

## **Study Session/Student Life Committee/Budget Update Discussion MINUTES**

March 8, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. Remote Access via ZOOM  
as a result of necessity due to coronavirus pandemic sanctions

### **Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm**

In attendance: N. English, L. Ashbaugh, J. Hurt-Robinson, M. McClure, A. Loeffler, M. Pallone, J. Miller, B. Hawk, J. Chaparro, T. Schaaf, T. Good, F. Muscante, D. Zolkowski, C. Monroe, R. Rizzo, A. Pater, E. Hewitt, R. Long, M. Rometo, P. Kvortek, K. Krajca, W. Wilton, S. Garibay, C. Longstreth, T. Abraham, H. Deem, B. Radulet, J. Gonzalez, additional unnamed residents

### **Presentation**

Dr. English welcomed everyone to this evening's meeting. He mentioned that this meeting was packed with promising and optimistic news across a host of school-related fronts. As this agenda will have a student life focus, both Mrs. Schaaf and Mr. Rometo will be providing updates. He wanted to start the meeting with a winter sports wrap-up and spring sports preview. Dr. English then turned the meeting over to Mr. Rometo.

Winter sports wrap-up – Spring Sports preview – Mr. Rometo mentioned how challenging the season was but that he was happy that the students were able to compete. The wrestling team ended their season 0-6, but were able to compete and did a good job overall. The girls basketball team went 6-6 and boys ended at 3-12. All students wore masks and experienced a slightly condensed season due to Covid. Both teams chose to enter the playoffs and lost in the first round. The Junior High and 9<sup>th</sup> grade teams wore masks and had a successful season. Mr. Rometo also spoke of the spring, saying that the baseball and track teams were both ready to go. He mentioned that track numbers seem to be lower than usual and the softball team is still recruiting girls to complete a full team.

Vaccination Update – Dr. English shared exciting news regarding vaccinations of school personnel. Through the Dept. of Health, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and the National Guard, all of our school personnel can be vaccinated. He reviewed the tentative "tier" breakdown and start dates, along with the time slots to be available. He also took the opportunity to thank the Governor, the Dept. of Education, PEMA, and the National Guard for their efforts to make our school safer. In addition, he thanks the Allegheny Intermediate Unit and the Waterfront businesses for accommodating the logistics of this endeavor.

Fourth Marking Period Education Plan – Dr. English then moved to the Fourth Marking Period Education Plan. He shared his screen and shared his slide presentation. He began by discussing what has changed, in terms of the pandemic, from the last marking period to this one, highlighting the decrease of cases and positivity rates, the increase of vaccinations, the loosening of indoor and outdoor gathering limits, and decline of cases in the schools. He made the recommendation of providing two options for the 4<sup>th</sup> marking period: a 5-day a week in-person option, and a 5-day a week virtual option. He then spoke of the key drivers for making this decision, including empirical and anecdotal evidence, projection model data, the improvement of health conditions, the need to get students back into the building (regression, complacency), mental health, and health and safety protocols. Dr. English then discussed the projection models provided by Epistemix. He then discussed the rigorous cleaning and disinfecting protocols and procedures that will continue to be a focus in the schools. Finally, he discussed the pros and cons of bringing more students back in person, stating that physical distancing of 6ft will remain in the cafeteria

only, and that concessions will have to be made in the classroom. He also discussed the implication of possibly additional quarantines due to students being less than 6ft apart.

### **Announcements**

Dr. English then spoke about a research study from Penn State, the Penn State Fasten Study At risk student study to plan school counseling and health services. He mentioned that this week's packet included an overview of a partnership with Penn State University we have been working on for a year and a half and has been delayed due to Covid-19. Although this was discussed at a prior meeting last year, we are now reevaluating this effort for the 21-22 school year. Dr. English then gave a complete overview of the study with Drs. Greg Fosco and Stephanie Lanza at the Penn State Prevention Research Center. He noted that this is funded by the Hillman Foundation of Pittsburgh to address growing concerns regarding substance use and abuse in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Drs. Fosco and Lanza are partnering with local high schools to better understand the scope of substance abuse, and rates of risk and protective factors among high school students in Allegheny County. He then continued to discuss the phases of the study. He also mentioned that the study will be completely optional. Mr. Muscante and Ms. Lane, our legal team, have studied the description and consent forms, and have concluded that the study protects the data and de-identifies the information and maintains such only in aggregate form.

### **Discussion/Review of Potential Motions for Approval for Regular Voting Meeting**

Dr. English then reviewed the personnel motions for the upcoming board meeting.

#### **Personnel**

- Paraprofessional - Resignations -
- Paraprofessional – New Hires – Filling Replacement Positions - We have 2 paraprofessional resignations which will be on the agenda for approval next week. One of them has resigned to become a building sub at Tenth Street. We will also be asking the board to approve new paraprofessional hires at Verner and at Tenth Street. This is wonderful news, as we continue to attract and solidify much needed paraprofessionals.
- Leave Replacement Teacher(s) – Filling Open Sabbatical/XIb leaves - Mrs. O'Block will begin her Article XIb leave shortly. Ms. Jones, one our current building subs, has agreed to fill in for Mrs. O'Block during her absence.
- Sabbatical Leave Extension – Jill Swogger - Mrs. Swogger has requested an extension to her current sabbatical leave.  
We hope to fill the additional open sabbatical and Article XIb leaves at the Jr-Sr High School very shortly. If so, that information will be included in next week's voting meeting packet as well.
- Substitutes - We will be asking for approval of several Precision substitutes, as usual.
- ESY and Targeted Assistance - We have posted for both Extended School Year (ESY) and Targeted Assistance. Letters of interest are to be submitted to Dr. Monroe.
- Supplemental Athletic Resignation – Junior High Volleyball Coach -
- Supplemental Athletic Approvals – Baseball, JV Head Coach; Track and Field Coaching; Junior High Volleyball Coach; Softball, JV Head Coach
- Athletic Event Worker Approvals - We have a number of Athletic approvals for spring sports that will be listed on next week's voting agenda for supplemental coaching and athletic event worker positions. We also received a letter from Mr. Jake Stone resigning from his current volleyball position.
- Musical – Vocal Coach - The musical team has found a vocal coach for this year's musical. Her letter of interest was included in the board packet for your purview this week.

- Principal Intern – Summer 2020 – Jr/Sr High School - Mr. Hewitt is looking forward to having a principal intern during the summer of 2021. We are working on obtaining all of her clearance and health information at this time.

## **Board Governance**

Charter School Reform Resolution Dr. English then reviewed the Charter School Reform Resolution. For those that do not know, Riverview paid \$618,410 in taxpayer money via mandatory payments to brick-and-mortar and cyber charter schools in the 2019-2020 school year. Why is this number so exorbitant?

- The State’s charter school tuition funding formula is fundamentally flawed because it mandates a double payment by including the charter school tuition costs in the total district expenses when calculating the per-student tuition rate; consequently, the tuition rate districts pay charter schools is actually higher than each district’s per-student expenditures; and the mandated charter school tuition rate calculations are based on a school district’s expenses, many of which are not incurred in charter schools, such as costs for career and technical education programs and student activities including athletics, intramurals, and fine arts, leading to incredibly inflated tuition payments;
- The charter schools’ special education funding routinely fails to align with the services and programs they provide their students; further, charter schools’ disproportionately identify students with special needs in certain areas; both issues unnecessarily increasing tuition payments for school districts;
- This resolution is being brought to the Board for consideration in next week’s voting meeting in light of concerns with the current charter school law, calling upon local legislators to support the proposed charter school reform bill and address the following:
  - Eliminate the inclusion of charter tuition costs within the tuition formula;
  - Reform charter funding formula to eliminate costs for programming not offered – career and technical centers, athletics, intramurals, fine arts, and other extracurricular activities;
  - Reform special education to align costs with services provided and ensure appropriate student identification;
  - Enhance the power and authority of school boards in charter oversight, increasing transparency and taxpayer understanding;
  - Enforce equal prohibitions on conflicts of interest;
  - Require school district board representation on charter school boards;
  - Eliminate tuition payments to cyber charter schools if a school district offers a cyber option; and
  - Provide school districts with the same teacher certification flexibility

Upon signature, a copy of this resolution will be posted on the Riverview School District’s website and submitted to the elected state senators and representatives of our school district in the General Assembly, and to the Governor of Pennsylvania. As you know, the Governor has illuminated this issue in his budget proposal by providing a stipulation to cap charter school tuition to \$9,500 per student. We believe this reform is vital to the solvency of local Districts throughout the Commonwealth. Next week, we are asking the Board to support and sign this resolution, as a necessary step in advocating for our District’s frustration and need for reform. This resolution has been analyzed by our legal team and business office to both protect the District and add financial statements specifically relevant to Riverview. We thank them for their efforts.

## **Student Life**

- Activity Report – Review of clubs and other activities – Mrs. Schaaf then reviewed the student club and activity report. The report showed that our students, despite certain obstacles, are still very busy in our District. Dr. English thanked Mrs. Schaaf for her report.

## **Agreements/Contracts:**

- The Meadows Psychiatric Center / UPMC Behavioral Health – Dr. English explained that the Meadows Agreement would be needed should a student of the district be hospitalized and require educational services. The UPMC Behavioral Health Agreement is for emergency partial hospitalization visits as well.

Dr. English then turned the meeting over to Ms. Good for the Business/Finance review.

## **Business/Finance:**

- Serving Line Equipment Tenth Street and Verner – Muncibid /Dispose Ms. Good mentioned that with the Metz Investment with the Contract agreement, the Serving lines were replaced. Mr. Pater has asked for permission to sell them on Muncibid and if unsold, dispose of them.
- GASB 45/75 Valuation report – Also motion on public agenda Ms. Good explained that the valuation report is a result of a governmental accounting standard that went into effect in 2015 and then was updated in 2017. We are required to have an independent firm perform this calculation every two years. She explained further that the District uses Mockenhaupt Benefits Group in Pittsburgh.
- Price Lunch Equity – Ms. Good explained that PDE is late releasing this again. Likely we will need to wait until April for approval. This is the tool that confirms our paid meals are higher than the reimbursement we received for free meals from the federal government.
- Food Service Renewal Ms. Good explained that Metz is working on the renewal. It needs to be submitted to PDE by March 31<sup>st</sup>. Once approved and returned from PDE the board will approve it as well.
- CEP Renewal Ms. Good explained that she has the paperwork completed and approved for the CEP provision for Verner Elementary for the 21-22 school year. This provision provides free meals for all Verner Elementary students.
- 5-year Forecast She explained she is working on this and the importance of reviewing a forecast due to COVID and all of the federal dollars coming in.
- Budget Update She notified all that the Stimulus was passed by the Senate and likely the House would pass by Tuesday with the President following by Friday. Hopefully, we should see the funds quickly.

**Adjournment – 9:57 pm**