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SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

The Scranton School Board of Directors held a Special Meeting on Monday, February 8, 2021 via Zoom, immediately following Vendor Relations and Policy Committees meetings, for the specific purpose of Considering the PDE/DOH Guidelines Updated on January 7, 2021.

President Gilmartin called the meeting to order at 9:38PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was held prior to the Committee Meetings.

Roll Call: By the Secretary.

Present: Directors Cruz, Dempsey, Fox, Hume, Malloy, McAndrew, Welby, Yanni and President Gilmartin.

Absent: All Present.

President Gilmartin announced the purpose of the meeting.

At this time President Gilmartin would like consensus from her colleagues whether or not they would like to consider the motion that is on this agenda or perhaps amend the agenda and she will yield to Mr. Conn, (filling in for Solicitor Audi) for the appropriate language given the pending guidelines or requirements that is expected to come from the CDC this week; they need to come to consensus whether they want to consider implementing any of these changes or wait to understand the full picture that may come out as early as Wednesday (February 10th)

Director Hume thinks that since the time is now 9:40pm and they have twenty speakers signed up for public comment, she would recommend they adjourn this meeting now and reschedule it for a stand-alone meeting either this Thursday or next Monday when they will be able to present it to the public. Ms. Hume cannot see any way that tonight they will be finished in time to have all discussions on it, some things may not be relevant and her suggestion is to adjourn and reconvene at another meeting where they can sensibly discuss the options with all of the incorporations of the requirements.

Director Cruz disagreed with having another meeting as some members already have prior commitments so either they make the decision tonight or they table it for the next scheduled meeting either February 22nd or March 1st.

President Gilmartin agreed with Ms. Cruz and also thinks they need to hear public comment since people have been signed on to this meeting and are waiting to share.

Director McAndrew agreed they need to hear everybody.

Director Hume said in that case she thinks they should vote on the motion tonight with the words incorporated that it would be amended if necessary according to the requirements coming because if they don't vote tonight and defer voting until February 22nd or in March they are just pushing time further down and in that case if they are going to go through with this and take a vote she thinks they should take a vote and then if need be revisit it but if we're going to go through with discussions tonight she thinks they should take the vote.

Director McAndrew would like to hear the recommendations from the administration because they are the ones who sit in on the meetings every day.

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President Gilmartin believes they should hear Mrs. McTiernan's recommendations but believes they need consensus whether to go through this entire meeting and entertain this motion whether voting on it or tabling it, whatever the group decides but Director Hume does have information prepared that she can share if they are going to entertain this at this time and frankly she doesn't think there isn't any point in not some of it as they are trying to gather information but they need consensus whether they would like to continue with the meeting as planned or if they want to hear public comment and entertain this motion when they understand the information being shared by the CDC; they've also heard comments coming forward this evening and those can be considered as well.

Director Hume would like to go ahead with the meeting.

Director Yanni asked if they're voting on whether they're going to vote tonight and asked if the administration recommends they vote tonight.

Mrs. McTiernan said she does not know what information is coming out on Wednesday (from the CDC), she has not received any information, and she doesn't know how that will affect the vote tonight. Mrs. McTiernan said she was prepared to roll out a phase-in plan as she has in the past with regards to employees and staff coming back. Mrs. McTiernan would be happy to share that right now but she does not know how that will affect the information that is coming out on Wednesday.

Director McAndrew asked if Mrs. McTiernan would feel more comfortable rolling out the plan and then holding off the vote until they know what comes out from the CDC.

Mrs. McTiernan thinks they need to get the kids back in school but also thinks the board needs to give the authority to get things moving because this isn't a flip of switch; transportation alone is going to take three weeks to implement in order to get bus drivers back but we can't continue to push this off, they need a timeline, they need to get things moving forward.

Director McAndrew said they need to get started no matter what.

Director Dempsey liked Director Hume's idea of the potential to amend so they don't delay a vote given everybody's schedules and that they build in some sort of ability for flexibility given the potential of regulation changes.

Attorney Conn noted caution as it may work, it may not work if in fact what comes out from the CDC this week and if it is mandatory then the motion can be amended but his guess is that it is going to be a mix of some directives and some guidance and you won't be able to automatically import the guidance when they don't know what it is yet but he would leave the position of basically trying to call another special meeting to then decide what components of the guidance to follow.

Director Dempsey asked Mr. Conn if they would be able to grant Mrs. McTiernan with a friendly amendment, the ability to modify the plan based on any guidance that may come forward so it would not require another vote.

Attorney Conn responded yes with the following caveat because we're making this up as we go along so in terms they absolutely could delegate to the Superintendent the authority to make the adjustments as the administration sees fit, if that wound up affecting their obligations under the attestation to Pennsylvania Department of Education, that might ultimately have to come back to the board if the board ratifies it after the fact he is okay with that.

Mrs. McTiernan confirmed that the attestation form does not have to be board approved.

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Mr. Conn agreed as long as there's no conflict with the board adopted Health and Safety Plan.

Director Hume asked Mr. Conn to start drafting something that would accommodate all of that while the board is having their discussion.

Mr. Conn agreed if that is what the board wishes.

Director Welby believes they have to vote on something tonight, she doubts that the new guidelines are going to be more restrictive than they are now, she thinks they're going to be less restrictive and more in getting the kids back to school.

Director Malloy commented about the new CDC Director coming out with new information, hearing the words "minimum requirements" for the safe return to school, and he is interested in hearing what the minimum requirements are but at the same time he doesn't want to stay in the way of what Mrs. McTiernan has to start doing with fellow administrators. Mr. Malloy is unsure what the next steps should be and deferred to Attorney Conn to guide them as to the proper approach.

Mr. Conn said the first decision is whether they want to postpone until they get the guidance or direction from the CDC and then option two, to go ahead and hear the motion with the understanding it would have to be amended to adjust to what comes out this week (from the CDC). Mr. Conn added that legally they could do either one; whether to tackle it tonight with the addendum attached to the motion or if they want to wait to see what comes out this week from the CDC.

Director Malloy asked what the next step would be to find out what the next step is; do they vote on what Ms. Gilmartin said or wait until Mr. Conn is done writing the addendum. Mr. Malloy is interested in the procedural aspect of this.

Mr. Conn said from a parliamentary prospective they have an agenda to follow and when they get to the motion part of the agenda he would simply invite a board member to make a motion to amend that language or to table the motion.

Director Fox asked if they are making a decision now or waiting until the motion, adding that she doesn't feel comfortable making a decision knowing that in two days they will have more information and she would prefer to hear everybody before making an official decision including hearing what is coming out this Wednesday.

President Gilmartin is unclear where they are going right now.

Director Malloy made a motion to table. Director Cruz seconded.

The motion to table failed with four (4) affirmative and five (5) negative. Directors Dempsey, Hume, McAndrew, Welby and Yanni voted in the negative.

Attorney Conn said he will work on the language now for the amendment.

Director Hume now shared information she has researched regarding the pandemic and school closings, recommendations, pandemic resilience, school safety to open provided they strictly implement the strategies of infection control and the need for the community to still practice safety guidelines.

Director Hume asked Mrs. McTiernan, since some parents are unwilling to return their students to school even in hybrid, is there an option to stay virtual.

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Mrs. McTiernan said all parents will have the option to have their child remain in a virtual environment.

Director Hume said there are concerns of reopening the schools and are they going to become hotspots for Covid transmission.

Mrs. McTiernan believes that is a medical questions and Dr. Patrick Conaboy and the Chief School Nurse, Melissa Dailey are available to answer the medical questions.

Dr. Conaboy said there's not a straight forward answer to that question but if proper infection control processes are followed in the schools there is every reason to believe that they can open a school without it becoming a hotspot. Dr. Conaboy referred to studies across the country that schools have been areas where the disease was communicated but one thing that none of those studies are very good at is breaking down what type of precautions were taken in the schools and breaking it down to how well they were handled but they have seen some local schools that are open, even in Lackawanna County and they have not become hotspots so it can be done, it depends how well you do it.

Director Hume asked how Dr. Conaboy feels about the research that teachers are at no greater risk of contracting Covid in their workplace than many other essential workers, referred to research in Wisconsin that student transmission within schools is lower in student to staff than student to student.

Dr. Conaboy looked at a number of studies and most of them are small studies, they are not obviously placebo controlled and not really well controlled studies or well done and the truth is they took most of the students out of schools and so they don't have a large population that they can look at to really do a good study on. Dr. Conaboy added that grocery workers etc are at a higher risk than the average person so if you're working in a grocery store or a production line or as a school teacher the risk is higher than the attorney working in town so there is a risk,

Director Hume commented that some research has shown that the Covid cases within schools, the infection has normally come from outside of the school and is brought into the school and with the proper control it can be controlled if you're doing proper infection control procedures.

Dr. Conaboy said that from what he has read that's most universally true that most infections are brought into school and not home from school and again that has to do with proper environmental controls and following the rules in the school that are probably not followed at home.

Director Hume said her next questions have to do with what happens if students and staff show symptoms at school, how do we control student and staff return to school after infection or close contact exposure, who has to quarantine if there is a positive case and all of that is detailed on the website so she referred people to the website for those answers.

Mrs. McTiernan said that is correct.

Director Yanni asked if they could hear from Melissa Dailey, the Chief School Nurse and asked what protocols have been relayed to the nursing staff.

Ms. Dailey responded that infection control is an everyday thing for nursing so hand washing and isolating people who are sick is all standard nursing care, the medical rooms have been prepared and they have isolation areas. Miss Dailey said the one thing that hasn't been addressed which is a concern and is up to administration is temperature taking and screening of symptoms. Miss Dailey

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added that the CDC does not recommend that for schools as they say it's not an effective way to pick up on Covid cases but the thought of her department is that it would go a long way to show parents and teachers that the district is committed and concerned about their health and safety and if the nurses department was responsible for the symptom surveys and temperature checks, the burden would be on them and they're happy to do that but it is an administrative decision. Ms. Dailey said it is something that successful schools in the area have been using for mitigation and it does help with contact tracing. Ms. Dailey said it is something to consider and teachers and parents have been asking about it and they do have the equipment that they received through grants.

Director Dempsey asked Ms. Dailey, using Prescott as an example, would a single nurse be responsible for temperature checks for 150 students.

Ms. Dailey said there are different ways they can do it and that would all depend on participation, they do have thermometers that are mounted in the entry way for teachers going into schools, they record their temperature when they sign in to school so they could do some that way or do it as they're coming off the bus or they could ask teachers if they would be willing to do it in their classrooms.

Director Yanni asked Dr. Conaboy's recommendation on temperature checks.

Dr. Conaboy responded that at the hospital they are still required by the CDC to do temperature checks on everybody who comes in to the building. Dr. Conaboy's opinion is that it is not the most effective way to find this disease in asymptomatic people and ineffective especially in the cold weather however he does agree that if it is a requirement for some why not for others and it's a mindset, it may have a psychological effect so everyone remembers that we are in a pandemic.

Director Hume commented that the CDC has said that vaccines are not a prerequisite for the safe re-opening of schools and asked Dr. Conaboy if he feels testing would help in re-opening.

Dr. Conaboy replied they do not do surveillance testing of employees at the hospital because having a negative test at 6AM doesn't mean it would be negative at 6PM so surveillance testing doesn't really have a place in prevention. Dr. Conaboy said having rapid testing for someone who has symptoms is important but he doesn't think surveillance testing has been shown to be helpful.

Director Hume asked Mrs. McTiernan about infection control and disinfecting procedures within the schools. Mrs. McTiernan deferred to Mr. Paul Dougherty.

Mr. Dougherty said there are very detailed plans in the Health & Safety Plan, very specific to each area, the ventilation systems, the HVAC units, filter maintenance is performed based on manufacturer's recommendations, the learning spaces are deep cleaned and disinfected at the end of each school day, the medical rooms have a quarantine space ready for symptomatic people, cafeterias are cleaned and disinfected between all lunch periods and at the end of the day, the garbage can liners are changed between all lunch periods, daily cleaning and disinfecting in restrooms throughout the day, the hallways are cleaned and disinfected at the end of every school day and all floors are scrubbed clean with an antimicrobial wax. There is always periodic daily cleaning of high touch areas such as door knobs, handles, push bars, light switches, sink faucets, handrails, stairwells, pencil sharpeners, buttons; there are a lot of protocols that are in place and they're ready to implement.

Director Hume asked if they have made sure that windows can be opened.

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Mr. Dougherty said that windows are in pretty good shape, there were some emails they received that some windows weren't working and they went in to verify and found that was not always the case. Mr. Dougherty added that anything that has been reported has been addressed.

Director Hume inquired about the new Dude system; if anyone has a window that isn't opening if it was reported in the Dude system.

Mr. Dougherty said many of the classrooms have 6-8 windows and we all know that outside air is the best ventilation so they would encourage people to open a window, even slightly in winter.

Director McAndrew asked if Mr. Dougherty feels confident that on March 16th the buildings are ready to go with proper cleaning every night.

Mr. Dougherty he does, and the maintenance staff has been very good throughout all of this and having some close calls with returning to school so they moved staff back and forth in the buildings multiple times and each time the maintenance staff had buildings ready to go. Mr. Dougherty commented that having hired D'Huy to be our Owners Representative, when they came in and walked through all of our facilities the first thing they said and were very impressed with how clean the buildings are which was great to hear and he is confident the buildings will be ready.

Director McAndrew thanked Ms. Dailey and Dr. Conaboy for joining the meeting tonight and asked if they both feel confident that our Health & Safety Plan is ready and will be able to be followed and we should be returning to school.

Ms. Dailey thinks that everybody wants to go back to school, the last recommendation from CDC and the Department of Health, we meet all of their mitigation, we are ready for hand washing, new hand washing stations on walls, we've educated our staff, vaccinations were never a recommendation but we're glad we were able to get those fragile people vaccinated and hopefully we'll be able to get more vaccines before school opens but she thinks we have isolation areas and all of the mitigation we were supposed to do she feels we're prepared in that way.

Director Cruz asked Mr. Dougherty if he could give a brief summary since he attended yesterday's vaccine clinic.

Mr. Dougherty said it was very positive and Ms. Dailey attended also, he thought it was a very good experience, it was about two hours long, it was extraordinarily well organized thinks everyone that was vaccinated was thankful to be there, very positive atmosphere and he was able to greet and talk to everyone that came in, it was a very positive event.

Director Cruz asked how many people were vaccinated. Mr. Dougherty replied 150 Scranton School District employees.

Director Cruz asked if in two weeks they will be getting their 2nd vaccine. Mr. Dougherty said it would be four weeks and also at Scranton High School.

Director Cruz asked if the 150 who signed up and were qualified under phase 1A. Mr. Dougherty said correct.

Director Cruz asked Mr. Gentilezza, according to the questionnaire he sent out, how many are left to be vaccinated.

Mr. Gentilezza said there were roughly 800 that signed up for the original questionnaire but with them being qualified under the new guidelines of 1A a lot of them already received their first shot

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prior to the clinic yesterday at Scranton High, he does not have the number of people who got their first shot, he would have to do another survey, hopefully they will get another wave of 150 but we still have a lot to go through yet.

Dr. Conaboy added that it is reasonable to believe that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine will be approved and will be distributed in hundreds and millions of doses very quickly to a single dose vaccine and that is probably going to be preferentially aimed towards those folks who don't meet the 1A criteria and so there is reason to be optimistic that the vast majority of the people who want to be vaccinated will have an opportunity either by the end of this month or the first week of March when would be from what he hears that should be coming down the road.

Director Malloy asked Dr. Conaboy to repeat what he said; he wants to make sure he heard it correctly about his estimation about the vaccines.

Dr. Conaboy said it is his belief, Johnson & Johnson has already applied for emergency authorization, that process for the last two vaccines has taken less than ten days, the government pre-purchased and has warehoused more of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine than they did of Pfizer or Moderna already, it is reasonable to believe that either by the end of this week or certainly the end of next week those vaccines will start to ship, they are a single injection, there is talk that maybe they're not 94% or 95% effective at preventing the disease at all but it's a slightly different approach but from what they can tell 100% effective preventing hospitalization and death, they are probably going to be aimed very specifically at that 1B category of folks who are theoretically a little bit healthier so he thinks they will be moving into the 1Bs by the last week of February and into the first week of March. Unfortunately the government has not been very good at communicating with people who are doing the vaccines so you may have another instance of getting a call at 6PM and telling you to get your folks there the next day, that's just the way they're being shipped.

Director Fox asked Dr. Conaboy's opinion of the fast spreading variants and the recommendation of doubling up wearing masks and the effectiveness of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine on these other strands of the virus.

Dr. Conaboy replied there are a couple different strands, the main ones people are talking about are the UK variant which is the one that is doubling every five days in the US and is expected to be the major virus in the US by March. There is the Brazilian and South African version, he doesn't think there are any more than two or three cases of the Brazilian documented in the US, there's a little bit more of the South African and those are currently in hotspots. The vaccine so far, Moderna and Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson have been shown to be effective against those, not as effective, so they're saying they're about 20% less effective so you're still talking about 70% or so effective and that compares to a flu shot which is about 35%-40% effective and if you remember they would get approval if they were over 50% so they would all still get approved against those variants. They stopped the testing of AstraZenecas in Africa because that was found to be less than 50% effective and so they stopped using that in the South African trials but the two that we have and the one in process have been shown to be effective just not as good but he's not sure he truly believes 94%, 95% effectiveness for the Moderna and Pfizer, he's never seen any vaccine ever be that effective, he thinks over time this is all going to shake out and we're going to find out they're not perfect but they are effective but the UK variant is more contagious, slightly more vicious when you get it, which is why what we're seeing is when we were quarantining people we pushed it back to 10 days, if you have the disease, and 10 days if you've been exposed, he thinks you're going to see the CDC coming back and changing it back to 14 days for both the disease and the exposure, those things keep changing back and forth.

Director Fox asked if he believes that it will be a recommendation that the students and staff will have to double up on masks.

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Dr. Conaboy responded that discussion was somewhat misinterpreted and it really depends upon the type of masks that you are wearing, what the point of that discussion was is if you're wearing one of these fashion masks, that are generally two layers of material or loosely woven material you should probably wear a surgical type mask beneath that and then your fashion mask over it because the fashion mask has not been shown to be very effective and they have not been shown to make a good seal so the idea of a surgical mask underneath one of the woven masks is probably a good idea because you get a better seal. If you happen to be somebody wearing an N95 or that type of mask you'll see people put surgical masks over that, that's actually not a good idea, it decreases the effectiveness of it but they do that mainly to try to keep it from getting soiled so an N95, no, but a cloth mask probably does well by having a surgical mask underneath it.

Director Hume said there is concern about PPE for the staff and some people have asked whether it will be supplied and what will we do if children come in without masks.

Mr. Dougherty said we have thousands and thousands of masks, we issued thousands of masks to each school in anticipation of a return to school, they've had them for quite a while, we have multiple cloth masks in place to issue to students and staff, we have a sizable supply of disposable masks to be utilized as needed, face shields have been issued for staff who are interested in wearing face shields, hand sanitizing stations are installed throughout the facilities, electrostatic sprayers are used throughout sporting events, and he thinks we're in a pretty solid place with the PPE for staff and students.

Director Hume asked about the lack of wi-fi and band width capacity within the school buildings.

Mr. Dougherty responded we have done some upgrades to some wireless access points, we're at a pretty strong place and at this point we have extremely fast internet speed within our district. He understands the band width concern and at this point we need to get in and need to give it a shot because we think we're in a pretty strong place.

Director Hume asked about bus transportation precautions and that they had conversation already that we would have between 32-35 students on a bus, front seats empty and everybody has to be masked and sitting in cohorts and family members together.

Mrs. McTiernan said that is correct, buses will be at 50% capacity.

Director Hume understands we've been providing transportation for charter schools and some other schools in the district and she doesn't think there's been any problem with them or with children wearing masks on the buses and windows cracked open.

Mrs. McTiernan said correct, we'll be treating that mask wearing similar to how we treat the dress code.

Director Hume said there is concern of staff or substitute shortages and asked about plans for that.

Mrs. McTiernan thinks that is part of their recommendation to the board that we phase in, we are definitely going to have challenges and obstacles, every district has had their obstacles and challenges that they've had to face, we will have them also but we won't know what those obstacles are until we get kids and staff back in the buildings and that's why we're recommending a phased in approach to be able to identify those areas such as staffing and other things we have to solve.

Director Hume had some suggestions to the administration to consider and perhaps they can come back to the board at another meeting. Director Hume said people have asked if there could be a

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parent advisory committee established where parents could have input, if the district would investigate full synchronous learning now for intermediate and high schools now that chromebooks have arrived and now that every student has the opportunity to have a district device, is there any intention for the district to go full synchronous learning for intermediate and high schools.

Mrs. McTiernan responded that those discussion are taking place, chromebooks are being delivered to each student, our phase in approach for Pre-K to 5th grade, it does not consider 6-12 at this time, those discussions are taking place as we move forward for the possibility of 6-12 if we remain in substantial status to stay virtual, then we would be looking at moving into synchronous education.

Director Hume said several people asked would 2021-2022 school year be virtual, hybrid or full in person.

Mrs. McTiernan cannot answer that, she cannot say what the board vote is going to tell her to do in two weeks yet so let's get our kids back to school right now, safely and successfully and then hopefully 2021/2022 is traditional and everyone is back five days a week but she is just trying to get kids back to school for this year.

Director McAndrew thinks a lot can happen in the next few weeks but they need to at least try, they need to get the ball rolling and get the buildings ready; a lot can happen before March 16th.

President Gilmartin also acknowledged the passing of Scranton High School sophomore Juan Rivera and extended condolences to Juan's family.

Director Yanni asked what the procedure will be, are they voting on the plan or does Mrs. McTiernan have a presentation.

Mrs. McTiernan said the motion is pretty clear, adding that the plan is to bring staff back on March 1st and phase in students on March 15th.

Mrs. McTiernan would proceed however the board chooses.

Director Yanni was looking to make sure it is Administration's recommendation to the board that they implement the plan based on the new dates.

Mrs. McTiernan said that is correct, she is waiting for direction from the board and the dates are outlined in the plan that the board received in their packets on Friday and repeated that Pre-K-12 staff will return to their buildings on March 1st, with Pre-K through 5th grade students start phasing in on March 15th.

Public Comment:

Anna Hill, 5th grader at Prescott, with siblings at Northeast and Scranton High School, expressed that virtual learning is not helping, it is hurting students mentally, socially and academically and they are not getting the education they need and deserve. Anna added that it is unacceptable that Scranton is one of the only schools in Lackawanna County that does not have a firm plan in place to return to school. Anna also suggested having public comment at the very beginning of the meeting.

Rosemary Boland, SFT President, spoke of her awareness of CDC guidelines and the district's plans but what the teachers don't know is what their jobs are going to be when they go back in the buildings. Ms. Boland also spoke of chromebooks and powercords and asked if there are enough outlets in classrooms for all of the chromebooks and if the system can handle all of it since the system shuts down when report cards come out. Ms. Boland spoke of the new British virus cases and

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that the virus is mutating and is in the United States.

Ms. Boland said teachers want to get back into safe schools and she doesn't believe the schools are safe right now and she is certain there will be transmission because we cannot control the student factors because the district's students are not going home to "Donna Reed" homes. Ms. Boland said students and families have been to Philadelphia and New York, some have left the United States and returned and there is no way of knowing who is positive of Covid because we don't have the data of who in the district has the virus and what happens if a teacher goes into the classrooms and infect the children; people think children cannot get the virus but a child just passed away today, it is all over the news. Ms. Boland asked to give teachers enough time to take care of their health.

Lisa Rescigno, teacher at Whittier Annex, expressed concern about returning to classrooms at Whittier Annex, asked about plans regarding contact tracing, proper ventilation, proper cleaning and compliance, sanitizing stations, lack of HVAC system at the annex, inoperable windows, shared bathrooms with students and staff, daily screenings and mask wearing. Ms. Rescigno asked what will they do when they don't have substitutes and noted that the annex does not have a full time nurse at all times. Ms. Rescigno also spoke of the poverty level in Scranton, proper mask wearing, differences in rural and suburban schools, public reporting of covid cases, and detailed scheduling of each day and definitive plans for special needs students. Ms. Rescigno is not comfortable returning to her building without specific plans.

Vivian Williams, parent, spoke of her support of the SFT and administrators, her son's need of assistance, the need for the union and administration to work together, her support and allegiance will always be in the best interest of her children and classmates, the district community becoming more fractured each day and the lack of communication and ineffective communication.

Brandi Solomon, parent, spoke of comments made by other speakers regarding poverty levels and black and brown children. Ms. Solomon said her children are black and brown but that doesn't mean they are not clean and bad people; she is a good mom. Ms. Solomon promised her children they would have an amazing education and she feels as if she has failed them because she allowed herself to rely on people and all everybody wants is what is best for their children but parents are scared. Ms. Solomon added that everyone needs to learn to live with this pandemic as a community and stop blaming each other. Ms. Solomon is asking for help as parents and children are scared but really need their schooling.

Lynn King, parent, taxpayer, advocate for students and teacher at Whittier implored the board to consider returning to school. Mrs. King spoke of the increase in mental health issues with children in grades 7-12, the long term negative impact from the loss of learning, the lack of chromebooks and siblings having to share chromebooks, truancy is at an all time high, enrollment has dropped because families have fled to cyber, charter, private and parochial schools that have been open and operating since the fall and thousands of dollars has been wasted in our district. Mrs. King also noted that Scranton is one of the only schools in the county still on remote learning when all others are open in some form of hybrid learning.

Patricia Carr, thanked Mr. Gentilezza for his email for the phase 1A category of vaccinations and would like to know how long it will take for the remaining employees to be vaccinated and asked to please wait for all to be vaccinated before returning to school. Ms. Carr asked if we know the expected number of students who will return, will substitutes be available, will teachers be expected to teach in person or virtual and if there are enough outlets in classrooms to charge the chromebooks. Ms. Carr also asked if there is a plan for each school or a one size fits all plan and where can the teachers read the plans.

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Ms. Carr asked to remember the paraprofessionals and PCAs who are still traveling to homes and why were they expected to travel in two feet of snow last week.

Margie Holmes, taxpayer and 3rd grade teacher at Bancroft, urged the board to wait to return to school until all buildings have been checked, teachers have been vaccinated, and until the board starts to meet in person. Mrs. Holmes asked what the specific plan is for returning to school, has all ventilation systems in each building been checked, is there enough cleaning supplies, PPE and technology equipment to support the teachers needs. Mrs. Holmes asked if the district's bandwidth is strong enough to support every teacher live streaming at the same time and to please take into consideration the new variants and the health and well being of staff and students.

Mrs. Holmes spoke of the closing of Bancroft and urged to board to vote no to closing Bancroft.

Maria Hurst, teacher at Scranton High, spoke of the importance of children in school, understands the stress on parents, spoke of the cases of paraprofessionals entering homes, sick days that people may or may not have, the lack of staff and is not in favor of returning to school at this time. Jill Cadden, teacher at Bancroft, spoke of the issue of closing Bancroft adding that the non English speaking families were not given the opportunity to participate in the original public hearing and asked that translation be provided to our non English speaking families and schedule public hearings. Mrs. Cadden urged the board to not close Bancroft as the students need consistency upon returning to school.

Suzanne Furey, teacher at Armstrong, said they have been teaching virtual due to public health reasons and they are still waiting for a vaccine. Ms. Furey spoke of improper ventilation and roof problems at Armstrong. Ms. Furey is concerned about ventilation issues and her windows do not have screens. Ms. Furey said the faucets have been turned off and is looking for substantive communication about the reopening plan.

Jennifer Telesco, teacher and parent, said everyone shares the same concerns and want children to return to school safely and with a concise detailed plan to keep them healthy. Ms. Telesco understands the struggles of virtual learning and it is easy to compare Scranton to other districts and also understands Scranton's limitations. Ms. Telesco spoke of the need of proper ventilation and cleaning procedures and asked how the use of face masks and social distancing will be enforced and would like a very clear written policy and how it will be enforced.

Jerry Baldauff, Secretary Treasurer SFT, spoke of equity between groups 1A and 1B receiving vaccines and if staff and students return then the board should also return to in person meetings. Mr. Baldauff asked for a motion to amend the vote to return to school to include in person board meetings.

Roseann Polishan, parent and advocate, knows everyone is working hard and diligently in the Scranton School District but has concerns about education, mental health, low morale, decreased motivation and sparse engagement as this is all areas of concerns for students. Ms. Polishan spoke of the lack of meaningful support for special education and students are falling through the cracks as there is only so much a teacher or therapist can do behind a screen. Ms. Polishan said it is going to take a long time to get students back on a schedule when they are currently doing their school work whenever they feel like doing it; the longer we're out of school the more difficult it will be. Ms. Polishan said even the most dedicated students are fatigued with this model and missing out on vital social learning which is essential for every age group.

Ms. Polishan said they need to be working on plans for next year and a full return to school and suggested working to expand cyber school to encompass the virtual learners and bring back the students who want to be in person.

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Mike Frounfelker, parent, reiterated the urgency to get students back in the schools, not only the elementary but secondary as well and it is imperative to give parents the option.

Written Comment was received by Matt Loftus and Angie Krieger.

President Gilmartin now asked Dr. Sharon Baddick about the PCAs going into homes during the recent snow storm and asked Dr. Baddick to clarify.

Dr. Baddick said that statement was inaccurate and the paraprofessionals and PCAs were notified on Sunday the 31st at approximately 12:30 in the afternoon that they did not have to go in person on Monday or Tuesday and her email encouraged them to stay home and work virtually. Dr. Baddick appreciated the opportunity to clarify as the statement that was made was incorrect.

President Gilmartin now asked Dr. Candis Finan about the Governor's proposed budget and asked Dr. Finan to explain how that is not a get out of recovery free card.

Dr. Finan responded that the Governor proposes a budget but it takes the legislature to vote on that and they have until June 30th to pass a budget for schools and sometimes there are power struggles with Democrats and Republicans. Dr. Finan added that while something is proposed and certainly \$39 million would be extremely important and would be wonderful for Scranton to receive, we will have to wait and see if that budget gets adopted. Dr. Finan thinks that since it is tied to an increase in wage taxes, will be something to discuss and will that get Scranton out of recovery, it will take time even if Scranton does receive the \$39 million. The deficit that has been dug in Scranton is very deep and is around \$300 million. This financial recovery plan will get Scranton into financial sustainability; that is the goal she has to help Scranton do. The \$39 million would come in very quickly and maybe it won't take 5 years, maybe it will take 4 years if we can get that kind of regular income from the State that will help us get to sustainability faster but trust her when she says, and please everyone understand that \$17.9 million, that \$3 million RCAP funding, the CARES funding, the ESSR funding, they're all one time funds that are tied to specific categories that we can spend it on. All that will help us in this covid pandemic but we cannot expect to get those funds every year. Certainly if the \$39 million were to be a reoccurring budget every year, that would help tremendously but it doesn't get Scranton out of recovery immediately because we have too many deficits that we have to pay and for one is the salaries, the reason why we're working very hard to find avenues for income so we can fund the SFT salaries and the Act 93 salaries. It's because we don't have that extra money so this is a very long process as she mentioned a year and a half ago, it took the district a long time of over spending to get where it is and the whole purpose of the financial recovery plan is expenditure control and to get everything back in control so the district can sustain itself over time and have money to replace those HVAC units and all of the things. The reason why they're hearing some of what they just heard is the district hasn't had the money to put into the buildings and it would be wonderful and we should be hopeful that it happens but it doesn't help improve our condition overnight.

Director Fox announced that there will be Fair Funding Community Workshop on Tuesday, February 17th at 7:00pm with more details forthcoming.

President Gilmartin asked Dr. Finan about the Bancroft PTA asking for language access regarding Bancroft and if it is something they are looking into.

Dr. Finan said they are waiting to hear from Attorney Audi to provide more information on that.

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At this time President Gilmartin entertained a motion that Attorney Conn is going to help us amend; a motion to consider the PDE/DOH guidelines updated on January 7, 2021 and asked for a second and Mr. Conn will help us make a friendly amendment.

Attorney Conn assumes the motion is to implement the hybrid educational model?

President Gilmartin agreed it is to implement.

Attorney Conn invited a board member to make a motion.

Director Malloy asked if this is a motion to allow the current motion they're considering to be amended if necessary after the CDC requirements come out.

Attorney Conn said we first need the motion on the table and then we'll amend it.

Director Hume made a motion, seconded by Director Malloy.

Attorney Conn, a motion is needed to amend to add the following to the end of the existing motion; and to authorize District Administration to amend the hybrid educational model to conform to any mandatory directives from state or federal agencies and to adopt any guidelines issued by those agencies which District Administration determines are appropriate for Scranton School District.

Director Dempsey made the motion, Director Yanni will second if she could just have the first motion read in its entirety and then the second part; she needs to have it clearly stated.

Director Welby read the following motion:

Motion to implement a hybrid educational model for PreK-5 students per the PDE/DOH guidelines of January 7, 2021 through a phased in return of staff to begin March 1, 2021 and students to begin March 15, 2021 according to District Administration's proposed timeline.

Attorney Conn repeated the addition of: to authorize District Administration to amend the hybrid educational model phased in plan to conform to any mandatory directives from state or federal agencies and to adopt any guidelines issued by those agencies which District Administration determines are appropriate for Scranton School District.

Director Yanni previously seconded.

ON THE QUESTION for the amendment. No question.

The friendly amendment passed unanimously on roll call.

ON THE QUESTION OF AMENDED MOTION:

Director Dempsey, asked Mrs. McTiernan, in full transparency, her family is battling COVID, her husband is quarantine until February 27th, if they were in person, is there a plan in place to cover his classes for the potential of twenty plus days, what would happen to his classes, would he be permitted to work from home and teach his students as he has been doing or would the district have to find a sub to cover his classroom for the quarantine period.

Mrs. McTiernan is not comfortable talking about a personnel matter in public as it is not appropriate but individual cases will arise and internally they will have to deal with them through the Human Resources office, based on case by case, and they will deal with them accordingly.

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Director Dempsey asked for those students who choose hybrid, if they must quarantine, would they be able to switch to a virtual model while they must be quarantined or would they be excused from school.

Mrs. McTiernan said there is a plan in place that was shared in the board packet, parents have to decide at some point but if a student had to quarantine we would put them on all virtual and they would be able to go back to hybrid after quarantine.

Director Yanni asked if the issues at Armstrong and the Whittier Annex could be addressed at this time.

Mrs. McTiernan apologized that she doesn't have all of the questions raised this evening in front of her and asked Mr. Dougherty to address but there may be some things they have to look into and get back to them but will try to address to the best of their ability.

Director Yanni said there are some staff that are uncomfortable returning to Armstrong, that it is not safe, there's no water and they can't even wash their hands.

Mr. Dougherty responded that the sinks in the classrooms are turned off but there is water in the building. The sinks in restrooms and all consumption points are filtered and obviously turned on but that was specifically regarding sinks in classrooms which are difficult to manage and control and the best way to handle is to have them turned off.

Director Yanni asked about the windows.

Mr. Dougherty replied that he heard there were no screens, he can't speak directly to that but he knows that the windows do open. The windows at the annex, they were unaware of any broken windows there, but the no water issue is there was no water because of another church building next to the annex had a water main break today and that is why there was no water in that building today.

Director Yanni said these are issues they feel they can handle on a case by case basis and administration is comfortable saying that they would evaluate them and handle them as they come up.

Mrs. McTiernan agreed adding that they're not really sure of all of the obstacles or challenges they will have but they will definitely handle them as they arise but they won't know what they are until they try.

Director Yanni said she appreciates all of her colleagues on this board because she knows everyone is trying to do the best they can and make the best decisions for the students and administrators, we're all trying and we need to get that across to the public, they discussed having in person meetings, they're all upset they have to make this decision, it's a tough one, but at the end of the day we're all here because they want to do the right thing and her decision will be based on the data she received tonight.

Director Hume spoke about the issues at Whittier, there was an email received and within an hour there was a detailed response back from Mr. Wolff what the situation was and if that's the speed of the attention to issues they should have enormous confidence in the administration's ability to address these issues quickly.

Director McAndrew said he would like the legal team and the technology team to come up with a plan to have in person meetings and he also thinks if we are telling teachers they have to return

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then everyone should be working in the administration building. Mr. McAndrew would like to do some walk-throughs to see some of these buildings from now until March 1st and as a board member he wants to be in the building March 1st, he will take time out of his day to greet the teachers as they come in and on the 16th if the students come in.

Director Malloy said he has received a lot of emails, he's read all of them, even ones he didn't know were there until he looked at the Spam folder, there seems there are two fairly distinct groups, there are the parents who want the kids to go back right away and there are the teachers who don't feel safe. Each group have valid points but there is really one common denominator between the two fairly distinct groups and that each of them is 100% sure they're right on this issue. For his part, he is not 100% sure he is right, he's a lawyer, not a scientist, and he's a school board director, not an administrator or superintendent, so he feels compelled to listen to the people who follow the science and the data as he tries to do, and the people that he just mentioned, the scientists, superintendents, administrators, they're better trained for this than he is, so he tries to follow the science and the data but he also definitely follows the people who follow the science and data better than he does. Director Malloy said he is in favor of having the kids return to school, even though he wanted to table it because he wanted to hear about the new regulations. The reason he is in favor is because the federal officials, the state officials and the local officials all say that we can safely do it. He has a child in the district, his child will be going back to in person learning as soon as possible, and he is also in favor of returning to in person school board meetings.

Director Fox said she received an email from a resident and wanted to share the following: the only path forward to align teachers, students, the SFT, the Board and parents is to be fully transparent, discuss things proactively and approach the challenges as problem solvers not as liability issuers, they have adapted to masks, temperature checks and longer lines and we can adapt to rules in school, we can figure it out, it won't be perfect but we will all adapt.

Director Fox agreed things won't be perfect, we have to adapt, the recommendations are to mitigate risks, not to completely eliminate so we cannot guarantee 100% satisfaction with everything but all we can do is our best and be transparent as possible and as proactive as possible.

Director Fox asked Mrs. McTiernan how the plan works pertaining to special education and the higher grades.

Mrs. McTiernan said that right now it's PreK-5, the 6-12 and the subgroups, 6-12 would remain in virtual, after we begin our phase in plan we'll be able to see very quickly the obstacles and challenges that we have and asked that they all remember that the chart they are following, PDE/DOH, we are still in substantial so while its substantial the recommendation is a blended or hybrid approach at the elementary level and once we move into the moderate level we are able to establish the challenges that we have, such as staffing and other things that may arise, then we will move to moderate and start to phase in the 6-12 students, all students 6-12, that's kind of the plan and she hopes she answered Ms. Fox's question.

Director Fox asked if special education students will be with the full roll out.

Mrs. McTiernan said that it depends on if we remain in substantial then we would look to get our subgroups back next that are 6-12 then once we move into the moderate stage or better, then we would move to a PreK-12 hybrid for all.

Director Dempsey said the safety of herself and her children is her responsibility and believes the children need to get back in school, she believes they can do it safely adding that she has family in other districts much larger than Scranton with very similar demographics and they returned on January 25th so this can be done.

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President Gilmartin expressed her reservations of returning, she remains torn because she does believe it is right for students to be back in the classroom, she has faith in the administration, building principals, teachers and maintenance staff that they will conduct themselves appropriately, they will follow the protocols, our students will work hard to do the same yet she hesitates and goes back and forth but like herself, many others deal with the public and know how overwhelming that can be. Director Cruz agreed.

A discussion began about in person meetings and it was agreed that they would assess the logistics of that and have a discussion on that.

Director McAndrew remarked about the administration building working.

President Gilmartin believes people have been working out of the administration building. Mrs. McTiernan said that is correct, there may be some days someone may work remotely but there are people working in the administration building every day but we've been trying to keep the numbers down and if individuals can work remotely we have encouraged them to do that if they can but many of the central level administrators are there every day including herself.

The motion now passed with (7) seven affirmative and (2) negative. Directors Cruz and Gilmartin voted in the negative.

President Gilmartin has the utmost faith in administrators and staff that this plan will be carried out and make sure the facilities are the safest environments possible.

There being no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Director Cruz, seconded by Director Dempsey and the meeting adjourned at 12:23AM.

By: _____