



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Minutes – Board of Education Special Meeting – March 2, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Mrs. Y. Rivera, President. The meeting was held in the 2nd floor Board Room at 54 Meadow St., New Haven, Connecticut.

Present:

Mrs. Y. Rivera, President; Mr. M. Wilcox, Vice-President; Dr. E. Joyner, Secretary; Mr. D. Goldson, Dr. T. Jackson- McArthur, Mayor J. Elicker, Mr. Larry Conaway

Absent:

Ms. L. Arouna, Mr. N. Rivera

Dr. Joyner led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Rivera announced that we are here this evening to discuss possible action regarding Domestic and International Field Trips.

Dr. Tracey remarked we have been following the recent happenings in the news, the health department, etc., and we thought we needed to be proactive in bringing this to the Board’s attention since some of these trips were Board actions and we didn’t want to take it upon ourselves to make decisions on our own. One of these trips is scheduled for tomorrow. Dr. Tracey remarked that they just wanted the Board’s thinking on moving forward.

One of the International trips is scheduled for April 29th and one of the domestic trips is scheduled for tomorrow. In answer to a question by Mr. Goldson about parents taking out insurance for these trips, Ms. Jessica Haxhi, Supervisor, World Languages, explained in detail about parents being offered insurance and some of them opted out. She specifically noted “cancel” or “any reason insurance”, which she recommended. Ms. Haxhi remarked that she also sent a letter to trip leaders for insurance to opt out for any reason. She explained the entire process in detail for domestic and international trips. She also mentioned that not everyone took the insurance and explained what would happen if families didn’t take the insurance. She also noted what the cancellation cost would be.

Ms. Haxhi commented that some of the international trips have already been canceled and they are thinking about canceling the other international trips.

Mr. Goldson then wanted to know if they are informing parents and involving parents in the decision. Dr. Tracey remarked, no, because this just happened on Friday so we haven’t had a chance to talk to families. Ms. Haxhi added that they, as Central Office, have not met with families but the trip leaders have been in constant touch with families.

Mr. Goldson wanted to know what our liability would be and Ms. Haxhi explained that all of the companies except the Bermuda trip, have been able to add us to their certificate of liability and they are all covered up to \$50million of liability.



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Mr. Wilcox asked if the district is recommending, at this time, to cancel any of these trips. Dr. Tracey remarked that they have great concerns about some of the trips coming up, based on what they are hearing on the news, and Jen Vasquez working with the City's Department of Health. The trip to Italy has recently been rated a 3 and we have canceled that trip. Now we hear that things are breaking out among our states here on the East Coast, and Florida has called a state of emergency so we are concerned about some of the domestic trips as well. Dr. Tracey remarked that we just want some direction from the Board.

Mr. Wilcox stated that his position is that any decision should be based on CDC, local public health and the state department of public health documents and as of this afternoon there is no call to cancel field trips as a whole. He explained. For example, the trip to Bermuda, which his kid is scheduled to go on he has no reservations about that, because it is a level 1 warning. Mr. Wilcox also wanted to know if there is a date beyond when parents and/or the district would incur a lot of expense when we make a decision whether or not to go.

Ms. Haxhi remarked that right now we are beyond the 30 day window that is why we wanted to come here tonight. She explained. Most of the travel companies will not travel if the level goes to 4.

Motion was made by Mr. Goldson to have executive committee have the authority to make decisions for parents in between Board meetings.

Dr. Tracey stressed that the reason she brought this to the Board is because this came up at an emergency planning meeting and she felt because the Board made the original decision, the Board should make the final decision.

Dr. Tracy and Ms. Jessica Haxhi, Supervisor, World Languages, presented highlights of the overnight and domestic field trips that students are slated to participate in in the next few months, beginning tomorrow; a trip by Clinton Avenue School to Fairlee, VT. Ms. Haxhi also mentioned that they have already taken Sound School's trip to Italy, which was approved in August, off the table.

Dr. Joyner commented that if it were up to him, he would cancel all the trips. He explained his reasons in detail.

Mr. Goldson remarked that what Dr. Joyner said was very important, but he feels that parents should be the ones to decide. Dr. Joyner expressed his concerns and a discussion ensued.



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Mr. Goldson again stressed to the administration that he would like to hear what the parents for each of these trips has to say. He would like to give authority to the executive committee to make decisions in our stead in an emergency in need for speed.

Dr. Jackson-McArthur stated that she would support that if they knew that the health director, Maritza Bond, was intimately involved in the decision-making with the executive committee.

Dr. Tracey reiterated her position of bringing this to the Board because it was an emergency planning meeting and it is not her decision to make, and because they were already having an F&O meeting she felt we could have this discussion before that. It is a Board decision to make.

Ms. Haxhi added that any parent can pull their child out of a trip whenever they want to. Dr. Jackson-McArthur said that if her children were signed up to go on any of these trips, she would not allow them to go. She continued to explain her position.

Dr. Joyner said that having the executive committee make a decision might not even be legal because it is not a quorum. Mr. Goldson explained that he just wants to give the executive committee authority to make the decision in case of an emergency. Mr. Wilcox initiated a further discussion. He also noted that some of these trips are incredible educational opportunities. A discussion ensued.

Dr. Jackson-McArthur suggested that Director Maritza Bond, health director for the City of New Haven be part of the discussion. Ms. Bond thanked the Board for their dedication and service to the children of New Haven. She thinks that this is a very important topic, at this time, as the situation is evolving day by day, minute by minute to the point where CDC has not updated their website on the number of cases that are current. She agrees with Mr. Wilcox that we should rely on the CDC Guidance. She explained that what they are doing is constantly looking at the recommendations at the federal level and the state is also aligned with the same recommendations. It is important that the parents be made fully aware of the risks associated with the travel. It is also important that the individuals organizing these trips at the schools include some advice from the local health departments and she explained.

Ms. Bond continued to explain the precautions to be taken and noted that they developed a flow chart in the event that we have to respond and they would like to present it to the Board at a later date. In answer to a question by Mr. Goldson, Ms. Bond said that right now she recommends that we take the advice of the CDC into consideration. If you know that there are cases in respective states, use precaution. It is up to the discretion of the parent if they want to send their children. She commends the Board for looking at this conscientiously and utilizing the CDC as a baseline to make these considerations. She



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recommends that we are cognizant of the different travel advisories that are being published and changed daily. She explained further.

Mr. Goldson asked Ms. Bond if she would send her children on any of these trips. Ms. Bond remarked that she has a son who is a junior in college and, at the discretion of the professor, his trip was cancelled. To Dr. Joyner’s point that it is important that the parents be made aware of the risk factors. Dr. Tracey has been tremendous support and we have worked collaboratively with the Director of Public Nursing to make sure we are communicating to the parents the most up-to-date information available. It is up to the discretion of the parents to decide if their children should go or not.

191-20
Resolution
Vermont

Mr. Goldson made a resolution, seconded by Mrs. Rivera, it was unanimously voted to support these young people to have the experience of going on this trip to and all March trips.

192-20
Authority for
Executive Committee
Trip Cancellations

On the motion by Mr. Goldson, seconded by Mr. Conaway, it was unanimously voted, by roll call vote, to give authority to the Executive Committee to make decisions on trip cancellations in between Board meetings.

192-20
City of New Haven
Health Director Input

On the motion amended by Dr. Jackson-McArthur, seconded by Mr. Goldson, it was unanimously, voted by roll call, to include that the City of New Haven Health Director will be a part of the deliberations concerning these trips before a final decision is made and the Health Director will make us aware of CDC Guidance.

Ms. Haxhi addressed Dr. Joyner’s concern and explained the Greece and Costa Rica travel companies have already notified their plans to give back more money than they would have. The trip to Canada, however, families are going to lose \$15 a student. Ms. Haxhi asked Board members how they would like to handle domestic field trips that will be coming to the Board.

A discussion took place around the Celentano trip to the Hulbert Outdoor Leadership Program in Fairlee, Vermont. Celentano principal, Kristina DeNegre, explained the trip to Board members and she explained that this is the second year that their students received the opportunity to go to a leadership summit in Vermont and they are going with another Connecticut school. Ms. DeNegre explained that the students will spend three days engaging in some leadership activities as well as plan for a community service project. There are 40 kids, 2 adults from each school, and six counselors. They will be housed in Chalet style homes. They are leaving tomorrow morning and will be back on Thursday evening.



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Dr. Joyner said that Ms. DeNegre is a superstar principal and he knows that she wants the best for our kids. She thanked him for that. Dr. Joyner expressed his concerns at length. He feels that there are ways that we could have a win/win. Dr. Joyner expressed his concerns about who the kids would come in contact with and where they would stay, etc. Dr. Jackson-McArthur commented that she feels it's a risk but the question is, how big of a risk? A discussion ensued.

Mr. Goldson asked Dr. Tracey if it were her child or grandchild would she let them go. Dr. Tracey responded they would not be going anywhere. The unknown is bothering her. Mr. Goldson made a resolution that we support allowing these young people to have this experience and go on this trip. Mr. Wilcox added there is more risk in traveling to the location than there is in contracting this virus at the location. He explained further. This is a great opportunity to explain to the students and anyone in the district, the importance of handwashing, etc.

Dr. Jackson-McArthur engaged in a discussion with Director Bond regarding the precautions that are being taken in Vermont and the other sites the students will be visiting.

193-20
Approve March
Domestic Trips

On the motion by Mr. Goldson, seconded by Mrs. Rivera, it was voted by roll call vote with one nay by Dr. Jackson-McArthur, to amend the motion to include all March trips, i.e., Clinton Avenue to Fairlee, VT; Edgewood to Ivoryton, CT; and HSC to Philadelphia, PA.

194-20
Approve Field Trips
To Fairlee, VT and
Ivoryton, CT

On the motion by Mr. Goldson, seconded by Mrs. Rivera, it was voted by roll call with two nays by Mr. Conaway and Dr. Jackson-McArthur, to amend the motion to include the Fairlee, VT trip and the Ivoryton, CT trips only and readdress the Philadelphia, PA trip at a later date.

Ms. Haxhi talked about the trips to Costa Rica and Greece and mentioned that if we wait until after March 9th to April 10th to cancel these trips, it might cause additional expense to the parents. She explained that Greece and Costa Rica are at a level 1 as of now.

Dr. Tracey mentioned that her concern is the liability to the Board.

For the record, Dr. Jackson-McArthur stated she votes, no, at this point because we do not have enough information. She feels it's too risky.

For the record, Mr. Conaway stated that he feels we have to look at these trips on a situation by situation basis. His concerns are the International trips.

Dr. Joyner said he has talked with Dr. Tracey over the last several days and liability is not just talking about legal. It is how we would feel if we made a decision that we would regret



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for the rest of our lives. He was always taught that it is better to be safe than sorry. He agrees with Mr. Conaway that we look at this on a case by case basis.

Mr. Goldson pointed out that right now we don't have information before us that would suggest we cancel this trip. We now have a rapid response team in place that can make decisions between Board meetings, if need be. He agrees with Mr. Conaway that it is a case by case basis and we allow the administration to continue to update the executive committee and if we have to cancel between meetings, they can make that decision. He doesn't feel that we have to make a decision on these at this point because there is nothing that says we should.

For the record, Mr. Conaway remarked that he would want to know what the CDC is saying because there is rapid change and we have to look at this on a situation by situation basis. His main concerns are the International trips and Florida.

Ms. Haxhi offered to meet with the parent groups on these three trips.

For the record Dr. Jackson-McArthur stated that she votes, no, to international trips because the situation is too precarious at this point and because we don't have enough information. She feels it is too risky.

195-20
Adjournment

On the motion by Mr. Goldson, seconded by Dr. Jackson-McArthur, it was unanimously voted to adjourn at 5:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginger McHugh

Recording Secretary