

**Delaware Academy Central School District at Delhi  
Special Meeting of the Board of Education (Monday, February 8, 2021)  
Virtual and In-Person Meeting**

**Members Present:** Elizabeth Huneke, Tammy Neumann, Seth Haight, Lucy Kelly, Sean Leddy, Kimberly Shephard, and James R. Tucker Jr.

**Others Present:** Kelly Zimmerman, Superintendent, Susan Temple, District Clerk, Jeffrey Ferrara, Athletic Director, Robin Robbins, MS/HS Principal, Carey Shultz, Business Manager, and several members of the faculty, staff, students and community.

**Open the Meeting:**

**Call to Order:**

President, Elizabeth Huneke called the Special Meeting of the Board of Education of the Delaware Academy Central School District at Delhi to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 5:34 p.m.

**Enter Executive Session:**

On a motion made by Tammy Neumann, seconded by Lucy Kelly, the Board of Education entered Executive Session for the purpose of discussing matters leading to the employment of particular persons, with no action to be taken. The Board entered Executive Session at 5:35 p.m.

**Leave Executive Session:**

On a motion made by Tammy Neumann, seconded by Kimberly Shephard, the Board of Education left Executive Session at 5:53 p.m.

**Open Public Session:**

President, Elizabeth Huneke called the Public Session of the Special Board of Education Meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:03 p.m.

**Presentation**

Mr. Jeffrey Ferrara, Athletic Director presented the Athletic Preparedness Plan that covered the following information for the return to play after COVID-19:

- Requirements and Metrics;
- NYSDOH Risk Definitions;
- Sport Specific Protocols and Implementation Procedures;
- Process for Reporting Questions and Concerns.

The Board thanked Mr. Ferrara for his presentation.

**Public Comments:**

President, Elizabeth Huneke opened the floor to public comments.

Mr. Jay Wilson, Delhi, New York thanked everyone within the school district for the transparency. As far as telephone calls, emails, and the website, it has all been fantastic. He would like the Board of Education to accept the resolutions to participate in high-risk sports. He personally believes that this will benefit the kids in helping them cope with the crisis. He believes the kids have suffered both educationally and socially without being able to attend school on a regular basis and have extra activities. Giving the kids the opportunity to play sports will reduce some of their stress and return them to a more normal routine. Personally, he believes that anything we can do to get these kids back to a normal routine, it will benefit them more than a path they are on. He's asking the Board to activate the Athletic Preparedness Plan.

The Board thanked Mr. Wilson for his comments.

Luke Branigan, Student spoke in support of the Athletic Preparedness Plan. He expressed how difficult it has been for students to prepare for sports, but not be allowed to participate. He asked the Board to please approve the participation in higher-risk sports.

Mrs. Zimmerman thanked Luke for being one of the student contributors to the development of the preparedness plan.

Alex Haight, Jody Bray and Sylvia Liddle, Students attending on behalf of the Varsity Club read a letter (attached) that they collaborated on in hopes that the Board will consider their point of view before making a decision tonight.

The Board thanked the student's for attending the meeting and speaking on behalf of the student body.

Matt Krzyston, Delhi, New York commented he has a student in ninth grade. From a personal point of view, he doesn't think the average person knows the damage that has been done by removing sports from our kids. He's not going to try to convince anybody to care about his situation, but it's real, and he's heard intelligent people that have made passionate arguments that if kids are not going to school then it's stupid to even talk about sports. They completely reject the idea. He knows the Board has a lot to consider as a school board, but if you were to be the obstacle in this process, he thinks that's cruel to these kids, and he thinks the kids said it better than anybody else, but the mental health issues are real, and he urges the Board to take it very seriously. He knows they have a lot to consider, but please consider that. Thank you.

The Board thanked Mr. Krzyston for his comments.

A comment was made from the audience that for many colleges looking for student athletes who want to play at the next level, they want to see them in playing situations. Colleges don't want to see the highlighting of skills, because they can be edited to look good, they want to see them in a game situation, so without having a season, it's changing the track of their lives because opportunities may not be there.

Glenn Nealis, Delhi, New York spoke in favor of sports, but he also noted he's speaking in favor of all extracurricular clubs and activities. He's glad the District found a way to go forward with the musical, and in his sole opinion, we should have full-time, in-person instruction as well. He quoted the World Health Organization's definition of health: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease" and he thinks there has been, for all the right reasons, a sole focus on making sure that we do everything we can to eliminate disease without paying attention to all the other aspects of health. Matt spoke to it, these kids spoke to it, there's a lot of other things that make up the healthy individual besides just the lack of disease. Mr. Nealis gave statistics; there have been 26.8 million cases of COVID in this country, 1.8 million of them are in kids age 5 to 17, so that's 6.8 of the total cases in this country are in that demographic, yet they represent nearly 20 percent of the population, so there's a risk, but there's a proportionate risk, and he thinks that's something that needs to be taken into consideration. He commended the Board of Education, the administration, teachers and staff for the good job they are doing in managing the COVID positive rate. In doing some math, to have everyone appreciate this, with all the COVID cases that we have, including the one on Sunday, and the one today, Delaware Academy has experienced one COVID positive test for every 16,000 contact hours that people had in this school with each other, with their teachers, everything. Again, there is a risk, but we need to put it in proportion. What the World Health Organization is saying now is in most infections or COVID-19 cases reported in children, infection was acquired at home more than in school. It was more likely that the virus was introduced by an adult. One study suggests that closing schools reduces community transmission less than social distancing interventions, so we're taking a lot from these kids for a very tiny benefit. One statistic that is sports related, since that's the topic tonight, is the University of Wisconsin completed a study related to fall sports in high schools. With 30,000 athletes, 16,000 practices and more than 4,000 games, there were 271 cases of COVID which is less than one percent. They were able to track and find the causes to. Ninety-six percent of the COVID cases in 2020 with 30,000 athletes from their homes and their communities and less than half a percent of us from participating in sports. He reiterated he's in support of reopening sports for Delaware Academy.

The Board thanked Mr. Nealis for his comments.

Michael Branigan, Delancy, New York commented he broke out his notes from the Board of Education Meet and Greet from 21 months ago when he ran for the Board, and question number two that night was, what's our biggest challenge facing DA, and his response was emotional well-being and mental health. That's what he thought then, and now. It's like Matt said, and some other people, the mental health crisis is real. I've got two boys at home, a senior and a freshman, that are much different dudes than they were 11 months ago. We went down to Waverly for flag football, a seven-on-seven thing. We took a little backlash, but I hadn't seen Bryce and Tanner, as well as every other boy that was out there that day, so happy, energetic and having a good time. He thinks this is the Board's chance. It's important to fight the mental health thing and make that step, and make that change, he said 20 or 21 months ago would be a big challenge for you guys so here it is. Thank you.

The Board thanked Mr. Branigan for his comments.

There were no further public comments.

#### **New Business:**

##### **A. Request for Approval for Delaware Academy to Participate in High-Risk Sports, Basketball:**

On a motion made by Seth Haight, seconded by Lucy Kelly, the Board of Education approved the following resolution to participate in the high-risk sports, basketball:

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2021, the Governor and the New York State Health Department authorized schools to operate certain higher-risk winter sports effective February 1, 2021, as may be permitted and authorized by local county health departments; and, WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Health subsequently issued updated guidelines for the operation of Sports and Recreation related to higher-risk winter sports; and, WHEREAS, NYSPHSAA and Section IV have issued revised guidelines for Return to Interscholastic Athletics for the 2020-21 season; and, WHEREAS the Delaware County Executive and Public Health Director approved schools within Delaware County to operate winter high-risk sports, subject to certain requirements, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education of the Delaware Academy Central School District at Delhi hereby authorizes the District to participate in Basketball (Boys and Girls) for the 2021 winter season.

A brief question and answer session was held for clarification. There were no further questions, comments, or discussions and President, Elizabeth Huneke called for a roll call vote with the following results:

Elizabeth Huneke VOTING Aye,  
 Tammy Neumann VOTING Aye,  
 Seth Haight VOTING Aye,  
 Lucy Kelly VOTING Aye,  
 Sean Leddy VOTING Nay,  
 Kimberly Shephard VOTING, Aye,  
 James Tucker Jr. VOTING, Aye.

The motion carried with a vote of 6-1.

##### **B. Resolution for Approval for Delaware Academy to Participate in High-Risk Sport, Football:**

On a motion made by Seth Haight, seconded by Tammy Neumann, the Board of Education approved the following resolution to participate in the hi-risk sport of Football:

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2021, the Governor and the New York State Health Department authorized schools to operate certain higher-risk winter sports effective February 1, 2021, as may be permitted and authorized by local county health departments; and, WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Health subsequently issued updated guidelines for the operation of Sports and Recreation related to higher-risk winter sports; and, WHEREAS, NYSPHSAA and Section IV have issued revised guidelines for Return to Interscholastic Athletics for the 2020-21 season; and, WHEREAS the Delaware County Executive and Public Health Director approved schools within Delaware County to operate winter high-risk sports, subject to certain requirements, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education of the Delaware Academy Central School District at Delhi hereby authorizes the District to participate in Football for the 2021 winter season. There were no

questions, comments, or discussion. President, Elizabeth Huneke called for a roll call vote with the following results:

Elizabeth Huneke VOTING Aye,  
 Tammy Neumann VOTING Aye,  
 Seth Haight VOTING Aye,  
 Lucy Kelly VOTING Aye,  
 Sean Leddy VOTING Nay,  
 Kimberly Shephard VOTING, Aye,  
 James Tucker Jr. VOTING, Aye.

The motion carried with a vote of 6-1.

**C. Resolution for Approval for Delaware Academy to Participate in High-Risk Sport, Volleyball:**

On a motion made by Seth Haight seconded by Tammy Neumann, the Board of Education approved the following resolution to participate in the high-risk sport of volleyball:

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2021, the Governor and the New York State Health Department authorized schools to operate certain higher-risk winter sports effective February 1, 2021 as may be permitted and authorized by local county health departments; and, WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Health subsequently issued updated guidelines for the operation of Sports and Recreation related to higher-risk winter sports; and, WHEREAS, NYSPHSAA and Section IV have issued revised guidelines for Return to Interscholastic Athletics for the 2020-21 season; and, WHEREAS the Delaware County Executive and Public Health Director approved schools within Delaware County to operate winter high-risk sports, subject to certain requirements, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education of the Delaware Academy Central School District at Delhi hereby authorizes the District to participate in Volleyball for the 2021 winter season. There were no questions, comments, or discussion. President, Elizabeth Huneke called for a roll call vote with the following results:

Elizabeth Huneke VOTING Aye,  
 Tammy Neumann VOTING Aye,  
 Seth Haight VOTING Aye,  
 Lucy Kelly VOTING Aye,  
 Sean Leddy VOTING Nay,  
 Kimberly Shephard VOTING, Aye,  
 James Tucker Jr. VOTING, Aye.

The motion carried with a vote of 6-1.

**D. Resolution for Approval for Delaware Academy to Participate in High-Risk Sport, Wrestling:**

On a motion made by Tammy Neumann, seconded by Seth Haight the following resolution to participate in the high-risk sport of wrestling:

WHEREAS, on January 22, 2021, the Governor and the New York State Health Department authorized schools to operate certain higher-risk winter sports effective February 1, 2021 as may be permitted and authorized by local county health departments; and, WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Health subsequently issued updated guidelines for the operation of Sports and Recreation related to higher-risk winter sports; and, WHEREAS, NYSPHSAA and Section IV have issued revised guidelines for Return to Interscholastic Athletics for the 2020-21 season; and, WHEREAS the Delaware County Executive and Public Health Director approved schools within Delaware County to operate winter high-risk sports, subject to certain requirements, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education of the Delaware Academy Central School District at Delhi hereby authorizes the District to participate in Wrestling for the 2021 winter season.

Mrs. Zimmerman read a letter from the Superintendent at Walton Central School District. She acknowledged the MAC League voted down the return to wrestling as they don't feel it is feasible. There are ten days of formal practice required for wrestling, the sport requires more student contact and there is no schedule. Due to the fact that wrestling is performed by weight, there is very little competition. Walton is choosing not to move forward due to health and safety issues. A brief question and answer session was held. There were no further questions, comments, or discussion. President, Elizabeth Huneke called for a roll call vote with the following results:

Elizabeth Huneke VOTING Aye,  
 Tammy Neumann VOTING Aye,  
 Seth Haight VOTING Aye,  
 Lucy Kelly VOTING Aye,  
 Sean Leddy VOTING Nay,  
 Kimberly Shephard VOTING, Aye,  
 James Tucker Jr. VOTING, Aye.

The motion carried with a vote of 6-1.

**E. Personnel Appointment, Assistant Building Maintenance Mechanic:**

On a motion made by Tammy Neumann, seconded by Lucy Kelly, the Board of Education appointed Anthony S. Cerullo as Assistant Building Maintenance Mechanic in the non-competitive class of civil service, to serve a 26-week probationary term commencing on February 9, 2021, through August 9, 2021, at a salary of \$30,725.00, and working conditions as per the CSEA unit. There were no questions, comments, or discussion, and the motion carried with a vote of 7-0.

**F. Personnel Appointment, Substitute Teacher:**

On a motion made by Tammy Neumann, seconded by Sean Leddy, the Board of Education appointed Solvig Comer as an Uncertified Instructional Substitute, effective February 9, 2021, through June 30, 2021, with a compensation of \$100.00 per day. There were no questions, comments, or discussion, and the motion carried with a vote of 7-0.

**G. Resolution Authorizing the Superintendent to Sign a Release, Indemnification and Assumption of Risk:**

On a motion made by Kim Shephard, seconded by Tammy Neumann, the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to sign a Release, Indemnification and Assumption of Risk with the New York State Snowmobile Association Club to approve the Club's use of

District premises.

Mrs. Zimmerman informed the Board that she met with Mr. Bender, and had one of our grounds personnel walk the pathway with him that was proposed by the club. As a result from the walk, there are a few changes that were made. During the walk, it was noted that there are a few rocks, trees and branches that need to be cleared. The snowmobile club members have offered to do the work on the pathway. Mrs. Zimmerman wanted to make sure the club's insurance covered any work they do, and that they are clear about only removing debris from the path, no other removal of trees will be done. Mrs. Zimmerman and Mr. Bender also discussed the limitations of use during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or during events outside hours or weekends. They are both in agreement with the changes, and with the Board's approval they are ready to move forward.

Trustee, Sean Leddy commented it is his understanding the snowmobile club is funded and reimbursed annually for grooming and maintaining the trails. He's confident the insurance covers all of that work.

Trustee, Seth Haight commented he knows the people bringing the proposal to the District are trustworthy, but since the work will be voluntary by the members, Mrs. Zimmerman may feel more confident if we provide supervision from a Delaware Academy employee while the work is being done. He is confident in moving forward with the motion.

There were no further questions, comments, or discussion, and the motion carried with a vote of 7-0.

#### **Board of Education Comments:**

Trustee, Kimberly Shephard commented she is frustrated with the mental health issue with the students. She would love to see Delaware Academy take Initiative to do something like a reset for the students. She expressed that she is frustrated to no end that the students can't return full time to classes, especially in light of the statistics Mr. Nealis provided tonight. We need everybody back in school. She feels we should try to make that happen.

Mrs. Zimmerman agreed that it is critically important to have everyone back in school. She encouraged everyone to be active in contacting senators and the governor with their concerns. It doesn't make sense that two separate codes are used. We are following laws for conduct during the day, but it is hypocritical with sports in the evening. She mentioned not one COVID case has been traced to in-person learning at this district. We've been able to control transmissions with our safety practices. She also wants everyone to be clear that the District is not valuing athletes over the extracurricular activities. She is always an advocate for ways to come back. She is currently working with the department of health to set up a vaccine pod, but they do not have a date yet.

Trustee, Seth Haight thanked everyone for all the effort to bring back sports. He said it is obvious that everyone is committed to the protocols and practices put in place, and the ability to move forward is there. Well done!

Mrs. Zimmerman thanked Mr. Haight for his comments. She noted all participants will be held accountable; however, she can't control what happens out of school, so she encouraged everyone to be smart, social distance, and don't have public gatherings.

Trustee, Tammy Neumann commented Mrs. Zimmerman's comment to continue to be diligent is very important because we've proven that the technique is working with the protocols we've put in place.

There were no further comments from the Board of Education. President, Elizabeth Huneke thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting.

#### **Adjournment:**

On a motion made by Lucy Kelly, seconded by Seth Haight the Board of Education adjourned the Special Meeting at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Temple  
District Clerk

BOE Approved: 2/22/21