

**CLOSED MINUTES
OF
SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON
NOVEMBER 18, 2020 at 7:00 P.M.
HARLEM HIGH SCHOOL
W 145**

Motion to go into closed session to discuss Employment of Personnel and Negotiations

1st S. Berogan 2nd Sterling

Meeks, S. Berogan, Ranieri, Sterling, J. Berogan, Lawrence, Meister – 7 ayes

Motion carried

Other Attendees:

Kris Arduino, Recording Secretary

Dr. Julie Morris, Superintendent

Employment of Personnel/Negotiations

Patti Lawrence noted that the numbers are rising for Covid positive and we need to have an open discussion regarding barriers and positives for remote learning.

Dr. Morris shared that she has taken a look at the issue of Covid and how we can compromise with another plan. The original plan was for November 30 through January 15. That is not something the Board wants to take a look at. A compromise plan to get through the tough spot right now with full remote and still addressing the issues for families that do not have a place for kids to go is the compromise. Jason has spent time with the YMCA and Girls & Boys Club for this period of time for kids to be able to attend these centers to enable people to have child care while learning remotely. There is really an issue with Covid and many have died across the country. The Governor talked yesterday and did issue many mandates as far as staying home as much as possible. We can do that as a compromise between Thanksgiving and Christmas with remote learning and come back on January 4. This will get us through the spike time. Per Dr. Martell this is a spike time and every holiday since spring has spiked numbers.

In the Governor's statement yesterday, he said that in order to stop the spread and preserve some semblance of the holidays we need to do more than just wear masks now. It is spreading quickly and wildly and whenever possible you need to stay home. He said schools were okay to stay in session but this concerns me as we have two staff members that are currently in the hospital and we don't want to see staff hurt by Covid. We have the means to provide education via remote and provide assistance to families for students to go to a place during the day on a sliding financial basis and for free. If their money runs out we feel the District should provide a reduced or free rate. We also will continue to provide food for families by pick up or delivery. We have the means to help people out. We have the means to do remote learning as some kids thrive and some not. Right now, because of the safety factors we need to consider and mitigate and we need to do this. All of our students have Chromebooks. There is a difference with E-learning at the beginning of the year and now in that students now know the tools and how to use their Chromebooks. There was a big learning curve at the beginning and we will have hotspots to provide families if needed.

The other fact is that it is a defined period of time and is reasonable based upon the situation. In January we may need to relook at it based on what the Governor says. We could come back to in

person learning after the holidays. Many things the Governor said states it is really bad but we have to consider what the Union is doing also. They are targeting the Board but we need to focus on what is best for the District. We need to do what is best for staff, students and community right now. People are exhausted emotionally, mentally and physically and this short period of time from November 30 through December 18, would be e-learning. Patti is concerned that with e-learning kids will not be doing the work and she wants to make sure that bus drivers can bring continue to work if necessary and other support staff and paras could potentially be in a setting monitoring kids who are e-learning in a room and may be there to answer questions that kids may have. No child shall be at home if there is a concern about their educational needs being met. If we need an administrator to teach a classroom that would be also available.

Jill noted that if we are having students in the elementary level test positive and students are not going out on quarantine with the whole class why are we not doing it. Julie noted that due to contract tracing not everybody goes out on quarantine. Jill noted that she has a major issue with that. Julie noted that if that is happening we will address and she will talk to Heidi.

Mike agreed with Dr. Morris and confirmed that with the 3 weeks pause we will not let go of any staff and everybody will be working. Julie noted some people will not have a lot to do but we have a lot of trainings they can do as well. Food Service people will rotate to do the food, bus drivers will rotate on picking up students and delivering food.

Patti asked that if there is an IEP child with a para, and if we have a para only available on computer is that meeting their needs.

Jill noted another concern is mixing cohorts. Patti noted that at some point we need to do something different. Patti noted that it will be the same class every single day. Jill asked if we closed schools and they are going to different daycares now we are mixing more cohorts and isn't that more of a strain on the medical field. She reached out to Dr. Martell and she is waiting for staff quarantines due to positive contact in Harlem Schools and positive cases inside the school metrics. She noted that Scott Rollinson should also be able to provide this information but until recently it was not being tracked. Dr. Martell noted that there has been no transmission within the schools but Jill noted when in daycares they are not going to be separated. Patti noted that they could still be going to a daycare anyway or now and they will continue in that regard. Jill then asked what would make the difference as there will still be staffing issues when we come back. Patti noted that a three-week break will allow people to get healthy and alleviate some of the pressure. Not everyone will quarantine. Sue noted that what about teachers that still have to teach and still have students in our district will they be able to drop their kids off and will the District cover that. Julie noted that we will have students with the same teacher if out on remote. Patti noted that teachers can send their children to school for e-learning or work from school or if home and if the children are not self-sufficient, then they would do the Y care as well. Sue noted that we need to offer structure for students that need that in the building and not learning remote. Mike noted that whatever the Y is charging if you cannot meet it the Y has grants and the people who are charged the District can cover for them. Julie noted that a parent who needs Y Care can be anybody who doesn't have a place for a child or for a parent that can't stay home. 504 and IEP students normally do better in the structured environment and they can still go there. Teachers can also drop their children so they can remote teach while their students are being assisted with the remote learning. The kids who are at Y care will be in with their teacher remotely. There will be Y care people supervising these classes and people in the buildings to help. Julie noted we are working through the building locations with the Y and we would spread out as we don't want all close contact but social distanced. The Y care can use our buildings and they have a program at Camp Winnebago as well. This is daycare and remote

learning. Patti asked what the maximum number of remote learning students would be that we can have in a building. Julie noted as soon as we know what the numbers are we can decide all of this.

Jill asked what is the difference in having in person vs. daycare and a remote learning class. Julie said the number of staffs needed is the reason. The licensed teachers will be on the computers and there should be less staffing and less interaction for less transmission.

Mike noted that he likes the offering of other options for kids to go to Y Care and child care so parents can work and children will be supervised as to remote learning.

Julie noted Belvidere works with their Park District. She is not familiar with their program. Jill asked if anyone has looked into why Belvidere's positivity rate is 30% as they have been remote all school year. Our totals are less and we have been in school and remote. Are they actually keeping students separated and who holds them accountable.

Patti noted that part of the reason is that the District and Board did so much work to prepare such as purchase of air purifiers so our protocols are working. It is 25% in our area per Mike. Jill noted if in our District it is not being spread, how many were in person contact in schools and Scott said 9. So, staff members are not following the guidelines and we can't control that. Julie noted that what we need to do as the Board is look at the big picture and the numbers are there. The rates are skyrocketing in the greater community which has an effect on the mental and social well-being as well staff is exhausted. We are looking at a defined period of time with providing assistance to students and families who cannot do remote at home. We can't fix every scenario but we work with our families and we know who will need some assistance and what type. We have to make a decision as to what is right now. We have to consider this as well. The holidays are coming and we would love to say everyone will stay home but it is likely that many people will not do this. Patti noted that people are not staying home right now. She knows what is going on in the hospitals and schools are safe but it is our responsibility to project out to be proactive or reactive. We went from 1 Covid in a week to 5 deaths in a day. We need to be proactive. If someone is eligible for free and reduced and if people don't meet that the District should pick up the tab.

Mike Sterling noted it is good that it is a defined period. Julie noted that there will be about ten days after Christmas before we would come back on January 4. Mike noted that if we do something like this there should be a sigh of relief from the Union as no one knows what is going on right now. As long as there is a defined period of time with a start and end date there is no ambiguity. Patti noted it is important that we control our message.

Patti noted that as a Board we can make decisions and come to a consensus on how to proceed and we can start notifying families with our message. We stick with our plan and watch as we go.

Jill noted if we would have had correct numbers and breakdowns for schools such as Windsor, it would have been helpful. Windsor had 3 positives the entire year and now they are being impacted. Staff is stating that the protocols are not being followed. Julie noted that many of the comments made are not completely truthful. Kids are wearing masks, but some need reminders, Julie doesn't see it when she is in the schools. There are things that we correct on a daily basis. With 1500 employees and 6,000 students we will have things to address. She gave as an example did the comment tonight from that person ever talk to the principal about it. So many people don't bring things they see to the proper administrators. Julie noted that the majority are being

following but there are times we need to remind and retrain people. Patti noted that we need to have people go through the process and not come directly to the Board.

Patti noted we need to work with the Union to say this is not the way to get your way but you need to take steps also. If Julie talked to the Board and it doesn't work then the Union comes to the Board and they are not taking these steps. We have to follow steps. Jill noted the last Equity & Social Justice meeting she stated that we need to sit down and talk with the Union and she was told we are not talking to them by Patti.

Jill noted that if it was Julie's role to do this it was not being done. Julie asked Jill what she meant by that? She noted that she tells the Union all the time that they need to go to the principals before going to the Board all the time. Rich asked if she is talking about a lot of the public comments. Rich noted that the Union gave out mass templates to flood the meetings. Patti noted that everything we say the Union throws it back in our face and they take it to the media. Jill insisted that we need to sit down and talk to the Union as we were not getting accurate information. Julie noted that the Board and Superintendent working together so it does not get to this point is so important. She is aware there is trust issues with her and to say she is not doing her job is wrong. Unions do this. Jill noted that she totally aware because she is in a Union. Julie noted on the side of governance we need to know that is what they do and we need to make decisions for the whole and as Rich said they put it out there to come and flood us with public comments and they will continue this. We need to continue to focus on what is best for the District. Jill continued to state that it is better if we sit down with them and see what they know.

Julie noted that everyone is scared and it is a terrible situation and it is new. We need to work through it and address it right now with this situation based on the greater picture with Covid. The best decision is to take the pause for a short period of time.

Rich Meister agrees on the defined pause

Consensus to allow Julie's proposed pause to have a defined 3 week pause to January 4

Sue, Evelyn, Rich, Patti, Jill-no, Mike yes, Sharon, yes

6 yes to 1 no to take a defined 3 week pause to January 4. Patti noted that no one gets turned away if child care is needed to which Julie responded correct.

Sharon asked how do you get the little ones to do this remote learning. Evelyn noted that her grandchildren are all doing it at home. Sharon noted that she has seen the anxiety with her own grandchild when she was not understanding. Julie noted that this should be talked with teacher to make sure she is aware.

Julie noted that there are ways to handle the remote learners through Y Care and Girls' and Boys' Club.

Next steps with the Union for Thursday evening.

Julie asked the Board if they still want to meet with the Union. Patti said leave it up to the Union and if they want to meet we will still meet with them. Julie noted that they wanted through January 20, but if we get to January 4 this is a good step. Rich noted we may have to do that but you don't know.

Julie noted that we will put notification out tomorrow about the defined pause. Jason will get things finalized and things are in place already for financial assistance and signing up a child.

We will work on communications with parents by the end of day tomorrow as well as letting the Union know before we send it out.

Julie noted we will be meeting in the morning to finalize it. Rich is hopeful that the Union will not then do a demonstration.

Motion to return to open

1st J. Berogan 2nd Sterling

All aye