

## Virtual Legislative Meeting Minutes May 5, 2020

Attendees: Tom Cavanaugh, Chair; Darren Doane; Paul Daigle; Chris Vigneaux; Coley Walsh; Leslie Murray; Margo Fraczek; Kristy Yankee; Larry Murphy

Coley outlined the budget situation in the legislature:

- There probably won't be a "real" budget from the legislature until September/October due to the unknown status of state revenues. Coley reminded us the state can only spend what it takes in and has to have a balanced budget. This is unlike the Federal government that can run deficits and print more money.
- Legislature hasn't agreed on revenues and have pushed out the budget to July 1st.
- Lack of the Federal government to respond has been slow. Federal monies for our state are real unknowns and in Coley's opinion they are favoring states that supportive of the present administration.
- Chapter 70 monies are uncertain as well for cities and towns and may provide only for a "bare bones budget." Certain items such as pensions and health insurance will be funded and then tough decisions will have to be made locally. "Dire straits" is the way Coley described the budget; "we're in uncharted territory." There may be as much as a 20% reduction in monies provided to schools.
- Discussion of Property Taxes brought different projections. Coley thought they may be "steady" but others felt because of the high unemployment rate, especially in low-income districts, people may not be able to pay their taxes. Revenues could be down in local communities.

How this effects schools for the fall brought more lively discussion:

Leslie felt he can't see Distance Learning ending before January. He shared issues with distancing, PPE for teachers and students, services for OT/PT are all dependent on the development of a vaccine.

Paul felt that many of the decisions on what schools will look like and when they reopen will be determined by local school districts themselves. There won't be on statewide opinion or strategy.

Tom shared that Voke schools are already considering using Academic Week for Distance Learning and staggering the hand-on labs at the school.

Coley talked about an author from Sterling, MA who's book Economic Equity underscores how vulnerable our economy is to events such as a pandemic. The economy, especially for

the poor, is fragile and can be disrupted with tragic results. No safeguards that prepare for an event such as a pandemic.

More discussion ensued. Tom asked Coley: "So what can our committee and the MSA do?"

It was decided:

- The committee would take a wait and see approach until we have more information on any plans by the Governor on May 18th.
- After May 18th committee members will submit to Larry any questions/concerns they may have from the Governor's plans.
- A position paper then could be generated prioritizing the questions/concerns and sent to the State Education Committee and the House and Ways Committee.
- This was put into a motion and voted on unanimously.
- Adjourned: 12:59 p.m.