

**Cheltenham School District
Virtual Special Board Meeting of the Board of School Directors
January 4, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER

In accordance with Sections 402 and 404 of the Pennsylvania School Code, the Board of School Directors of Cheltenham School District met virtually on Monday, January 4, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom to hold a special board meeting. The meeting was called to order by President, Mr. Fishbein. Attendance was as follows:

CHELTENHAM SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Charles Burdell-Williams, Mr. David L. Cohen, Mr. William England, Mr. Joel Fishbein, Ms. Julie Haywood, Ms. Pamela Henry, Ms. Jennifer Lowman, Mr. Christopher Pender, Sr., Mr. Daniel Schultz

CHELTENHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Chris Barone, Director of Information Technology; Ms. Charlene Collins, Director of Secondary Education; Mr. Kevin Kaufman, Director of Communications; Dr. Beverly Gallagher, Director of Special Education; Dr. Cheryl Horsey, Director of Student Services; Ms. Cara Michaels, Business Manager; Mr. David Teasdale, Director of Facilities and Maintenance; Dr. Tamara Thomas Smith, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Adrienne Tolbert-Jackson, Director of Human Services; and Dr. Wagner Marseille, Superintendent.

SOLICITOR

Mr. Kenneth Roos, Esq.

BOARD SECRETARY

Ms. Debra Harding

ATTENDEES

There were 134 attendees who joined online for the virtual meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Cheltenham School Board member, Mr. Burdell-Williams.

ATHLETICS PRESENTATION

Mr. Blackwell, Athletic Director, presented PowerPoint slides which provided updates on the Cheltenham School District's Winter Sports program. At the 11/23/2020 School Board meeting, the School Board agreed with Administration's recommendation to permit practices for Winter Sports to proceed in accordance with the School District's updated health and safety plan. The School Board also agreed with proceeding with Winter sports competitions in January except for basketball, which the Board requested further evaluation after two weeks of basketball practice. The updates included information about the Winter sports practice experience in Cheltenham School District and comparative information from other schools in the Suburban One League planning to go forward with Winter Sports competition.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ATHLETICS PRESENTATION AND AGENDA ITEMS

There were six (6) comments from the public.

Matt Moore, of Glenside: Just curious if the District is safe from liability in the event student(s), faculty and staff test positive for the coronavirus and, further, to what extent is the legal exposure to such an event?

Novice, of Glenside: Will indoor track practices go back to having their indoor component or will everything remain outside only?

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Vladimir, of Elkins Park: With the issue of transportation to and from athletic competitions, I believe the risks are too high for group transport, such as on busses. In addition, allowing students and or their parents to drive separate from the group also has repercussions. The risks of independent travel, such as car accidents, traffic, and general safety issues should not be one out school district should have to bear. My suggestion would be to postpone sports and extracurricular activities until next year or at a more safe time.

Tanesha Thomas-McClain, of Elkins Park: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the consideration of competitive play for the basketball team. These are uncharted waters and I understand the decision is not easy.

This decision HIGHLY affects senior and junior athletes who have had plans to play on a college level for 10 plus years. With the previous winter season cut short, AAU season cancelled and recruiting opportunities severely limited these kids have been impacted in a way that may not have impacted kids who participate in other activities.

Some other activity/club members have had opportunities, albeit altered, to find ways to connect and maintain their crafts and interests. For those whom this would be their last (or next to last) high school season and opportunity for college coaches to see them play (even if by streaming or video) this decision affects the trajectory of their college careers. The psychological and financial toll on these students would be immeasurable.

In addition, for the younger student- athletes it is fundamental to have this time to learn and hone their skills with the benefit of the experience and help of the older kids. If all COVID precautions are observed and taken seriously, is participating safely in a sport more dangerous than going to the mall, ordering from a restaurant or attending school with hundreds of students?

I do not mean to discount the severity of this pandemic at all but this is something in which we all have to learn how to navigate safely. My family did Zoom calls for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Our large group did not congregate for the first time in 24 years. I am confident that all of the families of the basketball team have taken these precautions seriously as stressed by the coaches and administration.

We have not taken this lightly but just as most of us have moved about society as safely as we can, we are asking for the opportunity to do that with our basketball team so that they can recover in some way from the nine months that have already been lost.

**ACTION TAKEN ON
BASKETBALL**

Mr. Fishbein asked for a motion on allowing basketball to proceed with competition. Mr. England then asked for clarification of the motion. Dr. Marseille offered clarification that the motion speaks to competition of Boys and Girls basketball as it relates to the Cheltenham School District Health and Safety Plan.

Mr. Fishbein thanked Dr. Marseille for the clarification and Mr. England stated his satisfaction with the clarification.

The motion was repeated by Ms. Henry and seconded by Mr. Pender. A vote was called and the motion was passed 8-1.

Aye: Ms. Haywood, Mr. Burdell-Williams, Mr. Pender, Mr. Cohen, Ms. Henry, Ms. Schultz, Ms. Lowman, Mr. Fishbein

Nay: Mr. England

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There were three (3) comments on non-agenda items.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON
NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Aileen Dreibelbis, of Wyncote: Could the board please confirm that the return to school is contingent upon the county being within the recommended transmission rate and case levels set by the county commissioners? When will a confirmation of the 2.1.21 start? What happens if the county goes back above those thresholds? Thank you!

Mia Blitstein, of Elkins Park: Thank you for all of your deliberations around this difficult situation. If a student is registered hybrid and needs to be remote for a period of time (due to exposure or other health related reason), will they still be permitted to return to hybrid/in person when they are able to?

Debbie Blackstock, of Wyncote: and staff member at Wyncote Elementary: We are in the Elementary School - our 4th grade classes at this point have approximately 12 - 14 students coming back - with the size of our classrooms how can they possibly social distance the 6 feet?

The Meeting adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Secretary

President