

**STRONGSVILLE BOARD OF EDUCATION
DECEMBER 16, 2020
SPECIAL MEETING**

The Special Meeting of the Strongsville Board of Education and any other items germane to the Board of Education was called to order at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 16, 2020, at the **Administration Building, Meeting Room, 18199 Cook Avenue, Strongsville, Ohio**, by President, Richard O. Micko.

All members of the Board and media were notified of this meeting in compliance with Section 121.22 O.R.C., effective November 28, 1975.

The following Board Members answered Roll Call: Mrs. Bissell, Mrs. Buckner-Sallee, Mrs. Housum, Mr. Micko, and Mr. Roberts.

Others present were: Dr. Cameron Ryba, Superintendent; Mr. George Anagnostou, Treasurer; Ms. Jenni Pelko, Assistant Superintendent; Mr. David Binkley, Director of Technology; Mr. Stephen Breckner, Director of Business Services; Ms. Erin Green, Director of Curriculum; and Mr. Andy Trujillo, Director of Pupil Services.

This meeting was videotaped and is part of the official minutes.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Gianna Monzo spoke on virtual learning. She stated it was better than she thought it would be, but urged the Board to return to in-person learning. Ms. Monzo works at Fairview Hospital and stated the number one killer of children, ages 10-14, is suicide. Children should stay in school. Ms. Monzo asked if a substitute teacher could be hired with an associate's degree. Ms. Pelko responded that all teachers must hold a bachelor's degree.

BOARD DISCUSSION – RESPONSIBLE RESTART

The District has been in remote learning for the past couple weeks, which was a good decision. Ms. Pelko has been bolstering the sub pool, so the District is currently in a better position with staffing.

Discussion was had about how to proceed with the learning framework after the winter break. Dr. Ryba shared his recommendation as long as the County is not in purple. If the County moves to purple, the District will continue with remote learning. His recommendation is that for the week of Jan 4, 2021, the District continue with remote learning 2.0. He shared his reasons. He looked at local data two weeks prior to Thanksgiving, two weeks after Thanksgiving, and COVID related absences. There was a large spike the first week after Thanksgiving in COVID cases. In week 2, the number of COVID cases declined. Once exposed, it is typically 7 to 8 days before symptoms show. Families will gather for the holidays. If we wait until Jan 11th, it gives us 10 days after the holidays before bringing students back in to school. Dr. Ryba does not want to open schools for in-person learning and then have to close it down the next week. If we wait, anyone exposed during the holidays should show their symptoms within those 10 days. Concerns shared with Dr. Ryba were spikes in COVID after the holiday and consistency. On Monday, January 11, Dr. Ryba recommends returning to in-person learning for PreK-5 and blended learning for grades 6-12 until further notice. For grades 6-12 blended learning, Dr. Ryba shared two avenues to discuss. First, is to see a four week decline in COVID cases before moving from blended to in-person. Second, is to set a definitive date; January 4th week of remote learning, blended learning beginning January 11th, and in-person at a specific date. Both pathways would use the District's data when determining the learning framework. Dr. Ryba's recommendation includes moving away from transitioning the entire District from a learning

BOARD DISCUSSION – RESPONSIBLE RESTART (continued)

framework to remote 2.0, but to strategically look at individual building needs. He also recommends looking at the Middle School differently than the High School. Dr. Ryba stated we need to be more strategic in planning and shared examples of scenarios. The elementary schools and middle school can be strategic and go by grade level or team based movements to remote 2.0. This cannot be done at the high school. If there are spikes at the high school, this is the one building that would have to move entirely to remote 2.0.

Mr. Micko asked about learning for students who are quarantined. Dr. Ryba assured the Board that the students learning from home will have access to live instruction but that it will take time for the teachers to be fluid with it and to learn how to engage the students working from home. How to develop it and evolve it is a process of growth. One issue with the Concurrent Classrooms (live and virtual at same time) is that when the students are working together, live and remotely, it is difficult to hear because of the noise so the Technology Department purchased earbuds and microphones for the students. Teachers are learning to use students in the classroom to engage the students learning from home. It is a learning process. The elementary principals met today and their recommendation on how to support students in quarantine at the elementary level was finalized this afternoon and will be shared soon.

It was asked if students could be quarantined by classroom instead of quarantining an entire grade. Dr. Ryba responded this will be looked at but ultimately, the District will do what is in the best interest for students, classes and grades. Now, there is data to refer to when making decisions. If there is an increase of COVID cases that warrants changing the learning framework, the District's intent is to give at least one week notice to families. If the change is immediate, the notice will be shorter, but based on data trends, Dr. Ryba feels comfortable that a week's notice will be given before changes are made. The Administration will be watching trend data closely.

Mr. Micko stated he finds Dr. Ryba's proposal reasonable. He supports selecting a date for when the District will go back to in-person learning over waiting for a four-week decline in COVID cases. The entire framework of learning will continue to be remote for the week of January 4th, January 11th, move to blended learning for the high school and middle school for two weeks, and move the PreK-5th grade students to in-person learning. Then the week of January 25th, bring the middle school and high school students back to in-person learning. Having a specific date is effective for planning.

A spike in COVID is expected after the holidays which is the reason for continuing with remote learning the first week students return to school.

Dr. Ryba continued to field questions from the Board.

Mrs. Buckner-Sallee stated she likes the plan. Mrs. Bissell said she would support either option. Mr. Roberts would like the decision to be made based on trends and data. He is more in favor of "until further notice" based on trends and data. Mr. Micko likes the plan to return all students to in-person learning on January 25th barring data that would caution the District otherwise.

Dr. Ryba explained the benchmark used for absences which is 20%. Dr. Ryba explained his process. He looks at both internal and external factors.

- 0-10% low risk
- 10%-20% medium risk
- Over 20% high risk

BOARD DISCUSSION – RESPONSIBLE RESTART (continued)

20-12-22 Moved by Mr. Micko to adopt the plan whereas January 4 through January 8 all students, PreK through 12th, will use the remote learning framework. The weeks of January 11 through January 22, PreK through 5th grade will return to in-person learning and students at the Middle School and High School will use blended learning. Then the week of January 25th, Middle School and High School students will return to in-person learning. All students, PreK-12, will be in-person beginning January 25, 2021, barring data otherwise, seconded by Mrs. Housum and approved on a roll call vote as follows:

Mr. Micko, yes; Mrs. Housum, yes; Mr. Roberts, yes;
Mrs. Buckner-Sallee, yes; Mrs. Bissell, yes.
Motion carried 5-0

Mr. Micko wished everyone a happy holiday.

Live-streaming and recording of the meeting concluded at 7:24 p.m.

A short break was had as the Board and Administration prepared for the retreat portion of the meeting. This is an annual occurrence where the Administration and Board get together to develop a foundational understanding of the areas of focus and desired outcomes for the District. The Board has an opportunity to ask questions and to provide initial guidance on the prioritization of this work.

BOARD DISCUSSION – 2020-2021 DISTRICT GOALS AND STRATEGIC PLAN

Prior to the retreat, each member of the Board received a Planning Document that was to be reviewed before the meeting. The areas of focus were divided into four categories; a. Community, Culture, and Opportunities; b. District Operations; c. Finances; and d. Teaching and Learning. Under each of these categories, the Planning Document shared the current state of the District and the desired state – Where do we want to be by August 21, 2021? The Board was asked to focus on the desired state and to help set District goals. Dr. Ryba set a time limit for discussion for each of the focus areas.

1. Community, Culture and Opportunities

Dr. Ryba asked the Board if they needed clarification or had any questions on any of the topics under Community, Culture and Opportunities. There were five areas of focus: 1. Communications/website; 2. Culture; 3. Diversity; 4. Extracurriculars; and 5. Strategic Planning.

Some discussion was had on extracurricular activities for students. A suggestion was made to add clubs that could be linked to a class offering like Robotics. Club members could be entered into competitions, etc.

Another area of discussion was the R Factor training. Dr. Ryba stated this is year three of R Factor training and work still needs to be done. The training was projected to move to the students and to give parents the opportunity to understand the language we are learning.

Dr. Ryba asked Board members to prioritize the list of areas of focus from 1 to 5 with 1 being top priority.

These will be collected at the end of meeting.

BOARD DISCUSSION – 2020-2021 DISTRICT GOALS AND STRATEGIC PLAN (continued)

2. District Operations

Dr. Ryba asked if any topics needed clarification under District Operations. There were seven areas of focus: 1. COVID Contact Tracing; 2. Food Services; 3. HVAC; 4. Records; 5. Staffing; 6. Transportation; and 7. Building and Maintenance.

The HVAC systems are not up to standard, but Strongsville City Schools does have forced air in all our buildings. Mr. Breckner is investigating a recommendation for new filters, but unfortunately, they won't fit as they are not designed for our system. We would have to replace all our HVAC systems. The cost for just the filters is \$120,000. Mr. Breckner is investigating options.

The District hired subs but then had to use them for the SCS Connects program. More teacher substitutes were hired bringing the number of permanent subs to eight, but Ms. Pelko stated she would like a few more - ten plus maybe one for special education.

Mr. Breckner shared reasons why a bus wash with undercarriage wash would be beneficial to the District. Currently, washing the undercarriages of the buses is not possible. A bus wash with undercarriage wash would help to retain buses and trucks longer. Mr. Breckner is investigating to see what can be done. A big issue is waste water and where to dispose of it. Medina had a joint project between school and city. Mr. Breckner is also looking into a joint venture with the City. Another option to recoup some of the cost would be to possibly charge other Districts to come through to use it.

Mr. Anagnostou explained the reasons for digitization of records with the primary one being the District is running out of room to store permanent files. Student files along with some other files have to be kept permanently. Mr. Anagnostou is currently working with a company and his hope is to, eventually, become truly paperless. This item is on his wish list as it costs over \$110,000 for a company to scan them.

Some questions were asked about contact tracing. The District uses its nurses, principals and other Administration. Contact tracing is a major time commitment. There is a possibility of using some support staff after the holiday break.

Dr. Ryba asked the Board to prioritize the areas of focus under District Operations.

3. Finances

There were four areas of focus under Finances: 1. Financial Reporting; 2. Fundraising; 3. Internal Controls; and 4. Time Clocks.

Mr. Roberts asked if the District has a grant writer; an employee who specifically applies for grants. Mr. Anagnostou responded that the District does not have a specific employee who completes grant applications. He explained that employees apply for their own grants. Mr. Micko would like to see if other districts similar to Strongsville have grant writer positions.

Discussion was had regarding time clocks. Currently, there is no punching in and out. Discussion was had on who to target and whether incorporating time clocks would have to be included in negotiations. The benefits would be to eliminate the time it takes to input time sheets and the potential for law suits.

The internal fund raising process has been established with clear procedures for district-affiliated groups. Work was started to coordinate fundraisers done by external groups like the Boosters and PTAs so that our families are not hit with multiple and duplicate fundraisers at the same time. Information gathering is being done and then a tracking spreadsheet of all the fundraisers will be established.

Dr. Ryba asked the Board to prioritize the four areas of focus under Finances.

BOARD DISCUSSION – 2020-2021 DISTRICT GOALS AND STRATEGIC PLAN (continued)

4. Teaching and Learning

There were nine areas of focus under Teaching and Learning: 1. Career Development; 2. Deeper Learning; 3. Future of Learning; 4. Virtual Learning; 5. Model Mustang; 6. Special Education Services; 7. Summer Learning Opportunities for Students; 8. Digital Learning Library; and 9. Summer Learning Opportunities for Teachers.

Much discussion was had regarding Virtual Learning. The SCS Connects program continues to be enhanced. More work needs to be done at the secondary level. Questions were asked and discussed such as; What is the educational benefit vs a virtual class? What does the future of school look like? What is the better educational platform for kids? Are we required to offer the Edmentum program?

Teachers believe they are teaching to standards. Teachers need a deeper understanding of the curricular standards. There are many resources out there for teachers. Sometimes only content is taught. Skills need to be taught also. The District is working to have curricularly aligned assessments that are an accurate reflection of student learning so we don't get a false read on the tests.

Summer time offerings for teachers was discussed and repercussions for teachers not growing. The District can offer incentives and learning opportunities for teachers but cannot force them to attend or take advantage of the opportunities. Administration is working to identify where improvement would be beneficial and then will determine what professional development is needed and will be offered.

Discussion returned to virtual learning and the SCS Connects program. Questions included when would enrollment for grades K-5 open and close for SCS Connects? Who will be teaching? Will there be caps on class size? The District is working to strengthen the co-teaching model and to improve the SCS Connects product. Should the District continue to offer remote learning along with in-person learning or asynchronous purchased learning even if it is not as effective? What is the cost to the District? Data is needed.

Last year, summer school was offered at the elementary level for reading only. The course was only a few weeks long and there was no cost to participants. Summer school at the secondary level was offered for credit recovery only. Tuition for each class was \$100. The summer school program was remote for all students.

Many questions were asked regarding summer school. Should the District offer more than just classes for credit recovery? Should students who need help with specific courses be targeted or should summer classes be offered to anyone? Where will we be with COVID this summer? How do we equitably support students who need to come but can't afford the cost? How, what, and when all need to be explored. SCS didn't qualify for summer food programs in the past. Who are we targeting? Something to explore.

Dr. Ryba asked the Board to prioritize the nine areas of focus under Teaching and Learning.

5. Wish List

Each Administrator shared a "Wish List" with the Board. After clarifying questions, the Board was asked to circle the top five items that resonated with them.

Ms. Pelko

- Two more permanent subs and one intervention specialist substitute
- Add Innovation Specialist position
- Help with COVID contact tracing

BOARD DISCUSSION – 2020-2021 DISTRICT GOALS AND STRATEGIC PLAN (continued)

5. Wish List (continued)

Mr. Trujillo

- Keep and serve students at their home schools
- Special Education coaches to support educators on day to day level
- Help with Professional Development
- Add intervention specialists staffing

Mr. Breckner

- Custodial equipment
- Add an additional camera or two to each of the buses making it a 5 to 6 camera system
- Automate the whole transportation department

Ms. Green

- Personnel at the Middle School to emulate the English Learners program that is in place at High School
- Supervisor of Elementary curriculum similar to what is in place at the High School
- Bolster the gifted program and literacy program

Mr. Binkley

- Modification to tech assistants contracts changing days from 189 to 215
- Create a classroom Innovation Specialist position
- Additional tech assistant position
- Create an eSports Arena
- Purchase a new AV van/bus
- Purchase vehicle for transporting IT equipment
- VMware Servers and a new SAN

Mr. Foust

- Social media coordinator
- Alumni coordinator

Mr. Anagnostou

- Digitization of records - out sourced

Dr. Ryba

- Add an Innovation Specialist position
- Administrative support
- Extracurriculars for elementary students
- Bring back some programs that were eliminated
- Consultant support – strategic planning process (someone not attached to the District)
- Enrollment study plus

6. Next Steps

A lot of information was shared leaving a lot to process. Dr. Ryba asked the Board to take a little time to reflect and process it all. He asked them to focus on the desired outcomes and on the wish list. Discussion was had on when to meet again to continue the discussion and to talk about the prioritizations. It was decided to hold a special meeting on January 14, 2021.

On behalf of the Board, Mr. Micko thanked the directors for all they do and wished everyone a very Merry Christmas.

ADJOURNMENT

20-12-23 Moved by Mr. Roberts to adjourn the Strongsville Board of Education Special Meeting, seconded by Mrs. Housum and approved on a roll call vote as follows:

Mr. Roberts, yes; Mrs. Housum, yes; Mrs. Bissell, yes;
Mrs. Buckner-Sallee, yes; Mr. Micko, yes.
Motion carried 5-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Richard O. Micko, President

George K. Anagnostou, Treasurer