

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BRANDYWINE HEIGHTS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

November 17, 2020

The Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Brandywine Heights Area School District was called to order at 6:00 pm by President John Tomasi.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Recording Secretary called the roll:

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|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| ✓ Mr. Bieber | ✓ Mrs. Henry | ✓ Mr. Tomasi |
| Dr. Carter | ✓ Mrs. Huhn | ✓ Mr. Wagaman |
| ✓ Mrs. Eisenhart | ✓ Mr. Scheetz | ✓ Mrs. Walizer |

Administration Present:

- ✓ Mr. Andrew Potteiger, Superintendent
- Mr. Jamison Barnhart, High School Assistant Principal
- ✓ Mr. Matthew Dziunycz, High School Principal
- ✓ Mr. Robert Farina, Intermediate/Middle School Principal
- ✓ Mr. Scott Geist, Director of Athletics
- Mrs. Carolyn Hanych, Director of Brandywine Virtual Academy
- ✓ Ms. Stephanie Kelly, Elementary School Principal
- ✓ Mr. Craig Neiman, Business Manager/Board Secretary
- ✓ Dr. René Reese, Director of Pupil Services
- ✓ Mr. Thomas Voelker, Assistant to the Superintendent
- Mr. Michael Wetzal, Director of Buildings and Grounds
- Ms. Carly Worman, Supervisor of Instruction and Assessment

Solicitor: Mr. Benjamin Pratt, Esquire

Visitors: Traci Pino (Longswamp), Jerel Pino (Long Swamp), Ken Heffner (Rockland), Erin Clark (Rockland), Kurt Shauffer (Topton)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

A motion was made by Mr. Bieber and seconded by Mr. Scheetz to approve the Board of Directors Report.

Presentation = Health and Safety Plan Review Committee Outcomes and Recommendations

- A. To approve the recommendations of the Health and Safety Plan Review committee:
 - Data Metrics:
 - #1. County Level Data = Utilize the PA DOH and CDC "Indicators and thresholds for risk of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in schools" chart as County indicator for educational plan considerations.
 - County Data will be calculated using a two-week rolling average updated every Friday to evaluate impact on community spread.

- Data metrics utilized will be cases per 100,000 and percent positivity rate over 10%.
 - #2. Zip Code Data = If County Level data is in "Substantial"...
 - Zip Code Data will be calculated using a two-week rolling average updated every Friday to evaluate impact on community spread.
 - Data metrics utilized will be cases per 100,000 and percent positivity rate over 10%.
 - #3. School District Cases = If County and Local, Community Cases are elevated ("Substantial")...
 - School Cases will be evaluated to determine if there is a significant potential for community/schoolwide transmission with cases occurring in multiple buildings. The PDE "Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19" will be utilized.
 - Education Mode of operation = The Administration and School Board will make decisions on the education mode of operation after reviewing County, Zip Code and local building data.
 - The Administration will consider instructional shifts to virtual/remote learning if > County is in Substantial > Zip Code Data is in substantial and > there are multiple unrelated cases in multiple school buildings. The PDE "Recommendations for Pre-K to 12 Schools Following Identification of a Case(s) of COVID-19" will be utilized as guidance.
 - The School Board of Directors will determine long term educational plan decisions for the District.
 - The School District may close at any point based on unforeseen precipitating events for the safety of the students and staff.
- Modified Hybrid plan:
 - Grades 6-12 plan
 - Monday and Tuesday:
 - a. Cohort A - In-Person for FULL DAY
 - b. Cohort B - VIRTUAL Learning where students would be following along with the instruction in the live classroom
 - Wednesday: Virtual Instruction for all students in the morning
 - Thursday and Friday:
 - a. Cohort A - VIRTUAL Learning where students would be following along with the instruction in the live classroom
 - b. Cohort B - In-Person for FULL DAY
 - Kindergarten will remain in the current Hybrid plan of a half day program.
 - The District will continue to evaluate the Hybrid program for students in grades 1-5 and provide a recommendation at the December 7th Board meeting.
- BCTC students to resume education per the Hybrid model of attendance beginning November 19.
- Athletics and Extracurriculars to resume Friday, November 20 following safety protocols outlined in the Athletic and Extracurricular Health and Safety Plan.
- Timeline =

- Virtual/remote education continues through January 8 and the new Health and Safety Plan to be implemented beginning Monday, January 11.

*The Health and Safety Plan document will be updated accordingly pursuant to the vote of the Board of Directors.

Board Discussion

Mr. Tomasi asked for comments from the Board.

Mrs. Henry questioned if there will be support in the classroom when teachers are live streaming. It is challenging maintaining children at home and in the classroom at the same time, especially when a teacher needs to be at their computer to teach their students at home. It has been a team building rapport between the two (2) cohorts they are able to see each other virtually.

Mr. Tomasi mentioned the two teachers from other districts in the county that were on the committee and the feedback they gave about live streaming their teaching lessons during the review committee meetings.

Mr. Wagaman has heard concerns in the virtual and hybrid model about attendance and if it is possible for the attendance email to go out in the morning as opposed to the afternoon.

Mrs. Huhn thanked the members of the committee for working together to come up with this plan and Mr. Scheetz for suggesting a review committee be created. There are two things that are fully supported once being the timeline of staying virtual until January 11, 2021. This will buy the administration and teachers time to get ready for the new hybrid model as well as get us through the holiday season. There has been feedback from the community about how well the full virtual model is working and how much more time students get with their teachers. On the opposite side of things there has also been talk about students struggling. Mrs. Huhn encouraged anyone who is struggling to reach out to teachers, principals, and the administrators. They are to help navigate through this time when someone is struggling. She is also in support of the new hybrid model with having students who are virtual live streaming all day with their teachers. The new model proactively addressed the challenges that were happening in the district.

- Mrs. Huhn disagrees with the claim that the current model we are in is a precautionary measure. She challenged that statement because the District got to this point with data and a very thoughtful strategic plan. We are not in full virtual because we are being precautionary. We are full virtual today because the plan that was created told us to go virtual. Mrs. Huhn questioned if there was any discussion in the committee about combining the data rather than looking at one level and triggering the next level and so on. She asked if there was discussion about weighting the data points. As we talk about following professional guidance she struggles because the guidance coming from PDE is, if the county is substantial then schools should seriously consider moving virtual. School districts in berks county are choosing to actively ignore the guidance.
 - Mr. Scheetz explained if the District decided to use a weighting system for the metrics it would be arbitrary. Instead of going arbitrary the committee decided to use the numbers from each level. This will allow for the board to have three different metrics to look at when making any future decisions. Those numbers can also be used independently if needed.

- Mrs. Huhn asked for the clarification of the definition of elevated when it comes to the cases per 100,000 and what specific numbers put the district in substantial. She also asked if local data points to zip code data.
 - Mr. Potteiger explained, unlike any other district in the county we are still using data and we are one of the richest in terms of the process we are taking to make decisions to change phases. The metric the district will be using is 100/100,000 for both the county and local data.
- Mrs. Huhn questioned if the county data decreases and is no longer in substantial risk but the local zip code data is increasing how does the district interpret that to make a decision to be virtual or hybrid.
 - If the recommended health and safety plan is approved it gives us the ability to look at the data independently if needed. That way we are not locked in the following the flow chart. There is something happening locally that causes us to need to stay virtual.
- Mrs. Huhn questioned if there will be lead time for families because early on in the discussion about making decisions there was a lot of time spent talking about lead time and how the board felt that families and staff should have some time to make new plans for child care, etc. if needed. The plan that is recommended is not going to offer lead time for parents.
- Mrs. Huhn asked that there be a standing agenda item on each month's board agenda so the Board members can receive an update on the pandemic status and review the past month of data and what other school district's in the county are doing. This might relieve any last minute special board meetings and would create a proactive formal briefing about the administration's recommendations moving forward each month.
- Mrs. Huhn commented about the recent mandates that Dr. Levine released on November 17, 2020, for mask wearing guidelines as well as travel restrictions. The District has had a policy and expectation for staff and students to wear their mask from the beginning. She questioned if students are eating lunch in the building, how that affects the mask wearing guidelines.
 - Students will be expected to wear their masks at all times. Once a student begins eating they are able to remove their mask. As soon as they are finished their mask will need to be put back on. All students will be six (6) feet apart during lunch times.
- Mrs. Huhn commented on the notion that students may be able to receive full virtual learning with Brandywine staff instead of being enrolled in virtual academy. If that is a possibility she highly recommends that being an option for students.
- Mrs. Huhn is in full support of students getting back into BCTC as soon as possible because it is almost impossible to learn a trade virtually. She questioned if there was a way to develop a plan that BCTC students could remain in BCTC if the District needs to move to a virtual environment again once this plan is put into place. Could there be a way for BCTC students to stay virtual with Brandywine and since they are not in the buildings that will allow them to still attend BCTC.
 - The idea with the new plan is that if the district would close it would be for a short amount of time so BCTC would also be virtual because there would be cases inside the school. If there would be a prolonged closure the board would be able to make the decision to keep BCTC in person.
- Mrs. Huhn congratulated Mr. Geist, the coaches and the athletes for the incredible accomplishment of finishing the fall athletic season with no positive COVID-19 cases and

a low number of quarantine cases. She questioned what winter sports will look like compared to fall sports because winter sports are all indoors. COVID-19 is an airborne virus but often they share sweat as well as air, if students are in close contact with sports such as basketball and wrestling what will it look like to keep students safe. If a student catches COVID due to athletics that risks it being brought into the buildings and putting other students and families at risk. If the board approves this plan it may look like sports are being prioritized over education because we will be allowing winter athletics to continue but the school will be virtual. Mrs. Huhn has confidence in Mr. Geist to lead the kids in a safe and healthy direction. She asked that the board be updated about the winter athletic program.

- It has been frustrating that there is no guidance for athletics even since the beginning of school. To play winter sports there is going to be close contact however we will ensure to the best of our ability the safety of the students playing sports.
- Mr. Tomasi commented that St. Lukes identifies certain types of sports low, medium and high risk. We understand there is a higher possibility students will be exposed in high risk sports. The health and safety plan is set in a way that keeps parents aware but allows them to make the decision if they are comfortable and want their children to participate.
- Mr. Scheetz reminded the board that volleyball is an indoor sport and was played all throughout the fall season. If the district had a large wrestling team it would be harder to keep students safe but there are about ten (10) students on the team. It is going to be easier to work with such a small team.
- Mr. Geist explained the leveled approach that is put into place for practices and games. The first level, students work in pods and focus more on conditioning and individual skills. By following this plan it gives hope to have a winter season and that is what students are looking for at this point. We might not be at the point where we will play games but if we stick to the plan we might get to that point.
- Mrs. Henry commented that if Brandywine Heights does not offer winter sports students will find those opportunities elsewhere.
- Mrs. Huhn commented that there is no mention of students with an IEP. She questioned how this plan is going to affect special education students.
 - Students with an IEP will have the opportunity to come in all four days regardless of cohort to ensure their IEP is met. At this time while the district is in a virtual model low incidence, life skills and autistic support students are allowed to be in the building for on site teaching. All other students with an IEP are learning virtually.
- Mrs. Huhn questioned if we go back to the hybrid model in January per the recommendation, do we have very clearly articulated guidelines for quarantining for staff and students. She also questioned if the district requires a negative test to come back to school.
 - The district has communicated the quarantine information to families and staff and it is also on the BHASD website. Nurses and Principals have been monitoring if students or staff need to quarantine and have been in communication with families. The guidelines for close contact or someone testing positive is they still need to quarantine for fourteen days regardless if they receive a negative COVID test.

- Mr. Bieber commented that the nurse that was a part of the committee brought up that even when we are virtual if someone has a potential case or test positives she should still be notified.
- Mrs. Huhn suggested the district invest in bus assistants to ride with bus drivers during their route. This will help to enforce the mask wearing rules and other guidelines without putting the driver at risk of not focusing on the road. There should be simple reminders for students of the rules before they get on the bus.
- Mrs. Huhn questioned if the district has a sufficient number of substitute teachers.
 - The district made good strategic decisions with the onset of the pandemic by hiring daily substitute teachers for each building. There are two (2) for the Elementary school, three (3) for the Intermediate/Middle School and two (2) for the High School. The substitutes do not go to any other districts; they are only substitutes for our buildings. Staff has been phenomenal. We are a family and have been working together for what is best for our kids.
- Mr. Bieber reminded the board that we are in a situation that no one has ever seen before since August and the board has been asked to make decisions they know little about. Mr. Bieber questioned what the plan is for students that experience power outages.
 - All student absences will be forgiven that day and they would be marked present if there was a power outage and a student was not able to sign into their classrooms.
- Mrs. Henry asked if there would be snow days this year.
 - Mr. Potteiger explained that it will be an easy transition to have students work and learn virtually so there will be no snow days. If there is inclement weather students would be virtual for the day.

Mrs. Huhn asked the board if the items on the agenda could be split up so they could be voted on separately.

Public Comment

Mr. Tomasi asked for comments from the public.

Ken Heffner (Rockland) questioned if the additional expenses from COVID-19 are affecting the current budget and if there is enough contingency in this year's budget for the additional expenses. Mr. Heffner commented that the prior business manager suggested there would be a possible tax break by 2021 and encouraged the board and the administration to make that dream come true.

Mr. Neiman has been tracking COVID related expenses since last spring. We have incurred extra costs which racked up the prior fiscal year. The District is fortunate to have received quite a few grant funds from both federal and state costs to offset those expenses. Looking at the current revenue to this point we are not seeing a huge drop off in the budget related to COVID expenses. All indications at this point show the district will be able to maintain.

Mr. Scheetz we were able to position ourselves with savings with loans that the district has taken for building projects. The District is doing its best to not overspend but we don't see this being a huge impact.

Board Discussion

Mr. Tomasi asked for public comment and board discussion.

Roll call was taken to accept the Board of Directors Report item Board A.

Y Mr. Bieber Dr. Carter Y Mrs. Eisenhart Y Mrs. Henry N Mrs. Huhn
Y Mr. Scheetz Y Mr. Tomasi Y Mr. Wagaman Y Mrs. Walizer

Motion carried - 7 yeas, 1 nay, 1 absent

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Tomasi asked for comments from Board members and the public.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Scheetz seconded by Mr. Bieber to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Motion carried with all yeas.

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Approval Date

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Craig Neiman, Board Secretary
Chaydeanne Brunner,
Recording Secretary