

August 3, 2020

SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA

The Scranton School Board of Directors held a Special Meeting for the Specific Purpose of Reopening Plan and to adopt the 2021 Preliminary Proposed General Fund Budget on Monday, August 3, 2020 immediately following the 6:30PM Budget and Finance Committee Meeting.

President Gilmartin called the meeting to order at 7:20PM with a Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

At this time President Gilmartin asked for a moment of silence for Lexi Caviston-Ashmar who passed away and was a graduate of Scranton High School. Ms. Gilmartin expressed caring thoughts and shared Lexi's desire to be remembered in her plans for a scholarship for fellow Scranton High School alum so they may pursue a nursing degree. Ms. Gilmartin, to the Caviston and Ashmar families, they are in our thoughts.

Roll Call: By the Secretary.

Present: Directors Cruz, Dempsey, Fox, Hume, Malloy, McAndrew, Welby, Yanni and President Gilmartin.

Absent: All Present.

A Health & Safety Plan including reopening plans was presented by Administrators. Superintendent Melissa McTiernan reminded all parents that if they chose they may opt for full virtual education.

<C:\Users\virginia.orr\Downloads\SSD Health and Safety Proposals.pdf>

Mrs. McTiernan also asked every member of the school district community to complete the survey that will be available until August 7th at 3:00pm.

Mrs. McTiernan also thanked Dr. Michael Brown and Dr. Patrick Conaboy for their guidance with the plan and also thanked Mr. Rocco DiPietro as well.

Following the presentation President Gilmartin welcomed questions from the board members.

Director Dempsey asked if there will be a help desk for students and parents to reach out during the day.

Mrs. McTiernan said there isn't anything set up right now but that is certainly something they will document.

Director Dempsey asked, with regards to secondary education, will teachers be required to clean the desks between changes of classes and if so are there enough supplies on hand.

Mrs. McTiernan said teachers will not be responsible to clean desks unless it is something they wanted to do and it is not in the guidelines or guidance to do that; buildings will be cleaned at the end of the day as we do not have the staff to do every classroom after every period.

Director Dempsey asked about the deep cleaning of classrooms in the elementary schedule.

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Mrs. McTiernan said the deep cleaning would be performed every night in every school. Mr. Dougherty added that staff is still going to be in the buildings and extensive cleaning would still occur on cyber Wednesday.

Director Dempsey asked if the students will have access to their lockers and also if they will be allowed to use backpacks for their items.

Mrs. McTiernan said lockers will not be used at this time and backpacks would be allowed only if they are clear mesh bags but will be discussed further.

Director Dempsey asked that if the board decides on a hybrid model, do we know when grouping will be decided, for example in regards to siblings in order to give parents time to prepare.

Mrs. McTiernan said they have already begun working on groupings and siblings are being taken into consideration.

Director Dempsey asked if we move to virtual approach, will teachers have a classroom or will some teachers be floating.

Mrs. McTiernan said she cannot answer if every teacher will have a classroom, some related arts teachers will have a cart but they would be accommodated with space.

Director Fox asked if uniforms would still be required if they are learning in class. Mrs. McTiernan indicated they would.

Director Fox asked if there is the potential to start virtually and then re-evaluate later.

Mrs. McTiernan said the board can revise the Health & Safety Plan as many times as they wish.

Director Malloy asked for more information with regards to school lunches.

Mr. Pat Laffey said under the hybrid model, the students would receive breakfast and lunch and if students are attending virtually they would have the option of grab n go.

Director McAndrew asked about the CTC schedule.

Mrs. McTiernan said that again, it depends on the board vote; CTC students, if we are in a virtual model, then they would be one of the groups that would go to CTC and she is unsure if the CTC has voted on their plan yet.

President Gilmartin said the vote is planned for this Thursday. Mrs. McTiernan then didn't want to speak too much about CTC schedules yet but will work as best as they can to accommodate CTC students.

Director McAndrew asked if there will be any cost savings by going full virtual learning.

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Mrs. McTiernan could not answer today until after the vote but it is something they will work on to provide to the board.

Director Hume asked if the board will be given updates on a regular basis. Mrs. McTiernan assured her they would receive updates.

Director Welby asked Mrs. McTiernan to speak on the oversight of teachers in a virtual world.

Mrs. McTiernan said that is a reason why they feel the teachers should report to work every day and the building principals are responsible for the teachers in their building and they are putting out a plan how many times teachers need to be synchronous and asynchronous, whether that's recording lessons or being live and it is the responsibility of the principal to make sure that what we tell the parents is in the plan, is happening.

Director Cruz clarified with Mrs. McTiernan that whichever model is chosen, there will be some students returning to some buildings; Mrs. McTiernan said correct. Ms. Cruz asked if parents or guardians be required to sign a statement of release in case a student was to contract COVID.

Mrs. McTiernan deferred to Solicitor Audi.

Mr. Audi said there has been a lot of debate in the legal community and it is our position that simply putting a note of assumption that there is a risk in sending your student to school because waivers are not essentially effective anyway.

Director Yanni asked how confident they are they that there will be a continuous supply of PPE for students and staff.

Mrs. McTiernan said there were two masks ordered for every student, they are the washable cloth masks, and face shields were ordered for every teacher or adult. Mrs. McTiernan asked Mr. Laffey exactly how many masks were ordered.

Mr. Laffey said 1200 face shields, two cloth masks per student, plus some extra masks for a total of 24,000.

Mrs. Sharon Baddick added that the Special Education Department has also ordered an additional masks and face shields for those who will require them.

Mr. Paul Dougherty also said the Operations Department has also ordered masks.

Director Hume asked Mrs. McTiernan, if the board votes on a hybrid model and parents are unhappy about sending their student to school, would they have the option for full virtual.

Mrs. McTiernan said every parent has the option of full virtual regardless of how the board votes next week on Monday, August 10th. Mrs. McTiernan agreed the students would not suffer academically if they chose full virtual.

Director Dempsey asked if there is a deadline if a parent chooses full virtual.

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Mrs. McTiernan said that if the board chooses hybrid and a parent decides later to move to virtual that is their choice but there needs to be more discussion so that students aren't going back and forth between virtual and hybrid. They cannot make definitive decision without a vote from the board yet.

Director Malloy asked how parents are going to get the survey, how to fill it out and the timeline.

Mrs. McTiernan said the survey will be available starting tomorrow on the website August 4th and will be available until August 7th at 3 PM; they will be notifying parents through an all call and also on the website and social media.

Paul Dougherty said it will only be available on the website and people are able to complete it on their cell phones or computers and it is a simple Google doc asking what school their children attend and whether they chose a full virtual or hybrid and it is available in English and Spanish.

Director Welby asked that if the board chooses the full virtual model, if we can have sports for the fall.

Mrs. McTiernan believes there is some controversy at a much higher level with discussions saying how we can move to full virtual, that it's not safe for students in the classroom but they can play sports. She understands there are some guidelines coming out this week but that is a decision that is going to need to be made by the board after the decision is made for what proposal they're going to chose.

President Gilmartin now moved to Public Comment.

Christina Horne, Monticello, expressed concern reentering school under the current pandemic situation and her experience at Monticello, the need for behavioral techs and the recent furloughs of behavioral techs.

Marianne Davis, teacher at Monticello, shared her experience at Monticello and the needs of Monticello students and her concern of the Special Education Plan.

Angie Krieger, preschool teacher at Bancroft, expressed concern of a hybrid plan, the difficulty teaching virtually within the school building and if there will be subs available.

Suzanne Dicks, parent of Monticello student, spoke about the need of behavioral techs.

Sonya Ambrosia, works at Scranton High School, is concerned about the windows that don't open at Scranton High and the air conditioning re-circulating the air and how will we be able to stop the virus from spreading.

Mr. Dougherty said he doesn't know Ms. Ambrosia's room but said there has been a massive amount of work done on the air conditioning units at Scranton High in the last couple weeks making sure that ventilation is up and running but he will check it out.

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Erika Pavlowski, teacher at Monticello, expressed concern of the recent furlough of behavioral techs and the need of their services.

Ashley Richards, teacher at Monticello, expressed concern regarding the furlough of behavioral techs at Monticello. Ms. Richards thanked Directors Gilmartin and McAndrew for genuinely listening to her concerns. Ms. Richards also spoke of her injuries while in the classroom without a behavioral tech; she and her students are unsafe in the classroom.

Laura Roche, teacher at Monticello, spoke about how the furloughs of behavioral techs will impact the safety of students and staff.

Lindsey Vollrath, teacher at Monticello, spoke about the furlough of behavioral techs at Monticello.

Christina Smolley, teacher at Monticello, spoke about her teaching experience and the need for paraprofessionals and behavioral techs.

Helen Morohovech, teacher at Monticello, spoke about the furlough of behavioral techs.

Shawn Sullivan, speech therapist at Charles Sumner, spoke of the safety of reopening schools.

Karen Reed, recent furloughed behavioral tech, spoke about the need of behavioral techs at Monticello.

Melinda Conforti, teacher, expressed concern of HVAC systems in the schools, the need of masks and face shields and cleaning supplies. Ms. Conforti also spoke of the safety of reopening schools.

Megan Johnson, teacher at Monticello, spoke about the furlough of behavioral techs.

Dawn Hafner, expressed concern of the educational plan and reopening schools.

Ty Holmes, spoke about his experience in the military and the dangers of allowing children back in schools and the possible spread of COVID.

Holly Meade, special education teacher at Northeast, spoke about the equity plan, the need to translate documents in Spanish, professional development and virtual training.

Paul Lukasiewicz, spoke about the powerpoint he provided to the board and how easily the virus is transmitted through different schools as he travels to several schools.

Kim Gnall, music teacher, spoke about the teachers being blamed for the financial ruin of the district.

Jennifer Telesco – technical difficulties connecting.

Maria Healey-Hurst, expressed concerns about both the hybrid plan and the virtual plan.

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Andrea O'Neill-Hoffman, homeowner, spoke about rising taxes in the city.

Joel Hoffman, homeowner, spoke about the rising taxes in the city.

Pam Kochis, teacher at Willard Elementary, expressed concern about the safety of reopening schools.

Kelli Guerra, teacher at Willard Elementary, spoke about the needs of her students and concerns of reopening schools.

Jennifer Felter, art teacher, expressed concern of reopening schools.

Michele Shishlo, teacher at Willard Elementary, expressed concern of the spread of the virus and reopening schools.

Kathleen O'Neil, teacher at Scranton High, is concerned about the lack of cleaning supplies and her concern of the spread of the virus by reopening schools.

Jennifer Telesco – technical difficulties.

Suzanne Furey, teacher at Armstrong, thanked fellow teachers for speaking and spoke about her concerns of reopening schools.

Kathleen Beckwith, teacher and resident, was listed on the committee plan but did not have input, lack of virtual training, and concerns of reopening schools.

Emily Lutz – unavailable, did not speak.

Ann Blasko, teacher, expressed concern about reopening school.

Michelle Borthwick, teacher, spoke about risking their health by reopening schools.

Marissa Byron, teacher at Armstrong, spoke about teachers leaving the district and urged the board and administrators visit the schools, and does not have trust in the reopening of schools.

Rosemary Boland, SFT President, does not think schools should reopen and believes the schools should teach virtually for at least the first semester, concerns of the spread of the virus, the need that everyone should wear masks, urged the board to vote for virtual learning and defended her membership regarding being watched by “Big Mama”.

Kristin Baun, paraprofessional at Northeast Intermediate, spoke about the need of taking temperature before entering buildings, asked the board to temporarily suspend the dress code and expressed concern about reopening schools.

Krista Pastora, parent, expressed concerns of both the hybrid and virtual plans.

Lisa Resigno, teacher at Whittier, is concerned about ventilation in the school and is concerned about the safety if schools reopen.

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Lynn Cawley-Harding, teacher, is concerned about the safety reopening schools and is in favor of full virtual learning.

Karen Padden, expressed concern about reopening schools, scheduling and technology.

Amy Sekol, music teacher, spoke about the loss of music and libraries, and is concerned about reopening schools.

Jennifer Zaleski, teacher, expressed concerns and fear in reentry in schools.

Erin Moore, a Kindergarten teacher at Prescott, expressed concern of younger students wearing masks and social distancing.

Matt Loftus, teacher, urged the board to reopen schools safely.

Jennifer Telesco, parent and teacher, expressed concerns of reopening schools.

Nicole Santee, teacher at Scranton High School, asked if there are enough books to students or if there are online textbooks available and expressed concerns of Apex.

Danielle Richter – unavailable

Daniel Keeler, Sr., urged everyone to look out for the safety of the students, teachers and everyone in the community.

Christine Gutekunst, expressed concerns of reopening schools.

Matt Michaylo, teacher at Isaac Tripp, wishes for safe and normal reentry and expressed concern of reopening schools for special education students and staff.

Michael Richards, recently furloughed behavioral tech, addressed the board regarding the services of behavioral techs.

Bridget McAndrew, teacher at McNichols Plaza, expressed concern of reopening schools and is in favor of virtual learning.

Brittney Lee, paraprofessional at Isaac Tripp, expressed concern of reopening schools and is in favor of virtual learning.

Olivia Clough, student at Scranton High School, thanked the board and teachers, expressed concern of the lack of air conditioning at South Intermediate, asked why cheerleaders and band cannot meet if the footballs team can.

Director McAndrew thanked Olivia for speaking up.

Louise Poplarchick – unavailable

END PUBLIC COMMENT

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President Gilmartin now asked Solicitor Audi what his advice would be for them to make a decision this evening to vote on the reopening plan.

Since the meeting was advertised for the purpose of the Budget and the reopening plan and if the board chooses to do that, the community and public has had their input and we have met all the requirements of the Sunshine Act.

Director Hume objected to holding a vote this evening and since there is a survey out for the parents we should wait until we receive the survey results.

Director McAndrew made a motion to amend the agenda and vote on the plan this evening. Director Dempsey seconded.

Director Hume repeated her thought of waiting for the parent's survey.

Director Yanni asked Superintendent Mrs. McTiernan whether she would like to wait for the results of the survey.

Mrs. McTiernan said the sooner the decision is made the better; if the board is in agreement to vote this evening it would allow them to move forward.

Director McAndrew said it gives the parents more time to prepare and it is an opportunity to save some money and gives us more time to ensure the safety of students.

President Gilmartin said one of the issues is delaying the start of school and giving administration more time to work on the plan, and the Health & Safety plan must be adopted before the start of school.

Mrs. McTiernan agreed adding that they would appreciate the direction this evening so we could move forward.

Director Fox asked Mrs. McTiernan if they vote this evening can they still move forward with the parent's survey.

Mrs. McTiernan agreed.

Solicitor Audi asked if it is Ms. Gilmartin suggestion to go virtually for the first semester. Ms. Gilmartin said she is wondering if that is an option.

Director Malloy would like to know what the results of the survey before he makes his decision. Director Welby agreed.

Director Hume feels we should at least go virtually for a quarter.

President Gilmartin said there is still a motion and a second on the floor to amend the agenda and also suggested that the agenda is amended to include the calendar change this evening.

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Director McAndrew made a motion to also include the calendar change in the amended agenda. Director Dempsey seconded.

Motion passed unanimously on roll call.

President Gilmartin asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 29, 2020. Director Dempsey made a motion, seconded by Director Malloy and motion duly passed 9-0.

President Gilmartin asked for a motion to approve B-1, to approve the 2021 Proposed Preliminary General Fund Budget. Ms. Gilmartin asked for the Expenditures and Revenues.

Mr. Laffey responded \$168,725,166.

Director Yanni made the motion, seconded by Director Hume.

ON THE QUESTION:

Director McAndrew indicated he will be voting no due to the tax increase.

Director Yanni indicated that this adoption is not a vote to increase taxes but we need to approve this evening so Mr. Laffey can move forward with this budget.

Motion passed with eight (8) affirmative and one (1) negative. Director McAndrew voted in the negative.

President Gilmartin asked for a motion to approve the amended calendar change for the start of school to begin September 8, 2020.

Director Hume made a motion, seconded by Director Yanni and the motion duly passed 9-0.

President Gilmartin asked for a motion to approve F-1, Personnel Report. Director Cruz made a motion to separate part E, numbers 1 through 6, and vote on the Intervention Specialist furlough separately; she is not prepared to furlough them this evening. Director McAndrew seconded. The motion duly passed 9-0.

President Gilmartin asked for a motion for the remainder of the Personnel Report excluding section E, 1-6, the Intervention Specialists.

Director Malloy made a motion, seconded by Director Dempsey.

ON THE QUESTION:

Director Cruz, on behalf of the board congratulated the new hires and wished the resignations the best of luck.

Director McAndrew inquired about the Professional Leave of Absence for Organizational Leave and this means this individual would not be in the classroom teaching.

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Dr. Finan said it is something she is unfamiliar with. Mrs. McTiernan believes it is something that has been board approved since she has been in the district and that is correct, they would not be in the classroom teaching.

Director McAndrew asked Solicitor Audi if this is something that is in their contract as something we have to approve.

Mr. Audi said it is a provision and requires the board to vote on and he believes we are contractually obligated to vote on that.

Motion passed unanimously on roll call.

President Gilmartin asked for a motion to approve the furlough of section E, 1-6. Director Hume made a motion, seconded by Director Fox.

ON THE QUESTION:

Director McAndrew said he has received a lot of calls regarding the furloughs and the safety of students and staff; he will be voting against the furloughs.

President Gilmartin asked Sharon Baddick to speak about this as she doesn't believe Mrs. Baddick would develop a plan that would be unsafe.

Mrs. Baddick knows change is needed in programming and addressed the concerns of the safety of staff and students.

Director Dempsey asked how many cases of crisis there are. Dr. Baddick did not have that number right away.

Director Yanni indicated that she doesn't feel she can make a decision at this hour.

Director Cruz asked Mrs. McTiernan if the students will be going into their building.

Director Malloy asked Mrs. Baddick if we are at a net loss or net gain. Mrs. Baddick said instead of being down 6, we are only down 5, in addition to a psychologist and all of those people are highly qualified in their positions and the plan includes more professional development.

Director McAndrew asked Mrs. Baddick if she visits the school regularly. Mrs. Baddick said she does at least weekly.

Mrs. McTiernan added that there has been a Special Education Audit and changes need to be made, this is the first of many hard decisions they will have to make and the board cannot buckle under public pressure. Mrs. McTiernan further added that this can be evaluated if it is not working and changes can be made but the board cannot make their decision on emotional pressure from the public and this is the first of many, many, many tough decisions.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding the safety of the special education plan.

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A motion to table was made by Director McAndrew, seconded by Director Yanni, failed with eight (8) negative and one (1) affirmative. Directors Cruz, Dempsey, Fox, Gilmartin, Hume, Malloy, Welby and Yanni voted in the negative to table.

The original motion to approve the furloughs of section E, 1-6, now passed with seven (7) affirmative and two (2) negative. Directors Cruz and McAndrew voted in the negative.

There being no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Director Hume, seconded by Director Malloy and the meeting adjourned at 1:09AM on Tuesday, August 4, 2020.

By: _____
Secretary

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