

Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Board Meeting Transcript – March 31, 2020

Patrick Ziegler: We still have a quorum. So we'll open the meeting and thank everyone for joining us here this is our special Board of Education meeting for March 31st of 2020. We will be considering only one piece of action tonight it is a resolution regarding the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake status during a disaster emergency as called by our Governor due to the continuing COVID-19 public health crisis. If everyone could please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance, I believe Dr. McGrath has a flag right behind him. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Thank you alright. It looks like we have myself, Jennifer Longtin, Lisa Morse, Don Marshall, and Dave Versocki as board members tonight. Just so you know folks, we're gonna ask you to unmute your microphones just to vote on this one resolution which we will do first and then we will turn the meeting over to Dr. McGrath for a few additional comments relating to school district operations. Just before we get started found out tonight that we should thank a few more people here obviously we tried to capture everyone who's really been doing some phenomenal work not only for the district and for the community but for our students, of course, which is why we're all here at the last meeting. Also wanted to make sure we did thank all of our CSEA team members. They've been providing hundreds of meals a day to students who are on our Free and Reduced Lunch Program to make sure that those students don't suffer from food insecurity during this crisis in addition to all the other stresses that they're dealing with. So for all of you with CSEA who have been making sure those students get their meals we want to thank you very much for all the work you're putting in and of course the team at Spartan Catering for preparing those meals. They've also been making sure that students get backpacks for the weekend so that students aren't suffering over the weekends when they can't get those free meals from the school. So again thank you to everyone for putting all that time in and making sure those students aren't going without. We also want to thank all of our bus drivers and the transportation team. We've had folks going out and delivering these meals for the past several weeks and that will continue as you know if you have heard the governor's not recommendation that I should say his executive order that schools will be closed through at least April 15. So that process will continue and we thank everyone that's delivering those meals to those students as well. I want to thank all of our maintenance team members and custodial team members for keeping those buildings clean for the essential staff that have to be there but also to make sure those buildings are ready to go the second we get the green light and students can come back. So thank you to that to the team there. And finally a special thank you to all of our teaching assistants who have really been putting in a lot of extra time learning new technologies but also trying to find those best practices to help those students who need the help the most. So those TAs are already working with students in the classroom and in sometimes challenging environments because no one wants to feel that they're they're left behind or they're struggling with their work or they're not able to get their work completed. I'm in a new job myself and I

have to tell you there are times it's embarrassing for me at 47 years old to reach out to one of my colleagues and say, "Gosh I really don't understand what happened on today's talk and can you give me a briefing on why that happened today and what we're trying to accomplish?" It's even harder for students and our teaching assistants those are the people that deal with those students and make sure that those students keep up to speed and help them not only academically but emotionally and these people are trying to do that job but not do a long distance and through this difficult and challenging time. So another big thank you to all the teaching assistants and everyone that's really helping to support our students and parents as we work through this together. It's been really a source of great pride for me as a parent, as a Board of Education member, just as a community member and as a friend to so many people in this district to see the work that everyone is doing. So all of you we thank you very much and thank you to the administrative team for putting this meeting together and my fellow board members for joining us here on fairly short notice. We thank you for finding the time tonight to make sure we have a quorum to accomplish this important business. So having said all that if I could let's ask our board members to unmute their microphones please. We are going to do a roll call vote by the way and I'll just take a second here to make sure we're not missing anyone else. I still don't see John or Pete so John Blowers Pete Sawyer if you are with us tonight just unmute your phones. Clearly you're not on the Google Meet which is fine but we'll call the roll here momentarily and if you're with us, please be sure to cast your vote then you can go back on mute. So having said that, we have resolution tonight. Again we are seeking to approve this resolution regarding Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District status during the disaster emergency related to COVID-19 and we get a motion please.

Jennifer Longtin: So moved

Dave Versocki: Second

Patrick Ziegler: Okay alright. So we got Dave as the second. Was that you Jen with the motion?

Jennifer Longtin: Yes

Patrick Ziegler: Great. Thank you. Okay I know that Mr. Blowers had a few questions that were answered earlier today via email. Any other questions, comments from the Board that would you like to ask of our administrative team?

Lisa Morse: None for me.

Dave Versocki: No

Patrick Ziegler: Very good. Okay so we will go. Alright so John Blowers is trying to get on now. So we might miss him. So we'll go down in alphabetical order. I think got this in alphabetical order. Jennifer, how do you vote?

Jennifer Longtin: Yes

Patrick Ziegler: Okay Mr. Marshall?

Don Marshall: Aye

Patrick Ziegler: Alright. Lisa Morse?

Lisa Morse: Yes

Patrick Ziegler: Mr. Versocki?

Dave Versocki: Yes

Patrick Ziegler: Alright and I also vote in favor. Um since I know John has just texted me he hasn't been able to jump on yet. Dr. Sawyer are you with us, sir? Okay then. We have just for the record there, Dottie, myself as well as Jennifer, Lisa, Don and Dave all voted in favor so we have a unanimous vote from the members of the Board of Education present in favor of this resolution. Very good. Alright, thank you all. With that I'm going to ask that all of you put your phones back on mute I'm actually going to do the same because we're going to turn the meeting over to Dr. McGrath for just a few moments. He'd like to give one or two updates here on the status of our operations as we move forward. So we'll all put our phones back on mute. Dr. McGrath it's all you.

Patrick McGrath: Okay. Thanks, Patrick. Um just real quickly because I know that Dottie part of the new regulations for having these remote meetings is that we have to provide a written transcript of the entire meeting in text as well as a video recording of the meeting and the opportunity for people to jump in and I did notice that we have a couple of community members, I also saw a student, one of our high school students present as well so we appreciate people joining, joining the meeting. Very quickly um the only real update that I haven't informed the Board about is the latest guidance from this newest executive order from the Governor. His executive order states that the district should classes should be canceled through the 15th so that they would start again on the 15th which would be but two weeks from Wednesday. From tomorrow, two weeks from tomorrow but that during that time that entire time that the district would continue to provide meals, assist in the in the childcare for first responders and essential workers, and also to continue remote instruction continuously throughout that period. Obviously,

part of this time falls over what would traditionally be the spring break and all of the districts across the state have been instructed in no uncertain terms that everything that we're doing now should continue on through this period with no interruption or no change and that the rest of that stuff will be sorted out after after this crisis is passed. So we will be sending out some guidance to the district tomorrow which states that we will just continue in the mode that we're in moving through through the 15th and then at that point we'll await further guidance. So I also will be releasing a document that we've been working hard on with the teachers and the administration and the district working together to create guidance for the implementation phase of remote learning. We've learned a lot over the last couple of weeks and we're ready to kind of put some more concrete guidelines in place for how this will work in a way that we try hard to balance the you know overwhelming our families and our kids with too much work versus making sure we do stay connected and provide a good amount of teacher directed instruction. so we've been working hard on that and gotten a lot of good feedback on that. I would say the one the one feedback that I've gotten more than any if there was anything that wasn't positive it's that people feel a bit overwhelmed by the amount of work and our teachers and our principals are working hard to try to get a handle on what they feel overwhelmed about and and what parts of it and try to streamline that. We're gonna be focusing instruction on the most important and critical concept skills and content that we would be covering between now and however long we're out for so that our students aren't at a disadvantage moving forward from this time that they're away from classes. We're gonna be looking at while the while we'll narrow the focus of the of the content we're gonna be asking our teachers to continue to ramp up the amount of teacher guided instruction versus lists of things that parents work with kids on at home and that's really important. And also it's trying to streamline our communications with parents are trying to streamline so that people know where to go in one place to check one time a day for all the things that they need to check and they don't feel may be bombarded by by email and communications. So we've learned a lot in the last couple weeks. We think that you know this will be a good strong plan for moving forward with implementation for however long we need to be in this remote learning. And we will give the community all the information tomorrow about the upcoming schedule. And again it's really we're left really with no choice in it and you'll see I actually just got as the meeting started I got a saw news news bulletin come across one of the news feeds that I have that said you know statewide New York State spring break is canceled. So it's obviously getting out there all around. And we're gonna be very consistent with the same message that every other district in the region is giving and that is nothing changes now that we're settling into this mode. We just keep on going in this mode and we don't break you know break our our the patterns and the things that we have people used to to try to keep things as as get into a routine as best as possible while we get through this. So I just that's all I wanted to update everybody on.

Patrick Ziegler: Great. Thanks, sir. Alright so is there any other new business to come before the Board while we're all together? Anything else from the Board of Education here? Any of

my team members have anything to raise? And if not, then we will take a motion to. Let me make the reminder to to take your microphones off mute. As you do this, I will take a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:12 p.m.

Dave Versocki: So moved

Patrick Ziegler: Alright

Lisa Morse: Second

Patrick Ziegler: We have Dave. Seconded by Lisa. Very good. All in favor.

Dave Versocki, Lisa Morse, Don Marshall, Jennifer Longtin, Patrick Ziegler (unison): Alright no opposed, right? Motion carries. Lisa that's very nice. It looks like you're taking the meeting from out on the deck.

Lisa Morse: Yes, sir.

Patrick Ziegler: Nice night to do it. Excellent. Alright, everybody thanks for coming out tonight. That'll wrap up the meeting for March 31st. Good luck out there and stay healthy. Take care.