

TMCS Board Minutes  
September 22, 2020

The September 22, 2020, 6:00 pm meeting held via Zoom conference call was called to order at 6:06 pm by Tanya Blackford.

Attending board members were Tanya Blackford, Aimie Burns, Jeannette Butterworth, Cathey Chet, Emily Cowan, Tamara Evans, Tricia King, Ann Lentini, Rick Prudhomme, Brad Ward.

Attending staff members were Wesley Arnold, Noelle McKay, Denise Pesce.

Attending guests: Alice Elio, Julie Baker

The meeting agenda was reviewed. A review of financial documents was added to the agenda.

The August 25, 2020 meeting minutes were approved; motion made by Rick Prudhomme, seconded by Aimie Burns. All voted in favor; none opposed. Motion carried.

### **Principal's Report: Denise Pesce**

#### Introduction of Guests

Denise introduced guests Alice Elio and Julie Baker. Alice Elio is with the Henderson County Health Department and, among other duties, has served as TMCS' school nurse for three years. Julie Baker is a Nurse Practitioner and has two children enrolled at TMCS. Both have served on the TMCS COVID-19 Task Force and are attending the meeting to provide information and answer COVID-19 related questions posed by the board.

#### Denise's Update on Henderson County COVID-19 Status

Denise recently met with Henderson County Health Director, Steve Smith. She asked if there would ever be a set of metrics that would result in the county stepping in and enforcing remote learning. He said there are no county indicators and positivity rates are only one set of indicators they would be reviewing. He advised that we should expect to have COVID in the building, but that they would follow TMCS counts and would be available when TMCS needed them.

Henderson County voted to return to Plan B beginning September 21<sup>st</sup>. They have had one positive case reported thus far.

#### Q&A with Alice Elio, Julie Baker, and Denise Pesce responding

Q. Would fans be helpful to keep air moving in the classrooms and buildings? Windows in the classrooms do not open.

A. Julie - Limited information currently exists, but COVID traveling throughout the ventilation systems is not considered high risk. Pulling air in can be helpful but there is also concern that fans may only serve to move disease particulates around the room. Providing distance and spacing between people is believed to be the more influential variable. In the end the addition of fans may be helpful. If the strategy is cost effective she would recommend the use of fans.

Q. Should we conduct temperature checks midday in addition to early morning?

A. Alice - Temperatures should be checked during the day if children are feeling unwell or present with symptoms.

Q. Can the teachers screen the students themselves?

A. Denise - Each teacher has supplies in their classrooms, including thermometers, if they need to conduct a screening.

Q. Do we have benchmarks for returning to remote learning?

A. Denise - Her biggest concern is not having enough teachers. Replacing teachers will be difficult because she is very hesitant to introduce substitutes into the cohorts. The school does not currently have benchmarks in place and it is difficult to quantify any markers until we get started and understand the dynamics. Alice said that the most important thing is that the school be able to shift and change quickly as new situations arise.

Q. Have we discussed periodic COVID testing for adults?

A. Alice and Julie - They are not aware of any public schools that are regularly testing their teachers. It's not a bad idea, but the availability of testing may become a concern.

### **Board Discussion: Returning in the Second Quarter to Plan B**

Denise feels better about reopening to Plan B than she did earlier this summer. The school is operating with more information, changes have been made to the building, and tents have been purchased. TMCS does not have to deal with the transportation and cafeteria complications of larger schools. She has some reservations but thinks it is important to return because Henderson County is returning, some kids are beginning to slip because they do not have great home environments, and because some students have mental health struggles.

#### Review of Plan B (as presented in supporting documents)

- The parent survey results showed that 82% want to return to school, 34 students are requesting full remote learning.
- Plan B will have two cohorts. Cohort A will be in school Mondays and Thursdays and Cohort B will be in-school Tuesdays and Fridays. We are using Henderson County's schedule so Boys and Girls Club will be available to TMCS students. Kindergarten will have a morning and afternoon cohort four days a week. All students will be remote on Wednesdays.
- Cohorts will have between 7 and 11 students, with the preference of having no more than 10 in a cohort.
- TMCS is working on a plan for the Sunset Program.
- Some afterschool activities such as cross country and art classes are being offered to both in-class and remote students.
- Arrival and dismissal times will be staggered by 15 minutes.

#### Q&A

Q. In Plan B should we require people to quarantine if they travel?

A. Alice – NC is already a hot spot so quarantining is not going to be as effective. The most important action is to develop a social system to wear masks and protect yourself outside of school so you can stay in school. Modeling is important.

- Cathey Chet suggested offering remote learning the week after Thanksgiving.

Q. Do we have policies in place that we are providing in writing to the school community?

A. Denise – Yes we have developed a handbook based on guidance from DHHS and the CDC.

Q. What policy do we have in place for people who don't follow our mask guidelines?

A. Denise – Generally speaking, the kids have been very compliant thus far. But it's hard to wear masks all day and kids need breaks. However, we will have low tolerance for people who do not comply. Kids have different issues and abilities so it is difficult to come up with one hard and fast rule.

- Cathey Chet requested Denise work with the task force to develop strict mask guidelines so classroom teachers do not have to deal with the issue.

Q. Are parents going to be asked sign an agreement that they reviewed school policies and release the school from liabilities?

A. Tamara Lee, speaking as a parent and not offering legal advice, suggested creating a school contract that 1) confirms that parents have read and agree to school policies 2) releases the school from liability – a generic statement would be appropriate 3) requires parents to commit to their obligations.

- Denise has already been working on a contract and will include the items as mentioned above based on the board's direction.

Q. What will be our response when parents ask if we will return to Plan A now that the state has allowed schools to do so if they choose?

A. Denise – We will have to say we are not prepared to return to Plan A. We do not have the ability to social distance in Plan A. The task force will create and review thresholds as needed.

Q. Can virtual learning be used for kids when they are sick so they are not counted absent?

A. Denise – yes

Q. Will we know in advance if a kid in a class cannot wear a mask?

A. Denise – We have not had any kids request a waiver from the mask requirement. If a child had a condition that prevented them from wearing mask they may be better served in remote learning.

Q. Can kids change from remote to in-class instruction midstream?

A. Denise – Returning to class will depend on cohort numbers. We are asking for families in remote to commit for a quarter. We won't move kids between cohorts and any more than 9 in a cohort is not ideal.

Q. After 9 weeks, will we offer the opportunity for kids in remote to go to in-person?

A. Denise – yes, although depending on numbers we may have to move to three cohorts. We will review the policy with the board as we move through the process.

A board member suggested that the COVID Task Force continue meeting again to discuss policies and thresholds. TMCS needs a group that is active and agile in response to changing situations.

Denise highlighted the importance of communicating with the school community. A team is working on updating the handbook. TMCS is having school community zoom meetings to answer questions as they arise.

Rick Prudhomme made a motion to approve reopening to Plan B as presented to the board, seconded by Jeannette Butterworth. Membership voting recorded as:

|             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| Blackford   | Aye       |
| Burns       | Aye       |
| Butterworth | Aye       |
| Cowan       | Aye       |
| King        | Aye       |
| Lee         | Abstained |
| Lentini     | Nay       |
| Prudomme    | Aye       |
| Ward        | Aye       |

The motion passed with 7 votes in favor, 1 against, 1 abstention.

### **Budget**

The ADM for our current budget will be based on last year's enrollment of 197 students. Our true enrollment is closer to 191 students and our maximum is 201. We don't yet know this year's allotments.

The final budget for 2019/2020 reflects the approximate \$25,000 loss from the GNAR and Annual Campaign. The school also had approximately \$50,000 in additional expenses for COVID related building improvements and curriculum materials and platforms.

TMCS has applied for additional funding but it is limited.

Motion made to approve the August 2020 budget report and 2019/2020 Year End Budget Report as presented, by Brad Ward, seconded by Rick Prudhomme. All voted in favor; none opposed. Motion approved.

### **Board Member Observation**

Rick Prudhomme asked that discussions within our zoom meetings be kept confidential until the school officially makes announcements.

With no further board observations or public comment Jeannette Butterworth, with a second by Aimie Burns, made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Noelle McKay.