Work Session Meeting
November 30, 2020

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:05 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the November 30, 2020, Caesar Rodney School District Work Session Meeting to order.

Roll Call

Members present in addition to President Marasco were Vice President, Ms. Jessica Marelli, Board Members Mr. Dave Failing, Dr. Joyce Denman, and Executive Secretary Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald. Mr. P. Scott Wilson was not present.

Dr. Fitzgerald asked to add a Delaware Public Health dashboard data with a possible action item to the November 30, 2020 agenda.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Marelli made a motion to adopt the November 30, 2020 agenda with the added item previously mentioned. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, and Denman).

Update on School Re-Opening

Delaware Public Health (DPH) data dashboard announcement was shared by Dr. Fitzgerald. The current status for Kent County is now in the red status. This includes the closing of school districts in Kent County. He recommended we move to all remote learning until Dec. 7th and we will revisit the data again at that time. 12 mo. staff would report as usual and 10 mo. staff will have the option to work remotely or go into their buildings. School extracurricular activities would be reviewed individually by building principals.

President Marasco stated he would like to stay hybrid, but he understands the safety concerns. It is a difficult decision to make. Mr. Failing prefers hybrid but recognizes the science and the outbreak currently in Kent County. He would like to look at the results for next week and offer as many services as we can offer safely. He continued to state we must look at the safety of all involved. Dr. Denman stated our staff is ready to do whatever comes one way or another. They have done a great job with preparations. She stated we are currently trending and must follow the guidelines. She agreed with having the principals decide about activities they can offer. Ms. Marelli stated she is sad we would go back to hybrid. Today was the last cohort coming back. She would like to hear more information from other districts and our numbers of positive cases, etc.

Dr. Fitzgerald stated Capital School District is going 100% remote, Polytech and Smyrna School Districts are remaining hybrid, and he is unaware of what Milford or Lake Forest School Districts are planning at this time. There is no uniform decision in Kent County. His recommendation is simply based on the information received today from DPH. He mentioned state-wide vs county-wide data. There are 43 staff currently quarantined or have tested positive. Some have just left the workplace and some are returning. No data regarding students is available at this time. DPH has not given out this information yet. Ms. Marelli asked what the governor's guidance was regarding closing schools. Dr. Fitzgerald stated he believes the governor prefers schools to stay open. It is currently left up to the districts on which data they want to follow.

Ms. Marelli shared the March DPH chart states that red status equals 100% remote learning. This is what we are basing the decision on. Dr. Fitzgerald stated it is at 8% and we are now above that. He also shared it is a moving target. His recommendation is based on the data today and he understands this is a difficult decision for the Board to make. His recommendation is to either pause hybrid learning for 1 week or move forward with hybrid learning. Ms. Marelli asked about the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines. Dr. Fitzgerald stated schools are the best place for students to be per CDC.

Lt. Col. Wilkerson, Base Liaison, stated the governor is making his announcement at 1:45 p.m. tomorrow and more information should be available.

President Marasco stated if we pause hybrid and review more data, where would we be with instruction. Mrs. Tara Faircloth, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, stated we have a plan where we can maintain the hybrid plan. For a short term closure, we would stay with our remote plan as of today. President Marasco asked about busing. Dr. Tamara Toles-Torain, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, stated we could pivot with a remote schedule.

Mr. Failing stated we are trending up. With this last-minute information, he feels we should pause, but attend school tomorrow to prepare to start with remote learning on Wed. This gives time for more data and they can give recommendations. We should give flexibility to the principals for their activities.

Dr. Denman asked about those remote working from the 42 staff quarantined. Dr. Michael Noel, Assistant Superintendent/ Human Resources Director, stated several are working from home. Dr. Denman continued to speak about the significant community spread. She suggests we look at the data every week. She believes we should pause at this time.

Ms. Marelli asked how easy would this be for teachers and their planning. Mrs. Faircloth stated teachers do have plans for remote learning and should be able to adjust. Ms. Marelli feels the last cohort of students should have a second day and we need to listen to the governor tomorrow. She shared we have received such great feedback from the hybrid learning.

President Marasco agreed with pushing the decision back a day allowing parents and staff time to get prepared for going to remote learning. He is interested in seeing more data.

Dr. Fitzgerald stated this is a recommendation. We can look at the information tomorrow. We can also look at the cases as it relates to our district. Ms. Marelli asked about a Board vote versus allowing the superintendent and Board president to make the decision. Dr. Fitzgerald reminded the Board that the DPH information posted states we should look at state-wide data vs. county-data. We continue to monitor individual buildings and if a building should need to close we would not need a vote.

Mr. Failing stated this area is hot right now. He believes President Maraco could poll the Board after hearing from the principals. He is in favor for keeping schools open tomorrow and make a decision tomorrow night. Dr. Denman stated we should make a decision tonight to pause until Monday night and revisit. President Marasco stated a compromise is to go remote until Monday evening and decide Monday night how we will move forward. Ms. Marelli suggested to allow parents and staff to plan ahead we should close until Tuesday and we can then decide for the next week.

Ms. Marelli made a motion for the Caesar Rodney School District to pause hybrid learning and go to 100% remote learning from December 2- December 9th with a decision to be made for the following week at the next work session.

President Marasco asked about sports and activities. Dr. Fitzgerald stated the principals would decide on their building's activities. Ms. Marelli amended the motion to include giving principals the flexibility for their building's activities.

Mr. Failing seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, and Denman).

Mr. Failing asked for the principal's thoughts on going in and out of hybrid which may happen. Dr. Fitzgerald will email the principals for their feedback. President Marasco asked for clarification on employee options. Dr. Fitzgerald stated 10 mo. staff will have the option of working from home or in their buildings and 12 mo. staff would report to their buildings.

Executive Session

At 7:29 p.m. Mr. Failing made a motion to go into Executive Session and for the meeting to be adjourned without returning to the general session. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0 with one absent. (Marasco, Failing, Marelli, and Denman).

Adjournment

At 8:47 p.m. Mr. Marasco adjourned the meeting.

12/09/2020

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