

TMCS Board Minutes
December 8, 2020

The December 8, 2020, 6:00 pm meeting held via Zoom conference call was called to order at 6:07 pm by Tanya Blackford. All members of the board were notified of the meeting, a quorum was present.

Attending board members were Tanya Blackford, Aimie Burns, Jeannette Butterworth, Cathey Chet (non-voting member), Emily Cowan, Tricia King, Ann Lentini, Rick Prudhomme, Rebecca Schwartz, Brad Ward.

Attending staff members were Noelle McKay, Denise Pesce.

Denise requested this meeting of the board of directors to review the COVID-19 situations arising in the school and community. Most of the information she provided is based off data as presented on the NCDHHS website.

Principal's Report

Prior to Thanksgiving TMCS was doing well. Most people were complying with the masking and social distancing requirements. But since Thanksgiving the situation has become more tenuous. Last week 4 staff members were absent because they were quarantining, two of the four are still waiting for COVID testing. Ten students have been quarantined and some parents have already begun transitioning their kids to remote learning.

Prior to the meeting, Denise sent the Core Indicators form updated with the latest data to the board. The following were areas of concern:

1. Testing availability – the county has begun only testing people with symptoms. This becomes difficult for the schools because families are quarantining but unable to get tests for kids to return.
2. The number of cases per 100,000 over the last 14 days has continued to increase. The number of cases per 100,000 is now significantly over 200, the highest risk category.
3. Positivity rate – the positivity rate has increased and is hovering around 6% for Henderson County, the moderate risk category.
4. Mitigators – staffing availability has become a concern, testing availability does not feel adequate, and contact tracing with the county has been hampered. With four mitigating factors being solidly practiced, this places the TMCS in the moderate risk category.

Since case counts continue to increase and trend upwards, Denise recommended we move into remote learning.

Discussion

Currently the NC positivity rate is 9.8% and a stay-at-home order is being issued by the Governor. Hospitals are reaching capacity.

Discussion circulated as to how soon should the school move into remote. Denise recommended moving to remote immediately, beginning Thursday, December 10th. Cathey Chet said that the staff was supportive of returning to remote learning immediately. She sees kids returning to school with parents who have tested positive and she sees the risks increasing.

Returning to remote learning immediately may be difficult for some families but the risk is becoming too great to continue with in-person instruction. Denise spoke with Alice Elio who understands our perspective on the issue. We have even smaller classrooms than Henderson County schools and it is that much more of a challenge to social distance.

The school has not seen many withdrawals recently.

After much discussion the board recommended returning to remote instruction beginning Thursday, November 10th. The board will reconvene January 13, 2020 to reevaluate the public health status and make a decision going forward. Motion made by Jeannette Butterworth, seconded by Brad Ward. All voted in favor; none opposed. Motion approved.

Denise will send a letter out Wednesday, November 9th, informing the school community of the decision to return to remote learning.

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:47 by Tanya Blackford.

Respectfully submitted by Noelle McKay.