

Tisbury School Committee
Wednesday, August 19, 2020,
By Zoom Cloud Conference

Present: Chair - Amy Houghton, Jen Cutrer, Michael Watts,
Supt.'s Of: Superintendent - Matt D'Andrea,
Asst. Supt. – Richie Smith, Interim Finance Manager – Mark Friedman,
Student Support Co-Directors – Nancy Dugan, Hope MacLeod,
Ruda Stone, Leah Palmer, Dr. Jeffrey Zack,
Staff: MVPS/Tis. John Custer – Principal, Melissa Ogden – Asst. Principal;
Matt D'Andrea – Superintendent, Richie Smith – Asst. Supt.
Mark Friedman – Interim Business Manager,
Ruth Ambrozaitis, Laura Bernard, Ellen Berube, Whitney Burke,
Catherine Googan, Emily Crossland, Amy D'Andrea, Hope Fecitt,
Vanessa Forrester, Gail Gardner, Kate Harding, Kelly Hayes,
Rachel Hickey, Rita Jeffers, Amy Jones, Natalie Krauthamer, Emily
Levett, John Mode, Alison Smith, Ashley Tartar, Esther Teves,
Anne Williamson, PTO - Siobhan Mullin,
MVPS/MVEA: Nedine Cunningham, Anne Davey,
Town: FinCom – Jynell Kristal, Board of Health Agent – Maura Valley,
Others: Ursula Goodenough, Becky Nutton, Shannon, Renny S.
Marni Lipke – Recorder

The Tisbury School Committee (AISC) meeting was called to order at 3:36PM.
(Recorder's note: some discussions are summarized and re-grouped for clarity and brevity.)

II. School Reopening Considerations

A. Students

B. Staff

C. Families

The TSC expressed great gratitude to the Tisbury Tigers and to the extended Tisbury School family and to the Administration and Reopening Task Force for their hard work and good thinking. The goal of this meeting was to iron out details and clarify some of the confusion. The TSC emphasized their role to partner with and not impede Administrators, while representing to them all feedback from parents and constituents.

- Community institutions (libraries, Farm Institute, etc.) were less available as space for children to stay/play, which put an increased burden on working families as they struggled with children at home. In addition as federal protections were withdrawn there was an increase in financial hardship.
- Cohort C could possibly start on September 17th and was defined as a potentially large number of Tisbury students: Special Education (SpEd), English Language Learners (ELL), those with technology challenges (lack of device, internet access, etc.), those who failed to engage during spring 2020 remote learning and kindergarten (K) through fourth/fifth grades.
- In addition there was a strong challenge on the safety of the hybrid model (still in scientific debate) and some members especially questioned its efficacy for kindergarteners.

- Administration had strongly considered these problems, advocating with the Health/Wellness Committee at length, and was very hopeful about more comprehensive and earlier in-person learning for kindergarteners. However, in fairness to all Island families the Health/Wellness Committee was very firm about the importance of:

- phasing-in small groups so as not to create Covid virus rate spikes (citing a nationwide trend in failed college re-openings), and

- a comprehensive, consistent plan for all Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS).

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) was mindful of the fluid situation and accepting of changes in reopening plans, requesting weekly updates on each district's position.

- The Tisbury School facility had limited internet access that all consulted contractors had attested could not be enhanced in the present facility. It was not possible to know if (and there was not assurance that) it would support simultaneous use by 40-50 staff.

- 130 single seat desks had been ordered but had not yet arrived. The classrooms could support 13 (at the most 15) desks at 6 ft. spacing, which meant that some grades might have to be split into three or four classrooms. The School library could be re-purposed into classroom space.

- Five rooms had no windows and would have to be repurposed into storage or possibly teacher spaces.

- All advice was that open windows (even in winter) presented the best ventilation. Air conditioning circulated the same air; it could be turned off or run with the windows open. Window would stay open in the winter, raising heating bills.

- Strict State guidelines defined deep cleanings. Given the hybrid model, TSC advocated for two such cleanings a week, Wednesday and over the weekend. However, additional deep cleaning would entail hiring private contractors and procurement was not easy. However, Administrators explained those would be in addition to the daily custodial cleanings as well as frequent touch-surface wipe-downs—with all staff expected to participate.

- The Martha's Vineyard Community Services (MVCS) pre-school had been in-person for some time and Ms. Amy Houghton suggested they be consulted on practicing the protocols (e.g. separate toy groups for separate cohorts).

- At this point Principal John Custer felt staffing numbers were stable although substitute numbers had been dwindling for some time, highlighting the lack of backup. The importance of staff as an irreplaceable resource was a major challenge for all schools. He was hesitant about the safety of all staff in the schools at the same time.

- The TSC emphasized this as an important factor for being able to pivot between the three plans (all in-person, hybrid, and all remote).

- Rumors of a large spike in school population from summer residents staying for the winter were not supported by school enrollment, which was actually down slightly from 2019-20.

- The TSC asked again what the metric/circumstances for allowing children into the building. Tisbury Board of Health (BOH) Agent Maura Valley explained that the Health/Safety group was still trying to determine a measure, hampered by lack of State guidance and the changing nature of the pandemic. They hoped to have an answer by the end of August.

- This would be a different fall from all others, without the marching band, and with no or curtailed sports. The TSC considered an open letter to the press urging increased community personal responsibility needed to reopen schools: masks, sports, travel, etc.

- At the end of the meeting there were two public comments.
- There was a conversation on families' need for consistent, high value, school. Administration stressed their continuing active thought and work on the best form of reopening and thanked the entire community for their thoughtful feedback.
- Staff expressed their great comfort and gratitude for such a supportive administration and responsive school committee.

D. Financial Impact (See documents on file.)

Thanks went to Tisbury School Administrative Support Professional (ASP) Rachel Hickey and MVPS Interim Business Manager Mark Friedman for their projections and reports showing the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Budget to be in good shape due to:

- purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) with FY210 residuals;
- substantial State/Federal grant funding, with the help of the Central Office (some with unusually broad expenditure parameters, some allowing retroactive spending);
- significant Building Maintenance reserve (see Minutes: 1/14/19 p.1 #I A & 6/2/20 p.2 #III A).
- Covid-19/Corona related expenses currently in play included:
 - goal of issuing a device to every student (48 purchased this summer, but problematic high demand and back orders);
 - three tents (two at 800 sq. ft. and one at 1,200 sq. ft.) leased for three months (building permit required);
 - best possible cleaning equipment and supplies;
 - summer servicing of unit ventilators.
- This year was unique in public sector financing in the history of this generation. Mr. Friedman informed the TSC that timely purchasing to address demand backlogs, unpredictable timing of grant funding and a plethora of other unknowns would require extraordinary budgeting flexibility, possibly overspending lines in anticipation of grant funding (some entitlement, some competitive). He would keep the TSC informed as the situation developed.
 - The TSC considered themselves fortunate in having a high degree of trust in their financial team.

I. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes – Tabled

Adjournment

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MR. WATTS AND SECONDED BY MS. CUTRER THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY ADJOURNED AT 4:51PM: MR. WATTS—AYE, MS. HOUGHTON—AYE, MS. CUTRER—AYE.

Appendix A: Meetings/Events:

- TSBC – TBD 5:00PM, Monday, September 14, 2020 – Zoom
- AISC – 5:00PM Thursdays, August 20, 27, 2020 – Zoom
- AISC – 1:00PM, Tuesday, August 25, 2020 – Zoom
- AISC – TBD – 5:00PM, Thursdays, September 3, 2020 - TBD
- TSC – TBD – 8:30AM, Tuesday, September 8, 2020 – TBD
- MVRHSC – TBD - 5:00PM, Monday, September 14, 2020 – Zoom

continued >

Appendix B: Actions

Prin. Custer – forward financial documents to TSC & Ms. Lipke

Appendix C: Documents on File:

- Agenda 8/19/20
- Custer/Hickey emails re: TSC Meeting Information 8/19/20
- Tisbury School Fund Balances Fiscal Year 2020-2021 8/19/20
- Tisbury School Site Budget Fiscal Year 2020-2021 (4 p.) 8/19/20

Minutes respectfully submitted by Office On Call/Marni Lipke.

Marni Lipke – Recorder

Date

Amy Houghton – TSC Chair

Date

Minutes approved 9/10/20