

# Seneca Valley School District



## SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION

Seneca Valley Intermediate High School Auditorium - 7:00 p.m.

### MINUTES

**February 1, 2021**

**I. CALL TO ORDER** by Mr. Eric DiTullio, President, at 7:10 p.m.

**A. Moments of Silence** – The meeting was opened with moments of silence for the following:

1. In memory of the lives lost due to COVID-19, and in reflection of those who are mourning loved ones, recovering from the illness or have been negatively impacted during this time.
2. In memory of Samantha “Sam” Condrick, SV Class of 2019, who sadly passed away on Saturday, Jan. 30. Miss Condrick, who was attending the University of Kentucky, was a student leader at Seneca Valley, in addition to active involvement in numerous school events and organizations. She was also a member of the Seneca Valley Varsity Girls’ Tennis Team. Miss Condrick was a wonderful classmate and teammate and will be sorely missed. Our thoughts go out to her family and friends during this difficult time.

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

- C. Roll Call** – Roll call by Ms. 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. Linda Andreassi, Director of Communications; Mr. Gerald Miller, Special Education and Gifted Director; Mr. Randy Miller, Director of Buildings and Grounds; Ms. Heather Lewis, Athletic Director; Dr. Marie Palano, Supervisor of Analytics and Federal Programs; Dr. Jeffrey Roberts, Supervisor of Gifted Education and Student Services; Mr. James Pearson, Director of Transportation; Ms. Annie Mersing, Director of Advancement; Mr. Matthew Hoffman, Solicitor

**2. INFORMATION REPORTS**

- A. Student/Staff Recognition** – Ms. Andreassi announced that the Seneca Valley Raider Battalion Marksmanship Team hit the bullseye when they brought home the Western PA

Army JROTC League trophy after placing first at the Western Pa Army JROTC League 2 Championship. The team competed at Seneca Valley Senior High School on Jan. 23, defeating Butler High School, Albert Gallatin High School, Beaver High School and Connellsville High School. The team was led by the top three shooters in the competition; team captain and senior Garrett Devault placed first, freshman Logan Randall placed second and senior Alek Matusiak came in third. Other contributors to the team's overall victory are junior Bryan Broad and sophomore Lexi Bardos.

- B. **Dates to Remember** – Ms. Andreassi announced the following dates to remember.

February	National Black History Month
February 8	School Board Meeting, 7 p.m. in/on SVIHS Auditorium/Zoom
February 12	Vacation Day – No School for Students
February 15	President's Day

- C. **Agency Reports**

1. Vo-Tech – Mr. Peterson noted that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 4, 2021. Mr. Jacobs added that the 2021-22 budget will be the primary item for Thursday's meeting.
2. I. U. IV – Mr. Eric DiTullio reported that the Business Manager Patricia Connolly has resigned. A new Business Manager is to be hired in the next month or two. The preliminary budget was also reviewed. Mr. DiTullio noted that this is the 28<sup>th</sup> year with a budget decrease. Lastly, IKM Architecture was hired to replace the HVAC system.

- D. **Financial Reports** – The following reports were provided in the backup materials.

1. Operations
2. Senior High Activities
3. Intermediate High Activities
4. Middle School Activities
5. Athletics
6. Food Service
7. Tax Collection Reports
8. Capital Projects Funds

- E. **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Update** – Dr. Vitale reported on the all-day SV Leadership Team training session that was held with Dr. Gadson on Wednesday, January 20, 2021. The following items were discussed related to how Seneca Valley staff can develop racial literacy as a norm:

- Understanding DEI terms and common language
- Acquiring the terms and skills to have a conversation about race
- Developing an accurate historical and sociological view of race as tools to talk about race and its impact on our school as a system and our society as a whole
- Recognizing that this skill must be developed, intentional and a priority in our school district

- How to have “racialized conversations” – “discourse that intentionally identifies race and the impact of race on one’s own life”
- Systems and structural conventions or customs that uphold oppression.
- Anti-racism and anti-racist strategies in practice
- Racial equity lens

Principals from each building reported on the following:

- Since March of 2020, what have you done to operationalize racial equity?
- What has worked well?
- What are the challenges?

F. **COVID-19 Update** – Dr. Vitale provided an update as follows:

As of today, the Butler County PCR positivity rate is 8.6%. The previous week, this data point was over 10%. The state average PCR rate is 9.3%. We need to be under 10% to meet one of the two thresholds that would move us back to moderate. The other threshold is Incident Rate. From January 22 through January 28, our incident rate is 138.9; we need to be at 100 to move to moderate. Last week’s incident rate was 206.5. We do not yet meet the two thresholds in order to move to moderate, but it is down significantly, and we are moving closer.

The Butler County daily COVID 14-day rolling average is now at 72.5 which is the lowest since November 15. This data also keeps tracking in the right direction.

COVID cases within the Seneca Valley School District zip codes totaled only 42 new cases over a three-day period of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We include the Mars zip code as we do have some students with a Mars post office zip code (Seven Fields Borough) who attend Seneca Valley. However, not all cases within the Mars zip code are Seneca Valley cases.

We have not seen data track up since returning from winter break and we are cautiously optimistic.

Three counties have moved from substantial to moderate and there is a good chance that zip codes within Seneca Valley will move into moderate at the end of the week. We would need to stay in this range for two weeks before returning to school five days.

We have been warned by health experts of the virus variants and are consulting with the experts to learn more. Approximately 45 staff members have now been vaccinated out of about 895. We are still in the 1a classification and would need to move into 1b before teachers can be vaccinated. This is driven by the state.

Out of about 7,400 students, we currently have 18 student cases. We have six active staff cases, out of about 980. This does not count bus drivers who are employed outside of the district.

Ages 10 and under are not transmitting at the same rate as teenagers are transmitting the virus. Many epidemiologists also believe 11 and 12-year olds are also not transmitting at the level of 13 years and up.

We are not yet ready to bring students back five days a week, but we are preparing a plan that takes steps toward doing so. Seneca Valley’s buildings are of different sizes and different square footages than

other districts and, therefore, should not be compared to other schools who are currently in person five days a week. We still have to be sure we can maintain distance.

Dr. McCarty talked about the “4-and-1” model for K-6, who have chosen in-person instruction, to attend four days a week in person, Monday through Thursday. Fridays would remain remote to contact trace and reset the numbers. Our main challenge was to create a plan that would provide six feet distance when children are not wearing masks, primarily during breakfast and lunch. With the help of teacher volunteers, we can maintain distance.

Mr. Jerry Miller added that all students with special needs in grades K-12 would be included in the “4-and-1” model to bring these children back four days a week.

Dr. Vitale thanked all the teachers who volunteered to give up their lunch period to eat with the students.

With teachers volunteering, we can more easily accommodate the six feet of distance during breakfast and lunch as required to adhere to the attestation form.

### 3. ACTION AGENDA

- A. **Public Comment** – There was no public comment.
- B. **Special Education, Kindergarten – Grade 12 In-Person Instruction** – Approve the return of students with special needs, grades Kindergarten through 12, who have chosen the in-person model, to four days a week (Monday-Thursday) in-person and remote Fridays beginning on Monday, February, 8, 2021. This includes any students with an Individualized Education Plan (learning support, emotional support, autistic support, speech and language). This Friday, February 5, 2021, \*\*\*~~elementary~~ K-12 special education teachers will be given a half day in the afternoon to prepare for the transition.

\*\*\* An amendment was made and approved by the board to replace “elementary” in the motion above with “K-12”.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Mr. Jacobs, to approve special education, kindergarten – grade 12 in-person instruction as detailed above. Motion carried on a roll call vote with eight votes in the affirmative and one no vote.

Mr. Hester and Mr. Widdowson expressed concern with the “4-and-1” model as outlined above. Mr. Widdowson added that we should take our time and wait until more staff are vaccinated. He believes we should continue to drive down the numbers before moving out of Cohort.

Mr. Peterson stated that he is in favor of the “4-and-1” model using local data as a base and noting that the significant majority of our cases have not been school transmissions.

Mr. Nickel, Mr. Jacobs, Ms. Harrison, Ms. Whittle, Ms. Bredl and Mr. DiTullio all noted that they are in favor of the “4-and-1” model.

Dr. Vitale added that families can stay in the Cohort model with livestreaming if they choose to do so.

- C. **Kindergarten – Grade 6 In-Person Instruction** – Approve the return of all students in grades kindergarten through 6, who have chosen the in-person model, to four days a week

(Monday-Thursday) in-person and remote Friday beginning on Monday, February 8, 2021. This Friday, February 5, 2021 elementary teachers will be given a half day in the afternoon to prepare for the transition.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Ms. Harrison, to approve kindergarten – grade 6 in-person instruction as detailed above. Motion carried on a roll call vote with eight votes in the affirmative and one no vote.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Approve the following meeting minutes.
  - A. **Work Session** – January 11, 2021
  - B. **Regular Meeting** – January 19, 2021
5. **TREASURER’S REPORT** – Approve the treasurer’s report.
6. **GENERAL FUND BILLS** – Approve the general fund bills totaling \$2,208,514
7. **CONSTRUCTION FUND BILLS** – Approve the construction fund bills totaling \$2,390,926.41
8. **ADMINISTRATION ACTION**
  - A. **Board Policies** – Approve the following board policies:
    1. Policy 212 – Reporting Student Progress, revised, second and final reading – Dr. McKinley
    2. Policy 217 – Graduation Requirements, revised, second and final reading – Dr. Palano
    3. Policy 218.4 – Discipline of Student Convicted/Adjudicated of Sexual Assault, revised, second and final reading – Dr. McKinley
    4. Policy 247 – Hazing, revised, first reading – Ms. Bobak
    5. Policy 249 – Anti-Bullying, revised, first reading – Ms. Bobak
    6. Policy 426 – Complaint Process, revised, first reading – Ms. Bobak
    7. Policy 824 – Maintaining Professional Adult/Student Boundaries, revised, first reading – Ms. Bobak
9. **INSTRUCTION ACTION**
  - A. **Conferences** – Approve conferences.
  - B. **Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania Employee Leasing Agreement** – Approve the agreement with Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania to lease the services of SV Speech Therapist Maggie Lockovich for the term of January 4, 2021 – June 30, 2021.
  - C. **Sign Language Interpreting Professionals LLC Client Agreement** – Approve the agreement with Sign Language Interpreting Professionals LLC to provide interpreting services for deaf and/or hard of hearing students.

10. **BUSINESS/FINANCE ACTION**

- A. **Budget Transfer** – Approve budget transfer.
- B. **Tax Collector Compensation Resolution** – Approve the resolution establishing tax collector compensation for the years 2022 through 2025.
- C. **Change Orders** – Approve the construction change orders for the new K-6 elementary school at Ehrman Road.

Mr. DiTullio noted that we recently approved a bond resolution which saved about \$35,000, actual compared to estimated per-year savings.

11. **PERSONNEL ACTION** – Personnel items were discussed in an executive session held prior to this meeting.

- A. **Appointments** – *Professional Substitute* – Krisztina Benji; *Classified* – Stephanie Bush, Nicole Matson, Ryan Healey
- B. **Leaves** – *Professional* – Kelly Vu, Matthew Martin, Erin Sypien, Sarah Corona, Natalie Green, Jessica Kerr, Lora Nickel, Emily Burkley; *Classified* – Brenda Mazinski
- C. **Retirements** – *Professionals* – Susan Dinger, John Motyl

12. **COMMUNICATION**

- A. Ms. Amy Walker – Return to five days, in-person instruction
- B. Ms. Melissa Morrison – COVID-19 protocols
- C. Dr. Natalie Heisey – School board seat
- D. Ms. Julie Jones – Attendance policies
- E. Ms. Cami Theodosis – 2021-22 school calendar
- F. Mr. Matt Herrick – Concern for children not being in school full time
- G. Ms. Beth Lauer – Quarantine and Cohort learning model
- H. Ms. Jolene Jaecke – Return to five days, in-person instruction and mental health
- I. Ms. Jennifer Clark – Return to school questions
- J. Ms. Jennifer Knier – Return to five days, in-person instruction and note of thanks
- K. Ms. Stephanie Lane – Return to five days, in -person instruction
- L. Mr. and Mrs. John and Petrice Sekuta – Detriment of remote learning for special needs children
- M. Ms. Laura Donaldson – Cohort A for Friday, February 5, 2021
- N. Ms. Sherry Steed – Eliminating contact tracing for K-4
- O. Ms. Aimee Pieszak – Cohort model is working
- P. Ms. Aubrey Hart – Return to five days, in-person instruction
- Q. Ms. Erika Costanzo – Remote Fridays
- R. Ms. Julie Jones – Snow days and remote learning

13. **ADJOURNMENT** – With nothing further to come before the Board, Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Mr. Jacobs, to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m.
14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – An executive session was held prior to this meeting to discuss personnel and other items.

Mr. Eric DiTullio, Board President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Mislán". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ms. Lisa Mislán, Board Secretary