

Seneca Valley School District



SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL MEETING

Zoom Teleconference – 7:00 p.m.

July 20, 2020

MINUTES

1. **CALL TO ORDER** by Mr. James Nickel – President called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.
 - A. **Moment of Silence** – Mr. Nickel opened the meeting with a Moment of Silence and stated: “I’d like you to think about those inflicted with and affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially Seneca Valley students and staff as they prepare to return to school during what are really unprecedented times. I would also like to take a moment of silence to remember John Lewis, Congressman and civil rights champion, who passed away last Friday. He fought hard for equality and social justice. I hope he can be an inspiration to all of us as we stand up to racism in our community and in our entire country.”
 - B. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Mr. Nickel led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
 - C. **Roll Call** – Roll call by Lisa Mislán, Board Secretary, showed the following members in attendance: Ms. Leslie Bredl, Mr. Eric DiTullio, Ms. Susan Harrison, Mr. Timothy Hester, Mr. Mike Jacobs, Mr. James Nickel, Mr. Frederick Peterson, Jr., Ms. Kathy Whittle and Mr. Jeffrey Widdowson.

Others present included Dr. Tracy Vitale, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Matthew McKinley, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary; Dr. Sean McCarty, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary; Ms. Kyra Bobak, Human Resources Director; Ms. Lynn Burtner, Business Manager; Ms. Katherine Huttinger, Media Support Specialist; Mr. Gerald Miller, Special Education and Gifted Director; Ms. Heather Lewis, Athletic Director; Dr. Marie Palano, Supervisor of Analytics and Federal Programs; Dr. Jeffrey Roberts, Supervisor of Gifted Education and Student Services; Ms. Annie Mersing, Director of Advancement; Ms. Katilin Remensky, Intern to the Superintendent; Mr. Matthew Hoffman, Solicitor; and press representatives.

2. INFORMATION REPORTS

- A. **PSERS Update** – Mr. Eric DiTullio provided an update from the Public School Employees’ Retirement System (PSERS) by stating that Act 72 of 2019 authorizes the PSERS Board to calculate and collect the retirement benefit liabilities associated with the employees of an employer that withdraws, in whole or in part, its participation from PSERS. The Withdrawal Liability represents that portion of the unfunded benefit liability attributable to the employees of the nonparticipating employer. Teachers hired after 2011 have a “shared risk” program, Class T-E and Class T-F members have a .5% increase one in every 3 years. Class T-G and T-H (Hires after 2019) have a .75% increase. This year the “risk” penalty might be applicable.

Pension Unfunded Liability has been decreasing because the state has been funding the Actuarial Required Contribution (ARC).

- \$70 Billion in 2007
- Largest 1-month decline in 2008 (\$7.1 Billion)
- March of 2020 \$4 Billion – Fund Value went from \$58.3 Billion to \$54.2 Billion
- June 8 Fund Value was \$57.1 Billion

Lastly, Mr. DiTullio mentioned that his re-election to the PSERS Board is due and he needs 25 school board member signatures on the ballot from five Districts by the end of August.

B. Athletic and Activities Update – Ms. Heather Lewis provided three updates to Athletics and Activities. First, a schedule change for the Friday, September 11, 2020 football game which has been moved to Thursday, September 10, 2020. The game will be held at NexTier Stadium at 7 p.m. vs. North Hills. Due to a shortage of game officials, we were asked to move one game to accommodate official coverage of all contests. The official shortage, and shortage of new officials entering into the profession, has been an issue for the past couple of years. There may be a COVID-19 impact, but this has been an issue since before COVID-19. Ms. Lewis noted that summer conditioning has gone exceptionally well. Ms. Lewis commends student athletes and coaches for their dedication and energy in adhering to protocol. Secondly, Ms. Lewis added the state recommended 14-day quarantine for families returning from hot spots to the Return to Sports and Activities Plan. Our strongest mitigation strategies are in place to provide the safest environment for our students and staff. Ms. Lewis' third and final update noted that as of today, July 20, 2020, the PIAA is proceeding as normal with start of fall sports. The current plan does not address in-season sports or activities. Therefore, an amendment to the plan will be necessary. Ms. Lewis hopes to provide an amendment and update at the August 3, 2020 school board meeting. She is awaiting guidelines from PIAA.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – Public comment regarding return to school was heard by Mr. Alexander Ufelle, Ms. Michelle Tresky, and Ms. Erin Kenyon. Dr. Vitale noted that more details will be provided, which should answer all questions, over the next month, including the Department of Health guidelines for hot spot travel tracking and adding nurse Liz Williams to our team as a point of contact with the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH). Also, more details for educating and preparing families will follow. Regarding a live interactive classroom platform, Dr. Vitale noted legal, privacy and logistical concerns as well as the challenge teachers would face in managing this type of platform for optimal learning. Superintendents across the county and across the state are sharing ideas. Dr. Vitale thanked Ms. Tresky for her service as a Seneca Valley Paraprofessional. Dr. Vitale stated that specials and electives are very important at Seneca Valley and we will not be removing any electives or specials. Traffic patterns at school buildings will be difficult. Patience and understanding is being asked of the families.

Dr. Vitale believes that if our District can pull off a personalized, socially distant graduation for 600 students with no students or staff (to our knowledge) becoming sick, we can do this with the cooperation of our families.

4. ACTION AGENDA

A. Health & Safety Plan for Return to School – Approved the phased school reopening Health and safety plan.

Mr. Nickel noted that this is a fluid work in progress. Given that the news and information change every day, the plan will be revisited on August 3 and August 10. The plan includes input from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), (PADOH), PA Department of Education (PDE), American Academy of Pediatrics and internal experts (AAP).

Dr. Vitale recognized the divided opinions on the topic of how or if to return to school physically. There is support on both sides of the argument and it is difficult to vet all the available information. The Pennsylvania Department of Education hired an education laboratory to gather research and vet for school Districts. All research and recommendations are posted to our Return to School webpage.

We ask for patience and understanding from parents as there is not a perfect answer or solution for return to school. It is a monumental task for the entire community to bring our children safely back to school. The virus has caused much uncertainty and chaos, but Seneca Valley is committed to doing as much as we can

to make informed decisions. Our rationale for planning to bring students back physically as much as possible is because that is what is best for many, not all, students. School is a vital part of a child's development and growth. There are many risks to keeping them at home. We have to weigh health and safety over academics; however, we are also concerned about the amount of academic progress that has been lost during this pandemic. Tonight's action will trigger us to begin more planning and also trigger our school psychologists to begin evaluations, which have been put on hold.

The transmission rate from children to adults is much higher than from children to children. Therefore, it is imperative that we have strong mitigation strategies in place, as outlined in our plan.

Dr. Vitale said that returning five days a week will hinge upon these ongoing considerations:

- 1) COVID infection and mortality rates of Butler and neighboring counties.
- 2) Our local ability to treat and react to those rates.
- 3) Availability of testing. Testing, while available for those that may have had exposure, have had to be symptomatic for insurance to pay. Results timelines vary and are inconsistent for our area at this time. We need to see improvement before we bring children back five days a week. It is the responsibility of the Department of Health to lead contact tracing. Nurse Liz Williams will be a point of contact for our staff and our parents. We have a school nurse in every building who have been assets to the District. A floating nurse serves parochial schools.
- 4) Cooperation from students and parents in following safety protocols including temperature checks before school, health inventories completed every morning, masks and social distancing. Masking is required by the Department of Health of all children over the age of two.
- 5) Adequate staffing levels will be enhanced by offering substitutes a financial bonus.
- 6) Ongoing considerations for the most vulnerable. We will continue to look at ways to protect them and help them serve our children and communities.

Details of all learning models will be on our web page. Podcasts with District leaders will also be made available.

Dr. Vitale noted that the Personalized URL (PURL) will open Wednesday, July 22, 2020. Parents will be asked to electronically update general information and choose the learning model that is best for their individual student. For planning, we ask that choices are made by July 29, 2020. Any changes after July 29, 2020 should be updated via the SV Portal.

School Board Deliberation

Mr. DiTullio supports and is proud of the plan and noted that we tried very hard to account for everything and that doing so is impossible. As parents, we have to understand that things may be out of our control and that we need them to partner with us as a District. We will act on caution, but responsibly.

Dr. Vitale addressed Mr. Hester's question about quarantining by noting that we have PADOH and PDE guidelines. These organizations will be doing the contact tracing and give instructions to family members regarding self-quarantining. This direction will come from the PADOH and/or a family physician, not the school District.

Mr. Peterson added his kudos to the well-organized planning process. He noted that the parents will need to step up, reinforce and prepare their students for return to school. Seneca Valley will do what is best for our District. Mr. Peterson noted again that this year's budget did not include a tax increase. However, there will be a financial impact on the Seneca Valley School System.

Mr. Widdowson asked how the vocational-technical students will be addressed. Dr. Vitale noted that she has a meeting this week with all the Butler County superintendents and the Executive Director at the Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School (BCAVTS). If BCAVTS is in session, we will transport.

Mr. Widdowson thanked the Return to School Committee and noted the amount of work that went into the planning. Mr. Widdowson asked if we could adopt the plan and start in the cohort phase which would allow parents time to make childcare arrangements and allow teachers additional time to prepare.

Dr. Vitale added that there are other considerations before we do start out in the traditional model, as mentioned earlier this evening. As more guidance is provided, this could change from the traditional to cohort model.

Mr. Jacobs fully supports the plan and the process and noted that the initial survey results helped support the plan to return to traditional school.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Mr. DiTullio, to approve the Health & Safety Plan for Return to School. Motion carried on a roll call vote of 8 in favor and 1 dissent (Mr. Widdowson).

B. Financial Incentive Program for Permanent Professional Day-to-Day Substitutes

K-12 – Approved day-to-day substitute bonus of \$300 for 33 permanent professional day-to-day substitutes on day 31 of school.

Mr. DiTullio asked for more details of this plan. Ms. Bobak noted that our goal is to secure three substitutes at each elementary building and five at each secondary building for a total of 33. They would commit to come in daily for 30 consecutive days before being eligible for the bonus. The administrative team is identifying candidates who are going through a three-round interview process.

Mr. Peterson asked about terms of employment. Ms. Bobak confirmed that the terms would be the same as all other substitutes.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Ms. Bredl, to approve the Financial Incentive Program for Permanent Professional Day-to-Day Substitutes K-12. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

C. Health & Safety Plan for Return to Sport/Activity – Approved revised Health & Safety Plan for Return to Sport/Activity.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Mr. Widdowson, to approve the revised Health & Safety Plan for Return to Sport/Activity. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

D. Emergency Instructional Time Plan – Approved the Emergency Instructional Time Plan.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Mr. Widdowson, to approve the Emergency Instructional Time Plan. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

E. **Bid Awards** – Awarded bids for the construction of the new K-6 elementary school at Ehrman Road.

1. **General Construction (GC)** contract to Rycon Construction in the amount of \$31,429,900.00. Base bid of \$31,238,000.00 with the following alternates accepted:

Alt. GC-02 Geothermal Signage	\$1,500
Alt. GC-03 GL-2 Glazing at Doors	\$4,400
Alt. GC-04 GL-2 at Storefronts	\$13,000
Alt. GC-06 Operable Windows	\$96,000
Alt. GC-13 Double Seat Wall	\$77,000

2. **HVAC Construction (HC)** contract to Hranek Corporation in the amount of \$5,977,500.00. Base bid of \$5,725,000.00 with the following alternates accepted:

Alt. HC-01 Geothermal Heat Pump	\$139,000
Alt. HC-04 Bipolar Ionization	\$113,500

3. **Plumbing Construction (PC)** contract to Vrabel Plumbing in the amount of \$2,527,200.00. Base bid of \$2,545,200.00 with the following alternates accepted:

PC-02 Lavatories Changes - DEDUCT	(\$18,000)
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4. **Electrical Construction (EC)** contract to Merit Electric in the amount of \$5,928,000.00. Base bid of \$5,928,000.00 with NO alternates accepted.

5. **Fire Protection Construction (FP)** contract to Vrabel Plumbing in the amount of \$520,000.00. Base bid of \$541,200.00 with the following alternates accepted:

Alt PC-01 Flexible Sprinkler Heads - DEDUCT	(\$21,200)
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6. **Food Service Construction (FS)** contract to 11400 Inc. in the amount of \$743,500.00. Base bid of \$743,500.00 with NO alternates accepted.

7. **Architectural Casework Construction (AC)** Contract to Northeast Interiors in the amount of \$1,658,000.00. Base bid of \$1,637,000.00 with the following alternates accepted:

Alt. ACC-01 - Doors on 8 Cubbies	\$21,000
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8. **Landscape Construction (LC)** Contract to CH&D in the amount of \$569,780.00. Base bid of \$466,300.00 with the following alternates accepted:

Alt. LC-01 - Rubber Play Surface	\$23,480
Alt. LC-02 - Sidewalk Agg Band	\$30,000
Alt. LC-03 - 2 yr. Grass Maintenance	\$20,000
Alt. LC-04 - 2 yr. Trees & Shrubs Maintenance	\$30,000

Mr. DiTullio noted that it was a wonderful bid day where we received 29% savings over what was budgeted. Mr. Miller confirmed that the sidewalk aggregate will address issues of salt runoff killing grass.

Mr. Miller added that the geothermal heat pump will also act as a learning tool for children. Also, bi-polar ionization, an electronic air cleaner, is another opportunity to assist in combating COVID-19. It can be added to the system to put ions into the air that would attach to viruses and make the virus larger so that it is

captured in the filtration system. Mr. DiTullio added that John Hopkins and the Children's Hospital of Boston both use this system with great success and well worth the small cost.

Mr. Peterson thanked Mr. Miller for including the geothermal piece so that we can teach about alternate sources of energy. Mr. Miller confirmed that many of our sub and prime contractors do reach out to minority business and women's business enterprises to be a part of our project. All of our prime contracts are Pennsylvania businesses.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Ms. Harrison, to award bids for the construction of the new K-6 elementary school at Ehrman Road. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

- F. **Valley Lines, Inc. Addendum** – Approved the renegotiated Valley Lines, Inc. addendum for parochial schools which now ends on June 30, 2025 with savings to the District of \$356,766.97 over five years.
- G. **DePaul School for Hearing and Speech** – Approved agreement with DePaul School for Hearing and Speech for professional services beginning on August 15, 2020 and ending on June 30, 2021.
- H. **Mon-D-Aid Cleanit Company** – Approved bid award for the maintenance paper products to Mon-D-Aid Cleanit Company.
- I. **Center for Community Resources Agreement** – Approved Letter of Agreement providing intervention services beginning with date of signature by both parties and reviewed in three years.
- J. **PCCD COVID-19 School Health and Safety Grant** – Approved grant request in the amount of \$393,121 to be used on supplies, equipment, technology, and other items to aid the District in preparing for students and staff to return to school amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.
- K. **ACCESS Agreement** – Approved Access agreement to provide services commencing July 1, 2020 and concluding on June 30, 2021.
- L. **Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, Inc.** – Approved Affiliate Partner Agreement for the administration of a Scholastic Art & Writing Awards regional program.
- M. **Drug Testing** – Approved the suspension of the initial drug testing requirement for extra-curricular participation and student driving privileges as established by Board Policy No. 227.1 for the 2020-21 school year due to considerations arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. (The Board of School Directors reserves the right to reinstate the initial drug testing requirement for or during the 2020-21 school year as it determines to be appropriate. Random drug testing requirements established by the policy shall continue in force)."

Mr. DiTullio asked about concussion testing. Ms. Lewis noted that additional information will be forthcoming and that we have started this summer with groups on campus, in smaller groups. We will conduct concussion testing through the season. Club sports will also be included, and a schedule will be provided.

- N. **Glade Run Lutheran Services Education Placement** – Approved the reduced-cost Day Student Education Placement Agreement for the 2020-21 school year.
- O. **Children's Institute ESY Contract** – Approved the agreement with the Day School at The Children's Institute to provide ESY services.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Ms. Whittle, to approve resolutions F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, and O. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

- P. **Personnel** – Approved resignations, appointments, leaves, contract addendum, stipend, retirement, and memorandums of understanding as follows.

Resignations: *Professional* – Kimberly Ball; *Classified* – Tawney Venafro, Denise Pascarella, Tricia Bennett; *Supplemental* – Gabriella DeSimone; Victoria Hinchee

Appointments: *Professional* – Mackenzie McGuire; Sarah Corona, Andrea Platt, Kayla Keown; *Professional Substitutes* – Day-to-Day Substitutes; *Classified* – Lauren Kingsley, Classified Substitutes; *Supplementals* – Christina King, Sharon Kramer

Leaves: *Professional* – Clare Calhoun, Heather Perella; *Classified* – Thomas Buchanan

Contract Addendum: Dr. Matthew McKinley

Stipend: Elizabeth Williams

Retirement: *Classified* – Robin Williams

Memorandums of Understanding: Elizabeth Williams

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Mr. Widdowson, to approve resignations, appointments, leaves, contract addendum, stipend, retirement, and memorandums of understanding. Motion carried on a roll call vote with 8 affirmative and 1 abstention.

5. **COMMUNICATION** – Communication was received from the following:

- A. Mr. Forest Barnes – Call to Action Diversity Proposal
- B. Ms. Megan Lizewski – Diversity Awareness
- C. Ms. Sonia Jaiswal – Diversity Awareness
- D. Ms. Stephanie Ryan – Diversity Awareness
- E. Ms. Lauren Duda – Diversity Awareness
- F. Mr. Rick Shafer – Diversity Awareness
- G. Dr. Abigail Scheg – Diversity Awareness, Raiders
- H. Mr. Tim and Ms. Bonnie Freshly – Graduation
- I. Ms. Sandra Cardosi – Return to School Information
- J. Mr. William Bryson – Return to School Information

Mr. Nickel noted the number of communications received regarding diversity. We look forward to Mr. Forest Barnes joining us in a future virtual meeting. Mr. Nickel added that we received and reviewed all school board email communications.

Ms. Harrison thanked all committee and administration members for working on the return-to-school plan.

Mr. Nickel stated that we had over 300 people join this evenings meeting either via Zoom or via the YouTube live stream and thanked everyone for being a part of this process.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** – With nothing further to come before the Board, Mr. Widdowson motioned, seconded by Ms. Whittle, to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

7. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – An executive session was held prior to this meeting to discuss personnel and budget items.