

Special Meeting March 2, 2021

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:04 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the March 2, 2021, Caesar Rodney School District Special 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, Mr. P. Scott Wilson, and Executive Secretary Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Failing made a motion to adopt the March 2, 2021 agenda as presented. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 5-0 (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

Discussion Items

Acquisition of the Thomas More School and the District Realignment

Dr. Michael Noel, Assistant Superintendent/Director of Human Resources, shared his presentation and gave an introduction on the steps the district has taken thus far on the acquisition of the Thomas More building. He gave a brief history of our middle schools and their capacities. Growth graphs were shared. Options were listed including referendums, additions, portable classrooms, and a lease opportunity.

Dr. Noel continued to show the Thomas More building's capacity including the large group areas, athletic fields, and classrooms with future growth considerations. He gave a description of what steps we will need to take to obtain the building. The committee findings would be presented to the community and the Board with planning for the fall of 2021.

He then introduced Mr. John Laznick, University of DE. Mr. Laznick has assisted many realignment committees and districts with the process. He stated he has vast experience with this realignment process. He shared his presentation and findings. Mr. Laznick included an update on the district realignment lines and school feeder patterns. The geographic areas and current school programs which includes the Immersion Programs have also been considered. School Choice data and Transportation were reviewed. Mr. Laznick gave a timeline of his work on this project and the past Board presentations he has given. The proposed building numbers for each middle school were included. A chart of developments /neighborhoods was also shared.

Next, future growth in the district was explained. This included current and future building permits and construction. Approved residential applications were also reviewed. There were 28 areas and most did not have activity or construction at this time. But there was one significant development on the Fifer Middle School side that will affect their future enrollment. Past birth data in the middle school areas were also shared. Mr. Laznick stated he is here for support and to answer any questions that the Board may have.

Dr. Noel shared the community responses submitted online prior to this meeting. His office received 24 questions with over 6,200 computer hits on the posted information. Dr. Noel has been answering the questions as they have come in. The bulk of questions received were about the Immersion Programs. He stated these programs will stay at the Fifer and Postlethwait schools. Students will attend one of those schools to continue the programs. The staff, curriculum, and religious aspects were also questions. Dr. Noel continued to state it would be a fourth blue and gold middle school. It would include moving some current and possibly adding new staff into the building. Those already pre-approved for School Choice will still be honored.

Future School Choice will be looked into. Questions regarding sports were submitted. He stated we will have athletics at Magnolia Middle School. The final timeline/decision was a question. The final decision for moving forward with the lease would be at the Board's pleasure and notification will go out to the community at that time. He concluded by sharing that questions from the community can still be submitted by email as we move forward.

President Marasco stated that was an amazing presentation. He is very impressed with the amount of detail that has gone into this project. It has been very smooth as we are leaving no stone unturned. He stated the building is in a perfect location for us.

Dr. Noel pointed out that FMS still has more students than PMS in the presentation because the Spanish Immersion Program is only located there. He clarified the building permits are more evident on the PMS and Thomas More side. Then they will be all relined.

Mr. Wilson asked about special education students and their services. Dr. Noel stated full special education programs will also be the same as the other middle schools with continued staff supports.

Mr. Failing stated this was a great job with the committee work and he likes the flexibility of the Board to work with our families. He encourages the community to keep asking questions if they have them. He thinks there will be special things drawing people to these schools. He thanked everyone involved with this process.

Dr. Denman thanked everyone for their presentations and their work on the whole process. Everyone has gone the extra mile to present this with clarity.

Dr. Noel express to the community to continue to ask follow-up questions online and there will be a FAQ list posted for sharing.

President Marasco asked for a better explanation and a map with lines posted on the website. Mr. Laznick stated he could work on getting a Google-type map posted. This could be a better-defined map for those who do not live in a neighborhood/development.

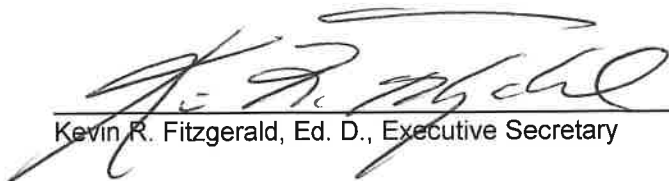
Vice President Marelli congratulated Mr. Keith Wisher on his new position as principal of the new middle school.

Executive Session

At 6:59 p.m. Dr. Denman made a motion to go into Executive Session and for the meeting to be adjourned without returning to the general session. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0. (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

Adjournment

At 8:39 p.m., Mr. Marasco adjourned the meeting.


Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary
Date 3/10/21

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