

WEST VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT #1
BOARD OF TRUSTEES – Special Board Meeting
West Valley School, Library and via Google Meet, 5:00PM
September 23, 2020

Board Members Present

Stephanie Nadasi
Tad Lisowski
Marilyn Hedstrom
Cory Hill
Jane Wheeler

Board Members Absent

None.

Also present

Cal Ketchum, Superintendent
Serina Nelson, District Clerk

Guests in attendance in person: Richard Gross, Jacquie Foster, Gretchen Brown, Jill Hale, Krista Buls, Karla Ryan, and Kathleen Johnson

Guests in attendance via Google Meet: Heidi Durbin, Brooke Elles, Tara Measure, Gena Wilson, Molly Zier-McLaughlin, Sarah Stoken, Rich Nickerson, Chad Grace, Marycaye Dover, Mark Waati, Timothy Peacher, David Baker, Vonnie McDonald, Sara Dankers, Marrene Peacher, Clara Hale, and Tina Blair. An attendee with the phone number 406-***-***36.

Chairman Nadasi read the mask requirement information aloud that was printed on the top of the agenda. Chairman Nadasi called the meeting to order at 5:00PM. She read aloud the processes to allow a member of the public to participate on a non-agenda and on an agenda item.

Superintendent Ketchum asked if the Information Items could be presented before the Action Items. It was agreed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

NONE.

INFORMATION ITEMS:

Superintendent Ketchum informed the Board of a situation with a group for a football player where the student is from Kila. The group is refusing to wear masks at games and have caused two games to stop for at least 15 minutes while various people have attempted to get the group to put masks on. He informed them that he will be implementing the authority given in policy 4315 and suspending the fans from the games. The child will be allowed to continue playing at this time. Mr. Ketchum stated he has attempted to contact the parents via telephone, but the numbers are all disconnected. He did send an email to them that he included the Board on. He stated the action will be on October's agenda. Marilyn Hedstrom asked what will happen if the group

shows up. Mr. Ketchum stated the game would be stopped and likely police would be called. He stated he will be sending a letter.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Consideration of New Hire: Nathan King-Brown – Instructional Aide
Superintendent Ketchum recommended the hiring of Mr. King-Brown and informed the Board this would fill all the open positions.

Cory Hill moved to approve the hiring of Nathan King-Brown upon the receipt of a clear background check. Jane Wheeler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Consideration for All Middle School Students to Return to School Full Time on October 5, 2020

Jacquie Foster shared what her son's week in middle school looked like this past week with doing an entire week's worth of assigned work in about one hour. She stated the students that chose to go online entirely have a different component for their learning that the hybrid students do not. She explained KMS is going to school as normal with masks. She expressed her concern that her son is falling behind socially, emotionally, and educationally. She also expressed her understanding that if West Valley were to open entirely to in person instruction, quarantine is a possibility but she is willing to take that risk.

Gretchen Brown stated she is a proponent for the continuation of the hybrid model. She explained she works at KMS and sees how kids are being quarantined.

Krista Buls stated she has children attending Glacier High and West Valley. She expressed her 6th grader's frustration and feels he is falling behind.

Karla Ryan stated she agrees with Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Buls. She expressed her concern for the kids that don't have support at home. She stated her daughter finished her one week's worth of assigned work in about one and half hours. She read averages of tests from FVCC classes comparing this year's averages to last year's averages. She stated she feels kids are not getting what they need.

Chad Grace (via chat on Google Meet) stated he echoed his support for the first, third, and fourth speakers. He stated he feels his student is falling behind. He asked the Board if they would give vouchers for private school so students could attend in person.

Tina Blair reviewed what phase two is and the requirements for that phase. She explained the activities that have been done in the last few weeks are the same sort of things that were done during this same time last year. She stated she wants to increase the online instruction content if West Valley were to stay in the hybrid model. She stated there have been students transitioning to online learning and from online learning depending on the situation. She explained the availability of substitutes has been impacted. She stated today there were two teachers who's absences weren't filled.

Superintendent Ketchum reviewed a meeting with the Health Department and other school districts. He stated the Health Department took 190 calls yesterday. He expressed his appreciation to the parents for taking the survey that he sent to find out what their thoughts are about returning to school full time. He stated he doesn't disagree with any of the four public participants. He explained that the entire situation needs to be taken into consideration. He explained cases spike after a holiday or event, which we just had, and in the last couple of weeks Montana has had the most cases it has had. He stated the Health Department recommends if a school is in a hybrid model, to stay in a hybrid model. He stated at a Superintendents meeting Micah Hill said KPS came very close to closing due to the lack of staff and subs. Mr. Ketchum reminded everyone how it would be a ripple effect if KPS closed. He stated the transmissions haven't been at school, but at events/activities and between family members. He brought up bussing as something to consider as part of the decision making.

There was discussion among the Board members. Stephanie Nadasi gave examples of her struggles as a teacher at GHS with kids and staff going on quarantine and the various effects of that. She read Governor Bullick's press release from the other day and stated Montana is seventh highest in the nation right now for cases. She stated last week Montana had the highest case rate in the entire pandemic. Right now the highest number of cases are ages 18 and under, which she attributed to schools opening. She stated the recommendation from the White House is to fine those that don't wear masks. She stated she doesn't and can't support going back to school fully. Jane Wheeler stated this is the hardest decision she has ever had to make as a Board member and she has been on the Board a long time. She expressed her concerns about the safety and education of the students. She stated she gave the Board a list of schools and what they are doing. She explained she asked the County Superintendent's office about bus routes. Jack Eggenberger told her Bigfork is doing some double routes and Columbia Falls is going to run some double routes. She stated KPS has about 500 home school students and Evergreen has about 23% learning online. Tad Lisowski stated he has spoken with parents, teachers, and teachers at other schools. He stated he too is torn on the decision. He stated the parents are willing to accept the consequences. He expressed he is for coming back to school fully. The survey stated about 95% of parents want their kids in school. Marilyn Hedstrom stated the COVID cases appear to be outside of West Valley. She stated kids know they have to wear masks to come to school and the majority of the parents want the kids in school. She expressed her concern about the schools getting the brunt of it when people are infected elsewhere.

Superintendent Ketchum explained the 15 minutes of accumulated contact with someone is not just constant contact, but a total time. He used an analogy Facebook bullying outside of school time as an example of parents looking for help from schools. Cory Hill asked if the curriculum is the same this year as it was last year. Mr. Ketchum stated it is. He said the online learners are the only ones using MobyMax and the hybrid learners are using different methods with the in-person instruction. He stated he wants kids back on October 5th but wants everyone to be safe. He stated for education and academically speaking, bring the kids back. He stated 96 to 97% of parents want their kids back in school. Mr. Ketchum stated his recommendation is to have the kids back safely. Marilyn Hedstrom asked when is the Health Department is going to throw their hands up. She expressed her disbelief with the Health Department wanting to "deputize" schools to help contact parents. Mr. Ketchum stated if West Valley, or any school, goes full speed, it could get shut down again. He reminded everyone that cold and flu season is coming up with

symptoms that mimic COVID symptoms. He stated he would lean to reopening the school fully, but cautioned if KPS closes then West Valley most likely wouldn't be far behind.

Tad Lisowski moved to approve reopening West Valley fully on October 5, 2020. Jane Wheeler seconded the motion. Stephanie Nadasi opposed. Four in favor and one against reopening West Valley on October 5, 2020. The motion passed.

Jane Wheeler asked if it would be beneficial to give the staff an additional day to prepare for the students to come back. Tina Blair stated she didn't think the middle school teachers would need an additional day along with the September 28 training day.

Tad Lisowski thanked Mr. Ketchum for his hard work and attending all the meetings to help make the decision.

ADJOURNMENT:

Tad Lisowski moved to adjourn at 6:07 pm. Marilyn Hedstrom seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Stephanie Nadasi, Board Chairman

Serina Nelson, District Clerk