

Mohawk Valley School District #17

Minutes

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING February 4, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Tristan Wright, President (Via Zoom)
Mr. Julian Rinehart, Vice-President
Mr. Howie Jorajuria, Clerk
Mrs. Ann Taylor, Member
Mrs. Gina Richmond, Member (Via Zoom)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Mrs. Shanna Johnson
Mrs. Delia Salcido
Mrs. Sherry Fajardo
Ms. Sarah Bell
Ms. Kim Hand
Ms. Nydia Salcido
Mrs. Jennifer Puga
Mrs. Kristina Ellis
Mr. Terry Jones
Mrs. Laura Lopez
Mrs. Rhona Taylor
Mr. Job Luque

I. CALL TO ORDER

- ❖ Mr. Howie Jorajuria called the Board Meeting to order at 5:03 pm

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- ❖ The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Howie Jorajuria

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

- ❖ Mr. Howie Jorajuria asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. Julian Rinehart made the motion to adopt. Mrs. Ann Taylor seconded.

There was no discussion, motion carries.

IV. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

- ❖ Public members commented at this time:
 - Mr. Terry Jones stated the following:
 - Does not understand why school is not back to a normal schedule
 - The current schedule MVS has is difficult on working parents. It is a hardship
 - He asked if there is still an option for parents if they send their children to school or keep them Distant Learning
 - Mrs. Rhona Taylor stated the following:
 - It is important for kids to be back in school
 - Teachers/staff are doing so much. It is a lot of work for them
 - There are risk factors with kids staying home
 - How long will it take for kids to catch up and be ready
 - This is a vicious cycle
 - As board members, have they volunteered or engaged with teachers and kids
 - If the board chooses not to return to school, then maybe consider K-2 coming back
 - Staff could be asked if they are willing to return

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- As a board member you should be here for the kids
- It is absolutely and critical for kids to return
- School is a safe place for students and for some it is the only place that provides a meal for them
- Mrs. Tina Ellis stated the following:
 - She is a single mother of four with special needs and social emotional children
 - Her child with speech therapy now has therapy through a computer instead of in person. He has regressed and has no motivation
 - Her kids are lonely and overwhelmed, they are afraid to show their faces on Zoom. They are losing motivation, there is strain on their eyes from the computers, it is hard for them to sleep, the blue light is hard on her ADHD children
 - Kids are losing interest and distracted while on Zoom
 - Our students need us
- Ms. Sarah Bell stated the following:
 - She stated she is speaking for those teachers that could not be present at tonight's meeting
 - Social emotional concerns
 - Academic language is suffering with kids
 - Internet issues
 - Decline in ability to focus
 - Parent frustration with having to help their children at home
 - K-2, need to be on campus
 - Hard to get one-on-one feedback
 - Asking board to shift focus from safety to emotional needs
 - K-2, it is hard to know if students are grasping
 - It is hard to have the safe to learn students on campus and Zoom at the same time
 - Every day is "triage"
 - Teachers feel safe
 - Kids would be safer in the classrooms
 - Top performing students have slipped, low performers have gone lower and middle performers are totally disengaged
 - Teachers are burnt out and at a breaking point. Teaching is suffering
- Ms. Kim Hand stated the following:
 - There are 30 students with IEP's
 - All services are now provided virtually. No hands on services. Concepts are different to work on for OT
 - Students have social/emotional needs/goals that need to be addressed
 - Seeing a decrease in attention and engagement
 - As a school we are providing a lot
- Mrs. Jennifer Puga stated the following:
 - Acknowledged Mrs. Johnson and co-workers
 - We are an elite staff/rapport and support
 - Lunch deliveries and Zoom meetings have been frustrating
 - Have gone above and beyond to help
 - Daily stresses are hard and frustrating
 - Followed state mandate for a safe place to learn
 - There are too many students in the library. It has been an organized chaos
 - Students are tired, staff is tired
 - Students are less engaged. They have checked out of Zoom classes
 - Students are left home alone
 - Siblings are needing to help siblings
 - Connecting with parents has been an issue. Have done everything possible to connect with them

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- Students being separated from classmates is hard. They are being effected emotionally and socially
- Hard to see how students were thriving last year and now they are not
- Ms. Nydia Salcido stated the following:
 - Distant Learning has been hard for all
 - Her son has never struggled academically, does not like to miss school, however he is a different child this year
 - She is not the only parent that struggles
 - There is frustration around the community
 - Worried about our students
 - Distant Learning is not working for our students
 - Students state everyday they want to be back in school
 - Everything gets sanitized daily
 - COVID numbers are dropping
 - School is a need for many of our students
 - More parents want their students in school
 - The number of students in the library have doubled in the past month
 - Half of our students are already on campus

After all the Call to the Public comments Mr. Jorajuria stated he appreciates and understands all the comments. He stated this is very valuable information.

V. ACTION ITEMS

1. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Delivery Method of Returning to In-Person Instruction

Motion: Mr. Howie Jorajuria asked for a motion to approve discussion of delivery method of returning to In-Person Instruction. Mr. Julian Rinehart made the motion to approve. Mrs. Ann Taylor seconded. Motion carries. This item is now open for discussion.

Mrs. Johnson stated the following:

- Tonight a decision needs to be made as to when we return to in-person instruction
- A couple of things need clarification:
 - 1) The words Hybrid, In-Person and Distant Learning – every District has used these terms all over the place. For clarification, for our purposes, we call Hybrid when we have some people home and some here. We are asking to have Hybrid, not full in-person. We will continue to call it Hybrid so we can have the option of some people on campus and some home. So tonight, when asking for Hybrid, we are really asking for the majority back but still with an option.
 - 2) Another clarification is in regards to a safe place to learn. Governor Duecy and his Executive Orders state that a safe place to learn must be provided. However, as we know, across the state, that has had all kinds of definitions. Some districts have completely ignored it and some have embraced it just as we have. In January, we asked to bus some students. We do not want the misconception that by busing we enticed this. It did increase it. However, the students we are busing, and this was looked at carefully before tonight, are the Texas Hill students who are EL students and had no reliable internet. The Wellton bus has grown. The majority of those students would have come anyways. We have 20-23 students total that are on buses. By all means it has increased our numbers, do not disagree, but do believe we would have at least 40 students on campus even without that transportation.
- Beamspeed has been fantastic. As of today:
 - 14 of our students homes are now new customers
 - 33 transfers – it means either their service was shut-off or have been nonexistent and now their accounts have been reactivated and switched so MVS can start paying their bill for six months

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- 8 families – we are waiting to see where this lands and reaching out to a couple more families
- Beamspeed provides service to the entire community, so it bogs down. When four kids are trying to Zoom it really bogs down and Zoom takes

Mrs. Johnson stated the following plan:

- Propose a date to reopen
- Will go briefly through reasoning of why the school is in a safe place to open
- Went through the data dashboard from AZDH
 - Data is trending downwards
 - Current week benchmark metrics
 - Confirmed cases by day and laboratory testing
 - Shared Crane's graphs and data overtime
- Data is rapidly trending downward
- We need to consider the data for East Yuma County
- With this going on now for a year, it shows that schools are generally not spreaders and as long as mitigation plan is in place, such as masking up, social distancing, etc., schools have done what has needed to be done
- Believe we are ready to open
- Sent out a staff poll
- Staff is ready to reopen. Unanimously all stated they are comfortable to bring kids back
- We will have 10 fully vaccinated staff within the next two weeks and another 9 will have their first vaccine – 70% of staff will be vaccinated
- We have few positive cases for our zip code, not many, minimal community spread
- Up to this point we have been able to keep the virus out of our school
- We have not had any families or staff report cases since early January, only one at beginning of January
- Yuma County School Superintendent, Tom Tyree, has stated that the expectation is for schools to reopen now that vaccines have been made available directly to the districts. A lot of work went into making this happen
- Per WHO, Moderna vaccine has a 94% efficacy after first vaccination
- With all this said, we feel safe and ready to open

Mrs. Johnson's Proposal:

- Open to In-Person instruction on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 - Hybrid
- Wednesday, February 10, 2021 – Pre-scheduled no-student day for Parent/Teacher Conferences and PD
- Thursday, February 11, 2021 – Zoom only with no students on campus
- Friday, February 12, 2021 – No Zoom with independent work on on-line programs and packets
- These days with no students will give us time to deep clean and prepare for the transition
- Monday, February 15, 2021 is a holiday

Mr. Howie Jorajuria stated the following:

- In January, when we met, numbers were still high. Numbers have gone down but are still at an intimidating level
- Has been doing a lot of thinking and really appreciates everything shared tonight
- The general understanding is that children are being protected
- Information is changing so much
- Fear was that children would spread the disease, but it seems children are paying a high cost to protect those at high risk
- Certainly open to returning to school
- High risk individuals have the opportunity to protect themselves at the same level as children are being asked to protect
- He is a member of this community and represents this community as a board member

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- What really speaks to him is the amount of students that are being sent to school. Tell him parents are making those decisions and would like to see the opportunity to see parents send kids back to school if they are willing to accept the risk that comes with that
- Everyone has a different opinion and does not know what the right answer is but does think that it makes sense to be transparent
- If school reopens, he would like to share information to the parents and acknowledge that even though numbers are going down we are still above the recommended guidelines

Mr. Julian Rinehart stated the following:

- Agrees with Mr. Jorajuria's comment about being transparent
- Parents can decide if they want to send their kids back or not
- He has no problem with opening up
- Personally, his kids are ready to return to school
- There is still concern but not like before

Mrs. Ann Taylor stated the following:

- Agrees that kids need to be back in school
- Kids are being harmed
- She does not think the school is a spreader
- She did research and said that the CDC Director stated that the safest place for kids is school

At this time, Mrs. Johnson stated that we will continue to implement our mitigation plan and this pandemic is not over yet.

Mrs. Gina Rodriguez stated and asked the following:

- It has been a trend between local schools on kids not liking this school or one of the other schools
- Is there concern if the other local school do not open, if those kids will come to Mohawk and we will be bombarded

Mrs. Johnson stated she spoke to the superintendent from Wellton School and they tentatively plan to open March 1st. She spoke to Dateland and they might be a little bit longer before they open, but they might change their mind now that it is tending down. Did reach out to Antelope High School and they have not returned her emails or her calls.

Mrs. Johnson stated that her answer to a parent would be to ask what their long-term goal is. If they plan to come for only a short while then please do not enroll at MVS. There is open enrollment we need to be careful with and need to be very cautious about allowing a student at this time. She would be very thorough and investigating, calling the other schools and be very blunt; we need to keep children safe. But with the other schools opening soon we should be ok.

The following addressed:

- Changing school hours – Mrs. Johnson stated that this would need to be discussed at the March board meeting. She has talked about it but a decision has not been made. She would like to go back to regular hours in the 4th quarter. She is always willing to work with parents and accommodate the best that she can
- Mr. Wright stated he is good

Mr. Terry Jones stated that he agrees with Mr. Jorajuria about being transparent with parents, but kids are suffering by not being in school and parents know the risk they are taking by sending them to school.

Mr. Jorajuria stated that kids have been asked to pay at a cost to protect high-risk individuals. He has concluded he is not God.

Mrs. Johnson restated that her proposal is to reopen on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.

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Mr. Wright stated the following:

- Likes everything stated by Mrs. Johnson
- Checked all boxes to make sure staff is on board
- Keep mitigation plan in place
- Time to let parents choose what they want to do
- More bandwidth available for those children that choose to remain distant learning
- Grocery store 10 times more dangerous than school

Mr. Jorajuria asked about what needs to be changed in the current Return-to-School Plan. Mrs. Johnson stated that it will need to be modified to be transparent. She will go through and modify the plan to reflect the decision made tonight. Between now and next meeting on Tuesday, we will clean it up and bring it back to board for review.

With a motion on the floor made by Mr. Tristan Wright, to approve the request made by Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Jorajuria asked if there was a second motion. Mr. Julian Rinehart seconded. At this time there was no further discussion. Motion carries unanimously.

VI. FUTURE ITEMS

- None

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Mr. Howie Jorajuria asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Ann Taylor made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Julian Rinehart seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 6:17 pm.

A copy of the agenda background material provided to the Governing Board members (with the exception of material relating to possible executive sessions) is available for public inspection at the District Office, 5151 South Avenue 39E, Roll, Arizona.

Dated this 8th day of February, 2021
Delia Salcido, Governing Board Secretary

Designated Board Member

Date

Delia Salcido, Board Secretary

Date