

Present - Pat McCabe, Roxanne Rebmann, Phil Kenline, Jim Grant, Jody Brege, Robert Masse, Erik Polkowski, Heather Cayea

Jim - 7:00 I would like to call the meeting to order. Pledge to the flag. We have no presentations tonight, so we're going to move right on to the Superintendent's Report.

Pat - Good evening. I thought I'd start tonight with some good news. I think we could all stand to hear some. I wanted to let you know this morning I received an email with the indication and acknowledgement that once again Akron High School is a 2020 Best High School based on rankings by the US News and World Report. That just came out today. So these rankings, you're probably familiar, they're based on performance on required state assessments. In addition, how well we prepare our kids for college. It's truly a testament to the quality of our teaching and our administrative staff, but also the dedication of our kids and support that they receive from home. So a really nice way to start my day. I wanted to alert the Board, if you haven't noticed it yet in the community, that we finally were able to launch our building-based Twitter accounts. It's just another important link in our attempt to communicate with students and families, particularly at this time during COVID-19. If you use Twitter, you can just search Akron High School or Akron Middle School or Akron Elementary. I believe the high school is Akron High School @hstigation. So the board is aware, it's a very controlled platform that will only provide one-way messaging. You have to be invited. If you try to follow, they have to invite you in and there's no interaction between, it's not a two way communication, no interaction between the host sending the message and anyone receiving it. So we'll see how it goes and grows and hopefully it's just another way. I know that our high school Twitter account is very popular. These are district sponsored accounts, so be on the lookout. I wanted to just share, and I know you've all seen it, and it feels like old news already, but we're really pleased with the positive media attention that we received as a result of our meal distribution program. The connection between the district and the community is very important, very special, and to see it highlighted in our local paper and also with a local news carrier. I know you all saw the story, but those are the type of things that really motivate us and keep us going. It's those personal connections. I wanted to kind of segway my report today to give you a few updates. I know that you're all aware our school closures remain in effect until May 15th, so that would be a resumption of school on May 18th. All of that is entirely contingent upon the governor's determination, and of course he's looking closely at all the statistical models related to COVID-19. We do know that just like the closing, kind of was an incremental 25%, 50%, 75% of the workforce reduction, you're following the news, you know this, the reopening of the economy and of our major institutions will follow a similar pursuit. There's ongoing meetings with SED. I get 3 updates a week, so I don't have anything new on the opening, other than to let you know that I'm anticipating hopefully getting something long before the 15th. The planning is essential. So in the interim, we're still responsible for our continuity of instruction, our meal distribution, and our childcare for essential workers and healthcare providers. To give you a sense of where we are with the meals, prior to Corona, our average was like 200 breakfasts every day, 790 lunches. So altogether a little less than 1000, about 990 meals a day. We're about 1600 meals a day now, because of course we have the Saturday meal, Friday delivery. So 9600 meals per week. We will obviously be applying for all the appropriate reimbursement for those meals. The details of that aren't yet forthcoming, but it's a major undertaking by our staff. I was on a conference call with the County Executive, I believe it was a week ago today, and he had said at that point only 1% of the county had actually been tested for COVID-19, and of that 1% tested, 25% of those people tested positive. So that's just a very small sample size, clearly an indicator of the manner in which they'll look at school closures and guide our

reopening. I know we're all hopeful testing rate increases. Have another meeting not this week, but next week with Dr. Gale Burstein, and hopefully she gives us an update and once that information is available I'll pass it along to all of you. I wanted to talk to you about the academic program. I know that many of you with children at home that are trying this distance-learning thing, and you're trying your hand at becoming teachers. I hope you're enjoying it. But it's been a challenge. But just some updates, the Regents exams, as I'm sure you know, are cancelled, but probably as important as that cancellation was the guidance that came along with the cancellation. It is very student-centered, it's student-based guidance with the clear indication that SED and the Regents do not want to see children harmed academically as a result of the school closure. So there's a great deal of latitude in terms of giving course credit and options for kids to earn credit and that they're not penalized. So our kids were in pretty good standing to begin with, but this certainly was helpful making sure that they're earning course credits. I had been trying to reiterate in my messaging to the community that it's important that the kids stay on track to graduate on time. It's important that the kids continue to work through the closure, but we can't make a direct correlation between what work at school looks like and work at home looks like. They're very two distinct and different things. And so there has to be an understanding that work at home, the work assigned, and the way kids participate, it just can't be the same as work at school. We definitely got some feedback from families that the work has been challenging and in some cases overwhelming for the parents unable to help and the kids struggling. That feedback, in listening to our parents and listening to our kids, is really helpful. And I know the building principals and teachers have done a lot of work over the last week to try to examine what they're doing and make it more reasonable for students and families to accomplish. That said, if kids are having trouble, teachers are trying to reach out to them, but they won't be penalized if they're struggling. Just wanted to let you know, very student-centered. There's been a lot of concerns about grading, marking periods, course credit, report cards. We have been engaged in this conversation about how to handle this and looking outside of our own community, but looking at what other communities are doing too within the WNY region. For us in particular in Akron, we have some inherent inequities with the distance-learning model. I think I shared this in previous meetings. We have a number of students, a significant number of students, who don't have internet access. So we have to take that into consideration too and recognize that participation in any form is important. You can't grade the kids on the same curve when they don't have access to the same instructional opportunities. Just kind of moving along, this week parents of children in grades 6-12 will receive a letter by the end of this week. I just looked at it, Roxanne put it on letterhead for the middle school and high school principals, that is going to explain the 4th quarter grading process. Some districts are calling it the COVID-19 period, the 4th quarter. But a significant emphasis I have shared, has been placed on participation. So that will be coming home. It has a rubric and an explanation that goes along with it. We believe that providing that clarity is really gonna help parents and children have a greater understanding of what they need to do in order to receive feedback on their learning and have a greater sense of understanding of what to expect in terms of the marking periods. As I said, the guidance from SED was clear, kids should not be harmed during this period. So that will be hopefully received by families by Friday. Just kind of moving along, high school graduation is a significant concern as are all of the other end of the year ceremonies and recognitions that we do for kids. I was talking to Mr. Ricci and Dr. Farrar today, and I said to me, this graduation really needs to be special. This has been a challenging year for our kids, they have missed out on so many of those wonderful experiences that you have as a high school senior, the culmination of so many years of work. We are exploring options. We looked at purchased distance virtual graduation programs. They're quite expensive, quite frankly, \$5k-12k range. We honestly feel that we can do many of the same things that they can do ourselves, should there be a need for virtual graduation. I don't want to give away any surprises, but we're trying to make it really meaningful and really engaging for

families. There's a lot of options and we are looking at all of them to do what's right by our kids. I suggested to Mr. Ricci at some point he might want to put a survey together for the kids to provide their feedback on it as well. The last piece on the educational thing that I wanted to share is, you know that I meet regularly with all of our administrators, but most recently have been meeting rather intently with our building leaders and Dr. Farrar to discuss the academic program, the distance-learning model in general, and just take an appraisal of where we're at, what we've learned. Earlier this week we carefully examined the elementary level, and we'll be meeting with the middle and high later this week after today, but I have to say that the quality of the programming at our elementary level is exceptionally good. Those teachers deserve tremendous credit. As you are aware, I live with 2 elementary teachers from 2 different districts, and then I looked at our program and our model and I am really blown away. And it's exceedingly good. I'm in communication 3 times a week with area superintendents, so I think I have a good frame of reference when I make that appraisal. Something really to be proud of. Later this week we'll be kind of doing another breakdown at the middle and high to see how things are going and to look at their models again with another critical lens. I anticipate SED is going to require that we upload our continuing plan. Our initial plan was when we thought school would be closed for a couple weeks. Before I move on to capital project, any questions about any of that? I know I covered a lot.

Phil - On the graduation, has any or is delaying the ceremony one of the options that's being looked at or being considered?

Pat - Yeah, we're sensitive to, we know hopefully kids will be able to get off to college and that they have summer jobs, but that is definitely looked at. I think once we get more guidance on when a reopening is going to occur, that'll inform that decision. Should we be told we're closed for the year, we don't want any, a lot of it's about gathering, group sizes as well and social distancing. I anticipate the rollback into school and work to include those types of guidelines. That could influence a delayed decision as well, if that helps. That's where I think a survey might help too.

Jody - I know that indoor rules will be different than outdoor cause I live in the outdoor world, you know, for the summer. Have we thought and I can just throw it out there, and I'm sure Mr. Ricci and you have talked about it, have we ever thought about the football fields? I mean cause we're outside, you can space more, as long as it's nice, but I just wanted to make sure that was something that was discussed.

Pat - Yep. So we talked about the football field, looked between the tennis court and the soccer field and thought about our own drive-in theatre, looking at the elementary parking lot and staging there. But we've also been in contact with the Lockport Drive-In. I said I wasn't going to give away any surprises, but I'm a terrible liar, so it's pretty easy to get the information out of me. Looking at those, those are some of the outdoor options we've discussed already. I told Mrs. Tretter today, let's find the money for it cause I think it's important. Obviously, we didn't budget for a drive-in movie theatre.

Erik - Yeah the one thing I wanted to mention was in regards to out of the blue the other day Principal Ricci called the house and spoke to Emerson. Specifically asking about what she thought in regards to her perception of the workload, how she was getting along with getting information from her teachers, and that sort of thing. So it was just kind of out of the blue, he indicated he was doing that with, going through the list of all the high school students and just checking with them. So I'm just validating that they're going through and doing that sort of thing, so it was kind of not expected, but it was a positive reaction to say the least. It was a happy surprise to say that he was reaching out and checking with how things were.

Pat - That's great. Yeah we have a Google spreadsheet at every building monitoring student engagement and we are responsible to ensure that kids are maintaining their engagement. So of course, initially kids were like hey, it's a snow day and really not engaging in some of the work. But credit to our counselors and our administrators that our participation rates are steadily growing throughout the closure. In terms of the Capital Project, I just wanted to let you know that the district has determined that our current project, Project A, meets the guidelines for essential criteria, and therefore should proceed. A major emphasis is on that however, there's an important caveat, is that it should proceed so long as all the work is done in accordance with the required safety protocols that have been specified in the executive order. I think I included an updated copy of that notification to proceed in your Board Doc. I know Mr. Polkowski was on the call, in working with Campus and some of our prime contractors, we recognize that there will be delays because portions of the project where they may have put in a 6-man, 8-man, or 10-man crew to do some of the work because of the safety protocols, we may need to reduce crew sizes to allow for appropriate social distancing. So we'll monitor it and make decisions on portions of the project that can proceed and the timelines will be adjusted accordingly, but the business suite is set to begin and we talked about looking at getting going on some site work. In terms of the interior work, there will be a physical barrier separating any aspect of the project with our employees. It's a hard wall as well as some plastic sheeting and some ventilation fans. I know in my note to you, I said not a lot on the budget, but hey I wrote it on Thursday and things happen quickly during COVID-19. While we haven't heard anything really definitive from the Governor yet, I did want to reiterate some of the really important things he said Sunday and again I think on Monday. You are all aware, he has made numerous statements that NY is facing anywhere from a \$10-15 billion deficit and that education makes up 27% of the state's budget. So the Governor and others have reported that unless there's significant federal assistance, schools could lose, I believe on Sunday, he said 50% of state aid, but anywhere from 20-50%. Again, it's sometimes difficult to determine how much of that is political lobbying and a cry for federal help, and how much of that is foreshadowing of the fiscal reality. It's anyone's guess. Most people do believe, and I know that you're following NYSSBA, I follow NYSCOSS and other associations, that there will be reductions in aid during the 4 measurement periods. There has been no indication yet that the state will hold this year's funding, but that's also a concern. So you know we get a significant, almost like a balloon payment at the end of this year, that's for this year's budget. There's been no indication yet that that could be withheld, but that's a concern. So as you know, and I've discussed this, in preparation for this our current budget model includes elimination of 2 teaching positions through retirement and significant reductions in spending on materials, supplies, contractual, professional development and equipment. We shared that a while back, I think at our last meeting. However, we are now looking at further tiered reductions should they become necessary during the school year. I want to reiterate that the intent is not to reduce staffing. That's a very damaging thing to do to a district during a year, so should we receive these reductions, that's where we're gonna be needing to look at the allocation of our reserves and fund balance to get us through a school year, in addition to other tiered reductions, but personnel reductions during a school year are very difficult to manage in terms of reassigning kids and teachers, they often just don't work. You get some contractual issues as well. But we do need to brace ourselves for those things. And again, it's one of the reasons why reserves are there and we are still pausing on developing our most recent model of the budget until we see what happens during the Governor's first adjustment period or measurement period, which concludes on the 30th of this month, then the Legislature has 10 days to respond to that. Just in a way of cost savings, we have frozen this year's budget and we're only allowing purchases that are necessary for the health, welfare, and safety of our students and staff. So we're trying to capture any unspent dollars now that perhaps could be utilized should we receive cuts. Wanted to talk to you a little bit on the revenue side. Our current model that we first shared with you

included a tax levy at 1.95%. Technically, we can go up to 3.21% and still be below the legislated tax gap of 2%, but we're at 1.95% with the model I shared with you weeks ago. However, you know that's something that I think is important that we consider as we try to maintain our programming in the upcoming year. There is movement to go higher than 1.95%, frankly all the way up to 3.21%. So if it's alright, I thought I would share with you some numbers to give you some perspective on that. In terms of the tax levy, last year to this year, we were \$9,875,000. With this projected levy of 1.95%, it takes us to \$10,067,709. So about \$9.88 million to almost \$10.1 million. That's an increase of \$192k. If we were to go higher than 1.95% levy, say at 2.45%, that would be an additional \$49k. If we were to go keeping it under 3%, say from 1.95% to 2.95%, that would be an additional \$98k. Legally, we could do these things to shore up our revenue side in preparation because you can't spend more than what you have in your revenue. Your expenditures go up, the district received less funds, we can't spend more than we budgeted for. Obviously, you know that but we could try to capture some more revenue through the levy. That would be, and that is a significant shift from where the district has been in the last 5 years, and I recognize that. We've been just under 1% since 2015. These are very different times. I want to kind of pause there and give the Board an opportunity to think about that and I apologize for not including that in my original notes to you but I've been working on it since last week.

Jim - Does anybody have any comments or thoughts on that? I think we need to consider it. When we set it at 1.95%, I spoke in favor of leaving it below 2%. Things have certainly changed in the last month since we started talking about it. I think we definitely need to consider in our budget proposals as we revisit it, increasing the tax levy.

Phil - Given what we know and what has been put out as far as the potential for the reduction in state aid, I know we've gotten that information. Has that information made it, and I'll be perfectly honest I don't watch the news, so I don't know if that information has gotten to the community in any way, shape, or form. Would it be prudent for us to pass this information along? Not just to the Board, but to the community at large as to what the potential losses from the State for the District would be and what the impact of those losses in terms of revenue from the State could have on the District in terms of what the losses as far as programs or whatever might be for the coming year?

Pat - I think you're right, Mr. Kenline, I am concerned about the community awareness. If you watch the Governor, he says it every time, but if you're not watching given the time, you may not hear it. One of the challenges we have is that there is no public gathering, so bringing people in to share the budget is harder to do, so it would have to be some kind of a letter or something to the community. The timing of that, it may be prudent to wait until we see what the first measurement period is, to see what kind of reduction we may be encountering. That is one of the reasons why I'm not putting a budget before you tonight is waiting for that opportunity. I will tell you that I got a text today that one of our neighboring districts is anticipating a \$1.95 million deficit and they're looking at letting 30 people go. I just heard that tonight. Thankfully, we're nowhere that fiscal dilemma that they are, but it's frightening quite honestly.

Bob - I would agree with you Pat. I'd agree that we probably should look at it. I think we should wait just a little bit longer. I think we have enough time before prematurely jumping out there and ringing that bell, kind of wait and see where the Governor goes. I think you're gonna hear about it before too long is my guess. I think it's good to talk about it and it sounds like you're pretty prepared with your numbers, but I think any decision could probably be held for a little bit.

Jody- Yeah, he was going to Washington, DC today to talk to the President. What will happen, I'm not sure. But I think we also have to be gentle and cognizant of the fact that I'm not feeling going over 3% because many, many people in this community are without jobs right now and having a vote no budget is not good. I think we have to make sure that we're thinking about all of those things when we're trying to set this tax cap levy.

Erik - I would be in agreement with everybody. I think Bob's on the right page of not setting anything in stone and kind of playing some things by ear. I do think that given the time period, it almost mandates that we have to do something just to look for the long-term, as we've done in the past, where we've just tried to maintain a sort of a consistent level as to what we're looking for. This obviously has some backing to it, so you can explain where the increase is coming from. You said each of the buildings has a Twitter account, does the District have one? That's at a head, other than yours? And if not, could we do something like to start to spread that sort of thing and start to take a proactive approach towards enlightening the community both in regards to this sort of situation or to look for additional announcements, whether it be snow closings, that sort of thing, to do something in conjunction as just another means and methods to get our voice out there and be heard in a proactive sense.

Pat - Two points for Mr. Polkowski. No, the District does not have a Twitter account. I have a personal account that I reference myself as the Superintendent of Akron. I can certainly change it to a district account, but it was one those things. I didn't have Twitter before I got this job quite honestly, but wanted it as a vehicle to communicate to the community. I'm thinking out loud right now, quite honestly, but I do intend over the next remainder of this week and into next week to begin to draft some letters of advocacy to our local officials and be sharing those with you, perhaps seeking to get the Board to cosign them with me, seeking federal dollars. But some of those letters of advocacy could explain the impact on Akron, and then those letters can be shared with the community to give them some context on what we're trying to do beyond just saying the sky is falling. This is quite frankly a 3-5 year problem because I do anticipate because of the prudent fiscal planning that this District has done for a number of years that we'll be ok this upcoming year. I mean it's gonna to be tight. It's the years after when we drawdown fund balance and other reserves where we're gonna really be strapped. So the solution, if you will, needs to play the long game. That's why an incremental increase in the tax levy, being very fiscally conservative, really analyzing our programming, and making quite honestly some challenging decisions. We know that we were declining in enrollment prior to COVID-19 and much of our revenue is based on student enrollment, so it's double whammy if you will. Is there anything else you would like me to do in the interim? Obviously, I'm monitoring it and we can start to plan but is there any other, besides communication pieces, anything you want me to research? I don't have at my fingertips, I always like context, I don't have at my fingertips what other districts are doing from a number sense. I just know from an approach sense districts are increasing their levy throughout the region.

Jim - I think realistically on the budget the first measurement period ends next week Friday the 30th. This is an important discussion, but I don't think we need to make any decisions until after that point in time.

Pat - Great, agreed. Alright, I'll move on then, unless there's anything else. Just very quickly, one final point. Still no information on the elections for board members or on the timing of the budget vote beyond the fact that it's postponed at least until June 1st. We reached out to our attorney this week for any guidance on the timeliness of the notifications to the community and it's still very much up in the air at this point. There were some rumors about Boards voting for budgets and again, if you're reading the tea leaves, that's not

something the Governor seems to be in favor of. He wants people to vote on their school budgets, so it will be probably some kind of, unless there's restrictions or significant changes in social distancing, I would assume it would be some kind of mail-in ballot. So that's a lot for me tonight, I apologize, but any other questions on anything I covered?

Jim - Thank you, Mr. McCabe. I really appreciate the detailed report. Moving on to item #3 on our agenda, which is minutes. We have on our agenda the minutes from March 25th and April 1st meetings. And the recommendation is that the Akron Central School Board of Education, upon the recommendation of Patrick D. McCabe, Superintendent of Schools, approve meeting minutes, consent 3A & 3B.

Bob - Moved.

Phil - Second.

Jim - Any questions or comments on that item?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Item #4, Personnel Instructional. And the recommendation is that the Board of Education, upon the recommendation of Patrick D. McCabe, Superintendent of Schools, approve Instructional items 4A - 4H.

Jody - Moved.

Heather - Second.

Jim - Any comments or questions from the Board?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Item #5, Personnel Non-Instructional. We have one item. And the recommendation is we accept the letter of resignation from the clerk typist.

Bob - Moved.

Phil - Second.

Jim - Any questions or comments?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Item #6 is District Items. The recommendation is that the Akron Central School Board of Education, upon the recommendation of Patrick D. McCabe, Superintendent of Schools, approve the following District items, consent 6A-6J.

Heather - Moved.

Erik - Second.

Jim - Any questions or comments from the Board?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Item #7 on the agenda is Special Education. And the recommendation is that the Akron Central School Board of Education, upon the recommendation of Patrick D. McCabe, Superintendent of Schools, approve Special Education items, consent 7A & 7B.

Bob - Moved.

Jody - Second.

Jim - Any questions or comments from the Board?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - We have the financial reports for the month of March as submitted by District Treasurer, Susan Brewer. The recommendation is that the Board approve both reports.

Phil - Moved.

Jody - Second.

Jim - Any questions or comments from the Board?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Item #9 is School Board Correspondence. Just a note that the Scholastic Achievement Dinner on May 21st has been cancelled. We will be looking to recognize our top 3 students at a later date. Upcoming dates, our next meeting is May 12th, it will be a Zoom meeting. Item #11, we have no need to go into Executive Session. And item #12 is adjournment. May I have a motion please?

Jody - Moved.

Bob - Second.

Jim - Any one object to adjournment?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - We are adjourned at 7:43. Thank you everyone. Mr. McCabe, thank you again for your continued efforts and I'm hearing really good things about the administrators and the teachers as well.