

**JANUARY 11, 2021**

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
OF SOUTH LYON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
DISTRICT #63-240 COUNTIES OF  
OAKLAND, LIVINGSTON AND WASHTENAW**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Acting President Kennedy called the January 11, 2021 virtual special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Anthony Abbate, Craig Dashner, Eric Kennedy, Martin Leftwich, Bridgett McDowell, Dan Schwegler, Jennifer Urtel

**Absent:** None

**Administration/Others Present:** Steven Archibald, Superintendent  
Lisa Kudwa, Assistant Superintendent  
Stacy Witt, Assistant Superintendent

Acting President Kennedy welcomed Mr. Leftwich, a new board member. He also welcomed back Mr. Schwegler to the Board.

He wished the Board and community a Happy New Year.

Mr. Kennedy explained that the term has ended for the Board's former president, Ms. Hanshaw. Mr. Kennedy is filling in as acting president of the Board until a new one is voted in at the Organizational Meeting on January 19.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Kennedy offered an opportunity for public comments. He shared the following comments.

- *Jennifer Propps* is happy her elementary child is attending school in person. The secondary students should follow the same schedule.
- *Jessica Souva* shared the struggles her 5<sup>th</sup> grade student had with virtual schooling by sharing her daughter's writing assignment of a story about a difficult time in her life.
- *Stephanie Rife* urged the Board to send ALL kids back to school full time since the case count in Michigan is low. The SLCS Board has let our students down.
- *Amy Menzer* asked the Board to send our kids back to school 5 days a week as soon as possible. They need to be in person full time. They are falling behind.
- *Craig Hearn* asked the Board to consider letting the kids go back to school. Virtual is not working. Face to Face is what the kids need. Many parents are considering leaving the district because of this.
- *Melissa Golden* wants in-person education.

- *Dawn Petz* wanted to know if the Board plans to have the middle school and high school students in-person at 100% like at the elementary level. It was never addressed in any of the information that was communicated to parents.
- *Jody Brzovski* shared that her kids are excited to attend school in person. Please follow Howell and other private schools and their guidelines and get these children back in the classroom 5 days a week. Enough “half day Wednesday” for elementary and only 2 days for secondary. Hear the voice of the parents who actually chose to put their children in the classroom.
- *Michelle Roslinski* stated that parents have been asking for a choice to send their kids back to school face to face full time. Starting with second semester, parents who do NOT want their kids face to face have the option to enroll their kids in Virtual Pathway. Let the families who DO WANT to send their kids face to face have that option too and allow MS and HS back face to face full time! The MS and HS kids NEED to be back in school full time. The data supports it, our district positivity rates support it, the governor even supports it. Give families the CHOICE!
- *Tammy Oliver* wants face-to-face learning.
- *Christine Campo* conveyed that the Board was trying to decide to offer a choice of face to face or virtual schooling. The community witnessed a parent who is now a board member call in crying while reading every staff member’s names at Brummer Elementary saying they could DIE! The students and parents are now crying and internally dying trying to manage virtual learning that they DID NOT WANT to do from the get-go. It is time for the Board to listen to your students and community! The data supports five-day face to face.
- *Nicole Morales* would like to know when elementary schools will go back to 5 days a week in person.
- *Candice Merva* has a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grader that she believes need to be back to in-person learning. The social and emotional and mental health of her kids is in her best interest. She will fight to get her kids back in the classroom. She wants 5 full days of in-person learning.
- *Brian Patrias* indicated that his kids have fallen far behind in school and strongly dislike remote learning. There is nothing that can replace face to face learning. Please work together and figure out a way to get our kids back in school full time ASAP. The vaccine is out and available to teachers.
- *Craig Skalski* wants to see 5 days of in-person learning when we return from winter break if the downward case trend continues. Data from other local districts show that this can be done. He also wanted to know why cleaning takes all of Wednesday to complete. Has the district looked into using weekends or evenings to achieve this?
- *Juliann Sleek* asked the Board to keep secondary children at 50% capacity in hybrid.
- *Patrick McGuire* thanked the Board for making the very difficult decisions they have to try to keep everyone safe. He hopes, going forward, the Board is willing to be flexible and adjust to current situations. Parents all want their kids in school, and he hopes that the Board continues to recognize if there are times this is not safe.

- *Joe Cusumano* stated that the Board has read many student and parent comments about desperately getting back to 100% in-person schools. He asked them to define and publish the criteria, metric and/or actions they are working to achieve before returning to 5 days per week, 100%, old schedule (non-block). If the Board and administration is unable to at least publish some criteria, metric, or actions, you are putting parents in a difficult position to move out of the district due to lack of any planning or goals on your part.
- *Christina Reeves* shared her appreciation to the Board for keeping our kids safe at home during this time. Her son is able to concentrate on his schoolwork and not getting COVID and bringing it home to his family. She appreciates the option to keep our kids at home.

### **SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS**

Mr. Archibald commended the 5<sup>th</sup> grade student whose passionate words from a writing assignment about a difficult time in her life was shared by her mom in the second public comment. Nothing speaks to us louder or moves us more than our students. They are amazing.

Mr. Archibald stated that he sincerely appreciates the public comments that come in as they are compelling points and comments on all sides of things. There is something different happening in every district around us, and many districts suggest that there is no magic pill or magic way through this, but we'll continue to do our best.

He shared some of the local health data. He noted that data has been trending in a favorable direction in our county for several weeks, which is excellent news. The school age groupings have been trending downward for the past five to six reporting cycles and are at or near where they were in mid to late October. The positive cases and the cases for 10,000 in the South Lyon geographical area within Oakland County have both been trending downward over the same period and are also near what they were in mid to late October. We have learned a great deal over the past several months about effective strategies to reduce the spread of the virus. We know from our own experiences, that schools can establish a low risk of transmission by following the mitigation strategies and safety protocols that South Lyon Community Schools and other districts have put in place. Our entire community must remain diligent in these efforts to help keep each other safe and to be in a position not only to maintain the current level of face to face instruction that we resume today, but to ultimately increase it in the future. Our next confirmation plan comes before the Board on February 1 and it is his hope and desire at that point to be able to share some information about being able to increase face-to-face instruction at the secondary level provided that the factors that we've outlined in the past have continued to move favorably. Face-to-face instruction is something that we continue to strive. He compared our district as a little bit of our version of The Three Bears. It is not enough for some, it's too much for others and it's just right for a third. He stressed the importance of having students face to face and it's time that we continue to work to move in that direction. Those eligible to receive the vaccine was expanded this week to include Pre-K – 12 educators, support staff and child-care workers. Currently the demand for vaccinations is so great that there are no appointments available at least in Oakland County. We will continue to work through Group 1A, and teaching staff and school personnel are in group 1B. We will work closely with the Oakland County Health Department regarding additional vaccine rollout and appointments and make sure that our staff has that information and are able to move forward with vaccinations.

On Friday, there was new guidance for schools. The Governor announced a goal that all school district offers an in-person option for students as soon as possible and not later than March 1. Our current mode of instruction achieves that goal. We fully recognize the social, emotional and academic benefits gained through in-person learning and will continue to work to increase our in-person learning to the extent possible. The Michigan

Department of Health and Human Services released new guidelines for operating schools safely. These guidelines are intended to replace the safe-schools roadmap from June. Our team is in the process of reviewing the revised guidelines to determine what if anything needs to be revised with respect to our current safety protocols and mitigation strategies.

#### **SLCS EXTENDED COVID-19 LEARNING PLAN RECONFIRMATION**

The Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan was presented to the Board of Education on September 21, 2020. Oakland ISD approved the district's Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan on September 30, 2020. We are required to reconfirm, once every thirty days thereafter, the instructional delivery method, along with reviewing the weekly two-way interaction rates. At this time, the administrative team is not recommending any changes to the instructional delivery method. Our weekly two-way interaction rates are included in the report and are well above the required 75%. Ms. Kudwa asked the Board to approve the continuation of the instructional delivery method as described in the Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan.

Moved by Mr. Dashner, supported by Ms. Urtel to approve the continuation of the instructional delivery method as described in the Extended COVID-19 Learning Plan as presented.

Mr. Schwegler questioned Mr. Archibald if he had any sort of projection on when he estimates teachers will actually be vaccinated in the district. He also asked how far out the appointments are going.

*Mr. Archibald could not provide an exact answer at this time. After speaking to the county, they are not making any appointments unless they have the actual doses to go along with those appointments. They made arrangements to use the Novi Showplace. He is waiting for additional details on appointments.*

Mr. Schwegler asked if there is somebody in the district who is tracking which employees get the vaccine and if there is any prioritization for the employee to schedule their own vaccination.

*It is on the individual employees to schedule an appointment.*

Mr. Schwegler asked if the district will be requiring vaccinations from all employees.

*Mr. Archibald noted that school districts have the ability to require the vaccinations, but we do not have a policy to that effect. He has consulted with our school attorneys, and it was their recommendation at this point that it should be voluntary.*

Mr. Abbate stated that he was happy to hear Mr. Archibald talking about the beginning of February and asked if we were going to ramp up our discussion of how to bring kids back at that point or is he thinking about bringing some sort of a shell of a plan at that point?

*Mr. Archibald stated that at this point, it would be the shell of a plan. Administration wants to look at the new guidance and then work with our teams to put plans in place to bring secondary students back with more face to face. He would be ramping that up now and bring something to the Board again assuming the circumstances would allow the district to go forward with it.*

Mr. Dashner stated that going back to the summer, there was an idea if we were full-time in schools five days a week at the secondary level at that point, we wouldn't be requiring the teachers to teach remotely anymore because of the impact that it has on the classroom. The idea would be all the kids would be back in the classroom. Would this still be the case if we do go back face to face at the secondary level? The teachers would just be teaching to the classroom.

*Mr. Archibald's initial reaction if we were to have 100% of our students in the classroom and again, whether it's four or five days a week, there is merit to both. He felt at some point we need to take something off the plate of the teachers and to continue to teach remotely with 100% of their students in front of them. There is no plan yet, but if he had to decide today, he would say then that we would be fully in-person at that point and would be four days a week with a remote Wednesday.*

Ms. Urtel stated that she had a concern if you had students in the classroom and a teacher teaching remotely, how many kids may or may not show up because it is struggling when they are bringing in all their devices sitting at a table looking at their devices for the lesson. She felt this could be deterring a lot of the high school kids because they could do the same thing sitting in their room as opposed to being in the classroom. When the time comes that you're looking at full time face to face at secondary, you may want to find a way to encourage the teachers to be out from behind the desk and not have to do that kind of combo remote and in-person at the same time because she felt both sides were not getting the 100% instruction.

*Mr. Archibald indicated that he felt our current model has served us well with respect to students who are quarantined because they were able to continue. We have provided through our model a 100% of asynchronous instruction as opposed to the on one day off day where that off day is asynchronous. It is very challenging and difficult for our teachers. When we are at 100%, the big advantage to that would be moving a little bit more closely to what we know as traditional instruction, which has been one of the concerns that has been raised.*

Ms. McDowell shared her concerns about when we move to more days face to face at the secondary level because many families chose the hybrid option because of the staff they were going to be getting or access to the curriculum. They prefer that they strongly wanted to have South Lyon teachers and it does kind of feel like a bait and switch to take away the location for attendance option.

*Ms. Kudwa stated that the district did communicate with family prior to that window opening that if they thought there was a time at second semester that they did not want their student back full-time in person that they truly needed to pick the VLP. The district was very clear in our messaging as they had them pick their choice for second semester because we recognized that our goal was going to be bringing students back as much as possible in person. They didn't want it to feel like there was any kind of bait and switch. They wanted to be clear with families as they made their decision that if they had hesitation about sending their child back, the model for them was going to be the VLP model.*

**Roll Call: Mr. Kennedy-yes, Mr. Abbate-yes, Mr. Dashner-yes, Mr. Schwegler-yes, Ms. Urtel-yes, Ms. McDowell-yes, Mr. Leftwich-yes. Motion carries 7 – 0.**

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Kennedy announced that comments will not be acknowledged unless there is a name given as part of the public record. It would be the same as if they were meeting face-to-face. They would be on video and have to give their name.

- *Karen Mikola* stated that case counts have been decreasing from levels 10 times higher than the summer. Individuals need to look at the raw data instead of just making talking points without fully understanding the context. Secondly, high schoolers at 100% is asking 35 kids to be side-by-side all day. Class sizes weren't reduced with the introduction of a fully virtual model. The Health Department still want distancing in school.
- *Lynn Knox* called in and noted that she has stood by and agreed and supported the district's choices. Her daughter recently has told her therapist that she had a plan to end her life. This isolation needs to end. She knows her child is NOT the only one that is in this place. She felt the district has failed her child. She has no option to move. Face to face is the only option.
- *Jennifer Gomori* asked if the movement into in-person is going to incrementally be 75% or straight 100%. Governor Whitmer stressed that in-person learning should include social distancing. District officials have stated that social distancing is not possible at all if 100% are in many secondary classrooms.
- *Amy Creswell* indicated that she is very pleased to hear the Board's plan to move towards more face to face instruction in the near future. She remains extremely disappointed to hear there is once again NO sign of any type of plan. Our kids are better off with in-person instruction. Half of this community remains unrepresented by this Board. Please do what you were elected to do and adequately represent the full community and take action now! She implored Mr. Archibald to do what he was hired to do....BE A LEADER!
- *Joe Cusumano* asked Mr. Archibald to focus on being an educator and not a public health official. You say you "recognize the benefits of in-person learning," but your comments only reflect concerns for the virus, not for teaching. You have said nothing that indicates you are being diligent with your primary role. Please get with the program.

**ADJOURN**

Moved by Mr. Abbate, supported by Ms. Urtel to adjourn the special meeting at 7:50 p.m.

**Roll Call: Mr. Leftwich-yes, Ms. McDowell-yes, Ms. Urtel-yes, Mr. Schwegler-yes, Mr. Dashner-yes, Mr. Abbate-yes, Mr. Kennedy-yes. Motion carries 7 - 0.**

Respectfully submitted,



Anthony Abbate, Secretary  
Board of Education