

Proposed Minutes of the Special Board Meeting  
September 17, 2020

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President Van Sickler called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

Members present: Alexander, Beatty, Davis, Herman, Van Sickler, Zinn

Members absent: Palmer

Administrators present: Groulx, Hubbard, Leja, Reedy, Simpson

Administrators absent: None

Visitors present: Allyssa Neyer, Amber Stratton, Amber Mobley, Ronda Judge, Janell Kilmer, Valorie Palmer, Jody Vissman, Candace Schilling, Angie Davis, Ciarra Petersen, Stefanie Smith, Tonya DeVerney, Amanda Bunton, Kate Drury, Tracey Reed, Christina Hartman, Erin Bigelow, Allison Ritzema, Laura Neelis, Ken Carll, Katie Bissell, Therese Hubbell, Lori Wolfe, Kerry Krzymicki, Amanda Slezak, Traci McCormick, Amy Johnston, Laura Kimbell, Kristen Davenport, Troy Johnston

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Zinn, support by Herman to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion CARRIED: 6-0

Recognition of Guests: None

New Business

1. Back to school discussion

Hubbard shared a powerpoint presentation with the board. Hubbard reminded the board that we are not making decisions based on political views. Hubbard showed the board the enrollment data and how many students chose virtual learning for the first semester over the distance learning. Hubbard showed the board the website to look up the most accurate date on covid cases in our county. MI Safe Start Map. Right now we are considered in the medium-high risk in the section of Michigan we are in. In Montcalm county we are in the low category. Isabella county is in the high risk category. Gratiot county in the low risk category. If you have two or more cases at school from different households it is considered an outbreak. Hubbard presented what the plan would look like if we came back. Hubbard stated we have a plan, but know that all plans can be adjusted daily. We can have a plan but there are always details that will come up. The platforms that we use right now for distance learning will still be used in face to face instruction. All students in grades k-12 will be required to wear a mask both in and out of the classroom. Student mask breaks will be scheduled throughout the day. Students refusing to wear a mask will be dealt through disciplinary actions. Food service

will be delivering meals to the classroom. All staff will be trained for requirements.

With

transportation hand sanitizer will be right as they enter the bus and will be required to put some on when entering. Families will be grouped together on the bus and socially distanced from other students. Buses will be cleaned before and after each route. Windows will be left open for circulation. Cleaning of frequently touched

services including light switches, doors and benches. Ionizers will be purchased to disinfect the building and buses every night. Zinn asked how comfortable is the administration with the current staff on making sure that everything is being taken care of. Hubbard stated that the cleaning is behind because of the roof and things getting dirty again. But they are pretty much back on schedule. The day time will be the hardest to clean during classroom breaks. Zinn believes that all staff should be helping to make sure their area is clean and disinfected. Hubbard stated that the custodians will do the majority of the cleaning and disinfecting but staff can help by picking up after themselves. Hubbard talked about athletics. Athletics are optional. We will be following the MHSAA guidelines. Most practices are being held outside. Volleyball just started inside and the numbers are low. Hubbard knows

that some people view this as inconsistent with not being able to send kids to school. Alexander asked isn't our back to school optional also. Parents have the choice to choose face to face or virtual. Hubbard talked about the plan for pick up and drop off before and after school. Students will not be allowed into the building until 7:55. Students will not be allowed to congregate in the building. Parents will be expected to stay in their vehicle unless they have an appointment. The building will close at 3:10. Students will not be allowed to hang out after school waiting for a practice. Students will be escorted to their assigned areas by staff. Parents will not be allowed to gather outside the doors. Hubbard stated that whatever the board decides what to do, we will be ready. Hubbard talked about different considerations. The health department would support our students' return to face to face instruction.

Hubbard stated the Superintendents meet with the health department weekly.

Hubbard addressed liability. Schools have indemnity, teachers are not held responsible for cases. Hubbard stated we know that there will be cases. We cannot fully prevent this from happening. We will do everything possible to limit exposure.

Hubbard talked about a school district that is a small class D school district like ours. They started out with face to face instruction and within days had 6 positive cases and one student was hospitalized. The school district ended up with 20% of the student body quarantined. Then it started spreading in the community.

Hubbard talked about how fast this spreads before you even know you have it.

Hubbard stated that our teachers are working hard on the Distance learning program. Hubbard is proud of what they are doing. However, he knows that it is not perfect for everyone. Hubbard understands that some students and parents are struggling and need us. Hubbard talked about going back to face to face instruction and have students all day and still lead the virtual programming. This could be 12 hours days trying to help every student. Zinn asked how are teachers going to teach all day and work with the students that chose virtual and lead them for the semester. Hubbard stated we are still looking at this. Do we hire subs long term to coordinate with the grade level staff to take some of the burden off the teachers. Leja stated that we have two teachers that have been assigned to the virtual students. But we have had more students choose virtual which is creating more of a work load for those teachers. Groulx stated that most of her concerns have been brought up. Groulx stated that the Kickstand program that we purchased does not have as much curriculum as we were told initially. Teachers are managing but it is taking a lot of time to create and video the curriculum to upload for students. Groulx does not think hiring subs to teach the virtual students is going to be an easy task. Groulx has also thought about the reduced schedule and hybrid days to help with this. Some schools have shortened their school day to give staff an hour or more to work on the virtual program.

Hubbard also talked about entering the flu season and an increase in covid cases. With that the governor could possibly close us back down.

Hubbard stated he believes that we need to go back to face to face instruction. Our students need us. But we need to follow all of the guidelines to keep students and staff safe. Hubbard started looking at a shortened day to help manage the double systems. Hubbard also talked about when we would come back. We have talked about October 5th or we could look at the start of the 2nd nine weeks which would be a natural break. Hubbard does not really think the hybrid would be a good decision. It would still put parents in a pickle with daycare. Hubbard believes a shortened day might be easier to help staff and parents. Hubbard stated it is important to look at the safety of our students and staff. We also owe it to our kids to offer a good education. Groulx talked about at the nine weeks changing the elementary virtual program to Edgenuity. The Edgenuity program has teachers right in the program that you can use. You also do not have to switch to so many different programs with Edgenuity like you do with Kickstand. Beatty asked about quarantining and how it affects so many. Hubbard stated that if we had enough staff and students that need to quarantine, we would go back to distance learning. Davis asked about students that are struggling with the virtual program, can they opt back into face to face or distance learning. Groulx stated that after the board makes a decision, Groulx can meet with families on a case by case basis. Groulx is trying to set up cohorts for each class and needs to be able to use those numbers. Zinn asked about the current platforms for each building. Elementary uses the same platform for both distance learning and virtual. The

secondary uses Schoology for Distance learning and Edgenuity for virtual. Zinn stated that we probably will need to offer the two options for some time, we don't know when this will slow down. Davis stated it sounds like the MS/HS are in a much better place than the elementary. Davis asked what we do to help the elementary? If we hire substitute teachers from an already low sub pool, what happens when we need subs for other areas. Davis asked if the third grade reading coach and the title teachers, could they help with the online part. Groulx stated that they already are helping. But once data is in they will need to set up assessments for those students that need it. Groulx stated that time will be the most beneficial for the elementary teachers. Groulx stated that an hour a day is not going to be beneficial. Davis stated that we need to continue to build that platform. Davis suggested that maybe we need to hire more elementary teachers. Groulx stated that anyone you hire will need to learn the curriculum. Zinn stated as a board member right now, I am frustrated that although we have had good conversation today, as a board member we need to make a decision on Monday and we are not hearing anything definitive on how we are teaching right now, what is it going to look like if we go back to face to face. I feel that the administration should be giving the board members two definite plans to choose from. Beatty stated that when we made the choice in August to go to distance learning, I don't see any positive changes to make us change our decision. Alexander stated it is still voluntary to come back to school. If you do not feel comfortable sending your student back to school, then keep them home. Alexander stated that if our teachers struggle with the platform then how are we expecting our students to do it. Davis agrees with Alexander and our students need us. Personally I would like to see it at the end of the marking period. Zinn agrees that we have students that need a more controlled environment to learn in. Zinn stated we have a lot of students that chose virtual. Are we going to allow them to change their decision if they are struggling with the virtual. Zinn stated he has been contacted by several parents so we obviously have a problem. What are we going to do? Hubbard's recommendation is to start with a shortened day to start and continue to add as we are more comfortable with the two platforms. Van Sickler agrees with Zinn and feels that the administration wants the board to micromanage. Van Sickler stated that once we make the decision on whether to go back to face to face or stay distance learning, then the administration will move forward on the best way to make that work. Van Sickler stated he agrees with Alexander and believes that the students need to be back in school. They will get their best instruction in person. Van Sickler asked if the administration has a plan on which direction they would like to go. Alexander asked if we need to hire more teachers will the state help with the financial part of that. Hubbard stated there is some money in the Cares Act that will help but will not cover everything. Hubbard stated that when we meet on Monday that he can have a couple of options moving forward.

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Recognition of Guests: None

2.

Motion by Zinn, support by Alexander to adjourn at 10:48 a.m.

Motion CARRIED 6-0

Karen S. Grover  
Recording Secretary