

# WATTSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 29, 2020

The Wattsburg Area School District Board of Education held a Special Board meeting via Zoom Virtual Meeting Platform on September 29. President Andy Pushchak called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He announced that any citizens wishing to address the Board this evening, to please use the Question and Answer feature.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Jeremy Bloeser, Mrs. Amanda Farrell, Mrs. Nicole Lee, Mr. Shawn Matson, Mr. Josh Paris, Mrs. Julie Pikiewicz, Mrs. Tara Pound, Mr. Marty Pushchak and Dr. Andy Pushchak attended. Mr. Kenneth Berlin, Superintendent; Mrs. Rebecca Kelley, Assistant to the Superintendent; Mrs. Vicki Bendig Business Administrator and Attorney Christine McClure, Solicitor also attended.

## Roll Call

Motion by Mr. Bloeser, seconded by Mrs. Farrell to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved by a voice vote with no opposition. Motion carried.

## Agenda

Danny Carter addressed the Board regarding the kind of lessons his children are receiving online. The due dates of the assignments and how students are falling behind He has experienced problems with the hot spots but noted that these issues were resolved within a very short time after contacting the IT Department.

## Guest and Citizen Comments

Bethany Pinzok has taught 13 years at the district and feels that this has been the hardest due to Covid. She stressed that she feels student safety MUST be the focus and we should not rush to open the schools but to consider waiting until the end of the 9 weeks to move toward the Green Phase.

Amanda Hurd reminded the Board that their duty is to make the hard decisions and that, the Board should focus on making the best decision to keep our students safe.

Joy Biebel voiced that we need consistency with the county if they are in the green, we should be in the green. Stating that students learn better in person and that grades 7-12 have been put aside. She said we need to involve and engage these students. She also stated we could observe other districts and how they handle the difficulties.

David Buona shared that being closed is not easy. He teaches at a neighboring district which went back to school August 26<sup>th</sup> full-time, full capacity. He encouraged the return of our students 7-12 back to school so they can build relationships with their teacher so they can make a connection.

Dr. Pushchak thanked all citizens that addressed the board this evening. He shared that discussion to move to the green phase is being considered by this board after careful consideration and deliberations. The three metrics the district has been using is the PDE guidance, Department of Health Guidance and community input. School Boards are not used to making public health decisions but as was mentioned, as making those decisions has been mandated to the board, we have accepted the responsibility and will make these decisions. We take very seriously the decisions we make for all of our students and their families and as already been mentioned, after a cautious approach to opening the year in the yellow phase, the Board would like to discuss to see if we should reexamine where we stand with regard to our metrics to see if a change to green is now warranted. The plan to revisit this has been the Board's plan since the we made that initial vote. It appears the metrics are leading us to consider the green phase and return the 7-12 graders back to the campus for in-person learning. Should the Board decide to move into the green phase, there will still be an option for families who wish to remain in remote learning through the district cyber academy. Be informed, many of the Board decisions are decided through the state and federal laws, mandates and policies. The community needs to know that your input is valued and always taken into consideration by this board. However, community input is only one of the factors we must consider when making our decisions. That brings us into the discussion tonight about moving into the green phase. Again, thank you to all citizens who spoke tonight.

Mr. Berlin went over where we were and where we are now using referring to the [Covid-19 Data and Opening Metrics](#). He said that in August when we made the decision to open in the Yellow phase, we were coming off a high spike in Covid cases. Since then the Health Department has gotten better at providing data that is more granular and more localized, noting the Health Department has started a 7-day lookback analysis of cases within school districts borders. For the period September 7-15, this report showed just 2% of 60 active cases in Erie County were within the District's borders. He also stated the Department of Health issued guidance for school reopening models is not a requirement, just a recommendation.

### **Superintendent's Report**

The Erie County Department of Health visited the schools prior to the start of the school year to review our preparedness. During the visit, the DOH provided the District with guidance and advice related to cleaning and disinfecting, contact tracing and quarantine recommendations and direction on when to close certain areas of the school or the entire school building if necessary. The DOH felt the District was well prepared.

Mr. Berlin stated that a transition to opening in the Green Phase is a large process. He said it entails moving classrooms, telephones, teachers, and more. If the Board wants to open school in the Green Phase, we will approach the move in phases while students are still attending class in school and virtually. Some calendar changes would also be necessary to facilitate the transition.

Regarding bussing, Durham has been working on a Green Phase bussing schedule that will keep the ridership on each bus as close to 48 students as possible.

Virtual remote teaching will no longer be available as teachers will be in their classes teaching, but student that want to learn virtually can do so in the District Fuel Ed Cyber Academy. He concluded by saying that Fuel Education students will be able to return to class also if desired.

Dr. Pushchak read the full resolution to implement the Green Phase of the WASD Learning Pathways.

Motion by Mrs. Pikiewicz , seconded by Mrs. Farrell to approve the [resolution to implement the Green Phase of the WASD learning pathways](#), being full in-person instruction for all students other than those choosing cyber education through the district's cyber academy. Discussion took place and questions were answered. In a recorded roll call vote, Mrs. Pikiewicz, Mrs. Pound, Mr. Pushchak, Mr. Bloeser, Mrs. Lee, Mr. Matson, Mr. Paris and Dr. Pushchak voted to approve the resolution. Mrs. Farrell voted against the resolution. Motion carried.

**Resolution to  
Implement the  
Green Phase of the  
WASD Learning  
Pathways**

Motion by Mrs. Pikiewicz, seconded by Mrs. Farrell to approve the [revised 2020-2021 school calendar](#) (to facilitate transition from the yellow to green operation phase). Motion approved by a voice vote with no opposition. Motion carried.

**Revised 2020-2021  
School Calendar**

Motion by Mrs. Pikiewicz, seconded by Mrs. Pound to approve the [revised gameday protocols for spectators](#). Motion approved by a voice vote with no opposition. Motion carried.

**Revised Gameday  
Protocols for  
Spectators**

Mr. Miller went over the number of spectators at sporting events and how tickets will be distributed.

There being no further business before the Board, upon motion by Mrs. Farrell seconded by Mrs. Lee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Signature on File  
Vicki Bendig  
School Board Secretary