

Currituck County Schools**(10:00 a.m. Closed Session) Special Meeting****Meeting Minutes****05/29/2020 11:00 AM**

Printed : 6/25/2020 3:34 PM EST

Virtual Meeting

This meeting can be viewed at CCS_BOE YouTube

Attendees

Voting Members

Karen Etheridge, Chairman
Dwan Craft, Vice Chairman
Dr. Bill Dobney, Board Member
Will Crodick, Board Member
Janet Rose, Board Member

Non-Voting Members

Mark Stefanik, Superintendent

A. Call to Order & Motion for Special Meeting

Motion made by: Dwan Craft

Motion seconded by: Janet Rose

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

B. Motion to Amend the Agenda for Client Attorney Communication (Reason 3 of G.S. 143-318.11) & add Item G. Contract for Neil Whitford, Attorney at Law

Will Crodick asked why an additional attorney was needed, since the Board retains Tharrington & Smith, LLP. He also thought an additional attorney was already involved. Chairman Etheridge replied that a separate attorney was needed because the Board needs an attorney for the appeal. Since Superintendent Stefanik will be represented by Neal Ramee of Tharrington Smith, there will be a conflict of interest. Dr. Matney will have his own counsel as well.

Mr. Crodick said he has raised concerns in the past and was informed by the Board's attorney they could represent the Board's interest over the Superintendent's interest. Now the Board's attorney is representing the Superintendent - which he found troubling. Janet Rose asked why the Superintendent did not have an attorney before now. Superintendent Stefanik explained that in an operation capacity the Board and Superintendent are viewed as one team so therefore represented by one attorney for the good of the district. When the Board is involved in a hearing it acts as a judicial board. If the Superintendent is presenting an additional attorney is needed. Mrs. Rose said that she understood but the hearing had been scheduled for over a month and why an attorney was not used. Superintendent said another attorney had been assisting. The Board continued to discuss using of attorneys at Tharrington versus using other counsel to represent the Board or Superintendent. Mr. Crodick voiced his concern with past issues and conflict of interest when it came to using the same attorney. Anne Mackin, HR Director, explained how the Board should not be privy to any information before a hearing. During the hearing both side presents to which the Board makes an unbiased decision. Mr. Crodick said he has problems with timing of

the hearing and receiving bad advice from Tharrington Smith. The Board continued to discuss conflict of interest between the Board, Board's attorney and Superintendent. The attorney that is selected to represent the Board should act as a mediator at the hearing.

The Board continued to discussed the hearing process as well as increasing the time allotment of the hearing to allow both side enough time to present. The policy currently allows only 15 minutes for each side. The Board asked if all parties were aware of the proposed change time. Superintendent Stefaink said he would verify. Mrs. Mackin said in her 34 years she has never been in an appeal. Normally recommendations or disciplinary issues are handled within the Superintendent's office and do not advance to an appeal. Mr. Crodick replied that the person had to agree with the process - whether they believe it in their heart or not. They succumbed to the process. Mrs. Rose said that she did not want to delay the process. Superintendent Stefanik recommended that the Board meet with Attorney Whitford in closed session to discuss the process further.

Motion made by: Dr. Bill Dobney

Motion seconded by: Dwan Craft

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

C. Motion to go into Closed Session for Reasons 1, 3 & 6 or G.S. 143.318.11

Motion made by: Will Crodick

Motion seconded by: Karen Etheridge

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

D. Approval of Special Meeting Agenda (Action)

E. CCHS Greenhouse Update

Matt Mullins, Executive Director of Buildings and Grounds, provided the Board with an update on the CCHS greenhouse construction. He said the greenhouse was 99% complete but it failed a recent inspection. A walkway will be added to the backdoor for emergency egress and the occupancy permit should be received. Following an application of epoxy on the floor, the greenhouse should be completed. Cracks in the floor are being addressed.

The contractor gave a reduced rate - material at cost and labor discounted. Superintendent Stefanik asked about the discounting the additional walkway.

Mrs. Rose made a motion to have a ribbon cutting.

Motion made by: Janet Rose

Motion seconded by: Karen Etheridge

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

F. New Elementary School Update

Superintendent Stefanik gave the Board an update on the new elementary school progress. He said conversations will start with the architect to review plans and start reviewing a templates approved by DPI. A meeting will be scheduled. Dr. Dobney asked about obtaining property. Superintendent Stefanik said with the recommendation of the architect that would trigger the negotiation of the property. The architect could be brought in at the next regular meeting to set priorities for the sites. Mrs. Rose asked if the architect has given his first priority, could the Board start negotiating. Superintendent Stefanik said yes, and with that Mrs. Rose made a motion to begin negotiating with the architect's prioritized site on for the new elementary school be on Survey Road. In addition Mrs. Rose asked if the Board could start looking at school plans. Superintendent Stefanik will share the plans with the Board. The Board discussed one-story versus two-story school plans and layout of the buildings.

Superintendent Stefanik shared that the worst case scenario of the down turn in the economy could require a bond referendum to fund the new school. The bond could delay the building of the new elementary school until 2022 to 2023, since a bond referendum is placed on the ballot in even years.

Superintendent Stefanik also reported in the Capital Outlay Budget. Following a meeting with the Commissioners, some projects will be delayed possible until December to all the County to review funding levels. There are concerns with revenues at the present time. Mrs. Rose asked if more Board members could attend budget meeting that evolve the Commissioners. She would like to see even representation. The Board went on to discuss the bond referendum process and the inclusion of future school projects as well. Mrs. Rose said that she would love to see a trade/vocational school in the area

Motion made by: Janet Rose

Motion seconded by: Dr. Bill Dobney

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

G. Contract - Neil Whitford, Attorney at Law

The motion was made to hire Attorney Whitford as special counsel for the upcoming hearing.

Motion made by: Karen Etheridge

Motion seconded by: Dwan Craft

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

H. 20-21 School Calendar Update

Assistant Superintendents, Dr. Matt Lutz and Renee Dowdy updated the Board on the school calendar. Due to COVID-19 and state laws. Schools will open on August 17, 2020. There are some revisions being discussed at the state level that would allow districts to have a soft opening with possible remote learning days. Administration is working on calendar revisions. Dr. Dobney asked if the first semester could be completed before the holiday break. Mrs. Dowdy said they were looking into the possibility but the calendar does require five remote learning days and she was unsure at this time until further legislation.

I. Revise Policy # 2500 Hearings Before the Board

The policy was revised to allow adequate time for parties to present during the hearing. Mr. Crodick added that both parties were aware of the time change from 15 minutes to 90 minutes.

Motion made by: Dr. Bill Dobney

Motion seconded by: Dwan Craft

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

J. Anonymous Reporting - Discussion

The item was removed from the agenda.

K. CCHS Graduation Discussion

Mrs. Dowdy, Assistant Superintendent and Principal Dr. Matney spoke on the CCHS graduation ceremony. On May 1st DPI issued guidance on mass gatherings on school sites. With the release of phase two on May 7th, there was language in the state's executive order stating restrictions on mass gatherings would not apply to educational and governmental institution. Mrs. Dowdy asked for clarification from DPI and the Governor's Office and received a document on May 20th stating educational gatherings on premises or campuses was to allow planning for the new school year not graduation ceremonies.

Will Crodick read the order which allowed various activities, opening of businesses and venues, along with the first amendment rights allowing people to assemble. He made a motion to have a ceremony, Janet Rose seconded the motion. Mrs. Rose said that she had spoken with several state representatives, as well as read the Governor's executive order 141, and no one could convenience her that the Governor is allowing mass gatherings at other venues but will not allow 243 graduates to have a ceremony. She asked that the district put safety measures in place in order to have a ceremony, such as groups of 25 and social limiting of guests. As far as legality - use waivers, recommend masks, supply hand sanitizers and possibly use the right to gather to worship by combining graduation and baccalaureate. Mr. Crodick said the district could use the right to assemble without combining the religious aspect.

Sydney MacDonald, student board member, said that she gained input from the community and students by using a survey. The majority of students wanted their peers and two family members in attendance. Other schools are having ceremonies.

Mr. Crodick said although there is risk associated with many activities such as serving meals and no one should live in fear. Dr. Dobney said the activities Mr. Crodick mentioned were legal. Mr. Crodick said a ceremony was legal too.

Dr. Matney said he would love to have a tradition service. He said within the perimeters he was given by Superintendent Stefanik and Mrs. Dowdy he created a plan with a maximum of 25 in each group. Dr. Matney also said based on the Board's tolerance for risk, he would do whatever the body wanted. The Board and Administrators went on to discuss the pros and cons for having a traditional

ceremony. Safety measures such as waivers, reducing the number of people entering at one time, asking people not to attend if sick and practicing the three W's were discussed. Mr. Crodick said he had contacted the Sheriff to discuss the right to assemble.

The group discussed the types of ceremonies being held in other districts and the practice of delaying the ceremonies until later in the summer. The Board discussed having smaller alternative ceremonies for those who preferred to do so.

Mrs. Rose asked what Administration needed in order to make it happen. Mrs. Dowdy said that thermometers and supplies would be needed. The number in attendance would be limited. Chairman Etheridge said the outpouring from the community has her divided on the issue. She expressed her concern with going against the Governor's orders however interpreted and how Currituck would be one of the only districts having a traditional ceremony. She does not like conflict and wants everyone to come together on this issue. She recommended waivers, masks for the larger ceremony, not forcing the faculty to work the event and allowing students who prefer a smaller private ceremony the option to do so.

The Board continued to discuss offering students the two ceremony options and whether masks should or could be mandatory.

Mr. Crodick made the motion to hold a traditional ceremony on June 11th, two tickets per students, masks recommended, seniors six feet apart on the field, required waivers, staff not required to attend and a private ceremony for those who prefer. The rain date will be June 18th. Mrs. Dowdy expressed her concern with not following the educational guidance on mass gatherings along with the possibility of holding a ceremony later in the year. Dr. Matney proposed a plan that would follow the maximum guidelines of 25 in a group.

Again, the Board discussed approving the original motion.

Motion made by: Will Crodick

Motion seconded by: Janet Rose

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

L. Approval of Contracts:

Motion made by: Dr. Bill Dobney

Motion seconded by: Janet Rose

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

1. Administrative Contracts
2. NCSBT Omissions/General Liability Policy
3. SunPac- Finance Software Contract

M. Approval of Minutes:

Motion made by: Will Crodick

Motion seconded by: Dr. Bill Dobney

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

1. Revised Board Meeting Minutes for Closed Session on April 9, 2020
2. Revised Board Meeting Minutes for April 9, 2020
3. Board Meeting Minutes for Closed Session on April 21, 2020
4. Board Meeting Minutes for Special Meeting on April 21, 2020
5. Board Meeting Minutes for Closed Session May 18, 2020
6. Board Meeting Minutes for Special Meeting May 18, 2020

N. Adjourn Meeting (Action)

Motion made by: Dr. Bill Dobney

Motion seconded by: Will Crodick

Voting:

Unanimously Approved

Chairperson

Secretary