

The Cumberland County Board of Education met in special session on Friday, November 13, 2020 at 8:30 am with the following board members present: Alicia Chisolm, Greg West, Deanna Jones, Susan Williams, Carrie Sutton, Joseph Sorce, Judy Musgrave, Charles McKellar and Donna Vann.

Others present were Superintendent Marvin Connelly, Associate Superintendents, Ron Phipps, Betty Musselwhite, Lindsay Whitley, Mary Black, Ruben Reyes, Stacey Wilson-Norman, Joe Desormeaux and Clyde Locklear; Board Attorney Nick Sojka.

1. OPENING ITEMS

1.01 Mrs. Chisolm called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

1.02 CONSIDER a Motion pursuant to Board Policy Codes 2300 and 2450, effective for this meeting only, to waive any requirements that board members participate in the meeting in-person, and to ratify and formally adopt the virtual meeting format described in the Meeting Notice. Upon a motion by Greg West, seconded by Susan Williams, the board voted unanimously to approve item 1.02.

1.03 CONSIDER Adoption of the Agenda

Upon a motion by Donna Vann, seconded by Joseph Sorce, the board voted unanimously to adopt the agenda.

1.04 CONSIDER Approval of Fall Testing Proposal as presented at the November 10, 2020 regular Board meeting.

Dr. Connelly shared that based on concerns shared at the November 10, 2020 meeting, he asked staff to explore all options available for testing. Additionally, high school principals and testing coordinators were surveyed for their input. Mr. Phipps shared the survey results.

Board members had the opportunity to share their thoughts on the testing proposal as presented in the information shared with Board members. Dr. Connelly reminded all that this is a *proposal* presented to the Board. It will be a decision of the Board on how to move forward. After much discussion, some members in support, others not supporting, the question was presented to Dr. Connelly regarding the plan if metrics were not in a place where a safe return was possible. Dr. Connelly responded that if metrics go significantly higher between now and Dec 14, he would notify the board that we would not bring students in for testing. Everything recommended is based on virus metrics.

After clarifying that Dr. Connelly made clear that if rates are outside where we are currently, or higher, Dr. Connelly will not bring students back, Carrie Sutton made the motion to approve item 1.04. Joseph Sorce seconded the motion.

Voting in favor of 1.04:

Chisolm, West, Sorce, Sutton, Vann and Williams

Voting against:
Jones, McKellar, Musgrave

1.05 CONSIDER Approval of Staff Return on December 7, 2020 for Reentry Preparation
Dr. Connelly shared that based on previous discussion with the Board, per Board request, we surveyed staff on return. Ruben Reyes shared the survey results and answered questions presented.

Mrs. Chisolm stated that all is predicated on low metrics.

Mr. West made a motion to approve item 1.05 (Motion for staff to return on January 4, 2021 to assist with reopening preparation based on COVID 19 metrics) Mr. Sorce seconded the motion.

Voting in favor of item 1.05:

Chisolm, West, Sorce, Sutton, Vann, Williams

Voting against:

Jones, McKellar, Musgrave

1.06 CONSIDER Approval of Plan for Re-Entry Transition as presented at the November 10, 2020 regular Board meeting

Mr. Reyes again presented the staff survey results. Following Mr. Reyes' presentation, Dr. Connelly again stated, contingent upon positive COVID 19 metrics and based on readiness factors, my administration and I recommend a transition to Plan B, following a staggered entry approach, on January 7, 2021 for traditional calendar students and January 11, 2021 for year-round calendar students.

Additionally, pending positive COVID 19 metrics, a transition for K-5 student to Plan A on February 1, 2021. This plan also limits students to a bus limitation to two students per seat on a bus. Both are contingent on metrics being in the right place. Each Board member was given the opportunity to again share their thoughts on this item. Some of the thoughts are as follows.

Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Vann thanked all for their hard work and shared appreciation.

Ms. Sutton shared concern that 60% of our staff are uncomfortable with return. She stated that we need to be clear that all of this is based on the infection rate being at or lower than 7% in January. Dr. Connelly stated all was contingent on metrics.

Mr. Sorce appreciates that we asked for input from stakeholders.

Mrs. Musgrave is concerned that as metrics rise, she is afraid to vote for this plan.

Mr. McKellar feels that some survey statements build in bias.

Mr. West stated that although the numbers may increase, based on statements from Dr. Beth Tilson, K-12 students are not making it worse. Regarding metrics, it is more than one metric. Dr. Green has not implemented any local control methods. He stated that plans create a safe environment. He feels the super minority should not hold us hostage from returning.

Mrs. Chisolm also thanked all for their work and for sharing their concerns. She stated her main concern is safety for all. She supports the plan depending on total metrics.

Dr. Connelly reminded all of the metrics we are monitoring:
Case positivity, rate of acceleration, rate of transmission.

Dr. Connelly asked if the Board wants him to return to the Board in January for another vote or move forward with the plan as presented today if metrics are right. Mr. West recommends that pending positive metrics, the tone from Dr. Green, the board does not need to meet again. If metrics become demonstratively worse, it will be apparent what Dr. Connelly will need to do.

Mr. West made the motion 'Contingent upon positive COVID 19 metrics and based upon the readiness factors presented by staff, the recommendation is a transition to Plan B following a staggered entry approach beginning January 7, 2021, for traditional calendar schools and January 11, 2021 for year-round schools. Additionally, pending positive COVID 19 metrics, a transition to Plan A for K-5 students beginning February 1, 2021, which would include two students per seat to be seated on the bus for transportation purposes.' Susan Williams seconded the motion.

Voting in favor: Chisolm, West, Sorce, Sutton (only if positive metrics- under 7%), Vann, Williams

Voting against: Jones, McKellar, Musgrave

With no additional business, Mrs. Chisolm adjourned the meeting at 10:12 am.

Dr. Marvin Connelly, Superintendent