 weeks now, a long time to not be connected.

Peggy O'Shea: We do have lists. We have a list of voice mail boxes that are full, not phone numbers that have been changed, so those are the families we could start reaching out to. I know that when there was packet distribution, there were a few families that we're not reached when that was delivered. So we'll definitely look at that. I know our social workers are also reaching out to families. So we'll get you more complete numbers, and then we will look at every way we can. We have a meeting with the nurses coming up to talk about ways that they can reach out and coordinate with social workers too.

Jennifer Spring: It's very important, and we agree.

Margaret Giller: Now that we're moving into an instructional phase, is there a thought of taking attendance? Are we going to be actually tracking you know the kids who received instruction or not?

Peggy O'Shea: So under Google Classroom, you can see who has signed on. You know who's joined the classroom. It's not a periodic every day that this is joined, but then you can see who has completed the assignments and turned the assignments in. So right now, we're exploring some additional ways. Unless there's some function that I haven't learned yet or we don't have. So we're going to be looking at it through that lens so who is not connecting because we have some students who signed on Day 1 but haven't connected. So there's two different things that we are looking at or continuing to brainstorm ways. And I know that with Schoology, there's similar functions too.

Margaret Giller: I'm wondering about instructional plans. Are they grade level specific so that everyone taking Algebra 1 will be learning the same thing on the same day? Anybody in kindergarten is learning the same thing on the same day?

Peggy O'Shea: So we're not there yet. We have had grade level meetings and part of the difficulty is when we left, some of the classrooms were in some different places so be mindful of that. We're approaching it through. I think we shared the website with you BOCES essential standards website. If you look there, they mapped the priority standard and most built upon future learning for the next school year. So we're going to be talking in terms of the standards and making sure. So here are the essential standards that need to be met. How do we ensure that these are being met? You know both by grade level and content and then by students. So that's the next phase of our plan especially since we know there's not going to be a Regents exam. And we'll have some more specifics for you in the very near future about that. But we're framing it around priority standards and standards that we need for future learning. And then we're thinking about, depending on when we come back, we'll have to continue looking at this for next year too. There are students in front of us next year so where are the gaps?

Margaret Giller: And what about accommodations? Have we considered how that's going to look if we have a student that has a certain need?

Peggy O'Shea: Yes. So Erin and Karen have been meeting, and I joined some of the meetings with special education teachers and speech teachers. And right now, there's a couple different things that are happening. Some teachers have been named a coach teacher on the virtual classroom, and you're able to assign and modify assignments and assign them to different students. It's very student specific and only that student can see the assignment. Anyone who is in a special class reading or math is self-contained are also having classrooms with those teachers. We're meeting with occupational therapists and physical therapists to figure out how to have them become co-teachers. We're just starting to explore that area, and I know our speech teachers are both co-teachers in some classes and have their own special classes. So yes, and at the high school and middle school in terms of consulting in special class.

Margaret Giller: I know that you guys have distributed a schedule based on your collaboration, and I was wondering if there's office hours included, like where a parent, maybe it's a Google meet that they can join, where a teacher is going to be available on this day at this time? Are we offering that? Are our administrators offering office hours to both our staff and our families?

Peggy O'Shea: So we have. The teachers have been talking about check-ins. I know that at the high school that they either have a schedule or coming up with a schedule. We're looking at that throughout. I know they have been shared with students via Schoology and Google Classroom but a master check and schedule that we could post on the website for parents as well would be beneficial.

Margaret Giller: Just a thought. I know that different districts are doing different things, but I thought that maybe some of our club advisors might be able to try and engage some of our kids by doing online club activities. For example, we have a cooking club and our advisor for that club is there literally cooking at home and learning recipes just a thought. You know to try and engage kids. Another thought was grade level meeting so they're seeing other students not only those in their classroom kind of a social gathering where there's a moderator whether or not that would be an administrator or grade level member, just some thoughts.

Peggy O'Shea: So grade level means for students?

Jennifer Spring: Peg, remember Brian held a grade level meeting for seniors and it was well attended and they were excited? I don't know if it's happened for the other grade levels. We can definitely talk to the high school about that. I do know that they're continuing so that will continue. I know that mentors are reaching out so that's something. Future Ready Pathways was one of our Good News points is that we had our committee assembled and we reviewed our applicants and our applications that we had a really strong group of students who applied from the 8th grade. So we actually took more than we have in the past. Instead of taking 25, we took 27 because we had two students who had left from other cohorts. So we just felt very strongly that all of these students definitely should be given this opportunity especially in this new economy and making sure we're helping as many families as possible benefiting students. So we are trying to continue as many of these activities as possible.

Peggy O'Shea: Could I mention one thing, and the word is not out there yet because Kay Weiss is still in the process of who needs instruments yet. But she's planning next week to start band at the elementary level. She is hoping to have the different elementary bands actually joined at the same time, and we're exploring different things in special areas as well. So good ideas. Thank you.

Margaret Giller: And then just a couple of things. I'm wondering if Johanna you might be able to, I don't know if you've done this or not, send out communication to those parties that have already picked up packets for Board elections just to notify them of the new changes as well if there's any information. I know that not much has been distributed about that, but timelines typically to pick up the packets in February, it's due by April, and what that's going to look like if we have that information. But for at least right now, if we can communicate with the parties involved just to say we're in a holding pattern. I'm not sure how long, but it might be a nice thing for us to reach out. And then just a thought to send out a reminder for students with the social distancing efforts that we're making right now. Maybe just, I don't know, if their daily reminders or weekly reminders to not gather together and things that they should and shouldn't be doing. Because I'm still going to work back and forth and I do see groups of kids out and about. So I think it might be a good idea to just send out a reminder from the school district just do you know just little things and doesn't have to be anything fancy just you know.

Jennifer Spring: We can do that. Good point.

Margaret Giller: And then budget wise, we we're in a holding pattern. But I do think that this is a really great time for us to really dig deep and see where we are and what we can do and make sure that we're collaborating with all of our administrators and make sure we're putting forth the best numbers and figures that we can. And last, Peg it sounds like you have not had a minute to not have a meeting. So I do appreciate all the work that everybody's doing in food service, and if there's anything that we can do to put the word out for more kids to be picking up those lunches, we'd be happy to do it. From a Board perspective, I feel like 2,000 kids and 400 lunches, we might be able to reach more. So again, if we can communicate those things and maybe there's talking points that our teachers make when they're doing their check-ins just say that this is available in case you don't have social media or you know are not connected. That's it. Thank you.

Nadia Carey: Margaret, are you finished? So I just want to circle back to the budget for just a second. The \$438,000 Stacy is in addition to the gap that existed or in lieu of?

Stacy Mackey: In addition. The \$438,000 represents a zero growth in budget to budget so that's in addition.

Nadia Carey: Alright. So that's a pretty substantial hole. I know that's not an easy message to have to relay. Just also about the great things everyone's doing. I'm getting unbelievable feedback from parents saying that they're very appreciative of the teachers reaching out and principals reaching out. If maybe we could reach out to all the buildings and see what sort of out of the ordinary things they're doing to connect with kids? I've heard that middle school is having virtual lunches. Harmony Hill, and pretty much everyone, had a parade but I know they do

morning announcements. If we could just maybe share some of the cool different things ways that we're reaching our families that would be great.

Helen Annely: Nadia are you done? This is Helen Annely.

Nadia: I'm done.

Helen Annely: Alright I've got a couple of questions too. I know for a lot of our students school is kind of a safe place for them. This is kind of piggybacking on what Margaret said about seeing a gaggle of kids too. And I guess I'm just a little concerned are we making sure that we're letting these kids know that there is social and emotional help out there for them if they need it? Because they feel like they need help outside they're home.

Jennifer Spring: Yeah. We've been talking about this Helen. And I mean I just read an article yesterday in the NY Times about child abuse is increasing, this is increasing domestic violence right, and it's really important to keep reaching out to all of our students. So our social workers are making extra efforts to connect with all students. Especially those students that they know may really need or benefit from a check in. As well as our nurses and utilizing our nurses as well with those wellness checks, and I know that Northern Rivers is continuing to offer something that's still available. We have a list of resources at our special area providers have all compiled and we have that on our website. Peg would you want to add a few more things.

Peg O'Shea: There's also been messages from our social workers on Schoology. Social workers are part of material distribution. One was dressed up as a bee. So they are reaching out. I also reached out today to our ACES Committee because to get some of their ideas on how to continue connecting. We are also planning some additional virtual events that have not unfolded yet to the students to get to the students. That was part of our secondary level discussion today too on how can we take some of the events going forward that might not happen and make them virtual. So we're also exploring that well. I think you know that the high school and middle school virtual Spirit week to just try to have kids connect outside the Google Classroom or Schoology. We have been listening to our principals read in the morning.

Helen Annely: I know our school does morning announcements every morning, and it's fantastic. So the other thing that I had a question about was I don't know what our quantity of Chromebooks actually is, but when we feel like we're in a good place with distributing them is there any way for some families that might really be struggling because they have five kids in the house to get a second Chromebook if they need it?

Jennifer Spring: I think that's something we'll definitely talk about once every family has at least one district Chromebook. And I think we'll have to take it and see what is the next level of need. I think we're at half our Chromebooks being distributed. Peg, are we at half?

Peggy O'Shea: So we're at 320 with another hundred slated. So we're at half Stacy?

Stacy Mackey: Correct.

Jennifer Spring: I think in the future, we would love to go one-to-one. If there is any way we could ever achieve that, I think it would be a great goal for our district.

Helen Annely: Yup, that would be great. But for now, if we could just think about getting one more to some for our larger families.

Mark Pascale: I have a question about the college in high school classes-the students that are taking college in high school. I realize the state has made accommodations for Regents exams. They are going to be exempt from the Regents exams. But for those students that are taking college in high school courses, we need to be careful that they understand they are still under the same expectations with respect to their college classes in those grades. I haven't heard any word from Hudson Valley about how those final grades will be handled. We need to be careful about the future impact on their grades. It's different. Things that are coming from Albany State Education Department do not apply to these college in high school classes, and I think it's important we need to convey to those students they need to be checking their email, college email account, and getting on their college websites to keep up with the changes that might be occurring from that. Because the fear is that could affect your ability to get financial aid. They're different regulations and different circumstances; so I'm hoping we're communicating that to those students.

Jennifer Spring: So what I can tell you is that this was the first priority because we found out right away from our HVCC partners, Mary-Kate, that students have to continue online right away. So that transition happened overnight. We made sure each one of those students enrolled in a dual credit course had a Chromebook. They were really the first level of the first wave of giving out Chromebooks. I know that Chris Fournier and Bryan Wood would have worked very closely with Mary Kate and all of our dual-credit teachers to make sure that kids are aware of this that they're constantly you know checking in and that they're completing their assignments.

Mark Pascale: That's important that those kids stay engaged, and I appreciate that everyone seemed to be on the right away. I spoke with the high school teacher a few days ago. Hope things are better. At that point, he was a nervous wreck; he was able to connect with about 40% of his students. So I expect there is awareness; and do we have a plan in place where we know who the kids are that are not responding or not engaged and are we reaching out to their parents? We know we have students that during the day are home alone and there's not a parent there to be sure they're logging on and doing what they are supposed to do. So do we have lists of students that we can't seem to connect with and are they identified to get the parents and students connected?

Jennifer Spring: Yes. So Mark that 40% teacher wasn't a dual-credit teacher.

Mark Pascale: Correct.

Jennifer Spring: So that is a challenge. Margaret did bring that up, and it's a challenge. But again our buildings, our principals and our teachers are working on that trying to connect with kids so that they understand if they do not complete the identified content and in the standards under the closure, they're in jeopardy of not getting awarded credit.

Mark Pascale: And we're trying to reach out to parents as well?

Jennifer Spring: Yes. They don't have to take the regents. We know they're exempt from their Regents.

Mark Pascale: Yes. That was really nice to see that. The last thing may be more positive, we've got a situation at the McDonald's senior towers. We're in a near panic with those folks. It's like a virus powder keg. We've got 90 elderly units in a confined area, and we're just doing everything we can to try to manage and mitigate the closeness. They're so vulnerable with compromised immune systems and in close quarters. But one of the issues that came up today is many of the residents would wear masks but don't have a mask and don't have a way to get masks. I'm wondering if maybe one of our clubs or some students might be able to take this on as a project to make masks. I'll see to it that we got the masks to the residents of McDonald towers. Maybe some of our club advisors are looking for things to do that would be a great idea.

Jennifer Spring: Great idea. We'll communicate that.

Helen Annely: If you need any help with that I've been sewing them. So if you need any help reach out and I can help out with that.

Mark Pascale: I'll take whatever you have, and I'll get them down there. Thank you. That's all I got.

Margaret Giller: Looks like Sue is trying to speak if someone can unmute her.

Sue Dion: I have a question Dr. Spring about Regents. It was my understanding that those... I just want clarification here when you said they're exempt from the regents...it's my understanding that if the student was failing the class prior to the closure, they have to take that Regents in August to graduate, is that correct?

Jennifer Spring: That is not correct. So the standard is intention. Did the student intend to take the Regents exam? So if the answer is yes, then that student is exempt from ever having to take that Regents exam. So the big question is: will that student receive course credit and pass the course? So it could be in this case the student does not, and then that student would still have to obviously retake that class. It could be in summer school or it could be in the next school year. But regardless, the student is exempt forever from having to take that Regents exam.

Sue Dion: Even in August?

Jennifer Spring: Even in August and ever forever.

Sue Dion: Okay, so if they're failing the class they won't get course credit?

Jennifer Spring: Correct.

Sue Dion: I guess I thought I read that today, but that's okay, you would know. I just read that somewhere today. But that's alright. Thank you.

Matt Nolin: I just want to see if there are any other questions from any Board members that didn't get a chance to share? There are a lot of good suggestions.

Mark Pascale: I would like to give my deep appreciation. I know that the world turned upside down, and I get the sense that our staff is just doing everything we could ask them to try to make this work. And also, I'd like to thank the folks that made this meeting work. I know Sylvi and Aaron that there's a lot that went into putting this all together, and I appreciate that as well. These are the most challenging times that I've ever been through with school, and I commend everyone. This is an awful situation, and we're seeing that it's bringing out the best in our folks. Whether it's the parades or all the personal sacrifices everyone is making, I'm so grateful and wanted to be sure to pass that along.

Sue Dion: I would like to expand on that also. Our teachers I think are realizing, and so are the parents, they've never worked harder in their lives; and I can honestly say for the first time, I'm glad I'm not in the classroom. And secondly, the parents are realizing what the teachers do, and I think sometimes I feel teachers go unappreciated from home or in the home and these teachers are working very hard. And I know I've heard from parents they just can't believe all these teachers have to do right now. And it's a challenging time, and they're pulling through for our kids, and I think it's great. I think the district has done a great job overall in getting to our kids. I mean we'll always have those students that aren't that won't sign on that won't jump on board the same students sometimes in the classroom. They're trying to reach everybody, and I've heard from a lot of parents and a lot of teachers that's what's happening so thank you.

Margaret Giller: Hi this is Margaret Giller. I just wanted to chime in on the Regents exams. So I think maybe Sue the part that you were referring to is there is one condition it says the student currently enrolled in a course of study culminating in a Regents exam has failed to earn credit by the end of the school year, that student will then have to return for summer instruction to make up the failed course and earn the course credit but still exempt from the Regents.

Sue Dion: Yeah. I don't think that's what I read, but I would have to see. But thank you for the clarification. I'm not the one that's the most knowledgeable. I just thought that's what I read and wanted clarification so thank you.

Matt Nolin: So with that, assuming that there looks like there are no more board comments, I'll reiterate once again I feel the same thing. It's incredibly challenging to make the transition that we have in the time that we have and even working from home it's a challenge and teaching from home and trying to reach the students and the challenges this imposes is great. We also have to remember we're not going to be able to focus as well. We're going to be learning less. We're going to be doing less well in just about everything because of the situation, the mental stress that everything is going on. So it's a really challenging situation for everyone, and I know that we're all doing the best in putting our best foot forward and doing what we can for our students and our staff. So thank you everyone for that. I believe Jennifer if there was nothing else I can move on to audience comments for the agenda is that correct?

Jennifer Spring: Correct. Thank you.

Matt Nolin: I did receive one comment from a parent, Miss Joiner, who is a parent at the middle school, and they were just wondering about the Chromebook distribution for middle school students and when that would occur. Specifically, if we have that timeline.

Jennifer Spring: So they had their first wave of distribution yesterday, and actually I saw Mr. Pascal and his wife, Joyce, there. They happened to walk up to the Chromebook distribution. So that was yesterday. I know they still have some Chromebooks that weren't picked up, and now we're getting the next wave prepared and that list and those Chromebooks ready for the next level of priority for each building. So Peg what is the timeline with the next wave.

Peggy O'Shea: I'm not exactly certain. I reached out to Sylvi who reached out to NERIC for some technical workers to help. It should be I think we're looking at some time next week, but I'm not positive. I'm wondering if this is a parent that called the school to let them know that they needed a Chromebook. I know there were some messages on Schoology, so I will have them reach out to Dan and I'll solidify the timeframe with Sylvi. I'll include on the email and cc both of you as well and we'll get that sorted.

Matt Nolin: Alright. I will need a motion for tonight's Consent Agenda from two individuals please.

Margaret Giller: I have a couple of questions or comments on the agenda. Is that okay?

Matt Nolin: Perfect.

Margaret Giller: In Section VII referring to the college students coming in, are they just going to be performing remote activities supporting our psychologists? How is that looking?

Jennifer Spring: So they are supporting our psychologists and exactly what you are saying. Peg can answer this as well Margaret.

Peggy O'Shea: I went the wrong way. We will work with the college to come up with some activities. We spoke about it, but I do know they came up with a plan.

Margaret Giller: Okay. Second question is VII(F). We have the closure on there until April 15. But now that's been changed. Are we updating that portion or are we going to expect that at the next meeting and vote on at the next meeting?

Stacy Mackey: So we'll have to update it for every duration of the closure. Yeah.

Margaret Giller: We're just approving that closure until the 15th right now. Then, we'll have another motion to approve at the next meeting until the 29th?

Stacy Mackey: Yeah.

Margaret Giller: Okay. And then last thing VII(G) just full disclosure. I have two family members on that list, my sister-in-law and Uncle. Neither one of them live in my household. I would be happy to abstain if anybody desires me to do that?

Matt Nolin: I think that's your call, I don't have any concerns there. But that's your judgment. With that, without anything else, I think we can move on. Oh, I do want to say we have some donations on the agenda as well and so I'd like to thank the groups and organizations that made those donations. I don't know that we'll be able to provide the activities as they were originally intended, but I'm sure we will replicate them whenever we are able to at the soonest opportunity. At this point I could use a motion for tonight's Consent Agenda.

Helen Annely: I'll make a motion. **Mark Pascale:** I'll second it.

District Clerk: Roll Call. Mrs. Giller - Yes, Mr. Pascale - Yes, Mrs. Annely - Yes, Mr. Jackson - Yes, Mrs. Dion--I didn't hear Mrs. Dion--Mrs. Dion - Yes, Mrs. Carey - Yes and Mr. Nolin - Yes. Thank you.

Matt Nolin: Is there any other Board comment on anything at all. I think we covered a wide range. I did get one other public comment that I wanted to acknowledge from Mrs. Kelly, who wanted to thank Kayla Cole and Elaine Flatow for arranging Food Service delivery as we started to realize the troubles with getting families and students to come for pickup, and they did a lot of work to help make sure that that happened. So thank you for bringing that up and Mrs. Kelly, and thank you Elaine and Kayla for their contributions to make that happen.

Mark Pascale: Thumbs up on the text messages effort and there was a day that I had about 100 of them. So there was a lot of work going into that and a great team of volunteers that were there. And it was expanded as Jennifer mentioned to include the housing projects, and they went above and beyond and I appreciate that.

Helen Annely: And I just want to reiterate one more time how appreciative I am of the teachers, you know, just one day teaching my daughter fractions just one kid was enough to make me realize how absolutely amazing all of you teachers are and what you do and everything. So I just want to again extend to you how appreciative I am of you.

Matt Nolin: In that case, I believe that starts to wrap things up here. Thank you to everyone for your participation. Thank you everyone for participating. I could use a motion to enter into Executive Session at 7:20 p.m. from the Board please.

Sue Dion: I'll make the motion. **Margaret Giller:** I'll second.

Mark Pascale: Can you hear me? On the agenda we just wanted to mention that we accepted the resignation of our high school principal. And I just want to, we all want to, extend our appreciation for his deep commitment to our students and to our school and he'll certainly be missed and we wish him the best in retirement. I expect he'll be flying around keeping track of all of us.

Matt Nolin: Thank you for pointing that out Mark. I know we're very thankful as a district to the contributions. I do believe we got two motions for that and were you able to get those Johanna?

District Clerk: Yes, I got Sue Dion and Margaret Giller. And now I am just going to do a Roll Call. Mrs. Giller - Yes, Mr. Pascal- Mark can you hear me?- Mr. Pascale - Yes, Mrs. Annely - Yes, Mr. Jackson - Yes, Mrs. Dion- Yes, Mrs. Carrie - Yes and Mr. Nolin - Yes.

Matt Nolin: We don't anticipate that we will be returning to open session this evening, and thank you again everyone for your participation. If you ever have any questions the same email will be open and you can reach out to us and we will get back to you as soon as possible. Thanks everyone.

Jennifer Spring: Thank you everyone.

District Clerk