

Minutes
Board of Education Special Meeting
August 17, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: James Chakulski, Jr., Linette Dooley, Chairman Christopher Lent, Michael Maziarz, Joseph Napolitano and Christine Sposito

Board Members Absent: David Crim

Mr. Maziarz left the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Others Present, as listed on Zoom:

Amanda Bill, Karen Butzgy, Karen Caputo, Jenna Cooke, Ann Marie Drury, Superintendent Maria Geryk, Alyssa Gwinnell, Gina Jarvis, Julie, Amy Lapsis, Karen Martin, Brenda Morey, Karen Piro, Ashley O'Connell, Jessica R, Fayne Sears and Barbara Wilson

I. Call to Order

Chairman Lent called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Comments from the Audience

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

For public comments during the meeting, please add your comments through the "Chat" feature in Zoom Meeting or use the "Raise Hand" function feature located at the bottom of your screen on the tool ribbon to let the host know you would like to speak. Please identify yourself by providing your name and address.

Principal Alyssa Gwinnell said she would like to again thank everyone for their incredible work. She complimented all that the administrative team, staff, and families have been doing. She said Facebook comments are helpful. Everyone's patience and understanding is greatly appreciated during this difficult time.

IV. Action Items

(Consent) A consent agenda is presented by the Chairman at the beginning of a meeting. Items may be removed from the consent agenda on the request of any one member. Items not removed may be adopted by general consent without debate. Removed items may be taken up either immediately after the consent agenda or placed later on the agenda at the discretion of the assembly.

- a) Approval of Special Meeting Minutes, July 20, 2020
- b) Payment of Bills
- c) Approval of the appointment of Willow Therrien, Library Media Specialist

Ms. Dooley MOVED and Mr. Maziarz SECONDED to approve a) Approval of Special Meeting Minutes, July 20, 2020; b) Payment of Bills; and c) Approval of the appointment of Willow Therrien, Library Media Specialist.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

V. Action Items (Discussion and Action)

- a) Administrators Association Contract Negotiations (7/1/18-6/30/21)

Chairman Lent said the current contract runs July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2021. The Board met earlier with our attorney to talk about potential dates. The union will be represented in negotiations by Alyssa Gwinnell, Barbara Wilson and Karen Caputo. The Board will be represented by Chairman Lent, Michael Maziarz and Christine Sposito. Superintendent Geryk said we are ready to move forward and be sure we meet our deadlines. She is looking forward to the process.

- b) Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes, June 1, 2020

Chairman Lent said approval of these minutes was previously tabled to double-check who had made a motion. Three corrections are to be made:

1. On page 1, in Others Present, correct the spelling of Karen Caputo's name.
2. On page 3, in Action Items, correct the first motion to be made by *Mr. Chakulski, Jr.*
3. On page 3, in Action Items, correct the second motion to be made by *Mr. Chakulski, Jr.* in place of Mr. Crim, who was not present at that meeting.

Mr. Napolitano MOVED, Ms. Sposito SECONDED to amend the June 1, 2020 minutes as follows: page 1, Others Present – correct spelling of Karen Caputo; page 3, Action Items – correct *Mr. Chakulski, Jr.* made the first motion; and page 3, Action Items – correct *Mr. Chakulski, Jr.* made the second motion, and approve as amended.

MOTION CARRIES 6:0

VI. Correspondence/Communications

There were no correspondence/communications to share.

VII. Board of Education Upcoming Meetings

- Tuesday, September 1, 2020, 6:30 p.m., BOE Subcommittee Meeting
- Tuesday, September 1, 2020, 7:30 p.m., BOE Regular Meeting

Superintendent Geryk suggested topics to be discussed at next month's meeting include the non-lapsing account, tuition for non-Columbia families to attend Porter and COVID policies. She said Jessica Ritter could join them at 6:30 to meet with the policy subcommittee. These meetings are anticipated to be in-person, not remote.

There was brief discussion about tuition being discussed at a previous meeting. We have a policy that parent will provide transportation and if there were special education costs, that would be reviewed. The tuition previously agreed upon is more than the per pupil expenditure, which is why it will be reviewed again.

Superintendent Geryk also raised the fact that the September meeting has historically been when the Board recognizes staff who have achieved tenure, new staff, paraprofessional of the year, teacher of

the year as well as do a walk-through. She said we will find a way for this to be done so it is memorable for all who are being honored while adhering to social distancing.

VIII. Superintendent's Report

a) Legislative Update

Superintendent Geryk said we have had information about teacher evaluations and licensure. A lot is happening very quickly. We received \$22,000 from the CARES Act funds, which will be applied to offset expenditures related to COVID. Examples include personal protective equipment, staffing and cleaning supplies. Funds must be expended by December and then we may reapply for additional funds. There are also temporary COVID policies.

b) Return to School Update

Superintendent Geryk gave her presentation, which was also given to approximately 100 people last week. It outlined the hybrid model to be used for school opening. On October 1 we will reassess the model to be followed. All students K-8 will be divided into two groups, all of whom will participate in remote learning. Each group will attend in-person two days per week and remote learning the three remaining days.

Preschool students will have the option to attend four days per week (Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays). Parents may opt to send their preschooler two days per week, similar to students in grades K-8. Unless Porter is mandating full remote learning for grades K-8, preschool students will not have the ability to "opt out" to participate in preschool from home.

Ms. Gwinnell and Ms. Caputo explained the school week for elementary and middle school students in both the hybrid and remote learning models. It included information about staff who are designated for in-school instruction as well as those for remote teaching. This will assist in continuity for students and staff.

All students K-8 will be assigned a device. Students in grades K-2 will receive iPads and those in 3-8 will receive Chromebooks. These are to go home and come back to school daily. A charger will be sent home and can stay there. Families are asked to charge the device overnight.

Before- and after-school care was discussed. Morning care requires pre-registration. Registration will begin once groupings are assigned. Current maximum is 30 students per grouped day (AA, BB). A lottery system will be used if more than 30 students register. Drop off times are 7:30-7:55. No drop offs after 7:55. YWCA after-school program is in the works. Their final inspection is underway. Columbia Rec is exploring options for off-days and Wednesdays. Information will be provided when available.

Meals will be available at school every day it is in session. Breakfast is free for ALL students. It will be delivered to elementary classrooms. Grades K-4 parents will pre-order breakfast. Middle school students will pick up breakfast in the cafeteria. There is no need to pre-order. All students eat in their classrooms. A monthly menu is on the website. If a parent forgets to order breakfast, there will be additional breakfasts for students. Lunch will be delivered and eaten in the

classroom for all grade levels. Students can purchase lunch or bring a lunch from home. Lunches will be eaten with plexiglass barriers on desks with masks removed. All lunches will be pre-packaged. The menu is posted on the website.

Mask breaks are built into the schedule. Outdoor classes are encouraged, which allows more mask breaks. We are setting up tents for shade. Cohorts will be provided with recess equipment. Individual games, i.e., Simon says, hopscotch, etc., are encouraged.

School starts on Wednesday, September 2. This first week only, Group A will attend on Wednesday. Group B will attend on Thursday. Friday, September 4 will be a “Wednesday,” meaning all will remote learn. This first week will be an opportunity for learning tech, building community and social emotional learning and welcoming kids back. This first week is the only time the schedule will have been altered.

Superintendent Geryk said they have purchased PPE, signage and hand sanitation stations to support students and staff. We will be hiring an additional third grade teacher who will be our remote teacher. We will also hire a facilities tech and part-time employees to help with cleaning bathrooms and high-touch areas throughout the day. There will also be additional coverage in the nursing office.

Ms. Dooley asked clarifying questions about a student’s typical day in school, which were answered by Superintendent Geryk and Ms. Gwinnell. Ms. Dooley asked the status of technology purchases. Amplification systems are in place, which will be very helpful hearing over masks. Ten swivel robots were purchased, to be used by staff who wish to utilize the technology for students to watch a lesson remotely.

The barriers are not plexiglass, but other material. They can be put on the desk and taken off. Same desk shield as Bolton and E.O.

Ms. Dooley asked if it is determined we will go fully remote, will teachers be in the building during remote teaching. Superintendent Geryk said right now staff are in the building on Wednesdays. If the governor says everyone is to be home, then it would probably be from home.

Using multiple entrances was discussed. All entrances used will be monitored by staff and they will have hand sanitizer there. Ms. Caputo reiterated these same entrances have always been used for exiting. Now they will also be used for entering at the start of the school day.

Ms. Dooley attended a virtual house call session, which was a panel of different doctors, including a pulmonologist. They answered questions about going back to school. There are useful links. CCMC is one of the links talking about wearing masks. Both Superintendent Geryk and Fayne Sears thanked Ms. Dooley for providing this, which families will be able to reference.

Ms. Sears confirmed she has a working relationship with area pediatricians. She also said that if a child is sent home for fever or coughing, we may need a note saying the child may return. Superintendent Geryk said EHHD would be responsible for contact tracing. Ms. Sears said she will be meeting with them on Friday, anticipating more guidance will be provided at that time.

Superintendent Geryk and Ms. Gwinnell answered Ms. Sposito's questions about the middle school model. The schedule will come out in a week or so, as well as be posted on the website. There will not be a supply list for families this year because the district is purchasing supplies for all students. The PTO's school supply drive this year will help when more supplies are needed as the year progresses.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. confirmed Bolton and E.O. is following the same A-B groups as Porter. This is appreciated because it will allow older siblings to be home on the same remote learning days as the younger siblings. Additionally there is collaboration with area districts including Ashford and Willington. We will probably have the same delays during bad weather. Superintendent Geryk said there is a great partnership with these area superintendents. They have been sharing resources.

Karen Piro thanked all administrators and Board members for their hard work.

Karen Martin agreed.

Mr. Napolitano believes things will change as we go. It will be easier if we keep communicating.

Superintendent Geryk agreed with Ms. Dooley's suggestion to take pictures and video for parents to see how the school is set up. Ms. Caputo said she will do this by the end of next week, which should ease some anxieties families are feeling. Superintendent Geryk said they will also reach out to kindergarten and new-to-Porter students.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr. asked about coverage if we have unexpected retirements or resignations. Superintendent Geryk said she is working on building substitutes. One has been secured and we continue to work on a second. She sees this as vital, especially if someone has symptoms and needs to be out of work. It could be extremely challenging without multiple adults to count on for substitute coverage.

IX. Comments from the Audience

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

Jessica R said thank you.

X. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

Mr. Napolitano thanked administrators, staff and parents for their continued flexibility.

Ms. Sposito also thanked everyone. There has been a lot to juggle at home with kids. Their hard work is appreciated.

Ms. Dooley thanked everyone for all the work with not a lot of guidance.

Mr. Chakulski, Jr., said the presentation was very informative.

Approved 9/14/2020

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Chairman Lent gave kudos to everyone for their hard work. They have been going above and beyond, and it has not gone unnoticed. Everyone has stepped up.

Chairman Lent then shared that Mr. Crim has resigned from the Board. His professional schedule made it a challenge for him for some time. He has been on the board almost seven years. He said the Board will invite him and Kathy Tolsdorf to a meeting to recognize them at a live meeting.

Chairman Lent said the Board is now going into executive session for the purpose of the superintendent's end of the year evaluation and contract negotiations.

The Board went into executive session at 8:37 p.m.

XI. Adjournment

Mr. Napolitano MOVED and Ms. Sposito SECONDED to adjourn.
MOTION CARRIES 5:0

The Board adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher Lent, Chairman