

Uintah Elementary School Community Council

April 16, 2020

4:45 – 6:00 pm

1. Welcome and Introductions

In attendance: Bruce Simpson, Jacob Skog, Caroline Moreno, Melissa Ford, Jennifer Foth, Angie Carter, Carol Theuer, Sam Hanson, Ellen Schwede, Amanda Funai, Amy Taylor

Jacob welcomes everyone to the first Zoom meeting.

2. Approve March 2020 minutes

Jacob moves to approve. Carol seconds. All vote in favor.

3. Principal's Report

a. Land trust plan

In the plan for this year, the money is being spent on paras. They are still getting paid: some help serve meals, some are helping hand out packets to younger grades, and others help individual kids from home. For next year, the plan was to pay for half the salary of a full-time SPED/ELD position; this position has been posted. Bruce hopes to interview next week if there are candidates. If anything was left over, at the moment Bruce wants to put that toward technology. Bruce asked for a vote on this plan; Council voted in favor.

SNAP walking route does appear to have been changed. All vote in favor.

Calendar for next year: they are still working on the template. Ms. Theurer and Bruce will hold an SIC meeting tomorrow and talk with teachers. The only changes under discussion are lengthening the time for back to school night by an hour, and having conferences across two days (W, Th) rather than three. M-W full days, Th./Fr. half days. Review the format for back to school night. No need to change start and end times is foreseen. Any start/end time changes for high schools will not take effect until year after next.

Technology needs. We currently have some money earmarked to replace older computers. Right before closure Bruce met with our tech. He would also like to look at the laptops and a cart of iPads, to see how well they would function as devices in this sort of situation should we need to hand out devices again. This has not been announced in any way, but it is best to be prepared in the event it becomes necessary.

Professional development will come up at the District. Bruce compliments the teachers on jumping in. They have been phenomenal at learning quickly how to use all these new platforms and meet student needs. He understands that it has been difficult. The district is discussing how to streamline the efforts that have been made. Expectations are not always clear for students. Guidelines will be coming out from Tiffany Hall and others at the district to help everyone with some clarity.

Caroline asks the teachers about the pros and cons of Zoom classes. Angie says there has been some difficulty with switching allowed platforms. Zoom was never mandated; this was left to the discretion of each teacher. Because not all the kids may be able to log in at the same time, she thinks that if the platform is used to teach rather than more of a friendly/social check-in, those lessons should be recorded for those who want to access the lesson at another time. Carol reports that meetings vary among teachers in her grade. The lead issue is that they can't judge kids who are unable to log in; many families have siblings competing for computer time. Angie and Carol both use their meetings as a check in. Carol likes to address questions and tech issues individually rather than in a Zoom meeting.

Caroline asks if there is any thinking around further encouraging teachers who are not meeting at all at this point? Carol will take that back as feedback from Council to the faculty. Most of Carol's students say what they miss most is seeing their friends. Caroline asks if the district plans to require anything? Bruce hasn't heard anything. They will discuss in SIC meeting tomorrow. Mandating something has not happened, and can be difficult given the lack of training. Also, not all teachers have a District laptop. So far there are no parameters given by the District. General feedback seems to be that the children appreciate seeing each other, and parents whose teachers are using Zoom have appreciated the hour of not teaching as they work from home. Bruce is encouraging professional development, perhaps over the summer from the educational technology department. He is hoping that we will see some offered for teachers specifically should this become necessary again. Angie hopes that if a minimum amount of online learning is set, there will be a reasonable expectation. Bruce says that should this happen again, they will try to arrange a schedule to help avoid students in different grades overlapping, with possible conflicts using scarce resources.

#### 4. District Updates

Melissa expresses enormous gratitude to teachers and parents for their work and patience. Melissa sees an opportunity here for a unique chance to make some dramatic changes. Rather than simply "going back to normal", this is an opportunity to look at what we might want to change and look forward to what's possible next. Sam echoes Melissa's thoughts. This situation is very difficult, and the Board appreciates meetings like this with the Council to hear from parents to make informed decisions. This is a chance to plan ahead in the event that remote learning continues past June. The Board is leaning toward submitting Land Trust plans on September 15th; they are told they have funds to cover the 4 month gap, or perhaps the Board can make differentiated submissions May 15 and September 15. If the Council feels confident in the current plan we can move toward submitting by May; one possible advantage to submitting at the later date is just to see as students come back from this soft closure whether there might be changing needs for those funds.

The Board is moving forward in its search for an interim superintendent and business administrator. The business administrator should likely be in place by fall, and an interim superintendent hired for one/two years, while a search continues for the right final candidate.

This is the path the Board has been discussing, including at its March meeting. Melissa is confident that it can find excellent candidates. It is difficult to fill both of these positions at once, even without a global pandemic, so an interim superintendent is a sensible choice.

Ellen reports that parents have asked her if there are any plans to end the school year early. Melissa has also heard this. At this point, her feeling is that everything is on the table. There is some talk of streamlining the process, figuring out what the right workload is, and that conversation would include the duration. These discussions are taking place in the Teaching and Learning Department, so she can't say where that is going at the moment, but it is definitely on their radar. There is also sensitivity to avoiding creating additional gaps with schools where children have even less access to online learning. Some parents are having real struggles in helping their children learn. At the middle school level, Melissa reports that at the Clayton SCC, some children appear to be thriving better, and the Council at Clayton is looking at how to retain the best of what we are learning in this experience. Carol says that some parents have said that Memorial Day seems like a natural break. After Memorial Day, much of school is dedicated to 'bonding' events and days, like the talent show and field day. The learning doesn't stop, but many teachers often try to wrap up most of the formal curriculum by Memorial Day, and parents are asking if that is a natural break. The Board had been looking at potentially returning May 1st. Now that we know that the soft closure will continue much longer, the discussion has changed. Looking at what the "end" will be is very reasonable given how things have changed. The Board is talking about what "time in school" even means in terms of requirements at this point. Sam mentions a potential danger of how things are perceived, perhaps by the legislature, and keeping in mind how the choices we make will be seen publicly and how it will affect us long term. How will our choices affect funding in the future? Bruce mentions that ending school very early would impact the paras and hourly people as well. This is only one factor, but definitely must be considered.

## 5. PTA Report

Ellen reports that as far as fund raising goes, PTA has a fairly substantial rainy day fund. No further fundraising will happen this year; no Art Night etc. Many families simply can't consider that at the moment, and for those who can, there are ways to donate. Ellen thinks we have funds to cover through next year. Yearbooks have been submitted. Jennifer managed to wrap up the yearbooks just as the shutdown came upon us. No word yet on distribution. Last big concern is 6<sup>th</sup> grade graduation. They will try to figure out something. Certificates will be mailed; kids will likely do something with their classes. There are discussions about what alternative options there may be for them, perhaps a one-year anniversary. Teachers should let the PTA know if they have urgent needs right now that can be funded from money earmarked for field trips, because the money is there. Bruce reports that questions of how students can collect their things will be discussed next week.

## 6. SIC Report

Carol reports there are three positions that need to be filled. SPED/ELD, school counselor, and library media. Ms. Jones is retiring. She will stay on through September of next year, but wants the school to be able to hire now while more candidates are available. For the period that she will still be in the building, she will shift to an interventionist position to assist kids at the beginning of the year. The counselor position is open for rehire. Caroline congratulates Bruce on his official position as Principal for next year.

Caroline reports the Legislature has moved to offer the Botvins Life Skills program to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in addition to older students.

Jacob will update the Council about our next meeting. Bruce reminds everyone that we can invite people to these meetings for more input.

Meeting adjourned.