



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date: January 25, 2021
Time: 6:30PM
Location: Virtual

1. SALUTE TO FLAG

2. ROLL CALL

On a roll call at 6:36 p.m., members present were, namely: Ms. Clark, Mr. Descoteaux, Mr. Dillon, Ms. Doherty, Mr. Hoey, Mayor Leahy and Ms. Martin.

3. SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

3.1. Members Of The Public May View The Meeting Via LTC And Those Wishing To Speak Regarding A Specific Agenda Item Shall Register To Speak In Advance Of The Meeting By Sending Email To The Superintendent Indicating The Agenda Item, A Phone Number And Email Address So We Can Provide A Zoom Link To Access The Meeting. Email Address Is Mpalazzo@Lowell.K12.Ma.Us If No Access To Email You May Contact Us At 978-674-4324. All Requests Must Be Submitted Before 3:00 PM On The Day Of Meeting.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Georges and Ms. Dumont, registered and spoke.

Members of the City of Lowell Board of Health that attended the meeting are as follows:

- Ms. Keegan RN, MSN
- Dr. William Galvin, MD
- Ms. Golden RN, MSN
- Ms. Cullen-Lutter, RN, CNM

Ms. Boulanger, City of Lowell Health Director was also present.

4.1. Discussion, Consideration, and Action on Health Metrics, Thresholds, and Other Data Related to Returning to Previous 3% Level on February 1, 2021 and Previous 25% Level on March 1, 2021 for In-Person Learning



Superintendent Boyd stated that these have been excruciating times trying to return students to school. He stated that the present data mirrors what the data was in November when the 3% were attending. He stated that he sent a letter out on Friday to our families, which stated that on the service level it appeared that the district was on track for the 3% to return. He thanked Ms. Keegan and the Board of Health for sharing and working with his team and the Committee.

Dr. Hall, Chief Operating Officer gave the Committee a COVID-19 Data monitoring update that included the Average Daily Incidence Rate per 100,000 and Percent Positivity Rate. It also reported the number of total staff and students as reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) of positive COVID cases, total number of quarantined due to in-person instruction, total number of quarantined due to outside school factors, and the approximate number of quarantined from September 1, 2020 through January 22, 2021, as well as COVID-19 positive cases per school from September 1, 2020 through January 22, 2021. He stated that the district is studying the feasibility of utilizing Abbott BinaxNOW antigen testing program for when more students are in school as well as sponsored pool testing. He stated that the State sponsored pool testing involves mixing several test samples together in a "batch" or "pool" and then testing the batch. He stated that this approach increases the number of individuals that can be tested using the same amount of resources. The test is performed once a week with an anterior nasal swab for all students and staff members. He stated that the results are delivered within 24-48 hours. If the pool test is negative, all are presumed to be negative. If the test is positive, all are quarantined until re-tested individually. Lowell Public Schools also have a Covid-19 dashboard that provides data, protocols and guidelines, where to go to get tested, what to do if you test positive or if you have come in contact with someone who is positive, and information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Hall stated the district is continuing to monitor PPE availability and options, continue to meet with City personnel on facility readiness and potential improvements, monitor onsite COVID-19 testing grants and options, meet with the City to collaborate on testing capabilities, work with the city to enhance contact tracing, and provide information in regard to vaccine availability for school personnel. He stated that the goals for returning to in-person learning are as follows:

- February 1, 2021 Students in substantially separate special education programs who were previously participating in our in-person learning model.
- March 1, 2021 Students, who are not in a substantially separate special education program, but were previously, served in-person this school year as part of our original school reopening plan.
- April 1, 2021 Expansion of our in-person learning model to include additional students beyond those who were assigned to in-person learning at the beginning of this school year.

Dr. Hall stated that the current plans for the Massachusetts Roll Out are as follows:

- The first group will include healthcare workers, people in long-term care, and first responders, as well as inmates at correctional facilities.
- The second phase will likely begin in February and targets those with underlying health problems, people over the age of 65 and essential workers like grocery store employees and teachers.
- Phase three (3) is for everyone else and is set to start in April.



Mr. Lovato, Director of Special Education informed the Committee that there has been a significant decline in participation among the 3% of students, who struggle with learning on Zoom (for durations of up to thirty (30) minutes). He also informed the Committee that parents have informed his staff that they have seen a change in their child's behavior (some aggressive). He stated that his team is trying to accommodate families with as many supports and learning options as possible.

Ms. Keegan addressed the Committee and stated that the Board of Health has received multiple letters from staff who have shared their concerns about returning with the 3% population on February 1, 2021 (students in substantially separate special education programs who were previously participating in our in-person learning model). She stated that the teachers have expressed concerns about students not being able to keep their masks on, which the teachers understand is no fault of the student. She stated that the students do have trouble keeping their masks on and with social distancing. She stated that studies in Washington and Michigan showed keeping schools open did not contribute to COVID-19 spread in communities with low to moderate levels of infection, but there was a correlation between in-person learning and spread in communities with higher rates. She stated that the Disease Control and Prevention guidelines indicate there is increased transmission when the community infection rate is between 8% and 10% and the average daily incidence rate per 100,000 is between fifty (50) and one hundred (100). She stated that Lowell's current positivity rate is 10.15% and its average daily incidence is 87 per 100,000. She stated that there has been an increase in people under the age of nineteen (19) testing positive for COVID-19 (21% of weekly cases). She stated that in the past two (2) weeks, Lowell has had 159 cases in the school age group. She stated that there is a lot of good news with schools going back in the future with teachers starting to get vaccinated starting by mid-February.

Dr. Galvin stated that he agrees with what Ms. Keegan had stated and added that these decisions about returning to school are not just about kids, and that we want to make decisions based on what is best for society and that all factors need to be looked at.

Ms. Martin made a motion to have 3% of our student population (students in substantially separate special education programs) resume school on February 22, 2021 and on March 1, 2021 have 25% of our student population return; seconded by Ms. Doherty. 5 yeas, 2 nays (Mr. Dillon, Mr. Hoey) APPROVED

4.2. Approval to Accept and Expend Allocated FY21 Awards

Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer provided a report that requested that the Committee vote to approve and accept the list of FY21 grant allocations received to date. These funds include Federal and State targeted awards that have been secured by the Lowell Public Schools through the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE), as well as funding from Share Our Strength and the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

Ms. Clark made a motion to approve and accept the Allocated FY21 Awards; seconded by Mr. Dillon. 7 yeas APPROVED



5. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Descoteaux made a motion to adjourn at 8:02 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Dillon. 7 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

**Joel D. Boyd, Ed.D., Superintendent and
Secretary to the Lowell School Committee**

JDB/mes