

PATRICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
104 Rucker Street – P.O. Box 346
Stuart, Virginia 24171

MINUTES FOR SPECIAL CALLED SCHOOL BOARD MEETING – WORK SESSION
Tuesday, July 21, 2020 – 11:00 a.m.
Patrick County High School Auditorium
215 Cougar Lane
Stuart, VA 24171

Present: Mr. Brandon J. Simmons, Chairman
Mr. Walter L. Scott, Vice Chairman
Ms. Amy E. Walker
Ms. Shannon R. Harrell
Mr. Ryan S. Lawson

Mr. C. Dean Gilbert, Division Superintendent
Ms. Sara Leigh D. Collins, Clerk

Absent: Ms. Andrea J. Cassell – Assistant Superintendent – Instruction

Mr. Brandon J. Simmons, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

No. 25592 **Opening Ceremonies**

- (a) Pledge of Allegiance (IEA)
- (b) Moment of Silence (IE)

No. 25593 **Public Comment**

- 1. Nancy Carlson
Two Concerns:
 - a. Five days a week – potentially life threatening during a pandemic. Best option is the Blend Learning Plan
 - b. School board statement that masks would be highly recommended – but not required – masks should absolutely be mandatory. Students should wear masks at all times unless eating in a classroom or speaking to a teacher in a classroom.
- 2. Mother – 12-year old - not from Patrick County
 - 1. Disagree with Ms. Carlson
 - 2. Everyone is over reacting
 - 3. 90% of cases are false
 - 4. Every case has to be reported are actually fear factor
- 3. Stacey Tatum – 2 students – HRMS
 - 1. Students learn best in school
 - 2. Cannot live in fear
 - 3. Danger of leaving children at home
 - 4. Some children may face abuse or neglect
 - 5. Prefer five days a week
- 4. Lauren Pate – Daughter – 7th grade
 - 1. Internet hot spot with two bars
 - 2. Packet very helpful
 - 3. Learn best in classroom
 - 4. Prefer blended option

5. Terri Alt
 1. Learn better in school
 2. Feels like blended option would be the best starting school then go to 4 days if this works out
 3. Start at a slower pace
6. Mother
 1. Suggested having half students go in morning the other half in the afternoon
7. Administrative Team at PCPS
Michelle Adams, Annie Baker, Adam Carter, Denise Clark, Sandra Clement, Jen Cox, Trey Cox, Robin Ferguson, Terry Harris, Jeannie King, Amy Nester and Rozina Turner

The safety and well-being of our staff and our students and their families is the most critical factor for Patrick County Public Schools. As administrators, we value all parental and community involvement in active decision making. The proposed PCPS reopening plan presented at the meeting on July 14 was a blended schedule. Half of the students would attend Monday/Tuesday and Thursday/Friday would be the second half of students to attend in-person sessions. On Wednesdays, an off day for students and instructional staff, virtual learning/teaching would take place. Also, teachers will hold office hours and virtual meetings. Central Office administrators created a plan based upon the VDOE guidance, CDC guidance, and from parent surveys with careful and deliberate consideration to health and safety, both physically and emotionally.

Here are our raised concerns about the proposed five-day reopening:

- Teacher resignations creating staff shortages. At this time, we all have many high-risk employees and employees with the ability to retire. At PCHS alone, there are over 30 staff members (1/3 of all staff members) who are at risk. These staff members have addressed concerns about returning given the blended learning plan, but we are concerned that they will not continue if they cannot correctly social distance by going full-time.
- Substitutes – principals have called most substitutes already to find long-term substitutes due to maternity leave, illness, surgeries, etc. and none are willing to sub. What will we do when a sub is needed?
- Time constraints for temperature and well checks daily at full capacity five days per week. All schools are fortunate to have one school nurse. Still, one nurse cannot possibly maintain two clinics – one for students who have fevers and one for students who need daily medications, have injuries, or non-COVID related illnesses.
- Teacher Burnout – With the five days a week, teachers do not have the flexibility to teach full-time and teach virtually with a full schedule. Right now, we do not have the financial resources to pay our staff to include the absence of planning times.
- Classroom Social Distancing – Some school classrooms in Patrick County can only safely hold eight students with 6-foot spacing.
- Some teachers have addressed concerns with the rising number of cases within the county. Teachers have called us in tears about the fear for their safety and their children’s safety, sharing that they will resign if having to return to school five days a week with the inability to accurately social distance.
- Masks: Teachers have expressed their concern that the cases are rising where businesses can mandate the use of masks. As educators, we cannot refuse services for students who do not wear masks as the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends for children two years and older.

- Many students and families will be returning from vacation before school starts exposing them to many places such as Myrtle Beach, Florida, etc. where there have been high cases of Covid-19.
- Going to a 5-day schedule for students now may lead to parents pulling students out to homeschool, which would hurt enrollment for the county as well as funds for the county.
- If students come back and do not follow the guidelines provided to us, the county will be held responsible.

In closing, there is no perfect plan, but it's the best plan that our division was able to come up with to stay within the CDC, VDOE, state, and AAP regulations that have been handed to us and still allow face-to-face learning.

8. Clyde DeLoach
 1. Agree with school administrators
 2. Agree with giving public input
 3. Strong believer in masks
9. Debra Nolen – Librarian – Woolwine and Hardin Reynolds
 1. Will see every student at both schools
 2. Supported starting with reduced attendance days
 3. Safer level then gradually move up
10. Andre Kidd – Mental Health Worker – Husband of PC teacher
 1. Too much to deal with five days a week
 2. Virtual out of question
 3. Kids with mental illness don't understand wearing masks and maintaining social distance
 4. Remote learning would not work for special needs children
11. Kerry Taylor – Teacher Health Occupation – PCHS
 1. Better idea of health risks
 2. 26.8% of the population over 65
 3. kids with mental illness don't understand wearing masks and maintaining social distance
 4. Jeopardize health in this county

Recess for five minutes

12. Mandy McKee – Working Mother
 1. No child care in county
 2. What are we doing with the Cares Money
13. Director of Emergency Services

Superintendent Gilbert called Mr. Steve Allen, Director of Emergency Services who always helps the school system. Mr. Allen reported on the latest cases of Covid-19 in Patrick County.
14. Safety Measures

Mr. Jason Wood, Director of Operations, gave a report on measures that have been taken for safety of students and staff
15. Special Education

Ms. Ann Fulcher, Director of Special Education, reported on the special education needs for students and how it would be addressed

16. Technology

Mr. Darren Biggs, Director of Technology, reported on how many students will be served with technology

1. All K-3 students will have iPads
2. All 4-12 Students will have Chromebooks
3. Necessary for all students to use our devices and programs

17. Plan

Superintendent Gilbert – there is no perfect plan, the blended plan is very fluid. We will continue to monitor our students and school system for safety. Our desire is to get schools back to normal as soon as we can.

18. Sports

Mr. Terry Harris, Assistant Principal – PCHS

No decision on sports. Waiting on CDC guidelines.

No. 25594

Blended Plan

After a long discussion between school board members with each expressing what they thought and with more comments from the audience. The school board desires for school to be in session four days or five days a week as soon as it can be safely done.

On motion by Ms. Harrell seconded by Mr. Scott to approve the Blended Plan and to re-evaluate at the September 10, 2020 regular meeting in hopes of going to a four day or five day week.

Ayes: Harrell, Lawson, Scott, Walker

Nays: None

Present: Simmons

No. 25595

Health Mitigation Plan – Reopening Health Plan

The phased reopening of schools will require Patrick County Public Schools to conduct operations very differently in order to protect the health of staff and students while public health risks of Covid-19 persist. PCPS seeks compliance with the CDC Guidance for Schools and the Virginia Phase Guidance.

Planning to reopen

Patrick County Public Schools has established a COVID-19 team consisting of division leadership. The PCPS COVID-19 team maintains close contact with the Emergency Services Coordinator. The collaboration between emergency services and school officials has included conversations with local health officials. The Health Mitigation plan includes the following:

1. Attendance Monitoring
2. Communication
3. Health Services
4. Education (Promotion behaviors that reduce spread of COVID-19)
5. Safe School Training for Staff
6. Healthy Hygiene
7. Physical Distancing
8. Health Screening
9. Hygiene Practice
10. Systems (Ventilation Systems operate properly)
11. Gatherings, Fieldtrips, volunteers (adhere to state guidelines) (limit fieldtrips)
12. Sick leave
13. Return to work after exposure (CDC guidelines)
14. Preparing for when someone gets sick

15. Preparing to close down if necessary (CDC School Decision Tree)

On motion by Mr. Lawson seconded by Ms. Walker to approve the Health Mitigation Plan as proposed.

Ayes: Harrell, Lawson, Scott, Simmons, Walker
Nays: None

No. 25596 Adjournment

On motion by Ms. Walker seconded by Ms. Harrell to adjourn the meeting at 1:48 p.m.

Ayes: Harrell, Lawson, Scott, Simmons, Walker
Nays: None

Brandon J. Simmons, Chairman
Patrick County School Board

Sara Leigh D. Collins, Clerk
Patrick County School Board