

BOARD NOTES

July 14, 2021

A special meeting of the School Board was held Wednesday, July 14, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. in the New Prairie High School Auditorium with Mr. Phil King, Mr. Dale Groves, Mr. Al Williamson and Mrs. Jill Smith present. Dr. Paul White, Superintendent, was also present.

Mr. Jason DeMeyer was absent.

Mr. Phil King, Board President, reviewed guidelines for speaking on agenda items

There was a motion by Mr. Groves to adopt the agenda, seconded by Mrs. Smith and approved 4-0-1.

CONSENT ITEMS

The Board approved the consent items as follows:

A. Personnel Report:

CERTIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations/Retirements
 1. Todd Dermody – Resignation as NPHS Alternative Education Teacher effective 6/23/2021
 2. Jon Schroeder – ECA Resignation as Olive Twp. Elementary 5th Grade Volleyball Coach effective 6/23/2021
 3. Teresa Serry – Retirement as NPMS Art Teacher effective 7/31/21
 4. Rhonda Myers – Resignation as Prairie View Elementary Principal effective 7/15/21
- Employment
 1. Sarah Hernandez – New Prairie Middle School Temporary Grade 6 English Language Teacher beginning 7/1/2021 pending criminal background search results
 2. Tara Curless – New Prairie Middle School PE/Health Teacher beginning 7/1/2021 pending criminal background search results
 3. Jonathan Chase – NPHS Alternative Education Teacher beginning 7/1/2021 pending criminal background search results
 4. Nicole Blake – NP Elementary Art Teacher beginning 7/1/21 pending criminal background search results
- Employment – Extra-Curricular
 1. Steve Baumgartner – NPHS Boys Basketball Assistant Varsity Coach beginning 2021-2022 school year
 2. Marlene Nickerson – NPMS Girls Cross Country Coach for the 2021-2022 school year
- Adjustments
 1. Jennifer Soos to receive a stipend of \$567 for training in June for PRIME Math Grant
 2. Steve Wade to receive a stipend of \$1,275 for 3-day training in July for PRIME Math Grant
 3. The following counselors and social workers to receive a stipend of \$100 for participating in the NPUSC High Ability Guidance & Counseling Plan:
 - Allison Middlebrook
 - Tim Flanagan
 - Melissa Kuczanski
 - Sara Harmon
 - Tara Walden
 - Heidi Schellinger

- Megan Papp
 - Angela Ruby
 - Tia Kolasa
 - Katie Kester
4. Ashley Wojtysiak to receive a \$2,000 stipend for directing the Summer Swim Program paid from the HFL Grant

CLASSIFIED

- Leaves/Resignations/Retirements
 1. Kellie Sturgeon – Resignation as Prairie View Elementary Building Secretary effective 7/1/2021
- Employment
 1. Jannie Ivankovig – NPHS Secretary/Registrar position beginning 7/22/21 pending criminal background check results
 2. Candice Scott - NPUSC Transportation Secretary beginning 8/1/21 pending criminal background check results
- Employment – Extra Curricular
 1. Ross Strieter – NPHS Boys Basketball JV Coach for the 2021-2022 school year
 2. Kasey Doorn – NPHS Girls Head Soccer Coach for the 2021-2022 school year
 3. Kyle Young – NPHS Boys Assistant Swim Coach for the 2021-2022 school year
 4. Haylee Presley – NPHS Girls Assistant Swim Coach for the 2021-2022 school year
- Adjustments
 1. Jaclyn Conley, Central Office Business Services, to change positions to Grant Coordinator at the District Office.
 2. Christal Jonas, Central Office Receptionist/Secretary, to change positions to Business Services at the Central Office.
 3. NPUSC Food Service staff to receive .50 cent increase effective August 2021
 4. NPUSC Food Service staff entry rate increased from \$9.50 to \$10.00

REPORTS

(A) Superintendent's Report:

- Dr. White welcomed the community who attended the meeting. Dr. White gave a summary on the most recent Health Department guidance from the State of Indiana. He explained that as we are coming to the end of the pandemic, with state numbers that have significantly improved, we are planning on full, in-person daily attendance.
- Dr. White explained that the Health Department makes it very clear that as of July 1, 2021, local school boards have the responsibility to implement any measures or restrictions, deemed necessary, to address COVID concerns at the local level.
- Dr. White explained that the Health Department no longer recommends a full mask requirement. They recommend anyone vaccinated does not need to wear masks at all. Regarding unvaccinated persons, wearing masks is recommended not required. The Health Department recommends that anyone vaccinated is exempt from quarantining. It is also suggested by the Health Department that anyone not vaccinated be quarantined for the required 10-day period in a close contact situation with a COVID positive person.
- Dr. White stated that the teacher association and the administration, after reviewing the information by the Health Department, agree with getting back to a pre-pandemic, normal school day with masks optional. He also recommends quarantining close contacts that are unvaccinated per latest Health Dept recommendations and the teachers association also recommends this and he agrees with that step, particularly due to a lack of vaccination option for elementary students currently

- Dr. White stated that he and the NPUSC teachers association suggest that we begin the year with masks not required but optional. Lunches will not be social distanced to start the year. The recommendation is based on the concept built on the Health Departments reporting on a 7-day average of positive cases but applied to our school buildings, not the county average. At a 0-5% positive cases in a school we are back to normal with continued sanitizing. Dr. White reminded that last year stringent protocols to change our attendance plan were always in place at 1.0 % to 1.5% positive cases with mitigation steps throughout. This year, Dr. White recommends we do not look at implementing stronger mitigation steps until we get to the 5-10% positive case range. Examples would include students will go back to social distancing at lunch, water coolers brought back, student mixing reduced, field trips & visitors reduced. Extra-curricular activities will be reviewed on a team by team basis. Another mitigation step at 5-10% positive cases would be to temporarily bring in a mask requirement for a week or two until situation is back in control. Consideration for hybrid attendance would happen at a 10-15% positive case rate over a 7-day period. Elementary students under the age of 12 presently are not vaccinated. If a student in an elementary classroom tests positive then masks will temporarily be expected for a week monitoring the situation. If more than 4 in a classroom test positive then look at an eLearning situation for that classroom.
- Dr. White stated, per Federal Mandate, school buses currently fall in the federal government's Public Transportation mandate to wear a mask if using the service. All bus drivers in the nation and students must wear a mask on the buses until the federal mandate is changed.

ACTION ITEMS

- Mr. King took community comments regarding the proposed COVID 19 Protocols for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Mr. Henrich stated that he mostly agreed with what Dr. White had to say. He explained the caution last year with COVID. He stated that what he didn't realize was the mental and emotional distress it would have on the kids. He strongly feels that masks should be at the parent's discretion.
- Mr. Malone said that he agrees with the gentleman who made the statement regarding the mental and emotional effects of mask wearing on the students. He believes as well that it should be up to the discretion of the parents.
- Mrs. Jarka thanked Dr. White for his presentation on trying to begin the year as normal as possible. She stated how relieved she is to hear his recommendation to the Board and believes it is a great plan as presented. She thanked the administration and Board for their support last year in keeping everyone safe. Mrs. Jarka stated that she agrees with the previous two gentlemen on the mask protocol and is concerned with the health of the students who sometimes come to school with soiled masks as well as the social, emotional effects of them. She agrees with giving parents the option.
- Mr. Pietrzak spoke on guarding against complacency though he agrees with what has been discussed. He feels that we should not hold ourselves to the numbers. He feels we should watch for trending, citing that the Delta variant is getting worse and it is not known yet how it is spread. If you feel something is coming please act on it and do not wait for a certain number to make changes. He feels that the Board does have good judgement.
- Mr. King started the Board discussion on two options he presented on quarantine and contact tracing:
 - Option One-NPUSC will quarantine COVID Positive Cases only and will contact trace only to notify families to monitor symptoms. Families will have the option to keep students' home that are in close contact as a precaution.

- Option Two-NPUSC will quarantine/contact trace per Dr. White's recommendation based on Indiana Dept of Health recommendations at that time.
 - Mr. Groves started by stating that he would attempt to use data to determine what is best for students and staff at NP. The current data shows that things are looking better. He believes masks should be optional with family's making the choice. Mr. Groves stated he looked at the data before the meeting as he does regularly and sees that right now we are in the blue. He stated that if you are a parent who is still nervous and you have an option to send your student to school with a mask as well as if a teacher feels more comfortable wearing a mask then please do wear it.
 - Mr. Williamson agrees with Mr. Groves about the parent and employee option on mask wearing. He feels the kids need to be in school. He has seen the social and emotional issues with kids as a result of them not being in school. Mr. Williamson said that if things change quickly the Board will make the changes necessary. He stresses that the custodial staff stay diligent with cleaning and sanitizing. He thanked the parents for speaking tonight.
 - Mrs. Smith stated that she agrees that masks should be optional with parent choice. When it comes to contract tracing, she goes along with what the Dept of Health suggests. She can support no contact tracing; however, she would like to see those students wear a mask for 14 days with social distancing. She explained that keeping kids in school is most important at this time.
 - Mr. King asked Dr. White if the 10% positive rate is reached if masks will be required for a 10-day period for unvaccinated students or all students?
 - Dr. White responded that there was not a differentiation between the two groups as it would be a challenge in terms of enforcement, therefore, it would be for everyone.
 - Mr. Groves agreed with Dr. White. Mr. King stated that if an individual is vaccinated then they should not have to wear a mask and remain optional. Mr. Williamson said that if the numbers go that high (5%-10%) then we have a problem as it did not get that high last year. Mr. Williamson agreed with Dr. White and Mr. Groves that everyone should put the masks back on. Mrs. Smith agrees with Dr. White, Mr. Groves and Mr. Williamson and feels it would be more important to put masks back on everyone for 10 days, slow the spread, and keep kids in school.
 - Mr. King asked about if the 5-10% positive rate was reached would we implement the contract tracing and quarantine with vaccinated and unvaccinated students or just unvaccinated students? Mr. Groves answered that his opinion would be the same as for the masks. He would support both groups. Mr. Williamson agreed with Mr. Groves. Mrs. Smith stated that she also agrees with both Mr. Williamson and Mr. Groves. Dr. White suggested that the recommendation should be that the unvaccinated at a 5 – 10% positive rate be quarantined and for the vaccinated the Health Department contacted for further guidance.
- (A) The Board approved COVID 19 Protocols for the 2021-2022 School Year, including the provision NPUSC will quarantine COVID positive cases only
- (B) The Board approved the Updated Job Descriptions

DISCUSSION

- (A) First Reading for New Board Policy:
Board Member Electronic Participation in Board Meetings
- There was no discussion by the Board

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Groves made the motion to adjourn at 5:34 p.m.

*Board approved COVID-19 Protocols for the 2021-2022 School Year beginning with Summer Programming on July 19, 2021. Protocols will include:

- **Masks optional for students/staff with the provision masks may be temporarily required any time COVID cases in a building reach five percent or higher**
- **Masks will be required on school buses due to Federal Public Transportation mandate. When the federal mandate is cancelled, NPUSC will move to masks optional on NPUSC school buses. If any building reaches five percent or more positive COVID cases, masks will again be temporarily required on NPUSC school buses**
- **NPUSC will quarantine COVID Positive Cases only and will contact trace only to notify families to monitor symptoms. Families will have the option to keep students' home that are in close contact as a precaution.**
- **Masks will be required for all staff & students if COVID Positive numbers reach 5% or more in any particular building**
- **Contact Tracing & Quarantine will occur if COVID Positive numbers reach 5% or higher for unvaccinated staff & students and for vaccinated students NPUSC will reach out to LaPorte County Health Dept. for guidance**
- **NPUSC will only implement mitigation steps to reduce spread when COVID cases within a building reach five to ten percent. Mitigation steps may include distancing at lunch time, temporary shut-off water fountains, and reduced visitors-volunteers-field trips**
- **NPUSC will consider use of the Hybrid Instructional Model temporarily if COVID cases within a building reach ten to fifteen percent**
- **NPUSC will consider use of an E-Learning Instructional Model temporarily if COVID cases within a building reach fifteen percent or more, with an incremental return to daily in-person learning that may include Hybrid Instruction first**
- **NPUSC may implement mitigation steps, including a temporary mask requirement, in an Elementary classroom if COVID cases exist within that classroom**
- **NPUSC will consider use of an E-Learning Instructional Model temporarily for a specific Elementary classroom if four or more COVID cases exist within that classroom**
- **Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular activities will continue as normal. Mitigation steps within a program will be considered on a case by case basis**