

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education
Community Unit School District #7
High School Cafeteria
612 Broadway Street
Gillespie, Illinois 62033
(and Broadcast on Zoom)
January 7, 2021**

President Hayes called the special meeting of Community Unit District #7 School Board to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Hatlee, present; Dobrino, present; Hayes, present; Schmidt, present; Tiburzi, present; Alepra, present; Carter, present

Superintendent Owsley attended the meeting. Union President Michelle Smith attended the meeting on zoom.

Motion made by Alepra, seconded by Carter to approve the agenda as presented. Hatlee, yes; Dobrino, yes; Hayes, yes; Schmidt, yes; Tiburzi, yes; Alepra, yes; Carter, yes. Motion carried.

Motion made by Dobrino, seconded by Tiburzi for Roll Call Vote to Adjourn to Closed Meeting at 6:01 p.m. for the following:

- A. Discussion of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance or dismissal of specific employees of the District, pursuant to 105 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)
- B. Discussion of collective negotiation matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives pursuant to 105 ILCS 120/2 (c)(2)

Dobrino, yes; Hayes, yes; Schmidt, yes; Tiburzi, yes; Alepra, yes; Carter, yes; Hatlee, yes. Motion carried.

Motion made by Carter, seconded by Dobrino for Roll Call Vote to return to Open Session at 7:00 p.m. Schmidt, yes; Hatlee, yes; Carter, yes; Hayes, yes; Alepra, yes; Dobrino, yes; Tiburzi, yes. Motion carried.

The Pledge of Allegiance was repeated.

Superintendent Owsley read the following statement:

I would like to start this meeting with a reminder to all those attending tonight's meeting that this Board Meeting is being held remotely pursuant to Section 120/7E of the Illinois Open Meetings Act due to the state-wide COVID-19 disaster declaration issued by Governor Pritzker on December 11, 2020 and effective through January 10, 2021, in order to ensure the health and safety of our community members, staff members, and students.

I have determined that, due to the COVID-19 disaster declaration, it is not feasible for members of the public to attend the meeting in person. Therefore, consistent with the Tier 3 mitigation measures and IDPH's and ISBE's recommendation that gatherings be limited to 10 persons or less, this meeting is being held remotely. Only Members of the Board, myself, and essential school district personnel were permitted to be physically present for this meeting. This ensures we remain below 10 people physically in attendance.

As such, the Board of Education has made alternative arrangements and has provided notice to the public on the school district's website describing how any interested member of the public may contemporaneously hear all discussion, testimony and roll call votes taken during tonight's Board Meeting by offering a web-based Zoom video link, as well as a telephone Zoom dial-in option for

anyone to access. This information was posted on the district's website and was included on the meeting notice and agenda.

Further, as stated on the notice and agenda for this meeting, public comment was accepted via email. All members of the public wishing to make a public comment at tonight's meeting were invited to email their public comment to me no later than 12:00 PM today, January 7, 2021. During the designated public comment portion of tonight's meeting, Board President Hayes will read all of the comments that were submitted. A copy of each submitted comment will be attached to the minutes of tonight's meeting.

The Board of Education will keep a verbatim record of this and all other board meetings held remotely in the form of an/a audio/video recording.

Also, please note that attendance at tonight's meeting was limited to board members and essential school district personnel only as a way to ensure all members of the public were treated equally. The district does not want to be placed in a position where it must pick and choose which members of the public can attend in-person versus which members must attend remotely. As such, it was decided that limiting attendance to essential personnel and board members was the most fair and equitable way to ensure a safe meeting could be conducted. Thank you for your understanding on this as we continue, as a community, to try and safely navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic."

Union Report

Union President Michelle Smith read the following Union Report:

"The Union would like to strongly encourage the board to take Mr. Owsley's planned recommendation of returning to **4 day hybrid** in person learning beginning January 11th with the same schedule in place as before the November 30th move to full remote. At this time, we believe that our priorities are such:

1. Education of our students – we feel it is ALWAYS in the best interest of education and student performance that they be in person and in front of their certified teachers and support staff.
2. Safety – due to constant fluctuation in positive case numbers in the county, lack of vaccinations, and the new strain that seems to be forthcoming, we feel that continuing to follow certain safety guidelines as set forth by the CDC, IDPH and Macoupin County Health Department are important in continuing to be successful in reducing the risk of exposure to our students and staff.
3. Consistency – consistency is key in communicating expectations with staff and students. Creating a clear path/timeline of when we will transition is essential to good planning. Even though this past year has been anything but consistent we feel as educational leaders this is extremely important in maintaining student engagement and understanding of what, when, and why they are expected to engage and complete tasks.
4. Planning – a clear plan and timeline moving forward is essential to execute so that all stakeholders have time to plan and consider a straight path back to full in person learning and back to our #1 priority to take its rightful place again.

Finally, we are asking you to set forth a clear plan and timeline for execution of this to take place over the course of the next several months to ensure **all** of the above priorities are considered and ensure we are **clearly thinking and communicating** with all stakeholders about what, when, why and how the plan details will achieve our needs. We urge you to communicate such plans and your wishes to the administration, and thus respectively to the Union and this community so that there is transparency and purpose in how we move forward and clearly how that plan will be executed.

We do NOT feel it is prudent to change the current plan on one business days' notice. We look forward to communicating our educational needs and concerns of our students and staff in upcoming days. We hope we can work together in creating a plan that brings us back to our students full time in what was considered a 'normal school day'."

Open Action

New Business

Motion made by Alepra, seconded by Carter to return to in-person learning on January 11th with 4-Day Hybrid Learning Plan. Schmidt, yes; Hatlee, yes; Carter, yes; Hayes, yes; Alepra, yes; Dobrino, yes; Tiburzi, yes. Motion carried.

Superintendent Owsley read the following statement:

“After careful consideration, I have asked that the Board of Education take formal action on a move from our current Remote Learning Plan to our Hybrid Learning Plan beginning Monday, January 11th. Remote Learning will continue to be an option for those parents who do not feel as if it is time for their students to return in person. Again, our teachers will be charged with providing meaningful instruction to students who attend their classroom in-person and those who “remote in” for instruction. The administrative team and Board of Education understand what a challenging task this is and have full faith that the staff at CUSD #7 is once again up for the challenge.

Currently Tier 3 mitigations are scheduled to expire on January 9th, 2021, and at this point there is no word on whether these mitigations will be extended or relaxed. There has been no update provided from the IHSA/IESA regarding athletics, but an IHSA meeting is scheduled to take place on January 13th. Once further information is provided from their offices it will be provided to our coaching staffs and families.


As we move back to our Hybrid Learning Plan I would still like to remind and caution our community that a return to Remote Instruction may be necessary at a moment’s notice. A return to Remote Instruction may be caused by an outbreak within a classroom or building, a high percentage of students or staff having to be quarantined, or simply not having enough substitutes to cover our classes. A return to Remote Instruction may also be necessary if the positivity rate of our county would again, return to an alarming rate. The safety of our students and staff will always be our primary focus. We will also look to return to 5 days of instruction on January 25th.

I will continue to be in close contact with the Macoupin County Health Department to monitor the positivity rate within our county. It is my hope that we’ll begin seeing a decrease in the positivity rate within our county and that the educational world can once again return to something that resembles “normal”. I again want to thank you for your continued patience during this unprecedented time.”

Recognition of Public

Nothing was received by email.

Motion made by Carter, seconded by Hatlee to adjourn the meeting at 7:13 p.m. Schmidt, yes; Hatlee, yes; Carter, yes; Hayes, yes; Alepra, yes; Dobrino, yes; Tiburzi, yes. Motion carried.



Mark Hayes, President



William J. Carter Jr., Secretary