

Minutes
Anson County Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Monday, October 12, 2020, 4:00 p.m.
Anson County Schools' Administrative Conference Room/Board Room
Virtual Go To Meeting

The Anson County Board of Education met in special session on Monday, October 12, 2020. Members present via Virtual Go To Meeting were Marilynn Bennett, Lisa Davis, Frank Liles, Bobbie Little and George Truman. Board members present in-person were Carol Gibson, Gay Lookabill, Beulah Pratt and Mike Turner. Others in attendance were Howard McLean (Superintendent), Marty Godwin (Assistant Superintendent), Holly Berry (Finance Officer), Anne Hyatt (Board Clerk), Mike Flake (Board Attorney) and Pete Swails (Administrator: Technology). Leadership Team Members were also present.

Call to Order

Dr. George Truman opened the meeting at 4:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Invocation

George Truman asked the board to join him in reciting the 23rd Psalm if they were interested.

Conflict of Interest Statement

In compliance with the requirements of Chapter 138A-15(e) of the State Government Ethics Act, Chair George Truman reminded Board Members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest and appearances of conflicts of interest under Chapter 138A. There were no conflicts of interest communicated by the members. Chair Truman then requested that if, during the course of the meeting, members became aware of an actual or apparent conflict of interest that they bring the matter to his attention. He further explained it would then be the member's duty to abstain from participating in discussion and from voting on the matter.

Adopt Agenda

Gay Lookabill asked to remove all consent items from the agenda for approval at the October 26, 2020, board meeting. The motion to approve the agenda with the amendment was given by Mike Turner, seconded by Beulah Pratt and approved by the board. Motion carried.

Closed Session

A motion was made by Mike Turner to go into closed session at 4:15 p.m. The motion was seconded by Frank Liles and approved by the board. Motion carried.

There was no action taken.

Reconvene Open Session

The Board returned to open session at 5:26 p.m. upon a motion by Lisa Davis, seconded by Frank Liles and approved by the board. Motion carried.

Chair's Report

Public Engagement: There was no public engagement information shared due to COVID-19.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. McLean gave a report on Re-Entry Plan B and Return to Athletics.

Mr. McLean said the Re-Entry Plan for K-5 students that he is proposing is a three-cohort plan with cohorts A, B & C coming tri-weekly, Monday-Thursday from 8:00 – 12:30. He then explained more details of Plan B with the board. Mr. McLean added that Kindergarten, Exceptional Children, ESL students would report daily. Mr. McLean said they would like to begin November 2 with the in-person cohort groups.

Dr. Truman said he has had parents ask if they will lose the option for remote learning if we go to Plan B. Mr. McLean said all parents will have the option to have their child attend in-person or continue virtual learning.

Lisa Davis asked what the plan is for students after 12:30 p.m. Mr. McLean said the schools will turn students over to parents. She asked if we would have after school. Mr. McLean said, right now, there is no option for after school.

Mr. McLean said we will not be able to do meal delivery when we return to in-person learning. He explained the meals will be curbside pickup.

Gay Lookabill asked why we can't bring 6th and 9th graders back in and then gradually bring in the other grades later. Mr. McLean said we could possibly make it work and we won't know numbers until after the registration process. He said he thinks his team can look at 6th and 9th grade to see if they can make it happen. Ms. Bennett and Dr. Truman said they think we should stick with K-5 and see how that goes for now.

Carol Gibson asked how you would do after school. Mr. McLean said he would look into seeing if it is even an option.

Lisa Davis asked what happens if there is a positive case in a cohort group. Mr. McLean said if there is a cluster in a particular cohort, they can shut that cohort down for 14 days. She asked if a parent decided virtual learning was the best route, does the child keep the same teacher. Mr. McLean said they will have to see what the manpower is with our personnel. Mr. McLean stated they will try to keep teachers where they are but he can't make that promise. He explained if any changes need to be made to the plan, the changes can be made within days and not weeks.

Dr. Truman said this is clearly something we haven't done before and when the time comes for the superintendent to amend the plan, he doesn't need to bring it back to the board. Dr. Truman said the superintendent will only need to inform the board and modify the plan. Mr. McLean said any changes depends on the numbers.

Ms. Davis asked if buses could drop students off at other residences and daycares, etc. Mr. McLean said the plan currently states that wherever the child is picked up at is where they will be dropped off but he could talk with Mr. Ross about that information. Ms. Davis requested for Mr. McLean to talk with Mr. Ross about making that change to the plan and allow students to be dropped off at other locations. Mr. McLean agreed to have that discussion with Mr. Ross.

Ms. Gibson asked how the cohorts will be divided into groups. Mr. McLean said principals are working to divide the cohorts. He said if a unique situation arises, they may have to make special considerations for some cases.

Ms. Davis asked how it works for social distancing when kindergarten students can attend daily. Mr. McLean said principals have the leeway of being creative to keep everyone safe.

Ms. Davis asked if the Friday remote learning day can be optional or a breather day for teachers. Mr. McLean said he is not sure how that would work to give teachers a day off on Fridays. Mr. Godwin said he is not aware of any codes that would work for teachers to have Fridays off. Mr. Godwin said he will research it and report back to our superintendent. Dr. Truman said if they are deep cleaning on Fridays, we don't need staff on campus. Mr. McLean said he will be experimenting with foggers at a few schools for deep cleaning purposes. Mr. McLean confirmed teachers would not be in the building on Fridays. Ms. Bennett asked if Fridays could be a planning day. Mr. McLean said they can be creative and see how it goes but we can't give teachers the day off. Dr. Little said you have to be careful about being creative when it comes to making sure teachers are on the clock.

Ms. Lookabill said if 6th and 9th graders can't come back now, when can they come back. She asked if they could come back November 9. Dr. Truman said he wants the superintendent to bring back a recommendation. Dr. Truman said he feels, with the situation we are in now, we would be wise to bring students in according to the superintendent's recommendation.

Ms. Gibson asked if parents would be surveyed this week. Mr. McLean confirmed that parents would be surveyed this week.

Ms. Davis asked if the survey could be very concise and more like a yes or no with comments that can be made by parents.

Dr. Little stated the survey that was done previously, showed that parents (overall) wanted students back in school. Ms. Collard said it was half and half with the results. Ms. Collard said parents were surveyed again and around 1200 parents asked for virtual learning for their child. She explained a lot of parents want to know what the plan is before they can complete a survey and they want more data and want to see a plan. Ms. Collard said that was out of around 3200 students. Ms. Collard explained after the surveys were complete, schools contacted those that did not complete the survey.

Return to Athletics Plan:

Mr. Stinson was present to speak on specifics regarding a return to athletics plan. With him during the presentation to answer questions were Patty Livingston (Volleyball Coach), Ralph Jackson (Football Coach), James Wall (Cross Country Coach) and Madison Polk (Atrium Health Athletic Trainer). After Mr. Stinson spoke about their plan, Dr. Truman asked for a signature from coaches verifying they feel they are able to handle a return to athletics. Mr. Stinson said he would get those signatures to the superintendent. Mr. Stinson stated the NC High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) is still at phase 2.5 which is considered off-season workouts and those are optional. Dr. Truman asked Mr. Stinson to provide information on transportation needs so administration can determine how to help them in that area.

Mr. Wall gave an update from a recent NCHSAA meeting where he mentioned that (for indoor athletic events) NCHSAA is looking at only allowing 25 fans (it will be home team fans only). He explained if there is an outdoor athletic event, fans would be limited to 50 people (it will be home team fans only).

Ms. Davis said she knows we have already voted to suspend the uniform part of the dress code policy and she asked that we continue to remind parents about that waiver. Ms. Davis also stated she has a concern with not giving kindergarten students a choice to be in a cohort. Mr. McLean said it can happen (although he can see them getting behind). Ms. Davis asked if a kindergarten parent chooses to send their student one week and leaves them home the other two weeks would they be counted absent. Ms. Cureton (Student Information Administrator) stated her protocol would be that those students are counted absent. Dr. Truman said he truly believes kindergarten students need to come everyday but he sees Ms. Davis' point and if they need to be put in a cohort he sees no issue with that. Mr. McLean said with principals' discretion they may have leeway in this situation. Ms. Davis asked if that same leeway could be given to exceptional children and ESL students. Mr. McLean said he has noted those suggestions.

New Business

Re-Entry Plan B Recommendation: Dr. Truman said there is a recommendation from the superintendent for grades 6-12 to stay in all remote learning for the remainder of the first semester or until such time the superintendent can bring them back. He said grades K-5 will phase in Plan B starting November 2 with all kindergarten students coming daily Monday – Thursday and grades 1-5 coming tri-weekly Monday – Thursday with virtual learning for those that elect to continue with remote instruction. Furthermore, Dr. Truman said the superintendent has suggested the implementation schedule for K-5 could be modified further depending on availability of instructors, social distancing limitations and transportation issues before the end of the first semester. Dr. Truman asked board members for their thoughts on the recommendation. Dr. Truman explained remote learning is a safe choice but he feels we need to give parents (who want their child to return) an option for those students to return. He said he will support the superintendent's recommendation. Bobbie Little said she will support the superintendent's recommendation. She also stated from what she has heard, at least half of the parents want their students back in school. Dr. Little said she will vote to support the plan even though it's not what she would do. Gay Lookabill asked to amend the plan to bring back 6th and 9th graders so they don't

lose two more months. Mr. Turner said all students need an opportunity for face-to-face learning and that's the way he is leaning or stay in plan C. Ms. Gibson said the parents have spoken and they want an option so we have to start somewhere. She also said she doesn't have an issue with the option to bring back 6th and 9th graders before January. She said if you have a senior that is taking senior English, that student needs teacher input and she has issues with that but she will support the superintendent's plan. Ms. Lookabill asked if it was set in stone that we are not going to look at the other grades coming in until January 4. Mr. McLean said after we get K-5 started, they can look at getting other grades back before January 4. Ms. Pratt said she doesn't have a problem with the recommendation because you have start somewhere. Ms. Davis said she can possibly support the plan but she has concerns. She said she would like the superintendent to address that there be no change in teachers, address allowing bus options for bus transportation to other locations (like daycares, etc) and allow exceptional children, ESL and kindergarten students to attend in a cohort group if they choose. Ms. Davis also stated we need to be able to make adjustments to our plan quicker than we have in the past. She explained this plan has to be fluid so we can make changes as needs arise. Mr. Liles said he agrees and we just have to be safe and know that our superintendent will make the right choices. Dr. Truman asked for a motion to approve the superintendent's recommendation. Mr. Liles made a motion to accept the superintendent's recommendation and plan. Ms. Bennett seconded the motion and it was approved by the board with a 6 to 3 vote. Those voting in favor were Frank Liles, George Truman, Marilyn Bennett, Beulah Pratt, Bobbie Little and Lisa Davis. Those voting against the motion were Carol Gibson, Gay Lookabill and Mike Turner. Motion carried.

Return to Athletics Recommendation: Dr. Truman said there is a recommendation to allow limited athletic practice and workouts. Ms. Davis said she thinks we should also give the same type of leeway to other high school clubs and groups. Dr. Truman said he thinks the coaches and athletic directors did a good job on the return to athletic plans. He said for any other groups besides athletics that want to return, they need to know they will be required to return in small groups as well. Ms. Lookabill asked if we could require others to bring in their plans for return to the superintendent. Mike Turner made a motion to approve the return to athletics plan and also allowing other clubs and groups to return after the superintendent has approved their plan. The motion was seconded by Lisa Davis and approved by the board. Motion carried. Mr. McLean clarified that other groups or clubs only need to submit their plan to the principal and then it will come before the superintendent for approval. The board said yes and also asked that plans from other groups or clubs be shared with them.

Dr. Truman said the October 26 board meeting will begin at 4:00 p.m. due to extra discussions needed during closed session. The board agreed on the 4:00 p.m. start time. Dr. Truman said open session to the public will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made at 6:56 p.m. by Mike Turner, seconded by Frank Liles and approved by the board. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

Dr. George Truman, Chairperson

Mr. Howard McLean, Secretary