

January 14, 2021

A special meeting of the Westfield School Committee was held on Thursday, January 14, 2021, at 5:00 pm remotely (due to COVID-19 crisis). Members present by roll call were: Ramon Diaz, Diane Mayhew, Bo Sullivan, Cindy Sullivan, Heather Sullivan, Tim O'Connor, and Chairman Humason.

At 5:02 pm Chairman Humason called the meeting to order.

1. Public participation, excluding personnel:

Diane Mayhew stated that eight (8) emails were received and due to time constraints, she was asked to summarize the emails submitted. The full text of the emails submitted will be included in the minutes. In summary, the committee was asked to look at winter sports programs individually. Ski teams and the girls hockey team are at the forefront of the emails submitted. All agree that they want winter sports to happen but take exception that these two sports are looked at separately. Emotional well-being and finding some normalcy that sports bring to a student athletes' lives was highly expressed. Skiing and hockey are expressed to be low risk environments. MIAA strict protocols were re-iterated as well as how the sport that take place indoors are being more risk of contracting COVID-19.

All emails submitted have been listed below:

Anna Chrisanthopoulos, Whispering Wind Rd, Westfield

My name is Anna Chrisanthopoulos and I am writing this to express my concern for the other girls and I from Westfield possibly not being allowed to play hockey this season due to Covid. We are all in tough situations right now due to this pandemic, however, I can speak for all of us when we say how much playing this season means to us. This is one of the only things that we are looking forward to during these times, and not being allowed to play would be detrimental. Proper Covid regulations are being exploited such as masks being worn at all times, social distancing, etc. I do know that Longmeadow was doubtful about letting their girls play as well, however they voted as of last night yes, after many persuading emails and phone calls by players and parents to let them play. With that being said, it shows just how much being able to play means to us and being able to play the sport we all love. I understand that you may be doubtful due to rising cases, etc, but there are only five of us from Westfield, all of which have been playing for pre-season teams to get ready for this season. Adding on to that, not one of us has contracted the virus through hockey. I know there is a lot to consider, but please bring up the fact that kids rely on sports to make them happy during a time like this, and that's all something that we need right now.

Bonnie Gauthier, River Road, South Hadley, MA

I am writing this letter as a parent of a child who is participating in the Westfield Technical Academy's ski team. I understand that one of the topics on your Special Meeting on 1/14/21 is to discuss the return of athletics more specially Winter Sports.

As we all know, sports are much more than students participating in athletics. Sports builds character, teaches team work, teaches how to deal with adversity and success. I believe it is possible to complete a high school sports season during a pandemic. My belief is also confirmed by MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic

Athletic Association) President Jeff Granatino's statement of 12/15/2020, "The pandemic has reshaped the way education is delivered across the country and the same can be said about its impact on athletics," MIAA President Jeff Granatino said in a release "Nonetheless, I am confident our student-athletes and coaches will adjust to the new expectations this winter and have an experience as fulfilling and as exciting as what we saw during the fall season."

Yes, the most obvious concern is that almost every winter sport takes place indoors where data suggest athletes will be more susceptible to catching COVID-19 inside than they are outside, and it's likely that program will once again have to shut down periodically as cases arise. However, skiing is an outside sport and most importantly an individualized sport where all safety protocols can be followed. They can be spaced on the transportation to and from practices/games. There will be spacing at the start gate and on the lifts. Masks and gloves are essentially already built into their equipment. And social distancing isn't too difficult while zipping and zigzagging down a mountain. The ski resorts have already made the decision to close lodges so the skiers will have to get used to life without cozy lodges and adapt to training in pods, but they should be able to do so. Skiing guidelines in this pandemic are much more "manageable" than the suggested guidelines for many sports.

I am asking, as a parent whose child needs all of the characteristics that a sport provides, that you and the rest of the School Committee vote to allow Winter Sports to take place and/or look at each winter sport separately in regards for safety protocols. I believe that this is the same view the MIAA has taken. I direct you to review the data on their website and most specifically see how this organization has provided "2020-2021 Rules Modifications and Guidelines" broken down by each winter sport. There website it

[http://www.miaa.net/contentm/easy\\_pages/view.php?sid=38&page\\_id=317](http://www.miaa.net/contentm/easy_pages/view.php?sid=38&page_id=317)

I have also provided to you the "Winter Sport Modifications Statement" and their Alpine Ski Modifications Statement:

[http://www.miaa.net/gen/miaa\\_generated\\_bin/documents/basic\\_module/Winter\\_Sport\\_Modification\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.miaa.net/gen/miaa_generated_bin/documents/basic_module/Winter_Sport_Modification_Statement.pdf)

[http://www.miaa.net/gen/miaa\\_generated\\_bin/documents/basic\\_module/Alpine\\_Ski\\_Modifications\\_Winter\\_202.pdf](http://www.miaa.net/gen/miaa_generated_bin/documents/basic_module/Alpine_Ski_Modifications_Winter_202.pdf)

In the Massachusetts Re-Opening Guidelines where each sport is considered separately with its own guidelines, they have identified Alpine skiing as Low Risk because "***this sport can be done with social distancing and no physical contact and this sport can be done individually.***" taken from: Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs –

Workplace Safety and Re-Opening Standards for Businesses and Other Entities providing Youth and Adult Amateur Sports Activities" Phase III, Step 2 dated 11-7-2020 amended November 6,2020, updated November 19, 2020, in Section III, subsection A – "Risk Level of Sports"

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/safety-standards-for-youth-and-adult-amateur-sports-activities-phase-iii-step-2-effective-11720/download>.

I'd like to ask that the School Committee vote to allow Winter Sports to proceed for 2021 based on all relative data available. I'd like to ask that each Winter Sport be looked at individually vs making a vote grouping all winter sports together even if that requires a member of the School Committee to make a motion to reconvene to discuss the risk of each Winter Sport on an individual basis. I'd once again like to point out that this is the route that the above organizations, separate from each

other, knew they need to take because each sport can happen safely but needing to their own protocols. I am requesting that the School Committee do the same. Thank you for your time to this important information.

William Fouche, Mockingbird Lane, Westfield, MA

I'd like to discuss the specifics of how the WHS Ski Team operates within the COVID-19 guidelines, creating a very safe environment allowing student athletes to participate in a low risk environment. Starting with transportation, When our team boards a bus we are prompted with questions regarding COVID-19 (do you have a fever, shortness of breath, loss of senses, ETC) While on the bus each student athlete is required to wear a mask and sit in every other row by themselves. Also there will be no consumption of food permitted on the bus. While at the mountain student athletes are required to wear a mask and lodge is completely off limits significantly reducing interactions with others. While boarding the chair lift, each chair is limited to two student athletes, and on our team we have collectively made the decision to only board the chair lift with our teammates. At the top of the mountain where the beginning of the race is located is only allowing student athletes who are close to having their turn to race. To reduce the amount of potential spread of COVID-19 there will be no spectators allowed at the mountain and the bibs worn by the student athletes will be washed and sanitized by our coach after every race. The majority of the WHS ski team is only committed to the ski team during the winter season, canceling the season would reduce the amount of time spent training and exercise the team gets. The rest of the team and I would be very disappointed on missing our season as we only get a short amount of time together each year. Thank you for your consideration.

Samantha Scanlon, Jessie Lane, Westfield, MA

Hello everyone, my name is Samantha Scanlon, I am a junior at Westfield High School and I was recently named assistant captain for Longmeadow's Varsity Ice Hockey team. I am asking you all to please consider to let us have a winter season. Pulling the girls from Westfield off of the team would be a huge setback for our program. There are 6 girls from Westfield High School that are in this program, 5 of them being varsity members. Taking away 5 of our girls would be very difficult to replace with an already shortened season. Taking away the Westfield girls from their season, would not only take away both of the assistant captains, but take away many key players. Even if you decide to cancel the rest of the sports in our school, it would be very much appreciated if you could reconsider letting us 5 girls have a season. We have multiple other towns relying on us to have a season. Longmeadow was also on the fence about letting us play, but in the end they, as well as the rest of the towns in our co-op, decided to give their approval. I am very hopeful that you'll decide to join them.

Abigail Balser, Alexander Place, Westfield, MA

There are numerous reasons why the ski team should be allowed to take place this year. Our sport is already socially distances. We have one racer going down a course at a time for safety reasons, but it also works now with social distancing requirements. After one of our racers completes a course, we have been told we need to report back to the bus so we don't risk contact with anyone. This year no spectators are allowed, which means the only people that will be in eyesight at the end of the course are ski coaches, who have been directed to stay socially distanced.

Our skis also force us to social distance, as it is simply impossible to go through someone's skis.

This upcoming season has many new rules that have been put into place, and all of our racers have already been informed of what they are. The race directors have made it clear to all participants that we need to wear a face mask at all times, the proper way. They will give us one warning for not covering our noses, and after that warning, the racing that is wearing the mask improperly will not be allowed to race and will be asked to leave. These race directors do not want to risk any danger with us this year.

Lodges are not available to get dressed in. This means we have to change in our designated bus seats. We have been asked to come half-dressed, so we are ready to get off the bus for the most part as soon as we arrive at the mountain. Changing in our bus seat will make sure that we do not come into contact with other teams, as well as other team members. We are sitting every other person on the bus to ensure proper social distancing. On the bus, we know that we need to have the windows down an inch to allow air circulation. While it will be cold, it is a sacrifice I'm willing to make in exchange for a ski season.

We will be getting designated bibs for this season. This means that one-person will be one number all season (ex. 333), so bibs will not be traded between racers each race. This lowers the risk we have to infect one another and keeps the bib process sanitary. We also get one pass for the season, which we are responsible for. No one else has a reason to touch it, because that would be unnecessary as their name isn't on the card, and it would just be unsanitary.

Skiers already need to have their own equipment. When wearing a mask and our equipment, almost every inch of skin will be covered. This means that on the off chance someone comes somewhat close to us, we have an extremely low chance of exchanging anything, including viruses, with them.

The people that manage the courses have created new processes for the races this year. We will not have one gathering place for all of the racers. We should trust their processes, as mountains are easy to social distance on. Berkshire East has around 33 trails that people can distance themselves throughout. I visited Berkshire East, the mountain we race at, the other day. You are only allowed to pack a chair full of people if you are in the same family. If you are not, you are labeled as a single. Singles need to sit at opposite ends of each other. The space left empty is enough space to fit at least two more people, between them, comfortably.

Our coach, Monique Piotte, has rules in place for our team to ensure our safety and health this season as well. We cannot eat or drink on the bus, as we are required to keep our masks on at all times. If we need to eat or drink something, we must bring it ourselves, and eat it outside, in an area with minimal people in our sight. Like the ski equipment, we are not allowed to share anything with our team members. These things include anything that someone might have forgotten, such as a hair tie or phone charger. Coach Monique also does not want us to socialize with other teams. She told us herself, that if we want to communicate with them we will find a way to do so. She is right, as we can find them on social media, and not put each other at risk for illnesses and breaking the social distancing requirements. Coach Monique Piotte also has a list of questions she needs to ask each individual before our team has a practice or race. These questions are all related to Covid-19; if we have been in contact with someone positive, if we have any symptoms, etc. If we answer yes,

we are not allowed to participate, understandably, for the safety of our team members. She also recommended bringing at least two masks with us when we meet, in case one malfunctions (straps breaking, tearing, etc.). I'm trusting our Coach for the upcoming season because I can tell she worries about our health as much as we do.

The ski team is one of the things I have been looking forward to the most this year. One of the first memories I have of this team is the first practice last year. Everyone was truly welcoming to me, the new member. The overall environment and members themselves, made me feel safe, and continue to do so. Covid-19 has put an end to mainly anything I enjoyed. This year this team allows me to safely socialize, and socialization is something that has been stolen from many people this year. The team is the reason why I have been able to see some of my friends for the first time in almost 10 months. And more than anything, I want to share the slopes with them, as a team. I hope these words help you make your decision while you are evaluating the ski team for winter sports continuation during Covid.

Craig Carrier, Glenwood Drive, Westfield, MA

As a parent of a student athlete I would ask that you be mindful of the scope of the vote you take concerning the fate of winter sports. The considerations should be limited to the safety of each individual sport, whether the state is allowing each sport and the guidelines set by the PVIAC. The committee should NOT be voting based on what they think may happen AFTER games and events. That is simply over-reach, and is the job of parents and guardians. Some sports such as golf in the fall, skiing, gymnastics, cross country and others could be viewed as naturally suited to social distance guidelines. Any other conclusion, in my opinion, isn't about safety, it's about optics. Essentially saying "if you can't do ALL the sports, we won't allow ANY sports." Please don't lump all the winter sports together. Your vote should consider the safety of each individual sport ONLY, and keep emotion, optics, and over-reach out.

MacKenzie Rae, Sunrise Terrace, Westfield, MA

My name is Mackenzie Rae and I am a senior at Westfield High School as well as a captain for the Longmeadow Girls Ice Hockey Varsity Team and starting goalie. I am writing to you today on behalf of not only myself but all of the girls from Westfield on both JV and Varsity teams. It can be understood that first and foremost everyone's health and safety should be the forefront of concern amid this global pandemic; however, I myself have witnessed every COVID-19 procedure executed to the highest standard and level seriousness in our pre-season practices, practices, and even for the start of our game play thus far this season between all coaches, players, and all others involved in the process. Masks and social distancing have been stressed even more than the sport itself at most times both on and off the ice. I know that as third-party individuals you may not fully understand how much a hockey season means to us girls. Our whole lives we have fallen second in line to boys sports and especially in the sport of ice hockey. At WHS, our boys team receives recognition from the school and town, however without the help of LHS, us girls would not be able to play the sport we love, seeing that co-ed sports are not completely embraced in our community. Not to mention that our girls team is playing in a higher division than our boys team, with Massachusetts Division 1 playoff appearances year after year. Being a senior, this may be my last season of hockey and would be completely devastated if that were to be cut short after

watching my friends complete their Fall seasons through WHS. If my interaction with the school community is a concern or a deciding factor in any way, I would like to volunteer to remain as a fully remote student for the duration of the already shortened season. Thank you for reading this and I wholeheartedly urge you to please consider allowing us to continue to play for Longmeadow High School and let us try and find some normal amongst the chaos of coronavirus.

Thank you again,  
Mackenzie Rae, 2021

Lindsey Deland, Scenic Rd, Westfield, MA

Hi, I'm Lindsey. I am a freshman at Westfield Technical Academy and the President of Westfield Technical Academy's Student Council. I think I speak for my fellow classmates when saying that we need winter sports at our school. Since fall sports went really well, I believe our winter sports will go just as smoothly. Sports for some people are a way to escape the depressing and horrible things that are going on around them and in the world. At least that's how I feel. Life has been difficult for a lot of people lately. These sports, for some, are the only thing keeping them going. I hope your take this into consideration. Thank you.

2. Westfield Public Schools Back to School Plan

a. January 19 return to the Hybrid Model

Stefan Czaporowski and Joe Rouse provided an update. Stefan Czaporowski reported that we have 151 Covid-19 cases in the schools (an increase from last week). Joe Rouse reported that the Covid-19 numbers are increasing weekly and the next two weeks are critical. Also, he shared his opinions with the committee on moving forward with the schools for February 1, 2021.

Diane Mayhew moved, Heather Sullivan seconded to the following:

- On January 19, 2021 = Westfield Technical Academy students (gr. 9 and 12) will attend school for their career technical education programs only
- On January 19, 2021 = English Language Learners at Level 1 and 2, Students enrolled in special education high needs programs, which include: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Essential Life Skills, Developmental Learning, Program, QUEST, RISE, Language Learning Disability (LLD), and the East Mountain Transition Program
- On January 25, 2021 = Westfield Technical Academy students (gr. 10 & 11) will attend school for their career technical education programs only

The following roll call vote was taken:

	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Ramon Diaz	X	
Diane Mayhew	X	
Bo Sullivan	X	
Cindy Sullivan	X	
Heather Sullivan	X	
Tim O'Connor	X	
Chairman Humason	<u>X</u>	
	7	0

motion passes

Stefan Czaporowski informed committee members that January 21 & 28, 2021 has been reserved for the School Committee to hold special meetings.

b. Athletics

Athletic Director Ryan Dunphy was in attendance and addressed the committee regarding winter sports. Winter Sports include: Skiing, Swimming, Hockey, and Basketball (177 athletes in total from WHS and WTA).

Ryan proposed four (4) different options to the committee for consideration:

1. Continue with Winter Athletics. Follow the EEA guidelines along with the MIAA modifications.
2. Continue with Winter Athletics. Follow the EEA guidelines and MIAA modifications but consider limiting or eliminating spectators.
3. Postpone our season for two weeks but allow for in-house participation in line with our modified tryouts.
4. Postpone our season entirely for two weeks and revisit athletics at a School Committee meeting on January 21, 2021 or January 28, 2021

Joe Rouse stated that he liked option 3 that was presented by Ryan Dunphy.

Bo Sullivan moved, Cindy Sullivan seconded to continue with athletic winter sports, to allow for a modified practice schedule (increase from 10 athletes) when the Coach and Ryan Dunphy agree that it is safe, and allow Skiing to move forward under the MIAA rules that have been established.

Amended motion: Ramon Diaz moved, Cindy Sullivan seconded to amend the motion to allow the swimmers to participate and keep the swimmers and divers separate.

The following roll call vote was taken:

	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Diane Mayhew	X	
Bo Sullivan	X	
Cindy Sullivan	X	
Heather Sullivan	X	
Ramon Diaz	X	
Tim O'Connor	X	
Chairman Humason	<u>X</u>	
	7	0 motion passes

Amended motion: Bo Sullivan moved, Diane Mayhew seconded a motion to continue with winter sports, allow for a modified practice schedule under the direction and approval of Athletic Director Ryan Dunphy, and allow Skiing to move forward under the MIAA rules that have been established.

The following roll call vote was taken:

	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Diane Mayhew	X	
Bo Sullivan	X	
Cindy Sullivan	X	
Heather Sullivan	X	
Ramon Diaz	X	
Tim O'Connor	X	
Chairman Humason	<u>X</u>	
	7	0 motion passes

At 6:11 pm Bo Sullivan moved, Heather Sullivan seconded to adjourn the meeting.

The following roll call vote was taken:

	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Diane Mayhew	X	
Bo Sullivan	X	
Cindy Sullivan	X	
Heather Sullivan	X	
Ramon Diaz	X	
Tim O'Connor	X	
Chairman Humason	<u>X</u>	
	7	<u>0</u> motion passes

Mr. Stefan Czaprowski, Superintendent of Schools  
Clerk – Westfield School Committee

A true copy, Attest:

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Diane Mayhew, secretary  
Westfield School Committee

DM/cm