Work Session
May 3, 2021

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:02 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the May 3, 2021, Caesar Rodney School District Work Session to order.

Roll Call

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

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Failing made a motion to adopt the May 4, 2021 agenda and addendum as presented. Ms. Marelli seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 with one absent (Marasco, Marelli, Wilson, and Failing).

Action Items

Approval of Settlement Agreement

The settlement agreement for the Konrad property adjacent to the Star Hill Elementary School was presented for the Board's approval.

President Marasco gave a brief description of the property. It is west of the school on the right side. This will allow more parking, etc. Negotiations were conducted and the price was also negotiated.

Mr. Failing made a motion to accept the settlement agreement for the Konrad property adjacent to the Star Hill Elementary School as presented. Ms. Marelli seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 with one absent (Marasco, Marelli, Wilson, and Failing).

Discussion Items

High School Graduation

Dr. Sherry Kijowski, CR High School Principal, gave an update to the Board on the details of the 2021 graduation. She has revisited the stadium area along with several high school staff members. Staging will be changed and the seating areas reconfigured on the visitor side. Pods of groups of four people are being considered. Two ceremonies instead of four are also being considered. A new plan will be resubmitted to the Delaware Department of Public Health (DPH). She understands there are additional family members who would like to attend. They will strive to make this experience wonderful for the class of 2021. She continued to remind the Board of all other senior activities currently being planned including the senior parade. Details were discussed for the promenade including staging, etc. Several seniors have requested specific things and they are working on all of those items.

Ms. Marelli asked if there would be dancing. Dr. Kijowski stated we will have students social distancing and masks should be worn. If students would like to dance, they may do so. They may wear prom clothing or

casual attire. There is no fee for these senior events. Ms. Marelli stated parents should be so happy with all of these plans and she commended Dr. Kijowski for going above and beyond this year to make it special. Dr. Kijowski shared that Dr. Allen, DSU President, will serve as the graduation speaker.

President Marasco stated Dr.Kijowski can move forward with her plans for two ceremonies. He also commended Dr. Kijowski for pulling it all together.

Update of School Return- 2021-2022 SY

Dr. Fitzgerald gave an update on a recent meeting with the Kent County Legislators and Superientendents. They discussed transporation and asked for any assisitance with the DPH social distancing guidelines. He shared the legislators were very receptive. They understand and have put together a committee to assist school districts with opening five days a week next school year.
President Marasco asked about Dr. Susan Bunting's role as education advisor. He stated the Governor must see this is the focus. We are looking at a possible waiver for transportation support to get more drivers. Dr. Fitzgerald shared we have had that conversation including social distancing and the best way to feed students. Dr. Fitzgerald has a follow-up meeting on our specific district concerns. We will let them know where we stand and what we hope to accomplish. President Marasco stated everyone should let the legislators and governor know what needs to happen. Dr. Fitzgerald recognized the board members for attending this important meeting. President Marasco shared the Board has received letters, etc. regarding next year. He stated the Board is committed to opening in-person five days a week next year. But they realize that approximately 10% are not comfortable sending students. Dr. Fitzgerald continued to state we prefer a set-up where teachers teach students in-person in class and those virtually would have a different teacher. We will need special permission to do that but we are committed to moving forward. He also stated that parents should contact legislators and let them know.

President Marasco asked about the Department of Education (DOE) in-depth survey. He inquired if other districts are conducting surveys. Dr. Fitzgerald shared what information he had regarding this. He will also contact others and find out where they are.

Mr. Failing was pleased that our survey went out quickly and was simple to understand. He saw the state's version which is very detailed and involved. He would like the Board to start planning now and have something to work with. He understands things will change before the first day and it is frustrating for all. He also reminded everyone that remote school is not approved and Dr. Fitzgerald understands that. He believes we are all pushing in the same direction to open up next year. He complimented the high school on his son's four years at CRHS. As a parent, he is very pleased. He continued to state the elementary schools have a lot to look at. There are no firm directions at this time. They are looking into the best options. He is pleased that our schools all have new HVAC systems which have been updated. We have much better air quality than others. We have done a great job keeping our facilities in top shape.

Mrs. Tara Faircloth, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, reported on the reopening school committees. They are making sure our principals are supported. They are considering the maximum number of students, space to feed students, scheduling, and maximizing instruction. The principals have sent in their staff needs, transportation needs, and meal distribution requests. She will be able to share more specific information with a quick turnaround once we know how many students will be in which buildings. The numbers need to be finalized. They plan to offer math support for all students. They are working with the barriers and will keep working. She reminded the Board there is six-foot social distancing guidance for eating with three in the classroom.

Dr. Fitzgerald continued to state they hope to move Star Hill Elementary (SHE) to the David E. Robinson Elementary(DER) school allowing to move more students from Allen Frear Elementary (AFE). We have to look at space versus the numbers of students. Nellie Hughes Stokes (NHS) is the smallest school where we truly lack space. They are also considering the number of classrooms we will need. The ultimate goal is to get students back in person five days a week. The realignment of elementary schools will be something we can start in July doing the groundwork at that time. He continued to state not all moves would be permanent. He asked the Board to approve the move of SHE and then Mr. John Laznik, University of DE, can begin the study

of realignment. Dr. Fitzgerald explained the current district programs and their physical locations. He gave examples of numbers for these programs. The student movement was shared allowing decreased numbers at AFE. He continued that we do not know the projection numbers of new developments in the area.

President Marasco and Mr. Failing would like to see some basic numbers of how many students can be in each building. Feeder programs, school choice, and special programs are a consideration. Mrs. Faircloth stated we already have that number per building. She shared it is 15 students in a small setting with 18-22 students in most classrooms. They have mapped it out with three ft. distancing but it will change depending on which students will be located at DER. This will impact other schools. Immersion numbers are higher and other program locations are being reviewed. She asked Mrs. Julie Lavender, Allen Frear Principal, to join the conversation.

Mrs. Lavender gave several scenarios of sample classrooms with three feet of social distancing. Mathematically we can achieve this, but overflow spaces will be needed. Additional teacher units are needed. There would be a separate plan for lunch by adding additional lunch periods. Dr. Fitzgerald asked if removing students from AFE would assist with getting things scheduled. Mrs. Lavender agreed this would help but it hard to say depending on the final numbers.

Mr. Failing shared with more building in the area we will have more growth. He said he would like to see all of the school's capacity. We should plan for a 100% return if the capacity allows. Dr. Fitzgerald stated we could give a scenario with moving SHE and then revisit. Mrs. Faircloth stated we have already done this. At the secondary level, scheduling options are being considered. There would be six lunch periods at CRHS. Mr. Failing reiterated his feelings and stated we should be sympathetic to those wanting remote learning. Dr. Fitzgerald spoke on staffing needs. We can move forward with posting permanent positions. President Marasco agreed. Mrs. Faircloth concluded by stating they will provide the numbers to the board reminding them the six feet eating guideline is the biggest concern. All strategies are being considered.

President Marasco appreciates principals and their hard work during this time.

Ms. Marelli stated her opinion and wanted to be very clear. She is in favor of realignment. Flex space for Robinson is doing nothing differently. We are still shifting kids. She believes it just makes sense to go forward and realign. We should be thankful we have two extra buildings and we should maximize that space. Principals should be involved in this process. She stated we must plan this now. Dr. Fitzgerald stated the elementary level realignment is much more complex and time is needed. Ms. Marelli stated it has been five years since the referendum passed and it only took one year to purchase St. Thomas. We have waited long enough. President Marasco stated he agrees with realignment. He suggested Mr. Laznik should move forward starting now as we plan for the 2021-22 SY. Mr. Failing stated the original plan was to build a new school and the public wants to see a plan in place which elevates overcrowding. It is complicated but we need to get started now. Dr. Fitzgerald suggested Mr. Laznik attend the next work session with a proposal regarding the realignment process and the cost. Dr. Fitzgerald has two goals. The immediate goal is to get the school opened and the second is to hold a referendum next year for the improvements we need to make. He stated if the community supports the realignment we are fine. If not, this presents more challenges. Mr. Failing believes we will have public support. Ms. Marelli is in favor of having Mr. Laznik attend next week.

President Marasco asked about the extra funding. Mrs. Kimberly Judy, Director of Business and Finance, joined the meeting. She stated there was not much of an update since the last meeting. The focus is on facility improvement and getting everyone back to school. They are working closely with Mrs. Faircloth putting items into the grant. Mr. Failing inquired about hiring and wanted a general idea of where we will spend the funding. Mrs. Faircloth shared the principals submitted their wish list for reopening. Once we have the decision for the location of students, additional staffing will be reviewed. She gave kudos to the principals for being well- prepared for their reopening needs. Several options are included for more instructional support before and after school. Math coaches are also included in the grant. Ms. Marelli asked about the recent DOE funding support. Mrs. Faircloth stated we will individually load programs for students as they are needed. President Marasco asked for a breakdown of the grant funding. Mrs. Judy is planning to do this. Mr. Failing stated we are doing things we have never done before and the public need to appreciate these efforts. This is exciting and we will use the funding the best way we can to serve our students.

Dr. Fitgerald shared the Board's appreciation and gave a thank you to our teachers. This is Teacher Appreciation Week. He shared an email he received from a paraprofessional. Her daughter has decided to become a teacher and appreciated the impact the district has made on her daughter. President Marasco stated he also appreciates all teachers.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Adjournment

At 7:34 p.m., Mr. Failing made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Marelli seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-0 with two absent. (Marasco, Marelli, and Failing).

Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary Date

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