



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### Weymouth School Committee

[ZOOM Meeting](#)

November 5, 2020

MEETING MINUTES

*(approved 11/19/20)*

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**Members In Attendance:** Lisa Belmarsh, Chair; Tracey Nardone, Vice-Chair; John Sullivan; Secretary, Kathy Curran; Rebecca Sherlock-Shangraw; Carrie Palazzo, Mayor Hedlund (arrived late; left at 8pm)

**Members Absent:**

**Also Present:** Dr. Jennifer Curtis-Whipple, Superintendent, Brian Smith, Assistant Superintendent; Robert Wargo, Assistant Superintendent

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**The Meeting Came to Order At 6:01pm.**

Chair Belmarsh led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

A moment of silence was observed for the passing of Barbara Slattery and Jennie Walsh. Condolences were shared with the families.

#### **Report of the Superintendent**

The Superintendent reported on the following:

A successful professional development day was completed on November 3 where the keynote speaker was Jamele Adams who virtually spoke about diversity, equity and inclusion. Rich conversations continued into the afternoon sessions as well.



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Benchmarks are being administered regarding basic literacy; DIBELS and iReady for grades 2-5. Grades 6-10 will be later in November. If families did not receive information they should reach out to building administration.

Search adjustment counselors created choice boards. October focused on bullying and November's focus will be on gratitude.

A multitude of library books in multiple languages are available for check out.

The next budget subcommittee meeting will be on November 18. State reporting has been completed; the Superintendent expressed her thanks to the Data department and the business of office.

The summer lunch program has been extended and is free to the community.

Ionization unit installations are being finalized on air handling systems in all schools.

The Superintendent shared her thanks to all the volunteers who helped as well as the attendees of the Weymouth Market on Wednesday, November 4.

The next SEPAC meeting will be on November 10 at 6:30pm. Board member elections will take place.

### **New Business**

#### **a. Return to School Plan and discuss potential return to school and district readiness dates**

Superintendent Curtis-Whipple stated that she received a letter earlier in the day from the president of the WEA and Eboard which expressed concerns of returning to in person learning and she expressed her hope that the presentation will help address those concerns.

#### **i. Review updated metric**

Assistant Superintendent Smith gave an overview of the metric update. The advisory board consists of Chair Belmarsh, the Superintendent, Elaine Lane, Town Department of



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Health, Councilor Haugh and John McLeod. Community spread is the only area in the red. Infrastructure is in the yellow due to staffing.

Elaine Lane shared that she is aware of 4 new student cases, 2 remote and 2 hybrid which were found not to have impact. 1 staff member tested positive for covid, however has not been in the building.

There is a new Weymouth Public Schools Dashboard which is updated by Dennis Jones and Myra Jones.

<https://www.weymouthschools.org/district/health-services/pages/covid-19>

<b>Total Number of Students</b>	<b>5,870</b>
<b>Number of Confirmed In-Person Learning Students Positive COVID-19 Cases this week</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Number of Confirmed Remote Learning Students Positive COVID-19 Cases this week</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Number of In-Person Learning Students beginning quarantine this week</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Number of Students beginning quarantine due to School exposure</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Number of Students beginning quarantine due to Non-School Exposure</b>	<b>6</b>



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Total Number of Staff	1,412
Number of Staff Newly Reported this week with a Positive COVID-19 Status	1
Number of Staff beginning quarantine due to School exposure	0
Number of Staff beginning quarantine due to Non-School Exposure	3
Number of students currently enrolled in Full Remote Learning	1,003

Some students have not yet participated in in-person learning. This has both an educational and a staffing impact, so principals are following up with families who have not formally decided to be completely remote

### ii. Staffing update

Human resources Director Maryann Foley gave a summary of the leaves and the positions that are open stating that there are building absences in addition to leaves and accommodations.

Assistant Superintendent Smith advised that the current potential impact of COVID-19 related leaves, based on HR numbers, is \$2.1M. FFCRA protects the right of employees to take paid leave of absence however it does not cover that district's expense for either the employee salary or the money spent for coverage. The hope is to submit for reimbursement. Many districts are experiencing staffing shortages as well.

There is also a shortage of bus/van drivers and monitors. Mandated transportation is being provided and some payriders may be accommodated. Robin Howard is planning



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

routes due to increased cohorts returning and asks families to be patient. If there is a transportation issue families are asked to reach out to their building principals.

**a. Grades 6-7 potential 11/16 2 day return by cohort-Principal Matt Meehan**

Mr. Meehan advised that staff and students are excited to be in the building and that cohorts are small and that space challenges have been met. Adams will maintain the 3' distance when cohorts go 2 days per week; cohort 1 and 2 will attend Tuesday/Wednesday, and cohort 3 and 4 will attend Thursday/Friday beginning the week of November 16.

Mr. Meehan reiterated the staffing deficit is a challenge.

The committee wished Principal Meehan happy birthday.

**b. Grades 8-12, CTE and Post-Grad potential 11/16 on day by cohort-Principal Alan Strauss, Associate Principal Karen Monahan & CTE Director Julieann Gamache**

Associate Principal Monahan advised that work is being done to prepare for in person cohorts to begin. Cohorts will start the week of November 16, 2020, 1 day a week:

Cohort 1 - November 17th

Cohort 2 - November 18th

Cohort 3 - November 19th

Cohort 4 - November 20th

The high school will also be welcoming 8th graders and space is maximized. All students will be traveling to classes and hallways are directional.

Staffing is a major concern. Principal Strauss added that 8th and 9th graders have never been in the building and that staff and students are excited to be back in the buildings.

CTE students will be attending with their cohort class and CTE director Julieanne Gamache advised students will be getting hours remotely in accordance with DOE and Chapter 74 and that all is being done to meet requirements for third party industry licensure.

The Superintendent reiterated that Commissioner Riley wants children in school and the district has to do their best to bring kids back in the building. Dr. Curtis-Whipple expressed her concern for unhealthy behaviors and habits as well as social emotional needs of students at home. All efforts are being made for staff, student and family safety.

Special thanks was given to Custodial, Maintenance, Food Service, and IT staff in addition



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

to Teachers, ESPs, traffic supervisors, bus/van driver/monitors, and leadership.

In time 1 day cohorts will be evaluated for double cohort days. Space will also be evaluated.

All questions by the committee were addressed.

Dr. Sullivan shared his appreciation for the caution in returning to in person however would like to see students in the buildings. It was stated that schools are a safe place for students and that there is not significant evidence of covid spreading in schools.

Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw expressed her concern for case numbers of children aged 0-19 and shared that it is a community effort in following health and safety guidelines so children can return to school.

Chair Belmarsh echoed Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw and expressed her conflict with going forward on the eve of the imposed mandates and shared her comfort for continuing on the current return to school path. Constant monitoring of the situation and metrics will continue.

### **b. Review Labor Foreman job description**

Assistant Superintendent Smith gave an overview of the position and discussed the reasoning for the need of the new position. The Labor Foreman will oversee a number of other positions and will require licensure to oversee equipment. The position is the byproduct of the maintenance union negotiations. The position will be posted as anticipated and will be voted on at the next meeting. The funding will come from the school budget and will be similar to the painter foreperson.

### **c. Review the Community Host Agreement between Weymouth and Algonquin Gas Transmission regarding North Weymouth Compressor Station**

Chair Belmarsh brought attention to the host agreement signed by the Mayor and Town Solicitor and the Enbridge Algonquin Gas company as well as the 1,110 page emergency response plan that was released on October 30, 2020. The Chair requested this be put on



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

the agenda. Ms. Belmarsh expressed her concern for health and safety measures as well as lack of inclusion of the School Committee and School Department in discussions.

Johnson Early Education Center is .9 miles and Wessagusset is 1.3 miles from the compressor station placing both within the 'Exposure Zone'. These 2 buildings contain 450 children and 100 staff. JECC houses many medically fragile and non ambulatory students. Schools were not mentioned in the evacuation plan which requires many evacuees from a large part of North Weymouth to go by JECC.

The Superintendent advised that there is a meeting scheduled for November 6, 2020 with John Mulveyhill to discuss the emergency response plan.

The safety and security committee meeting with police and fire on October 21 was mentioned. Mrs. Nardone shared that she's been to every meeting and evacuation was never discussed and conveyed found it disheartening that this committee was not part of the conversation.

Town of Weymouth Safety advisory meetings were held on June 8 and September 30; Assistant Superintendent Smith clarified that they were regarding OSHA and staff safety.

Mayor Hedlund shared that he felt there was a mischaracterization and misrepresentation of school department involvement. Numerous town, state, federal departments are involved in the compressor station development. Mayor Hedlund urged the school community to view the archived N. Weymouth Civic Association and environmental meetings on WETC and reminded that his office has been involved in a costly legal battle of 22 lawsuits for 6 ½ years. The suggestion was made that school committee members should have reached out for involvement. The Mayor reiterated that schools are part of the evacuation plan.

Chair Belmarsh advised that the school committee did write resolutions in the past and suggested drafting a letter addressing health and safety concerns.

The Mayor shared on behalf of the EMS Director that part of the emergency evacuation plan is for the schools to shelter in place and that the plan is a living document. He expressed his hope to have detailed interaction with the School Department.



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw expressed her concern for the disregard given the schools, especially for the medically complex and non ambulatory students at JECC. She shared that the shelter in place plans were not created for in the event of an explosion where toxins were released into the air. Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw shared her support for sending a letter to the Town Council.

Mrs. Curran suggested reviewing school safety plans and inquired about the St. Jerome facility. WPS would have access to the lower facility of the church. It was mentioned that JECC and Wessagusset would go to Pingree.

Ms. Palazzo thanked the Chair for adding this as an agenda item and shared that she's been attending meetings for the compressor station for 5 years and expressed her thanks for the opportunity for the community conversation however questioned the timing of the meeting on November 6. She referenced the Environmental Health Project and potentially educating health officials on specific health and safety concerns.

Dr. Curtis-Whipple advised that the meeting was not as a result of the agenda item and that Chief Stark and Fuller are welcome to attend the meeting in person or virtually.

The Mayor encouraged school and community members to reach out to his office. He expressed his frustration with the long costly fight and thanked the schools for their support during that time.

Dr. Sullivan expressed that the relationship between fire and police departments is positive and expressed his thanks for the conversation. Secretary Sullivan shared his hope that fire, police and schools would work together to improve the emergency plan.

Dr. Sherlock-Shangraw made a motion for Chair Belmarsh to draft a letter requesting additional health and safety measures around school evacuation on behalf of the school committee. Seconded by Mrs. Nardone. Roll Call vote. Passed unanimously.

The letter will be shared with the committee prior to the next meeting when it will be voted.



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### **Public Comment**

-Alice Arena, 6 Blueberry Street

As representing the Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station (FRRACS) stated that there are many appendices to the 1100 page response plan and that at the environmental sub committee meeting it was stated that the schools already had evacuation plans. It was shared that EMS Director Mulveyhill explained that the plan is technical and geared towards emergency personnel. Ms. Arena posed the question of what schools, students and families, and residents would do in evacuation as the evacuation route goes down Evans Street in front of the Johnson Early Childhood Center. The medically vulnerable population at the JECC was mentioned. Ms. Arena offered her assistance with obtaining resources.

-Ed Cowen, 41 Bluff Road

Expressed his thanks to the School Committee and shared his feelings that the Mayor should've reached out to the School Department regarding the compressor plan and agreement; that it wasn't incumbent on the School Department. Mr. Cowen conveyed his thoughts that the School Department deserves a seat at the table and an ally in Town Hall.

-Andrea Honore, Houserock Road

Expressed her thanks to the school committee for placing the compressor station on the agenda and emphasized the area that it's in is densely populated and that all staff, students and families, and residents should be considered in the evacuation plan. Ms. Honore reminded that the Mayor is a member of the school committee and shared her feelings that town administration should be inclusive of the school department.

Expectations of all areas of town being taken care of equally were conveyed. Mrs. Honore brought attention to #19 of the Host Community Agreement which prohibits town administrators or employees from speaking against Enbridge.

Town Councilor Hough's facebook post regarding the compressor station was referenced. 'Blow downs', and emergency system failures at the compressor are a health concern.

-Henry Bates, 174 West Street



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

As a student brought attention to teachers being overworked who have to simultaneously teach and divide their attention between online and in person students. Mr. Bates expressed his feelings that simultaneous teaching takes away from the quality of his education.

-Town Councilor Becky Haugh

Expressed her thanks to the school committee for addressing the compressor station and the collaborative effort to get involved. Councilor Haugh shared her feelings of support for the school reopening plan stating that her son returned to school this week and that spirits skyrocketed.

Chair Belmarsh thanked Councilor Haugh for her comments and her time on the advisory group and the racial equity group.

-Jen Meighan, 688 Pond Street

Expressed her concern for her daughter in the allied health CTE program not earning enough hours for her phlebotomy certification.

It was reiterated that CTE Director Gamache is working to make sure students get enough hours.

-Lisa Dembowski, 80 Heather Lane

She is thankful for the opportunity for more students to go hybrid. It's all about choice. She is in a "split family" where remote schooling is working for one but not for the other. Talking to families there is a profound positive impact from coming back.

She wants to make the public aware that the Weymouth Educators' Association president has filed a charge of prohibited practice with the Department of Labor against the school committee asking for a cease and desist order against return to school plans despite being notified on 10/5 by school committee attorney Brunt that the situation did not trigger an obligation to bargain. She hopes this will not prevent the plan for going forward. She doesn't believe this charge speaks for most of the teachers, and certainly is not in the interests of kids. She publicly thanked teachers and other staff for going above and beyond.



# Weymouth

---

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

-Josephine Burke,

Expressed her appreciation for returning to school even for 1 day a week. Ms. Burke conveyed her thanks to CTE Director Gamache for teaching her early childcare classes as the teacher was out.

-Ann Pike,

Expressed her thanks to the committee for caring about the children of Weymouth and echoed Mr. Cowen, and Ms Arena regarding compressor station comments. Ms. Pike conveyed her disappointment in the Mayor's attitude and lack of care for the children of North Weymouth, stating that she has reached out repeatedly to the Mayor's office unsuccessfully. She stated that when the compressor is not venting, toxic gases are released. Ms. Pike asked for the school committee to keep families informed.

-Kelly Stuckeborg, 28 Broad Street Place

Suggested pictures of what the high school looks like (3' or 6' of distance) and a schematic map to help students get an idea of what things will look like when returning to school. Mrs. Stuckeborg expressed her thanks to teachers and administrators.

-Kelly Cassier, 74 Raymond

Thanked the school committee and staff for their hard work and dedication and inquired if future phases would happen.

Chair Belmarsh advised that no other phases are being contemplated at this time but maybe in the future.

-Andrea Honore,

Requested that mask protocols be closely followed while students are back at school.

-Susan Bivins, 29 Bengel Road

Expressed her appreciation for the teachers and her support for in person learning. Ms. Bivins shared her feelings in following the data and her concern for mental health.



# Weymouth

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### **Announcements**

Weymouth Market, December 2, 2020-3:30pm-WHS-Market will occur in a drive through manner

### **Next School Committee Meeting:**

Regular Meeting: Thursday, November 19, 2020 - 7:00pm

**The Meeting adjourned at 8:42pm** on the motion of Mrs. Nardone, seconded by Dr. Sullivan. Roll call vote - passed unanimously.

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### **Documents Attached to These Minutes:**

- Updated Return to School Plan
- Labor Foreman Job Description
- Host Agreement Algonquin Gas

Respectfully Submitted,

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John Sullivan  
Secretary