

RIISING TIDE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL
Minutes
Special Board of Trustees Meeting

August 5, 2020

Virtual Meeting due to Governor Baker's stay at home advisory.

Narrative Mission Statement:

What is the purpose of the school?

"...The Rising Tide Charter School provides students with community-based education each day, using the Town of Plymouth as a local yet dynamic textbook which will provide fertile ground for the development of higher-order thinking skills."

Leadership and Governance:

"In accordance with MA Charter School Law, the Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for the school's educational mission, performance and adherence to its Charter."

Call to Order

This meeting was called to discuss reopening school.

Chairman, Chris Schelleng, called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. In attendance were Chris Schelleng, Norm DeCoste, Amy Norris, Sean Kelly, Sandy Kozlowsky, and Kevin Hennessey. Also in attendance were Michael O'Keefe, Head of School, and Eric Mello, Business Manager.

Guests

Maureen Chapman, Rising Tide Academic Director; James Simons, Rising Tide Upper School Principal; Tyler Post, Rising Tide Middle School Principal

Public Comment

None

Old Business

Attachments/Handouts: Presentation of Reopening Plans, August 5, 2020

Michael reviewed the three options for opening this fall. Initial guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on June 25 was for the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school settings. DESE set clear health and safety requirements for in-person learning. They have required schools to submit 3 models to the

state by August 10 for in-person, remote and hybrid learning. Transportation guidance provided by DESE on July 22 restricted bus ridership. Still waiting to hear if fall athletics will happen.

School leadership has worked hard over the last couple weeks to get feedback from teachers/staff and parents/guardians via surveys. There were also Q&A sessions for parents/guardians as well as students.

Safety preparations have included the purchase of medical grade HEPA filters and an iWave Air to improve air quality in the building. There are plenty of safety supplies on hand including masks, hand sanitizer, and single use paper towels. There will be signage to meet safety protocols. An electrostatic sprayer has been purchased to be used nightly to clean surfaces.

Tents will be used in parking lot spaces as well as sports fields (larger area to be used if no fall sports). Michael shared pictures of classroom configurations to show 3' and 6' chair spacing in various sized rooms, which also allow teachers plenty of room in the front of classrooms to move around.

Michael has been keeping in touch with local, state, and regional public health & safety personnel. Data provided on MA Department of Public Health and Harvard Global Health Institute websites were also consulted. While there has been a slight uptick in COVID cases in MA recently, Plymouth area is currently showing lower rates. Models are based on best information we have now but can always change if information changes.

Michael reviewed Model preference for reopening from the parent/guardian survey (466 out of 520 families responded), as well as from the faculty/staff survey (approximately 2/3 of staff responded). Majority of families were split between Hybrid (>43%) and full-in-person learning (>41%), with staff preferring a Hybrid Model (~67%). He also reviewed Hybrid Model preference results from both surveys.

The re-entry team has created as much consistency as they can across Models so that regardless of Model chosen, student schedule, support, and expectations will remain the same.

Michael began with Fully Remote Model as a starting point since at some point this year, we may have to be fully remote. Similar to Distance Learning this past Spring with Wednesday being a flex day, there would be an increase in structured learning time. In addition, there would be more variation of work expectations and an increase in academic support.

Michael went over a Remote and Hybrid schedule concept for both Middle School and Upper School. Teachers will have a check-in period of at least 10 minutes at start of class where

students will connect whether they are home or in school. This will provide crucial structured time for students to connect each day.

Michael provided key elements of Hybrid Model with 2 cohorts (A&B) where ~50% of students will be in the building 2 days/week, with 6' distancing guidelines in place. Siblings and those carpooling together will be kept in same cohort. Teachers would be in school with students Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Wednesday would be fully remote day. Tents will be provided as areas for mask breaks, lunch, physical education, and classes needing movement space (like dance). Smaller classrooms might be used for teacher workspace, or as remote distance learning areas for children of teachers/staff.

For Full In-Person Model, 3' distancing guidelines would be in place. Would limit movement of students as much as possible, while allowing for multiple mask breaks. Maureen Chapman detailed what cohorts would look like. Use of lockers, cubbies, refrigerator, and microwave will be suspended. Early Program and Homework Program will operate (will also operate in Hybrid Model).

If families feel, for any reason, they do not want to send children to school, they can stay remote. Students will have same classes, teachers, and assignments as in-person learning with additional staff serving as Remote Learning Coaches to support teachers and students.

Discussion

Plymouth schools have Monday as their remote day, but we will try to work with them on bus transportation if we proceed with Hybrid (Wednesday remote) or fully In-Person. We have alternative ideas if we cannot, such as getting reimbursed by the State or using our own regional busing.

For additional staffing needs, there is no guarantee we will get future additional federal aid. Once Model is decided, we will have better idea of numbers we're looking at. May need to go back to the Board for additional monies.

With Hybrid Model, there will be unit planning with goals for the week so that regardless of in-school or remote learning, the goals are accomplished. Have ramped up our digital learning tools.

There may be kids whose needs are greater that need to be in school more often if we use a Hybrid or Fully Remote Model. They may be in school 4 days/week, with Wednesday still being a Remote day.

Schedules may be adjusted for holidays if we can arrange logistics of transportation in a Hybrid Model, so that there's an equity of in-person and remote days for students. If we have a fully Remote Model, there will be advance notice of any schedule adjustment due to holidays.

Fully in-person is realistically not an option because of logistical and financial challenge of bussing. Also building would be very tight.

School administrators looked at 5' of distancing between chairs. Based on listening to staff and teachers across the State, administrators feel we put ourselves at risk if we don't honor 6' spacing.

The leadership team believes strongly in being with kids, and kids being with each other. With current public health data (which is being monitored and could change in the next few weeks) and based on family and staff surveys, their preference is the Hybrid Model.

Kevin liked the idea of an A, B, C, D Model which would allow us to be more prepared to go fully remote if we need to.

Kevin made a motion to enter a remote learning environment using an A, B, C, D Model, where students enter the building 1x/week. The motion was not seconded.

Tyler and James reviewed staff concerns/comments. Because of health issues in their homes, some teachers would teach remotely regardless of Model chosen. It was challenging for teachers in the Spring for fully Remote. It will be a challenge for teachers to create plans for both in-class and remote lessons in a Hybrid Model. There were various concerns with each proposed Model.

There are a long set of protocols from DESE on what to do for COVID cases (confirmed or suspected) of students or staff, including a COVID isolation room and contact tracing. The wellness staff would work with the local Department of Public Health for contact tracing.

Q&A

Tyler and James updated the Student Handbook to include a COVID-19 section. For students who don't/won't wear a mask, it will be considered a safety risk. They will be taken to the isolation room and removed from school that day. They would attend remotely until the student goes through disciplinary process to re-enter.

For Fully Remote, there are 5 options schools can take with varying levels of connectivity with the school. Our students will be fully connected to staff and curriculum, so that if a student is

unable to come into school on any day, they can connect remotely to classes/cohort via Google Classrooms.

Smaller groups (A, B, C or A, B, C, D) were considered, but kids would only be with teachers 1 day/week. Upper School classes would also need to be shortened.

There's a lot of guidance from DESE on mask protocols. Depending on Model chosen, if students will be in-school, further guidance on wearing masks for long periods of time will be provided. Face shields and bandanas will not be allowed as masks. There will be Rising Tide gaiters and masks available.

Sean made a motion that we begin the school year with a Hybrid A/B Model, with Cohort A in school Monday/Tuesday and Cohort B in Thursday/Friday. Kevin seconded. All voted in favor.

Additional Q&A

Lunch will be outside under the cover of tents with at least 6' of spacing.

Old Business

Attachments/Handouts: 2020-2021 Academic Calendar for Families – REVISED 8/5/20

Commissioner Riley is allowing schools to have 10 less teaching & learning days to enable 10 days of training for educators/staff before school starts, so long as instruction for students begins no later than September 16. Our standard teacher contracts build in 6 additional days beyond the usual State requirement of 180 days. Faculty would start August 25, giving them 12 full days to prepare. School start date would be September 16 with orientations scheduled September 14 and 15 on school fields. We would also add back in the PD day scheduled on November 3 (Election Day). Since September 16 is a Wednesday, the thought was to have that be a Remote run through day, with Cohort A in on Thursday and Cohort B on Friday, moving into regular Hybrid schedule the following week.

Sean made a motion to accept the revised calendar as presented. Amy seconded. All voted in favor.

Adjourn

Kevin made a motion to Adjourn. Sean seconded the motion. All voted in favor to Adjourn.