

December 10, 2020

Monday, December 7th, there were two Board of Education meetings. At 5pm, there was a special meeting scheduled to conduct the formal evaluation of Superintendent Dr. Christopher Timmis. The evaluation discussion was done in closed session. When the Board returned to open session, they approved his evaluation as “highly effective”. Board President Dr. Julie Schumaker thanked Dr. Timmis for his leadership, especially during this challenging year, stating that Dexter Schools has continued to make significant progress in all goal areas by creatively addressing the needs of our students.

At the regular (7pm) meeting, much talk centered on the pandemic. During his update, Dr. Timmis displayed slides from the District’s [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) (available on the DCS website). He shared that when students are learning remotely, the District does not receive as frequent updates on student health issues as when they are in person. Based on the data collected so far, DCS currently has 17 students and 4 staff who have tested positive for COVID-19*. The infection rate has been trending down, but new data will be forthcoming on Tuesday.

In Washtenaw County, cases have jumped from 0.2% to 7% for school-aged children in November and December. In the 48130 ZIP code, there are now 97 cases over the last two weeks; ages 0-9 at 4%, and ages 10-17 at 11%. COVID-19 cases in the county have reached a critical level, with a current positivity rate of 7.5%. Dr. Timmis stated that the highest risk level according to MDHHS is over 150 cases per million. Our area is roughly 360 cases per million, well above the highest risk category, which prompted the pause of in-person learning. In addition, before the pause, the District was approaching the point of not having enough staff available to keep the buildings open. Student attendance interaction rates at Dexter have been in the 98-99% range, the goal being an interaction rate of 75%. Before the pause, there was a COVID-19 outbreak in a special education room, which resulted in that program returning to remote learning.

Following Dr. Timmis’s update, Board President Julie Schumaker thanked outgoing Trustees Jason Gold and Barbara Read for their service to the students and community of Dexter Schools.

Student Representative Aidan Naughton shared that Dexter High School has changed their remote schedule to increase each class times by 15 minutes.

No community members asked to speak during the first opportunity for public participation, and the meeting moved to approve the hiring of two new teachers: Kasey Straub for a math position at Mill Creek Middle School, and Kylie Busdeker for a 4th grade teaching position at Wylie Elementary.

Discussion then turned to the 2020-2021 November budget amendment. The memo and documents prepared by CFO Sharon Raschke were reviewed in depth and recommended for approval to the BOE by the Finance Committee on December 2nd. Due to changes in staffing and other variations due to COVID-19, Dr. Timmis said the District is projected to be about \$76,000 revenue under expense, which is much better than the previously projected \$1.9M. The District received an unexpected \$1.2M in August (one-time federal funding), which significantly offset the projected shortfall. Dr. Schumaker noted the amended budget includes a \$65 increase per pupil from the state foundational allowance. The Board voted unanimously to accept the DCS November budget amendment.

The Board next authorized the Superintendent to sign a wetlands easement required for the construction of the twin turf fields. That had originally been authorized almost a year ago but COVID disruptions left it unfinished so this was merely a matter of form.

The Board also approved the purchase of seven 77-passenger buses and one 54-passenger special needs bus from Midwest Transit, after DCS applied for and received a 2020 EGLE Fuel Transformation Program Volkswagen State Mitigation Trust Grant. This grant funds 25% of the cost toward replacing eight pre-identified “dirty diesel” buses.

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Next, the Board considered an additional opportunity for Schools of Choice mid-year applications. With families transitions happening due to COVID-19 (change in income, living situations, etc.), the district has had many requests to enroll non-resident students. Many of these are current Dexter students who are moving out of the District temporarily due to COVID-19. Dexter Schools lost 240 students this year for a variety of pandemic-related reasons, mostly K-2 students whose parents indicated that once the pandemic is over they will be returning to DCS. After discussion, the Board unanimously approved offering at least two spots for the IB Programme (one student each from grades 9 and 10) plus a minimum of one student in each grade from Young Five through eighth grade, as well as at least one spot for the Virtual School and at least one spot for the Early Middle College for the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year.

Moving to the reconfirmation of the instructional delivery model required by the state, the Board discussed return-to-school dates subject to infection rates and case numbers. For Y5-6, most board members concurred that January 4th seemed too tight of a turnaround after the winter break for both families and staff, and recommended that Y5-6 return on January 11th.

Dr. Timmis noted that bringing the middle and high school students back to the buildings on the same day as the younger grades would likely create a logistical challenge with busing. He also asked whether it was wise to bring older grades back the week of January 18th, when there is no school that Monday due to Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and half days that same week.

The board approved the following extended learning plan: Jenkins and GSRP classrooms will remain in-person with safety protocols, Y5-6 will remain remote through January 8th, and middle and high school students will stay remote until the rate of daily infections declines or through mid-January. At that point, hybrid students will begin to be phased back to in-person instruction. The high school will begin Workday Wednesdays for students identified by staff as being at risk of not earning semester 1 credit as soon as permitted by MDHHS. Special needs, ELL and other special population students will remain remote until January as well.

DCS periodically updates policies based on changes in law, regulations, or as needed. This evening, the Board unanimously approved the following policies: 2266 (Title IX sexual harassment), 4362.01 (threatening behavior toward staff members), 5610 (emergency removal, suspension & expulsion), 5611 (due process rights), and 7440 (facility security), previously approved for first reading on November 16, 2020.

A second batch of policies (bylaws) returned for approval. At its June 29, 2020 meeting, the Board of Education reviewed and approved for first reading revisions to bylaws 0143.1 (public expression of board members), 0144.2 (board member ethics), 0155 committees), 0161 (parliamentary procedures), 0167.3 (public participation), 0168.1 (open meeting minutes), 0168.3 (committee meetings), and policy 9120 (communications with the general public). At that time, the Board asked for legal review of the bylaws. That happened immediately following the meeting but this batch of bylaws fell off the radar with COVID-19 distractions. The attorney's suggested changes to policies 0155, 0167.3, and 0168.3 were incorporated into this evening's packet.

On policy 0143.1, the Board decided to change the word "must" in the sentence, "News releases, articles or interviews with the media which reflect on the policies of the Board or practices of the School District must be cleared with the Board President," to the word "should."

Board members discussed policy 0155, which says the Board committees are advisory in nature and "not a public body for the purposes of the Open Meeting Act." Dr. Timmis explained that the language was to clarify meeting issues that had been frequently discussed over the past year or two. Committee meetings will still include public participation and require minutes as noted in other bylaws. Dr. Schumaker noted that these bylaws had been approved by the Board pending legal counsel at the June meeting and these versions have been reviewed by legal counsel. These bylaws were approved as well.

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A final discussion centered around Trustee Mara Greatorex's interest in running for the MASB Board of Directors. After a brief discussion in which Trustee Greatorex expressed her enthusiasm to represent the District in this position, Dr. Schumaker moved the item to action and called for a Board vote to support Greatorex's nomination. The motion passed.

No one spoke during the second opportunity for public participation.

This was Trustee Gold's and Trustee Read's last meeting. During Board comments, Jason Gold expressed his gratitude for his membership on the Board, saying he was looking forward to continuing to support Dexter Schools. Barbara Read also thanked the community for electing her in 2012, and said that she has greatly enjoyed her time on the Board.

Elise Bruderly and Mara Greatorex expressed their gratitude for the Board's support of board member education, after attending the MASB conference over the weekend. They also thanked Trustees Gold and Read for their service to Dexter Schools.

The next Dexter Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 11th at 7:00 p.m.

** UPDATE: As of December 8, 2020, 23 students and 6 staff have tested positive for COVID-19.*