Special Meeting  
August 10, 2020

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:04 p.m. School Board President Jessica Marelli called the August 10, 2020, Caesar Rodney School District Special Meeting to order.

Roll Call

Members present in addition to President Marelli were Vice President, Mr. Michael Marasco, Board Members Mr. Dave Failing, Dr. Joyce Denman, Mr. P. Scott Wilson and Executive Secretary Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Marasco made a motion to adopt the August 10, 2020 agenda as presented. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 5-0. (Marelli, Marasco, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

Discussion of remote and hybrid status

Dr. Toles-Torain shared the parent survey results. We received a 35% return rate on the survey. Stats were shared with the most responses received from the high school. The grade level stats were reviewed. 39% full stated they wanted remote learning, 28% preferred limited face to face or hybrid, and 32% preferred full time in person. Internet connectivity stats were reviewed. 89.9% have connectivity. Transportation was reviewed. Using district transportation was 47.6 %, 47% of parents/students can provide their own transportation, with 5% as walkers. These detailed results will be sent to all Board members.

Dr. Fitzgerald stated the staff survey will be sent out tomorrow. Mr. Failing would like to review this once more. Dr. Denman asked if that survey is anonymous. It asked for the position and building for the staff member. Dr. Toles-Torain shared the staff survey and each question was reviewed. Dr. Denman asked about job flexibility within the staff. Mr. Failing stated we need to expedite the survey and approve the survey. The deadline for the survey was discussed. Mr. Failing would like to monitor this survey throughout the week in real-time.

President Marelli asked about the district committees and their positions at this point. Mrs. Faircloth shared her committee results. The schedule for the elementary day was shared. Social and emotional learning in the morning with other content included. Essential Arts is included. A hybrid scenario would be split into two groups. The secondary committee would run all classes everyday live as a seven-period day. Professional development for staff would be important. Dr. Denman asked for clarification on a secondary day. Mrs. Faircloth stated it would mirror a typical day. Dr. Sander-Lofus shared the John S. Chariton School has two plans. The remote learning would be very structured. The zoom sessions from the spring were very successful. The day would start with a staff meeting and then follow with content instruction, related arts, individual sessions, ending in math break-out sessions, and whole group instruction. The office hours at the end of the day are reserved for parent contact.

Dr. Fitzgerald reminded the Board of the Governor’s instructions and restrictions for re-opening schools.

Mr. Thompson shared results from the operations committee. He met with the committee leads in June and he included transportation, child nutrition, and technology supervisors. They reviewed recommendations from DOE and Delaware Public Health and classified each one. There are some major challenges to bring our student community back. They propose bringing in small cohorts of students into our buildings with a protocol in place starting at the elementary level. Cleaning the buildings and meal service was also discussed. Protective supplies for staff is another challenge. Taking a phase-in approach seems to be best for our staff and students at this time. Mr. Failing asked about staff returning and having the safety measures in place. Mr. Thompson shared it won’t be like the regular first day of school, people will be strictly in their classroom, masks will be worn. There is a two-hour maximum time between cleaning high touch surfaces. Dr. Denman asked about the PPE we have ordered. We have ordered hand sanitizers, masks, nursing staff PPE which requires training and seeking more resources. We are focusing on critical items. There is a new way to do “business” with staff possibly assisting with continuous cleaning. Mr. Marasco asked about the cleaning restrictions with
students versus staff coming back. Mr. Thompson stated we would try to find success with staff first and then with small groups of students. There are even more challenges if a student or staff member may show symptoms and the restrictions we must have in place. Mr. Marasco asked about quarantined staff and substitutes. Mr. Thompson stated we have a contact at Delaware Public Health and they will provide guidance. Testing kits for staff and students was discussed. Dr. Fitzgerald stated some details still need to be worked out. The Governor wants everyone tested before entering school. He stated there would possibly be continued testing throughout the year.

Mr. Failing thanked all of the teachers and parents who have reached out to the Board. He shared they have been supportive and he wanted to know it is appreciated. He was appreciative of those attending tonight’s meeting where we can keep moving forward with having questions answered for everyone. Time is running out and the Board wants to make an informed decision. He would like to be able to send in detailed questions so they can be more responsive.

President Marelli agreed with Mr. Failing’s thoughts. Everyone feels strongly and this is an enormous decision to make.

Dr. Toles-Torain shared her results from the health committees. Screening of students and employees, mental and emotional health were some of the things they researched. They strongly several points. They encourage everyone to get a flu vaccine. Some items they are recommending are flu clinics for staff, providing instruction on proper handwashing, parent and guardians should provide health screenings by checking temps before leaving, practicing social distancing on the buses, all staff and students wearing masks, hand washing every two hours, hallway passing and flow, staggering dismissals, nurse evaluations for those who have symptoms, nurses providing education to staff, eliminate congestion in the nurse’s office, medication distribution, evidence of negative test for clearance to return to school, parent consent and isolation procedures, volunteers and school visitors at a minimum, limited contact with students, no field trips, essential arts restrictions in place, outdoor areas for staff/student use, and fire drill procedures. Student social/emotional learning and schoolwide behavior were also reviewed. Mr. Failing asked if we can follow all of the items on their recommendations. Dr. Toles-Torain stated we will need to this. Dr. Denman asked about bus capacity since there is 23 person as the limit. Mr. Bonner shared DOE guidance states it is one person per seat, every other seat/row. Driver safety was discussed. Mr. Marasco asked about the survey result of about 50% using transportation. Mr. Bonner stated we will look at the best way to transport students. Possibly bringing in 1/3 of the students could be an option once the Board decides what plan we are going with. Building administration would be involved. Dr. Fitzgerald asked clarification on mask-wearing grade level. The committees are recommending grades 1-12 to wear masks.

Mr. Failing asked Dr. Noel about our staff and their concerns they may have and the preliminary thoughts of staff returning. Dr. Noel stated we have to go against everything we are used to when seeing our students. We will work with staff members who may have accommodations. Most situations are based on the individual. Mr. Failing stated we will need to address those who may have higher risk family members at home. Dr. Denman asked about staff using sick days. Dr. Noel stated there will be state guidance for this. Mr. Failing asked about what other districts are thinking regarding the fear of coming to work. Dr. Noel stated we must follow the labor laws and use care and compassion with each case.

Mr. Rodgers took questions from the Board. We are using the USDA waiver giving meals to our students and families under the Summer School Program. We feed our families seven days a week. This expires on August 31st. If they do not extend this waiver, we would then fall under the National School Lunch Program. If this occurs, we could only provide meals to CR students and only for school days. Parents must enter their child’s PIN. We are asking for the waiver to be extended. We are going to the very last day of August 31st to provide meals. We have the ability to feed our children with the equipment we have in place. There are several methods to consider. We are asking our state leaders and national leaders to extend the waiver so we can continue to serve our families. From a revenue standpoint, we would lose significant revenue if we go into the National School Lunch Program. Mr. Failing expressed his appreciation for his dedicated work feeding our families. Mr. Rodgers gave all the credit to his team.

Mrs. Judy shared information on the Cares Act Funding. We have 1.5 million which will be allocated very quickly. In addition, we are trying to be proactive when spending. Cleaning, additional bus runs, and after-school instruction are being considered carefully. Our insurance agent stated we are covered as long as we are following the guidelines.
Dr. Fitzgerald introduced the building principals who were in attendance for this meeting. Mr. Failing wondered if teachers will be in their classroom while teaching remotely, etc. He didn't feel it was fair to ask the administrators this question at this time. He would like to get some direct responses on if your buildings will be ready when we go hybrid. Grading and plans for the first marking period should also be addressed. Mr. Marasco echoed Mr. Failing's comments. Plans for a possible spike should be addressed and how a transition could happen if needed. Mrs. Faircloth stated we could transition back and forth fairly easily. Mr. Marasco asked if we could have staff back in the buildings if they choose to do so even if we are teaching remotely. Dr. Fitzgerald stated the buildings will be open. Smyrna School District has offered daycare for staff.

Dr. Fitzgerald asked the Board for the information they need to make a decision. Dr. Denman stated she would like to pick a date to evaluate the data. Mr. Failing asked if we are going to be safe if we bring staff back into the building? The Board needs to know if we are ready 100% with the following guidelines. He feels we will be starting remotely. We have a lot of work to do gathering supplies, etc. Dr. Fitzgerald asked for any information they would need for a decision to be made on Tuesday night knowing we won't have all of the answers. Mr. Failing asked if we could do remote learning in September and be ready. Dr. Denman requested the results from the staff survey. She asked about small group instruction for special needs students for a remotely learning and hybrid plan. Mrs. Faircloth and Mr. Thompson are working together with social distancing and PPE. Mr. Marasco would like to know about transportation, food service inside the buildings, and crowd control for nurses and staff for a hybrid plan. Dr. Fitzgerald will collect the questions from the Board and seek answers.

Mr. Marasco thanked the community for their emails, suggestions, and information given to the Board. He continued to thank those attending tonight's meeting. He stated our plan needs to be doable and is looking forward to the staff survey and the next meetings.

Adjournment

At 7:58 p.m. Mr. Failing made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and the motion carried 3-0 with 2 absent. (Marasco, Failing, and Denman).

Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary Date