

BOARD NOTES:

August 18, 2020, Regular Board Meeting:

Consent Agenda: The Board approved the Consent Agenda, which included the minutes from the July 9th, July 21st, and August 3rd Special Board Meetings, the minutes from the July 14th Regular Board Meeting, the monthly bills and salaries, and Board Policies section 600 (Instruction).

Communications: Superintendent Dr. Ed Stange shared the updated Board Calendar, which includes all committee meetings, and the revised 2020-2021 District Calendar, which reflects the use of two student orientation days.

Audience Comments: District parent Mr. Rodney Watt expressed his displeasure that some students who qualify for Special Education services will be receiving those mandated services remotely rather than in person, due to the pod structure the District will implement to control viral spread. District parent Mr. Tom Whittaker asked that the Board review its practices for responding or referring back to public comments within the Board meetings in order to foster equitable dialogue.

Board Open Discussion: The Board discussed reevaluating how best to respond to public comments, noting that the “Board Open Discussion” portion of each meeting allows an opportunity to discuss any open session topic. Additionally, all community members are able to make anonymous comments to the Board through a link on the District website. Also discussed was making the Board Meeting Packet available in digital form in order to reduce paper use.

Finance and Facilities Committee: Board member Mr. Scott Subeck reported that we have all of the supplies we need to safely open school in both buildings next week, including PPE, sanitizers, and desk shields. All of the sanitizers we are using are FDA approved and not on the exclusion list. Classroom furniture has been arranged to allow for social distancing to the extent possible, COVID-19 related signage has been installed, acrylic shields are being installed at the front desks of both schools, and rooms and general areas that get used by staff are cleaned and disinfected daily. Additional improvements done include refinishing the Sunset Ridge School gym floor, waxing the Middlefork floors, and a deep cleaning of all areas. Back-up safety supplies are on order. Also discussed was the possible lunch price increase from \$3.75 to \$4.00, due to industry-wide packaging and food price increases because of COVID-19. The Board agreed to wait and see what the year brings regarding our ability to serve lunch and how any projected industry increases might affect our bottom line. The next meeting is October 13, 2020, at 6pm.

Education Committee: Dr. Stange noted that since the District is in its last year of the current Strategic Plan, we will begin to discuss engaging in a new Strategic Planning process. The next meeting will feature a Technology update, and will take place on September 15, 2020, at 6pm.

Policy Committee: Board member Mr. Rory Welch reported that the complete review of all of the District’s policies is almost finished. The Board discussed continuing the committee’s meetings on a quarterly basis. The next meeting is September 4, 2020, at 9am.

Return to School Task Force: Dr. Stange reported that guidance on the reopening of schools changes frequently, and new guidelines are released every day. We are working to quickly adjust our protocols and plans to reflect all current changes by health authorities. Two new pieces of guidance, one from IDPH and the other from Northern IL Consortium, were released recently regarding metrics to use to determine when a school should go remote or determine if it is safe to be in-person. While we are using these metrics in our own District’s considerations, we recognize that they can be skewed by the inclusion of the whole of Cook County,

rather than separating metro Chicago from its collar suburbs, as the state metrics have done by dividing the state into zones. That being said, we are grateful for any guidance and data as we move forward.

Mask guidance is as follows:

- ISBE has now said that staff members can remove their masks if they are alone in their room with the door closed
- Masks will be worn by students and staff while school is in session, except during allowable mask breaks
- Neck gaiters and valve masks are not allowed. Cloth masks are acceptable, and should be washed daily. ASTM level 1 masks are also acceptable and should be changed daily
- The District has child sized masks should a student need one at school
- Parents should feel free to ask administration for counsel on acceptable mask choice and use

District staff will be completing COVID-19 related training courses before school begins.

Dr. Stange described the “pod concept” the District is using to mitigate viral spread. Pods will be made up of grade levels, which are then separated into homerooms. Most of the time students will stay with their homerooms, but occasionally some may meet outside of their homeroom, but stay inside their grade pod, as they receive student services. This will limit cross-contamination between grade level pods. Specials staff will be assigned to pods, which means that some students who receive mandated student services will receive them in person, while others will receive them remotely in order to prevent viral spread. In 7th and 8th grade, the homerooms have been organized by math level. While this is not our usual practice, we have made this decision in order to keep students as safe as possible. While most students will go home at 12:30, some students who receive special services may stay to meet with their pod leaders. All of these plans have been developed through close counsel with our staff and our legal services in order to best meet our students’ needs.

IASB: No report.

PTO: Board member Mrs. Anne Peterson reported that they are organizing their lunchroom volunteers should the District move forward to hosting in-person lunch. They have also created their meeting calendar and are working out their location details.

NSSED: Board member Mr. Bill Hayes reported that they are planning on being remote until Labor Day, and then hybrid until October, at which time they will reevaluate. Any classrooms that take place in participating districts will follow those district schedules.

Northfield Park District: Mr. Welch reported that they are implementing a K-3 two-tiered program to accommodate families who required childcare. The first tier will be 1:30-3:30pm, and provide remote learning support. The second tier will start at 3:30pm and act as an afterschool care program. The District has agreed to subsidize the remote learning program on a needs-based basis, while at the same time emphasizing that it is not school sponsored. The Park District has agreed to maintain the pod structure. Unfortunately, the District could not accommodate Wesley Childcare, as they would have to break the pod structure due to space constraints. We are hopeful to have Wesley return in the future.

Village of Northfield: Board member Mrs. Nancy Detlefsen reported that the Village continues to debate the plans for the Skokie Valley Bike Trail. She thanked Village leadership for their advice and guidance on running a smooth virtual meeting. The Board agreed to look in to streaming the meetings to provide a more seamless experience.

Foundation Fund: No report.

Administrative Reports:

Dr. Stange: The District received one FOIA this month regarding purchasing records. 21% of Middlefork students and 9% of Sunset Ridge students are engaging in the Alternative Remote Program, for a total of 14% of the student body. This will allow for homeroom groups that range from 12-15 students. We have one Teaching Assistant position yet to fill. A group of retired Cook County Law Enforcement officers has agreed to take over our morning and afternoon traffic duties, relieving Dr. Stange of his traffic duties. In light of the fact that all students will require their devices at home for remote instruction, the Board discussed revising our procedures regarding technology fees charged. Parent Connections and SELPAC meetings will begin soon in a virtual format.

Dr. Sukenik and Mrs. Keidaisch: Efforts are being made to make staff committees more district-wide rather than school specific, and to encourage teacher leadership by creating co-leaders. The Social Justice Committee has been working all summer developing a year-long plan they will introduce to staff in small mixed groups. We will be sending out a panorama survey to families to gauge students' comfort levels as they reenter school. We are looking forward to orientation days, and have set up remote orientation for those who prefer it. Kindergarten and 4th grade families have had meet-and-greets in order to ease students' transitions to their new schools. Curriculum Nights will be held virtually soon after school starts, with both principals making themselves available for virtual meet-ups.

Ms. Emily Dunham: Pods are being finalized and we are ready to start school.

Mr. Corey Dreher: We are still looking to fill a night custodian position at Middlefork.

Mrs. Sheri Styczen: Parent Square online school community forum will be launching soon. Classroom cameras are on order. In the meantime teachers will use their computers to stream lessons to remote students.

Recommendations: The Board approved the Closed Session Minutes from July 9, July 14, and August 3, 2020. The Board approved the employment of Ms. Marci Peck (SRS Nurse) and Ms. Gloria Ramos (SRS Spanish Teacher), the resignations of Ms. Evelyn Levin and Ms. Alicia Cohen, and administrative recommendations for the accommodations of Employees 14 and 15.

Official meeting minutes will be posted on the website following their approval at the September 15, 2020, Regular Board meeting.