



Rocket Express

December 8, 2020

The Rockwood Area Board of School Directors held its annual reorganization meeting on Tuesday, December 8, 2020.

Irvin Kimmel announced that the Board held an emergency executive session on Wednesday, November 25, 2020, at 5:00 P.M. in the Administrative Office of the Rockwood Area School District for the purpose of discussing school safety matters.

The minutes of the committee meeting on 11/17/20 and the regular meeting on 11/17/20 were approved.

The Board approved the agenda, addenda items, and additional agenda items.

Public Comment:

Sandy Stevanus addressed the Board to comment about a recent parent survey. She expressed her concerns and her opinion in that she prefers students to be educated in-person rather than remotely. She feels the in-person option is more beneficial to students over all. Remote, or virtual learning, is more difficult especially for younger students. She requested school officials focus on in-person instruction. She also voiced her appreciation for everything that is being done by the faculty and staff.

Matt Pritts addressed the Board to agree with the comments made by Sandy Stevanus. He expressed his appreciation for the efforts being made by faculty, staff, administration and the Board. He also supports in-person instruction versus remote learning.

REORGANIZATION

Board President, Irvin Kimmel, announced that the meeting has been called for the purpose of reorganization and other general school purposes.

Irvin Kimmel appointed Adam Sembower as the temporary chairperson.

Irvin Kimmel was elected as President by acclamation.

Upon a vote, Adam Sembower was elected as Vice-President.

Irvin Kimmel was appointed as the representative to the Somerset County Technology Center Joint Operating Committee and Ashley Baker was appointed as the alternate.

Noah Wareham was appointed as the PSBA Legislative chairperson.

Noah Wareham was appointed as the PSBA Employee Relations chairperson.

Old Business:

The Board discussed possible action on revisions to the Rockwood Area School District Health and Safety Reopening Plan. Mark Bower reviewed the results and responses received from a recent survey, representing the total student body. Out of 466 responses received, 77% would like to return to in-person instruction, while 23% prefer to continue with remote learning. Comments from the survey regarding safety concerns were also reviewed. In regards to food distribution, approximately 60% of respondents indicated they would like to continue to receive food and materials at established morning bus stops. Others who do not utilize this service are in favor of continuing the distribution for those who need it. Mark Bower also reviewed the results in regards to synchronous learning versus asynchronous learning. Approximately 57% prefer synchronous learning over asynchronous learning. The 43% who prefer asynchronous learning mentioned some of the challenges associated with synchronous learning. Some examples include: limited internet access, lack of parental supervision during the school day due to work schedules, limited amount of time during evening hours to catch up with lessons and assignments, students with learning disabilities, and students sitting in front of a computer for the entire school day. Mark Bower also explained some of the challenges for teachers working remotely. Mark Bower reviewed three instructional model options that would fall under the Attestation Order. Mark Bower explained option #1 of the Attestation Order and the importance of following the mitigation efforts for the use of face masks. A face shield is no longer considered a face covering under the new order; therefore, if a student is unable to wear a face mask, a doctor's excuse would be required to qualify for an exemption to wear a face shield as an alternate option. Desk shields may be an option for students who qualify for an exemption who are unable to wear either a face mask or a face shield. Ashley Baker suggested another hybrid option that was discussed at a previous meeting. That option would provide for in-person instruction for grades K-8, four days per week and in-person instruction for grades 9-12, one day per week. Discussion was also held regarding the distribution of food and materials. The consensus agreed it would be more advantageous for our families to continue to receive items daily rather than one day per week. After review of the survey results, the Board allowed for additional public feedback. Carrie Pletcher addressed the Board to comment about the space available in some classrooms and the difficulty to socially distance. Dan Weaver thanked the Board and staff for their efforts and expressed his concern about families having limited internet access and confusion about educational materials and assignments. Sandy Stevanus addressed the Board to comment that she feels the District will make a decision that works best for the students and families and explained how difficult it is to teach our own children. Kara Childers commented on the difficulty of providing instruction to her children due to limited evening hours. Matt Pritts commented on behalf of himself and wife Joanie that they support all students being in school, unless they can't.

The Board voted in favor to hold a special meeting on January 7, 2021, at 7:00 P.M. to discuss possible action on revisions to the Rockwood Area School District Health and Safety Reopening Plan and other school purposes.

Upon a roll call vote, the Board voted in favor to remain with option #2 of the Attestation Order and continue remote instruction through January 8, 2021.

The Board approved revisions to the Rockwood Area School District Athletic Health and Safety Plan. Revisions to the plan include a 10% maximum occupancy for indoor events and individuals adhering to the face mask and social distancing orders.

New Business:

The Board voted in favor to establish the third Tuesday of every month as the official meeting dates for the 2021 calendar year with no scheduled meeting during the month of July.

The Board authorized the business office to pay necessary bills in December to avoid penalties and to present those bills for approval at the January meeting.

The Board approved the district musical proposal.

The Board approved the agreement between the Somerset Area School District and the Rockwood Area School District for Emotional Support Classroom services for the 2020-2021 school year.

The Board voted in favor to add Betsy Conn to the district substitute van driver list pending completion of all paperwork.

Committee Reports:

The Board approved a medical leave for Elyse Cordaro beginning February 15, 2021, through the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.

The Board approved special paid sick leave under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) for the following employees (referenced by employee identification number) who qualify for such leave for their own medical condition, or if the employee was ordered to quarantine by the Department of Health as a close contact. Such leave is considered special sick leave, which qualifies for Pennsylvania School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) creditable service time.

#161	# 84	#139	#133	# 25	#144	# 67
# 46	#173	# 50	#96	# 55	# 11	

Use of School Facility Requests:

The Board approved the following use of school facility request with the stipulation that the proper cleaning and disinfecting arrangements will be made following each use of the facility:

1. Rockwood Alumni Basketball – Rockwood high school gymnasium – Sundays beginning in December 2020 through April 2021 – 7:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M. – Play alumni basketball.

Superintendent's Report:

Mark Bower thanked the parents, families, faculty and staff for their hard work during the unusual circumstances of remote learning.

Mark Bower advised that internet "hot spots" are now available for students and families at Wesley Chapel Church and the Kingwood Fellowship Hall.

General Board Member Discussion:

Upon a roll call vote, the Board voted in favor to require a doctor's excuse to be exempt from wearing a face covering, as well as a doctor's excuse to be exempt from wearing a face shield.

Disclaimer: This document is only a summary of the above listed meeting and is not an official copy of the school board meeting minutes.