

SAULT STE. MARIE AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN 49783
SPECIAL MEETING, BOARD OF EDUCATION
Phone 906/635-6609

Minutes – Thursday, March 18, 2021

228. **I. CALL TO ORDER**

President Smith called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Sault Area Middle School, 684 Marquette Avenue, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783

229. **A. ROLL CALL OF BOARD**

Board Members Present: Christine M. Curtis, Raymond J. DeWitt, Caitlin L. Galer, Daniel L. Smith, Lisa A. Young, Melissa S. Pingatore

Absent: Jay D. Wilson

230. **B. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Member DeWitt, supported by Member Galer, that the Board of Education move to adopt the agenda as presented.

Yeas: Curtis, DeWitt, Galer, Smith, Young, Pingatore

Nays: None

Absent: Wilson

Motion Carried.

231. **C. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

There was no comment.

232. **D. SEPARATION AGREEMENT – Superintendent Hall**

Dr. Hall reported the only change in the separation agreement was for the insurance coverage to be through April instead of June.

President Smith confirmed there were no questions.

It was moved by Member Pingatore, supported by Member Curtis, that the Board of Education approve the separation agreement as presented.

Yeas: Curtis, DeWitt, Galer, Smith, Young, Pingatore

Nays: None

Absent: Wilson

Motion Carried.

E SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

1. Face to Face Learning

Dr. Hall reported he was concerned for the number of students quarantining due to a few positive COVID cases over the past couple of days and asked Karen Senkus and Charity Zimmerman of the Chippewa County Health Department to report on the changes over the past 24 hours.

Mrs. Senkus and Mrs. Zimmerman reported there have been some positive cases involving the Middle School and High School in which they have begun contact tracing. They noted they had brought the situation to Dr. Hall's attention because at this point they have no idea how many students may be involved.

Mrs. Zimmerman reported at this point, 3 students at Sault Middle have tested positive with 8 being under quarantine, 3 students at Sault High with 6 under quarantine, and 2 positive students at Lincoln School with 6 under quarantine. Ms. Zimmerman reported after being in contact with a positive case, it usually takes 48 hours before the onset of symptoms occur from the day of contract. She reported the department is working on contacting quite a few contacts.

Upon inquiry from Superintendent Hall, Mrs. Rondeau-McCarthy reported she had released 79 students associated with being in the contact area for more than 15 minutes with the 3 positive students. She stated the earliest those students could return is March 29 (the first day of Spring Break). Mrs. Rondeau-McCarthy reported she was concerned about additional students testing positive and the timeframe involved.

Mr. McCready reported Sault High is not seeing a large number of positive COVID cases and quarantining, but it did sound like they were on the crux of it. He reported several students were scheduled to be out next week mostly for planned trips.

Superintendent Hall reported on the percent of attendance by school for the week. He noted Sault High was from 94% to 87%, Malcolm was holding its own from 75% to 80%, Sault Middle 95% to 74%, Lincoln from 93% to 89% and Washington from 92% to 89%.

Superintendent Hall reported he held an administrators meeting this afternoon and invited members of the health department for input as he thought our community was on the verge of another outbreak. He reported the health department needs a day to catch up with contact tracing and raised the question of closing school Friday, closing school Friday and Monday to allow for contact testing and results on Monday, or close

school until the return from Spring Break to help eliminate possible spreading.

Upon inquiry, Superintendent Hall reported administrators were comfortable with closing school to allow the health department time to complete contact tracing, and there were 4 remaining snow days left should the district need to use one.

Upon inquiry from the Board, Mrs. Senkus reported no COVID testing is done over the weekend in the area but health department staff are working. She indicated they usually learn about positive cases on Monday and by mid-afternoon Charity has a good idea of the ones tied to the schools.

Superintendent Hall stated with the number of students quarantining, it's a no brainer to close school until the health department has time to catch up. He suggested if the health department finds out on Monday that the numbers are growing, the district could close through the end of the week and then monitor things closely after break. He strongly recommended student athletics continue to play as long as they keep apart from everyone else and do not congregate in groups. He referenced last year's basketball team being already on the bus when they learned they were not allowed to play due to COVID restrictions.

Upon inquiry from President Smith, Mrs. Zimmerman reported there were around 7 or 8 students quarantining and approximately an additional 80 who went home during the day. She confirmed the health department did not have all of the contacts yet and the process is like pulling off an onion shell that builds from there.

Mrs. Rondeau-McCarthy reported the students who were sent home to quarantine sat within 6 feet of the two who tested positive and were around them for 15 minutes or more. She reported the students were pulled from the bus, classroom, lunch, and after school program seating charts.

Upon inquiry from Member Curtis, Superintendent Hall reported the district would be able to count funding for all schools that are on the same schedule, if the combined daily attendance is at least 75%.

Upon request for input by President Smith, Member DeWitt reported he would prefer to close school on through Monday to allow for the health department to catch up and to hopefully ensure our students are not part of an outbreak.

Mrs. Senkus indicated she did not know if there would be additional positive cases on Monday but it would allow for additional time to receive testing results.

Member Pingatore suggested closing school to ensure students would not be mingling for 48 hours as a means to help stop the possible spread. Upon inquiry from Member Pingatore, Superintendent Hall reported he does not recommend having students out a week after returning from Spring Break.

Upon inquiry from the Board, Superintendent Hall reported it would take some time to deploy student chrome books for remote learning and then time to transition them back to face to face learning.

Upon inquiry from Member Pingatore, Superintendent Hall reported all of the schools would not have to close at the same time, but the number is growing at Lincoln School and it might be easier for parents if all schools were on the same schedule.

Upon inquiry from Member Young, Mrs. Senkus reported the majority of transmission over the last 24 hours was the result of household contact.

Superintendent Hall reported Friday was scheduled to be a half day for all schools except Sault High.

Members Curtis and DeWitt suggested using two snow days for Friday and Monday as long as the principals did not feel the loss of instruction was too great on the students.

Member Young discussed concern for having students jump back and forth between modes of instruction.

Member Galer indicated she was processing all of the information she learned at the meeting.

President Smith stated the four options for the Board to consider are:

1. Close school Friday as a snow day.
2. Close school Friday and Monday as snow days.
3. Close school Friday through the return from Spring Break.
4. Close school Friday through a week after Spring Break.

President Smith indicated he had given the Board a chance to speak and in his opinion he would agree to close on Friday for extra cleaning, but kids have had too much turmoil being off with COVID so he would not support closing another day. He confirmed his opinion did not have anything to do with the health department.

Member Pingatore confirmed she was in favor of Option 2.

Member DeWitt stated he was in favor of Option 2 as it would allow students who tested positive on Monday to already be separated out

After thorough discussion, President Smith indicated he was looking for a motion.

Member Young clarified what Dr. Hall classified as option 2, inquired on the location of Friday night's basketball game(s), and sought confirmation that an announcement would go out right after the meeting if a closure was approved.

Member Young expressed concern for the right people being under quarantine and the deployment of chrome books. Superintendent Hall reported his goal was to have all the students return on Tuesday for the rest of the week providing everyone follows the CDC guidelines so there would be no need to deploy the chrome books. He suggested the possibility of revisiting the matter on Monday.

Superintendent Hall reported administration does not want to pull athletic teams from MHSAA tournaments.

Member DeWitt inquired on the availability of teachers going online on Tuesday if necessary. Superintendent Hall reported he did not think that would be necessary unless we had bad/high numbers. He cautioned the need as extra days would have to be made up at the end of the year if necessary.

Superintendent Hall suggested a special meeting for Monday night based on new numbers from the health department.

President Smith referenced the flu outbreak across the region a few years ago and our district meeting the attendance quota and remaining open because of our low transmission rate.

Superintendent Hall indicated it sounds like it would be best for the Board to schedule a meeting Monday night to review the appropriate numbers.

Superintendent Hall reported he is prepared to make an announcement through school messenger and social media.

It was moved by Member DeWitt, supported by Member Curtis, that the district close school on Friday and Monday and to resume classes on Tuesday and allow all sporting events to continue.

Yeas: Curtis, DeWitt, Galer, Young, Pingatore

Nays: Smith

Absent: Wilson

Motion Carried.

Superintendent Hall confirmed Tom Nelson would communicate the closure with transportation and request additional cleaning from DM Burr.

Mrs. Sawyer reported on her concern to get the chrome books deployed/picked up on Tuesday if the Board makes its decision to close Monday night.

234. **II. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board at 6:05 p.m., it was moved by Member Curtis, supported by Member Young, that the meeting be adjourned.

Yeas: Curtis, DeWitt, Galer, Smith, Young, Pingatore

Nays: None

Absent: Wilson

Motion Carried.

Daniel L. Smith, President

Lisa A. Young, Board Secretary

Judy L. Sirk, Recording Secretary