

Seneca Valley School District



SCHOOL BOARD ACTION MEETING

Teleconference - 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

September 21, 2020

1. **CALL TO ORDER** by Mr. James Nickel, President

- A. **Moment of Silence** – The meeting was opened with a moment of silence.
- B. **Pledge of Allegiance** – Brody Frederick, Connoquenessing Valley Elementary School, Grade 2, continued the board meeting initiative, “I Led the Pledge,” by opening the meeting with the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

SVTube link for I Led the Pledge: <https://svtube.svsd.net/play?id=u63qfexp7g>



- 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. 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. Jeffrey James, Director of Safety and Security; Mr. Matthew Hoffman, Solicitor; and a press representative.

2. INFORMATION REPORTS

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

September 22	Autumn Begins
September 26	SAT Testing – SHS (112 students)
September 27	Yom Kippur Begins
October 3	SAT Testing – SHS (60 students)

Mr. Roberts confirmed that several precautions will be taken at the Senior High School to ensure a safe testing environment. Desks will be socially distanced and test takers will be assessed prior to being admitted to the testing site.

- B. **Student/Staff Recognition** – Ms. Andreassi announced the following student recognition: An impactful lesson from last school year has carried over for many of our students, but especially so for one of our freshmen students. Last fall, Lihini Ranaweera, in partnership with Classrooms Without Borders (CWB) of Pittsburgh, participated in a Holocaust Immersion Day at Ryan Gloyer Middle School where she and a classmate sang a Yiddish song for their peers. CWB was impressed with the performance and reached out recently to invite Miss Ranaweera to participate in a CWB virtual event that took place on Sept. 10. In addition to sharing a recording of the song, Miss Ranaweera, spoke live about her experiences with the CWB and learning about the Holocaust. The intent of the program was to help others across the nation and abroad learn about the incredible impact CWB has had on schools like Seneca Valley.

- C. **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 Services
7. Tax Collection Reports
8. Capital Project Funds

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – Public comment was heard by Ms. Jessica Todd Ms. Rebecca Snyder, Ms. Meredith Wolfe, and Ms. Anne Castagnero.
4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Approved the following meeting minutes.
- A. **Work Session** – August 3, 2020
 - B. **Regular Meeting** – August 10, 2020
 - C. **Special Meeting** – August 31, 2020
5. **TREASURER’S REPORT** – Approved the Treasurer’s report.
6. **GENERAL FUND BILLS** – Approved the general fund bills totaling \$3,630,639.72.
7. **CONSTRUCTION FUND BILLS** – Approved the construction fund bills totaling \$2,893,817.76.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Mr. Jacobs, to approve minutes, treasurer's report, general fund bills and construction fund bills. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

8. ADMINISTRATION ACTION

- A. **Care Unlimited, Inc. dba Aveanna Healthcare Provider Agreement** – Approved the Care Unlimited, Inc. dba Aveanna Healthcare provider agreement to provide healthcare services to students through June 30, 2021.
- B. **Epic Health Services, Inc. dba Aveanna Healthcare Provider Agreement** – Approved the Epic Health Services, Inc. dba Aveanna Healthcare provider agreement to provide healthcare services to students through June 30, 2021.
- C. **School Bus Drivers** – Approved the list of new bus drivers for ABC Transit and Valley Lines.
- D. **Transportation Contract** – Approved the transportation contract for one family to transport their child to D.T. Watson during the 2020-21 school year.

Mr. DiTullio motioned, seconded by Ms. Harrison, to approve Care Unlimited provider agreement, Epic Health Services provider agreement, school bus drivers and transportation contract. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

9. INSTRUCTION ACTION

- A. **MHY Family Services Agreement** – Approved the agreement with MHY Family Services for services during the 2020-21 school year.

Ms. Harrison motioned, seconded by Mr. DiTullio, to approve the MHY Family Services Agreement. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

- B. **Revised Phased School Reopening Health and Safety Plan** – Approved the revised phased reopening health and safety plan.

Dr. Palano reviewed the two minor changes to the plan which was approved in July 2020. On page 23, according to guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PDOH), language specific to siblings of students who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms being dismissed from schools has been removed. On page 25, when there is no direct exposure to COVID-19 and students or staff are experiencing symptoms; we are asking for parents and guardians to consult with their doctor to confirm the student or staff member is safe to return to school and communicate that confirmation from the physician with the school district.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Ms. Harrison, to approve the Revised Phased School Reopening Health and Safety Plan. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

- C. **Full-Time, In-Person Instruction** – Beginning October 5, 2020, all children who attend in-person instruction will come to school physically five days per week; livestreaming will be available from the classroom and synchronously for those that may be quarantined or have a medical issue(s)/concern(s).

Mr. Nickel began the conversation by noting that livestreaming will be available for all students starting October 5, 2020. Mr. Nickel stated that his support of this motion is born on the plans, process, protocols and equipment put in place to mitigate the risk associated with moving forward. He added that livestreaming and virtual leaning, however, is not ideal and believes there are real mental health issues associated with not returning in the optimal environment of in-person instruction. Mr. Nickel added that if we see cases rise at Seneca Valley, we could be forced to close for a period of time, depending on the number of cases. If our efforts do not limit the spread of the virus, we will close, regroup and move to full virtual while alternatives are considered.

Mr. DiTullio added that the board and administration has been looking at the data for months. He supports this motion because he believes that five-day, in-person instruction is the best option for both special learners and high achievers. He wants the parents to know that they have not failed their children and added that we are learning this together. Parents are not equipped or expected to replace a professional teacher. In order to offer the best educational experience, Mr. DiTullio added that we will remain vigilant with all cleaning and sanitizing procedures. He asked that we all stay vigilant, patient and kind.

Ms. Harrison stated that we are all partners in this education process and encourages families to contact teachers to talk about any concerns as we move forward.

Mr. Hester thanked the administration and teachers for the many hours of work to make it safe for our all. He noted that Seneca Valley has a lack of space to have adequate social distance and, for this reason, is not currently in favor of returning to full-time, in-person instruction.

Mr. Peterson added that COVID fatigue is real. After considering all factors including: 1) our mission to provide quality educational experience; 2) health and safety of the staff; and 3) mental health, he is in favor of returning to full-time, in-person instruction with the strict caveat that we will need to pivot very quickly if and when necessary.

Mr. Jacobs stated that the community should have the choice whether to return to school five days a week on October 5. The Return-to-School Committee met throughout the summer with the goal of returning to school five days. Since the plan was approved on July 20, every meaningful statistic has improved, including new case averages, hospital and ICU capacity and testing capacity in both Butler and Allegheny counties. Every variable has been reasonably satisfied, including contact tracing protocols, availability of personal protective equipment (PPE), availability of cleaning materials, staffing, and more. In addition, Mr. Jacobs noted that other school districts are in their third or fourth week of five-day, in-person instruction without significant disruption. He added that the majority of families are in favor of returning full-time, in-person and that on October 5, capacity would not be at 100% but closer to 80%.

Mr. Jacobs added that the impact on people must be considered. Cohort is not working for parents trying to also work from home and that it has also been very difficult for many children to adapt. We have improved remote learning in a short period of time, but it is not the ideal option.

Ms. Bredl believes we have had a very positive start to the school year and is in support of returning to full-time, in-person instruction. Seneca Valley has an advantage in that we are prepared to pivot quickly.

Ms. Whittle added her support to return to school five-days, in person instruction on October 5, with protocols, acknowledging that we may have information before then that could change this plan.

Mr. Nickel added that another meeting and vote could happen before October 5, if necessary.

Mr. Widdowson noted that this is the most difficult decision that has been asked of the board.

It is the goal of every board member, administrator and teacher to return to school full time. However, he noted that we have only been back to school 10 days and does not believe this is enough time to make an informed decision to move forward, even with buildings at a lower, 80% capacity. Mr. Widdowson suggests taking our time and re-evaluating the data at the end of the first nine weeks. He asked what legal ramifications, if any, there may be with moving forward. He added that social distancing with masks is our best defense. Mr. Widdowson is opposed to going back five days at this time.

Mr. Nickel motioned, seconded by Mr. DiTullio, to approve full-time, in-person instruction beginning October 5, 2020. Motion carried on a roll call vote with 7 votes in the affirmative and 2 no votes.

D. Stay in Current Cohort Model for Remainder of the First Nine Weeks

Mr. Widdowson motioned, seconded by Mr. Hester, to stay in the current cohort model for the remainder of the first nine weeks. At the end of the nine weeks, the board would reconvene and re-evaluate the data.

Dr. McKinley confirmed that the end of the first nine weeks is October 28, 2020.

Motion failed with 7 no votes and 2 in the affirmative.

10. BUSINESS/FINANCES ACTION

- A. **Amcom (formerly ComDoc)** – Approved a document printer/copier lease renewal with Amcom (formerly ComDoc) for a 60-month term in the amount of \$14,570 per month.

Mr. Jacobs motioned, seconded by Mr. DiTullio, to approve the Amcom lease renewal. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

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

- A. **Resignation** – *Classified* – Sandra Suski
- B. **Appointments** – *Administration* – Trisha Butschle; *Professional Substitutes* – Kelly Casey, Frances Kreider, Rochelle Rushe, Deborah Zimmerman; *Classified* – Cailyn Madden, Sandra Suski, Samantha Million; *Supplementals* – James O’Mara, Ashley Pritchard, Megan Oldenski, Thomas Magill, Mark Uhrenik, Jennifer Mayes; *Internships* – Anthony Babusci, Erin Wilcher
- C. **Leaves** – *Professional* – Heather Perella; *Classified* – Ann Wise, Elizabeth Marthens, Erica Sicilia, Christine Zacherl, Beth Lauer
- D. **Stipend** – Megan Lizewski

Mr. Widdowson motioned, seconded by Ms. Harrison, to approve the resignation, appointments, leaves and stipend. Motion carried on a roll call vote with those present voting in the affirmative.

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

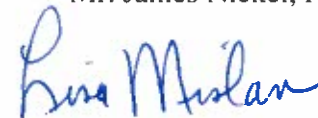
- A. Note of Thanks – Ms. Amber Scalise
- B. Renaissance Education Model for Achievement – Mr. Bertram Forsyth
- C. Re-evaluation of learning model and timing – Ms. Brandee Rentz
- D. Suggestion for remaining eight weeks – Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Hurley
- E. Concern about current virtual learning – Ms. Julie Jones
- F. Increase capacities to allow spectators at athletic events – Ms. Jennifer Booth;
Ms. Bobbi Congdon
- G. Transportation, if/when we return to five days, for parent choosing to transport –
Ms. Nicole Sylves
- H. Preference for five days of in-person instruction
 - 1. Ms. Jessica Todd
 - 2. Mr. David Steed
 - 3. Ms. Beth Lauer
 - 4. Mr. Brian Espey
 - 5. Ms. Dani Larkin
 - 6. Ms. Heather Makowski
 - 7. Mr. and Mrs. Scott Kramer
 - 8. Ms. Ami Halin
 - 9. Ms. Becky Matchett
 - 10. Ms. Lisa Bowers
 - 11. Ms. Stephanie Hunter
 - 12. Mr. and Mrs. Jim Veverka
 - 13. Ms. Mary Lynn Hammond
 - 14. Ms. Linda Davis
 - 15. Ms. Sarah Cushey
 - 16. Ms. Colleen Linzenbold
 - 17. Ms. Amy Jarzynka
 - 18. Ms. Deanna C. Brown
 - 19. Ms. Stephanie Brodmerkel
 - 20. Ms. Michelle Rabe
 - 21. Mr. Milan Grupp
 - 22. Ms. Tammy Cantella
 - 23. Mr. Michael English
 - 24. Ms. Sarah Cahall
 - 25. Mr. Ryan Beer
 - 26. Ms. Danielle Iaquina
 - 27. Ms. Christine Wilson
 - 28. Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Barclay
 - 29. Ms. Stephanie Lane
 - 30. Mr. Garrett Smith

31. Ms. Shannon Tharnish
32. Ms. Grace Ball
33. Ms. Meghan Fatta
34. Ms. Tiffany Dindinger
35. Ms. Dayna Horton
36. Ms. Erin Donahue
37. Mr. Joe Matachak
38. Ms. Stacie Gilliland
39. Ms. Alisha Nist
40. Ms. Mara Knauf
41. Mr. and Mrs. Dean Marks
42. Mr. Tom Bardol
43. Ms. Amanda DeBello
44. Ms. Mary Beth Keally
45. Ms. Krysta Lingenfelter
46. Ms. Megan Capizzi
47. The Sherman Family
48. Ms. Megan Leskovic
49. Ms. Kelly Scott
50. Ms. Bobbi Congdon
51. Ms. Sarah Santoro
52. Mr. Brian A. Beitko
53. Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Ricker
54. Ms. Melissa Schneider
55. Ms. Robin Pokrzywinski
56. Ms. Juliana Irvin
57. Ms. Lisa Kahle
58. Ms. Sarah Wilson
59. Ms. Christine Prouty
60. Mr. Dave Silvester
61. Mr. Thiago de Araujo
62. Mr. Wayne Lingenfelter

- I. Preference to stay in Cohort phase
 1. Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Mihalacki
 2. The Rankin Family
 3. Mr. Souad Richani
 4. Ms. Andrea Tucker
 5. Ms. Virginia Milne
 6. Ms. Kristie Long
 7. Ms. Jennifer Livorse
 8. Ms. Michelle Metz
 9. Ms. Bethany Traugh
 10. Ms. Urmi Batavia
 11. Ms. Rachel Cale
 12. Mr. and Mrs. Nick Brower
 13. Ms. Kristie Long
 14. Ms. Robyn Dobish
 15. Mr. Tony Livorse
 16. Ms. Aimee Pieszak
 17. Ms. Amanda Davidson
 18. Mr. and Mrs. Seth Murray

19. Ms. Tisha Apel
 20. Ms. Mary Wehner
 21. Mr. Kevin Haas
 22. Mr. Geoff Zimmerman
 23. Ms. Sharon Bonavoglia
 24. Dr. Peter Sylves
 25. Ms. Lindsey Hartle
 26. Ms. Cathy Capizzi
13. **ADJOURNMENT** – With nothing further to come before the Board, Mr. Widdowson motioned, seconded by Mr. Jacobs, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. Motion carried with those present voting in the affirmative.
14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – An executive session was held prior to this meeting to discuss personnel items.

Mr. James Nickel, President



Ms. Lisa Mislán, Board Secretary