

BOARD NOTES:

January 12, 2021, Regular Board Meeting:

Consent Agenda: The Board approved the Consent Agenda, which included the minutes from the December 8th Regular Special Board Meeting, and the monthly bills and salaries.

Communications: Superintendent Dr. Ed Stange reported one FOIA request for Board member contact information and compensation, of which there is none. Dr. Stange also shared a thank you note from Student Services teacher Ms. Dodi Bailen.

Old Business: The Board approved the 2021-2022 District calendar, which will be posted on the website.

Board Open Discussion: The Board discussed the possibility of some kind of summer academic program in order to address any potential deficits due to the pandemic. Dr. Stange commented that that this option is being considered by many of our surrounding districts. However, the ability to staff such a program remains the biggest issue. The Board agreed to return to this subject as the year progresses and we are able to get a better idea of student needs. Additionally, The Board was grateful for Police Chief Bill Lustig's recovery from COVID19.

New Business: Dr. Stange presented a first draft of a New Board Member Orientation Manual. This document will provide newly seated Board members with practical information and guiding principles to help in the transition to public office. Additionally, it was agreed that having an IASB representative help with new Board member orientation was a good idea. The Board discussed the schedule for the next Strategic Plan, as our current plan ends at the finish of the 2021 school year. The process usually takes 6-9 months and involves forming committees, engaging stakeholders for feedback, launching surveys and digesting those results, conducting focus groups, and identifying priorities. In the past we have both used and not used consultants to guide this process. The Board decided to explore options for outside consultants with an eye to start the Strategic Planning process sometime this summer.

Return to School Task Force Committee: Dr. Stange reviewed the regional and local metrics, noting that locally we have not seen the expected drastic spike that was predicted after the holidays. Local data is stable and trending downward, which supports our hybrid learning plan. This week marked the return to school after being remote for the holiday season, and students were excited to be back. Two additions to the in-person schedule include offering snack opportunities during the day and having some teachers cross pods in order to provide students with in-person Specials. Dr. Stange noted that these additions have been the source of anxiety for some teachers and parents. However, the practice is being done strategically and with an adherence to health department guidance, emphasizing social distancing, proper mask handling, and hand hygiene, and we are confident that we are able to continue to prioritize teacher and student safety.

Dr. Stange reported that the township schools are working together in an effort to provide New Trier West as a vaccination site. The requirement of 15 minutes of post-vaccination monitoring makes it difficult for pharmacies and other small facilities to offer the service, and the surrounding schools are eager to be helpful if they can by offering the space and personnel needed.

Dr. Stange noted that ILDPH is no longer recommending on-site symptom checking as an effective way to evaluate whether or not a person should be on site. However, we will continue our practice of temperature checks out of an abundance of caution.

Dr. Stange reported the number of students out on travel quarantine hovers around 4-6 per grade. As we move forward, and as students may need to be out of school for other reasons (i.e. "an abundance of caution"), it is important for parents to remember that it is "ok to be absent." Bouncing in and out of remote learning can be difficult not only for teachers but for students as well, whereas getting follow-up after being absent is a more thorough way of getting caught up and can actually be more of a benefit to students.

Finally, Board President Mr. Adelbert Spaan thanked all of the staff and administration for getting us back to in-person learning successfully, and the Board concurred.

Finance and Facilities Committee: Board member Mr. Scott Subeck reported that 23 trees will be replaced along the Sunset Ridge fence line at a cost of \$16,000-20,000. We will hold off on replacing any evergreen trees on the north side by the parking lot, as we continue to consider installing a walkway there. We are considering removing the free-standing cubby walls in the 4th and 5th grade rooms in order to loosen up the space in response to teacher feedback that they are not utilized, even before the pandemic. It was decided that we should gather more data before committing to removing permanent structures. The Committee discussed creating a 3-5 year facilities plan in order to understand upcoming expenses and priorities for budgeting purposes. CSBO Mr. Tom Beerheide reported that \$35,000 in CARES Act funding is earmarked for our district, with more possibly on the way. He is not optimistic about the promised FEMA reimbursements. The Board approved the 2021-2022 Budget Designation. The next meeting is April 13, 2021, at 6pm.

Education Committee: The next meeting is March 9, 2021, at 6pm.

Policy Committee: Dr. Stange reported that the option to create a policy mandating staff COVID19 vaccinations was discussed, but it was decided to wait and see what develops at the state level. Additionally, Dr. Stange noted that we are watching developing legislation that may make it more difficult for schools to limit social media free speech that happens outside of school, which could have an impact on our policies addressing those circumstances. The next meeting is March 9, 2021, at 9am.

IASB: Dr. Stange reported that current legislation is being bounced around regarding equity in education. There are many directions that something like that can take, and we continue to watch it.

PTO: Board member Mrs. Anne Peterson reported that their PTO Gifts program has concluded and they were happy to provide the District with a variety of supplies and services. They are exploring new vendors for the school supply kits and the Book Fair. Many exciting author visits and programs are in the works for both schools. They are at 58% participation for their fundraiser, which amounts to almost \$40,000. Next steps involve a letter writing campaign.

NSSD: Board member Mr. Bill Hayes reported they are ready to go back to hybrid mode on January 19th, but have been doing some in-person services when it's safe. They are studying the budget impacts of COVID19, and have completed their profile meetings with participating districts to understand next year's needs. Dr. Stange reported that several districts are considering engaging in an intergovernmental agreement to provide their own services for early childhood, rendering NSSD's services unnecessary. This has widespread effects on the remaining participating districts, as the then increased costs for services will be spread amongst them. More will be learned about this issue at their next meeting.

Northfield Park District: Board member Mr. Rory Welch reported that Clarkson Park construction remains on schedule to be completed in April, and the Buy-A-Brick program ends in February.

Village of Northfield: Board member Mrs. Nancy Detlefsen reported that they are encouraging residents to support local businesses, and are grateful for Chief Lustig's recovery.

Foundation Fund: No report.

Administrative Reports:

Dr. Stange: 5 new students have joined the District. A few students who had planned to transition to in-person hybrid decided against it and stayed remote. We continue to advertise for a 6th grade Teaching Assistant and a 5th grade Maternity Leave substitute. Thank you to retired D29 teachers Mrs. Joann Tennenbaum and Mrs. Barb Egofske for filling in as substitutes.

Dr. Sukenik and Mrs. Keidaisch: The students are excited to get back to school and love having some Specials in person! They are having no trouble learning the procedures that make having Specials safe. The nurses are responding to many quarantine questions every day, and we continue to offer guidance based on ILDPH and CCDPH information. Middlefork Play Pods are moving forward as Pod Pals this year, maintaining social distancing. Kindergarten registration is starting next week with pre-arranged appointments. Thanks to the hard work of PE teacher Mrs. Lisa Mattera, Zoom basketball is happening with around 40 students participating! Homework Club has formed to provide drop-in help over Zoom. Student-led advocacy projects are being formed in response to Martin Luther King Day, with many opportunities for the community to get involved.

Mr. Dreher: There has been an issue regarding the heating system in the 6th grade rooms. Maintenance is scheduled, but we have rented heaters at the ready just in case. Luckily the problem is only with the heat and not the air exchange, so our students and staff remain safe.

Recommendations: The Board approved the Closed Session Minutes from December 8, 2020. Also approved was the employment of Ms. Alondra Navarro (Teaching Assistant), a FMLA request, and the resignation of Mr. Brian Thiel (Network Manager).

Official meeting minutes will be posted on the website following their approval at the February 9, 2020, Regular Board meeting.