



PLYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CENTRAL OFFICE

27 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE
TERRYVILLE, CONNECTICUT 06786

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of Plymouth Public Schools is to challenge, inspire, and prepare all students for success in an ever-changing and complex world.

PLYMOUTH BOARD OF EDUCATION

REGULAR MEETING

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS & CENTRAL OFFICE
WILL MEET IN THE
TERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA
33 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE
TERRYVILLE, CT 06786

VIRTUAL FOR PUBLIC – AUDIO ONLY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2021

7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

Present: Mr. Seaman, Mrs. Kulesa, Mrs. Lucian, Mr. Showers, Mrs. Johnson,
Mr. Foote, Mr. Elsaghir, and Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani

Absent: Mrs. Kremmel

Others Present: Mrs. Turner, Interim Superintendent, Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Mr. Aronheim, Director of Pupil Personnel & Special Education Services, Mr. Tencza, Business Manager, Mr. Trudeau, Director of Technology; Mrs. Loveland, Principal Harry S. Fisher Elementary School, Mrs. Holleran, Interim Principal Plymouth Center School, Ms. Suffridge, Principal Eli Terry Jr. Middle School and Mr. Hults, Principal Terryville High School

1. **Call to Order & Pledge to the Flag**

Mr. Seaman called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. The group joined in the Pledge to the Flag.

2. **Adoption of the Agenda**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion Mr. Foote second Mrs. Lucian, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion passes.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 10, 2021.

Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Foote, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions (Mrs. Johnson abstains) motion passes.

4. **Presentation(s)**

- (a) Recognition of LCSA (Litchfield County Superintendent Association) Student Award
Winners via: Virtual Meeting – Audio Only (For Public)

Principals will introduce students.

Harry S. Fisher Elementary School

Mrs. Loveland, Principal

Amelia Pawlik

Plymouth Center School

Mrs. Holleran, Interim Principal

Joseph Poulin

Eli Terry Jr. Middle School

Ms. Suffridge, Principal

Abigail Ceritello

Daniel Schnaars

Terryville High School

Mr. Vigliotti, Assistant Principal

Jade Ockenfels

Tyler Mendela

- (b) Board Appreciation Month

A small token was placed at each Board Members seat in appreciation for all they do for the students, families and those individuals who are employed in the district. Your time and support and help are very much appreciated.

5. **Superintendent's Update**

* The district held its first onsite vaccination clinic today, March 10, 2021 for all Plymouth Personnel. Thank you to: Mr. Seaman for coordinating the clinic with Waterbury Hospital; Nurse Carol Giannini for all of her work in coordinating registration in VAMS; to the school nurses, substitute nurses, administrators, Mr. Trudeau, our outdoor greeter, the entire technology team; Mr. Mazon and his staff; the cafeteria staff, building secretaries, central office secretaries, and the Plymouth Ambulance Corps. The double theme for the day was, Gratitude and Happiness. The second onsite clinic will take place on April 1, 2021.

* Reminder: The Plymouth Board of Education will present the 2021 – 2022 Budget to the Plymouth Board of Finance on Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 7 p.m. Mrs. Turner and Mr. Tencza have put together a PowerPoint Presentation and will be there to answer questions.

* Learning Model Proposal (previously sent to Board of Education Members)

Recommendation: That we bring our K-12 students back to in person learning for 4 full days and ½ days on Wednesdays. The preschool schedule will remain the same. Wednesdays will follow an early dismissal schedule so that teachers and staff can continue to meet the needs of our remote learners. This includes using the Wednesday PM time to plan, record and upload videos and live meet with remote learners. We plan to begin this learning model after April vacation on Monday, April 19. This date will allow for us to have both doses of vaccine and our school personnel will be fully vaccinated.

A survey went out to high school parents on Monday, March 8 and the survey will close on the afternoon of March 11. A reminder will be sent out to parents. Currently, there are approximately 254 responses, with a total student count of 384 students at the high school. About 78% want to return and 21% choosing to remain remote. However, to be clear, high school students back full and in person, it is understood they will not be 6 feet apart. However, we are looking to find additional space, larger spaces, in order to get the students back to school. The parent survey will indicate how many students are expected to return.

Mrs. Kulesa – Do you feel Wednesday afternoons are sufficient times for teachers to connect with remote learners and plan?

Mrs. Turner – At this point, our teachers, especially K-5, are meeting with their remote learners for about an hour on Wednesdays in the afternoon. The other part of the time, the students will leave about 12:45 p.m. in K – 5 so they will have that time to 3:30 p.m. to be able to have an hour to work with their remote learners and plan. Planning meetings have taken place on Wednesdays and these meetings are running efficiently. They are getting those meetings done and planning and preparing in less time. So we believe they will have enough time.

Mrs. Kulesa – I did not realize it was only an hour. That seems like a small amount of time.

Mrs. Turner – In Grades 6 – 12, they are doing more synchronous work, but they also have this afternoon time where they can really target some needs of remote learners. It just seems to work out for everyone.

Mrs. Kulesa – Thank you.

Mr. Elsaghir – What is the reasoning for doing it on April 19 as opposed to sometime sooner?

Mrs. Turner – Knowing that our teachers and school personnel will be fully vaccinated by the time the students come back was a big factor for us. With a few short weeks coming up (the weeks of March 15 and March 29), SAT administration, elementary parent conferences with early dismissals, and Good Friday, the April 19 date allows for consistency.

Mr. Elsaghir – So, Mr. Chair, I move that we amend the motion at hand and replace “as presented by the superintendent” with starting the week of this Monday, the 15th.

Mr. Seaman – We don’t have a motion on the floor yet.

Mr. Seaman – So, with that said, I'd like to: Entertain a motion to return to in person learning as presented by the Superintendent. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mrs. Johnson, discussion

Mr. Elsaghir – I would like to move that we amend the motion to that was proposed as presented by the Superintendent with starting the week of this Monday the 15th or however that would be worded to make the most sense. Motion Mr. Elsaghir

Mr. Seaman – Let's talk about that Josiah, I understand

Mr. Elsaghir – It has to be seconded first.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – Second

Mr. Seaman – I don't think you can make a motion under a motion, right?

Mrs. Johnson – Yes, he made an amendment. So yes, it was seconded. So, you can have a discussion only on the motion of the amendment.

Mr. Seaman – Is there a second?

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – second

Mr. Seaman – Discussion on the amendment.

Mrs. Johnson – Just to be clear because I was having a hard time. What day did you want to do it?

Mr. Elsaghir – This coming Monday the 15th which I don't think exactly they're exactly in school right so that's why I amended to say the week of Monday the 15th. Whatever wording that would make sense with.

Mr. Seaman – Well, we have to look at a couple of things, Josiah

1. The teachers will not be vaccinated by then. They will not be vaccinated until April 1st.
2. The second thing that we need to look at logistically is moving stuff around to accommodate that probably is going to be very time consuming.
3. The third thing, we need to look at is, I think we would want our teachers vaccinated because as the Interim Superintendent stated at the high school they are not going to be 6 feet apart following the guidelines. So we need to take that into consideration. I think you know no one wants to see kids back to school more than I do. I think in person for the rest of this year and the following year is going to be make-up, no doubt. But I don't want to rush it. That is just my opinion. Anyone else that has an opinion speak up before we call for the vote on the amendment.

Mrs. Johnson – Mrs. Johnson thinks our Interim Superintendent has done her due diligence on this. She would agree that doing it before, during a week that's a little bit crazy, would not work. SAT's are coming up along with half days and that's not going to make any sense. We're giving parents enough time to say this is when we're starting. So that's another thing. She thinks we should be in school all the time, but this seems like the more legitimate way to start it. So I would not agree with that.

Mrs. Kulesa – She hears many times how our children are behind and feels they are not behind. A lot of times you hear our kids are behind. She feels our kids are where they're at and everyone is in the

same circumstance and is feeling the same things. If that means we need to alter the curriculum a little bit or we have to alter the timeline of when kids learn certain things, then so be it. It's not going to matter in 10/20 years. These kids will get the education they need to get. And if it takes a little longer to get it, it takes a little longer to get it. This is health and safety we are talking about. We are not in a race against anybody else and we have to be thinking about what is most important. Everybody's safety and everybody's health is more important than any bench marks we are trying to get. These are just my concerns.

Mr. Seaman – Feels Mr. Elsaghir brings up a good point and he does not necessarily disagree with his intentions. However, he feels the benefit is going to out weigh the risk by proposing what Mr. Elsaghir is proposing. Mr. Seaman indicated he wants Mr. Elsaghir to be heard and would like an understanding rather than he just wants the kids back in school.

Mr. Elsaghir – Mr. Elsaghir indicated he was going to answer every point that was made because everyone makes good points and their points were made in good conscious.

* Regarding the Superintending doing her due diligence. I don't disagree. I do think we have different roles than the Superintendent does. The Superintendent's role is not the same role as the Board of Education. The fact that she has a lot more information and specifics. Her job is to oversee every little detail and her role is to be little more careful. I think it would be an odd thing if the Superintendent was much more gun hoe on things than the Board. So, I just think we have different roles. She is able to put out the proposal that she thinks is best but we do have a vote for a reason. The vote isn't for us to just say "yes" to whatever the Superintendent says. But, also not to ignore what she says. This has nothing to do with doubting the Superintendent.

* Regarding the ½ days and the SAT's, etc. that are coming up and not making any sense coming back to school during that time. He doesn't feel it makes sense not to bring the students back to school as quickly as possible even during the times when the students would not be in school full-time. Under the current model, the students will have less days, even less, if it was decided for them to return. Even days like Easter when the students are not in school on that day, there are still other days in the week they could attend full time. He does not feel the reasoning is logical.

* Vaccination of the Teachers – It was mentioned that the district wants to make certain that all teachers are vaccinated before the students return to school. He mentioned every business and company situated currently in America, the people are back to work whether they are vaccinated or not. He feels the reason people are returning back to work is because we are figuring out everything we can about the virus and there is almost nothing anyone can do. He feels the safest place in the world is school. Some countries have had school full-time during the pandemic and they have not had outbreaks in schools. Some states, like Florida, have had school open for a very long time, months and months and there has been absolutely no evidence of school openings causing more outbreaks. He feels that when we talk about the safety of our teachers, he wants the safety of our teachers spoken of in a way that actually make sense. He does not believe people are saying what they do not believe is true, he just does not think individuals know exactly what is true.

* Points of Vaccination – When it comes to being time consuming or difficult it may be; he feels no matter how time consuming it is the Board's job to get students back to school. He feels the students have been a long time without school.

The students in the high school are not going to be 6' apart, a good point. As he previously stated, everything that we have learned about this virus indicates there is nothing anyone can do to combat it other than sit at home 100% of the time. You're pretty much going to catch the virus no matter what, even if you leave your house because the virus travels through the air.

* Time Consuming – Mr. Elsaghir feels we are beyond not rushing it. Kids have been out of school for a long, long time, and back not even full time.

* Kids Not Suffering – Mr. Elsaghir indicated that he has spoken to various students as well as speaking and hearing from various teachers. He feels every child may not be suffering but there are some children getting destroyed by this and this will affect their future for a very long time. Mr. Elsaghir feels student's grades have plummeted for many students because many students are unable to take school seriously when they are only in school one-half week. He does not know how this can be debatable. He feels it is difficult to imagine that everything we have been going through that we can just say everything is the same as it would have been if we went to school full time. This is a large difference for many students.

* Health & Safety – He feels he is with everyone on this issue. But, as he indicated, the safest place in the world during this pandemic seems to be schools because students and those individuals under 16 almost never transfer this virus. He does not feel Health & Safety has anything to do with currently opening up schools. Mr. Elsaghir indicated everything else in America is opening up and thinks schools are the most important. When you have students who are least likely to get and spread the virus, for schools to be closed over everything else does not make sense. Although he noted, schools are not closed but in hybrid.

Mr. Elsaghir believes he has respectfully addressed everyone's point without being personal. One can disagree with anything he has said which is fine but he does not think after everything that he just responded to that there is any real reason to keep the schools in hybrid or closed. He thinks we need to go back to school full time.

Mr. Seaman – Mr. Seaman indicated he really appreciates Mr. Elsaghir's view points and that he has done a good job. He does not disagree with most of them. However, he disagrees with the safest place is in the schools. He indicated we have had outbreaks in the school system and the one thing Mr. Elsaghir needs to keep in mind is that it is not just the children. It is also staff. When a staff person is absent the district does not have the resources within the community to backfill that staff member. Mr. Seaman feels this is an important part that we need to keep in mind as well. He indicated Mr. Elsaghir is correct, the younger children do not transmit the virus amongst themselves, as we know of at this point or the other variants coming. He indicated we do not have this information. The district has had remote days and hybrid days because of staff having to quarantine. The Board needs to follow the guidelines of the CDC, the governor's directives and the Department of Public Health whether we like it or not. He agrees with Mr. Elsaghir that he too wants the children back in school, there are children highly affected by the school closing for whatever reason, i.e. they are just not into the computer, they do not have the guidance at home, and some may be on-line learners. Mr. Seaman indicated that he does not think waiting until the proposed date from the Superintendent is going to be crucial. The teachers and staff also need to prepare for the students return to the classroom. Mentally, parents and children need to prepare for the return. Mr. Seaman feels this is an important aspect that needs to be considered.

Mrs. Lucian – If the district were to open next Monday, there is not sufficient time for the principals to plan schedules, etc. Preparation takes weeks. When the students return it is going to seem like the first day of school to them. Therefore, she agrees with the Superintendent that the students should return on April 19th.

Mr. Seaman – Any other discussion on the Amendment?

Mrs. Johnson – I just want to Call the Question.

Mr. Seaman – Let's vote on the Amendment.

Mr. Elsaghir – She (meaning Mrs. Johnson) needs to get a two-thirds vote to end the debate.

Mr. Seaman – Is there going to be another discussion on the Amendment?

Mr. Elsaghir – Yes

Mr. Seaman – Is that okay if we let Josiah ...

Mrs. Johnson – Calling the Question stops all conversation.

Mr. Seaman – Motion: To entertain a motion to recess at 7:40 p.m. Motion Mrs. Johnson, second Mr. Showers. All in favor, any opposed, motion passes.

Mr. Seaman – To entertain a motion to return to regular session at 7:43 p.m. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Foot, all in favor, any opposed, motion passes.

Mr. Seaman – Call of Question on the floor – Melissa Johnson, second Mr. Foote. A two-thirds vote is needed.

Yes, indicates you are in favor of ending the discussion

No indicates you are not in favor

Yes – Mr. Showers, Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Foote, Mrs. Kulesa, Mrs. Lucian and
Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani

No – Mr. Elsaghir

Vote: 6 yes 1 no Motion carries, discussion is ended

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the Amendment as proposed by Mr. Elsaghir.

Yes, indicates you are in favor of moving the date up to the week of March 15th.
Mr. Elsaghir

No, indicates you are not in favor of it.
Mr. Showers, Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Foote, Mrs. Kulesa, Mrs. Lucian and
Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani

Vote: 1 yes 6 no

Motion and Amendment Defeated.

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the recommendation as proposed by the Superintendent to return to full in-person learning on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and ½ day on Wednesdays starting on April 19th.

Yes – Mr. Showers, Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Foote, Mr. Elsaghir, Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani,
Mrs. Lucian, Mrs. Kulesa

Motion passes unanimously.

6. **Student Representatives**

* Tyler Mendela – scholarship season has arrived for the seniors. Tyler thanked all of the organizations that offered scholarships. Seniors may contact Mrs. Borda in the guidance office with any questions. It was also reported that winter sports are beginning to come to a close.

* Lilyana Ricardo – She reported on the National Honor Society Induction Ceremony Mr. Maslak put together a video for the students and families who could not attend due to limited attendance. The juniors will be taking the SAT's next week.

* Gena Buckley – Gena reported a change in schedule because Monday will be a professional development day for teachers and no school for students, Tuesday and Wednesday – Cohort A, in person and Thursday and Friday Cohort B will meet. Due to the Anniversary of COVID, individuals are taking time to reflect on the past year and focus on the good that has happened and not the bad.

7. **Public Comment** (limited to 3-minutes per speaker)

None

8. **Board Member/Committee Reports**

A. Finance/Operations - Matthew Tencza, School Business Manager

- Included in the packet are the following; Accounts by Facilities Report for February, 2021 and 3 different submissions: (1) Business Office Activity Report; (2) Board of Education Budget Summary February 2021 Report; and (3) Cumulative Total Board of Education Budget % by Month.

Mr. Tencza, Business Manager reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan and indicated it was merely a draft. He indicated it was a 10-year plan rather than a 5-year plan. The Plan is broken up in two sections. The Top Section: Items that still need to go through the Town Capital Procedure and the Bottom Section: Items by school that we feel at some point the Board of Education will be able to take on at some point. He indicated some things that need to be done this year are: refinishing the gym floors at Eli Terry Jr. Middle School and Harry S. Fisher Elementary School. This will be done over April break. There are funds available within the facilities budget.

Mr. Seaman – He and Mr. Tencza met with a couple of members of the Board of Finance the other day and they are very well aware that the Board is not moving forward with a Capital Budget this year. The suggestion was that we get together with the other agency in town and make them aware of this and work together in coming up with a plan to solve these issues on the town side as well.

Mrs. Johnson – Commented on the issues with the outside lighting at the high school which has always been an issue. This concern is under number 2 of the draft plan. She feels this should be priority.

Mr. Seaman – Inquired if Mr. Tencza was getting a quote for the lighting.

Mr. Tencza – Responded that currently, we have a contractor going through and getting lighting quotes for all of the buildings. Most of it is interior at this point but he will check on expanding it. All of the lighting will be changed from florescent to LED. Mr. Tencza indicated there are incentives coming from the utility companies and from the state. Not official, but in many cases it may be zero cost based on what we may have to put out in the beginning (savings in the first year and/or year and one-half) When these come in to us the Board will need to take action.

Mr. Seaman – What do you have in mind for room air conditioners. He hopes they are mini split and not window units.

Mr. Tencza – He indicated that recommendation came from Mr. Mazon, Director of Facilities. This is adding additional window units at the elementary schools. He understands, in the middle school, there is not the ability to do more substantial air conditioning. The issue is available circuits within the board at the building.

Mrs. Johnson – We have been trying to add more and more units every year but that has always been an issue with how much circuitry. Also, there are only certain ones we can put in the building as well.

- The Accounts by Facilities Report will be forwarded to the Town of Plymouth Board of Finance

B. Personnel Report – Mrs. Turner, Interim Superintendent

No Questions

9. **Public Comment** (limited to 3-minutes per speaker)

Randy Picard, 140 Old Waterbury Road, Terryville – Liaison to Library

Comments: (1) The Library has been opened during the pandemic. There were curbside services. Beginning on Monday the library will be open full time – 100% walk-in, no appointments needed. Look for events on Terryville Public Library's new revamped website; library offers teacher card; (2) Town Council filled vacancy on Board of Directors; (3) Harry S. Fisher selling tickets for an April drawing for a calendar - \$5.00 each; and Public Apology to Mrs. Turner, Interim Superintendent regarding a nasty email he had sent her regarding school closure. Hoping she will accept his apology.

Mrs. Turner – Thank you, I appreciate that.

10. **Board Liaison Reports**

Mr. Seaman -- Harry S. Fisher Elementary School
PTA – Discussion with regards to the reorganization of the schools. Possibility of approaching the Plymouth Center School PTA and coming up with an elementary PTA as a whole.

Mr. Elsaghir -- Plymouth Center School
Pasta Haven – pick up Tuesday, March 16 from 4 p.m. – 8 p.m., some scattered home deliveries. Upcoming to be decided when inaudible Chocolate Fundraiser; Teacher Appreciation Week, May 3 – 7; and Spring Book Fair May 17- 24 estimate dates.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani -- Eli Terry Jr. Middle School
The 8th Grade Committee is doing a Krispy Kreme Fundraiser - \$10 for a dozen doughnuts – ends March 25th – Pick-up is a drive through at the middle school; March 29th from 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. getting a committee together for scholarships as well as for high school seniors; and the next meeting the group will be discussing Staff Appreciation Week coming up in May.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani -- Booster Club
The Booster Club is also getting ready for the scholarship committee. All pictures need to be emailed in for the end of the year video.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani for Mrs. Kulesa -- Terryville High School
Concluded the Charleston Wrap Fundraiser; some fundraisers are still in the mix, debating on whether they are going to be able to fundraise enough money to give a couple of scholarships – committees are forming; and still looking for donations and ideas.

Mr. Foote -- SEPTA
No Report

Mrs. Kremmel -- CABE
Absent

Mrs. Johnson -- EdAdvance
The process has begun of developing the EdAdvance's budgets for the next fiscal year and will continue through March/April. A preliminary budget will be shared with the Board in May, with the final budget presentation in October.

Even during the pandemic, through huge efforts, EdAdvance is pleased with the current state of the budget and hopes to finish the fiscal year with a surplus. They have been informed that the Earned Income Tax credit has been extended, which will have a positive impact on the budget.

Mr. Kitching reported that as a RESC, EdAdvance has not yet been included in the vaccine roll out. He reported the Torrington Area Health District has reached out to EdAdvance and is looking to set up vaccines for staff at the Torrington Armory.

The RESC Alliance is putting together a list of supports and services that our districts could utilize either collectively or individually. These services would be eligible to be paid for through their Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER)

Finally, districts will need to be prepared for standardized testing this spring and the expected inequities that will be demonstrated in those results.

Mr. Showers -- District Safety Committee
No Report

11. **Board Comments**

Mr. Elsaghir – He was very disappointed that the Board voted to end the debate in the middle of the discussion. He did not think it is anything a political body should do when the discussion was going on so long. It is just unreasonable. To end a debate like that, it is just disappointing.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – All Boards are seeking new members going into next year whether it be elementary, middle school or high school. If anyone is interested in taking on a leadership role at any of these schools, this is the time to act. Also ideas are needed for, i.e. fundraisers, etc.

Congratulations to all of the students mentioned for the Superintendent's Award.

Mrs. Johnson – Congratulations to all of the students on their awards. It seems so different not having to recognize them in person.

Mr. Seaman – Vaccination Clinic was very impressive. He was able to procure the vaccine. All of the logistics, and planning was a group effort among everyone in the school system from the Superintendent, the nurses, Central Office, Plymouth Volunteer Corps, principals, secretaries, custodial staff, Mr. Mazon and cafeteria workers.

Congratulations to the students on their achievement and recognition. He is happy we are heading back to school. He thanked everyone that deals with this school situation every day.

12. **Next Board Meeting** – The next Regular Meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for Wednesday April 14, 2021 at 7 p.m. This will be a full in-person meeting with the public.

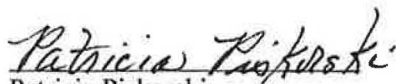
13. **Executive Session** – (Personnel Matter: For the Purpose of discussing a search for a Superintendent of Schools)

MOTION: To entertain a motion to move into executive session at 8:13 p.m. for the purpose of discussing the search for a Superintendent of Schools. Inviting Sherri Turner, Interim Superintendent and Matthew Tencza, School Business Manager into executive session. Motion Mrs. Johnson, second Mr. Showers, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion passes.

14. **Possible Action From Executive Session**
None

15. **Adjournment**

MOTION: Motion to adjourn at 8:33 p.m.



Patricia Piskorski
Recording Secretary
Plymouth Board of Education