

**MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION, SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 186, SPRINGFIELD,**  
**SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS**  
**Thursday, August 13, 2020 (6:30 PM)**

The Board of Education convened in Special Session on August 13 A.D., 2020, at 5:32 p.m., there being present thereat:

Present:            Scott McFarland, President  
                      Julie Hammers, Board Secretary  
                      Nicole Irlam, Assistant Board Secretary

Judith Johnson  
Anthony Mares  
Tiffany Mathis  
Micah Miller  
Bill Ringer  
J. Michael Zimmers

Jennifer Gill, Superintendent of Schools

It was noted that Board of Education members were in attendance via remote access, in keeping with the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamation. Mr. McFarland, Superintendent Gill, Ms. Hammers and Ms. Irlam joined the meeting from the Board of Education's regular meeting space at 1900 West Monroe, Springfield, Illinois.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**1.1 Roll Call**

President McFarland called the meeting to order.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**3.1 Approve the Agenda for August 13, 2020**

Resolution: That the Board of Education approves the agenda.

**ORIGINAL - Motion**

Member (**Tiffany Mathis**) Moved, Member (**J. Micahel Zimmers**) Seconded to approve the ORIGINAL motion 'That the Board of Education approves the agenda'. Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: 7 Nay: 0. The motion **Carried. 7 - 0**

Those voting "aye":        Johnson, Mares, Mathis, McFarland, Miller, Ringer, Zimmers  
Those voting "no":        None.

## **ROLL CALL ACTION ITEMS**

### **3.1 Approval of a Resolution Regarding the Opening of the 2020-2021 School Year**

**Resolution:** The Superintendent recommends approval of the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Sangamon County is currently experiencing a continued increase in the COVID-19 positivity rate;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves beginning the 2020-2021 school year remotely;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the goal is to be able to offer the hybrid model as soon as local conditions allow; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Education will review local conditions at each regular Board meeting to determine when the hybrid model will open; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent and District administrators may identify and prioritize small, appropriate groups of students for in-person hybrid instruction prior to the implementation of the full hybrid model and implement IHSA athletic and extracurricular programs which must follow pandemic restrictions and as described in the Return to Learn Plan and IHSA Return to Play Guidelines;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the District will provide remote feeding at 24 school sites across the city beginning on August 24, 2020.

#### **ORIGINAL - Motion**

Member **(Anthony Mares)** Moved, Member **(Michael Zimmers)** Seconded to approve the **ORIGINAL** motion 'The Superintendent recommends approval of the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Sangamon County is currently experiencing a continued increase in the COVID-19 positivity rate;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education approves beginning the 2020-2021 school year remotely;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the goal is to be able to offer the hybrid model as soon as local conditions allow; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Education will review local conditions at each regular Board meeting to determine when the hybrid model will open; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent and District administrators may identify and prioritize small, appropriate groups of students for in-person hybrid instruction prior to the implementation of the full hybrid model and implement IHSA athletic and extracurricular programs which must follow pandemic restrictions and as described in the Return to Learn Plan and IHSA Return to Play Guidelines;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the District will provide remote feeding at 24 school sites across the city beginning on August 24, 2020'.

Mr. Zimmers discussed the need to approach the reopening of in-person classes with caution due to the high positivity rate. He asked consideration be given to asking the Sangamon County Department of Public Health to provide data prior to each Board meeting to assist with decision making related to the start of in-person classes.

Ms. Mathis suggested that the phases that the State of Illinois has established for areas around the State should guide the decision making. She suggested setting a specific positivity rate, below which in-person classes can occur and above which, remote learning only will be offered. There was some additional discussion regarding the positivity rate.

Mr. Mares reminded the other members that the Illinois State Board of Education gave schools the charge to develop plans for both in-person and remote learning classes. He commended the teacher's union, administration and staff for their dedication and hard work to develop the necessary plans. Mr. Miller also asked to have a briefing by the Sangamon County Department of Public Health at each Board meeting. He addressed the increase in the most recent positivity rating for the county. He indicated that he feels a date range should be targeted for reopening in-person classes.

Ms. Johnson reported that she is a strong supporter of beginning the year with remote only learning in order to protect students and staff, although she recognizes that students best learn with in-person classes. She also recommended that students be provided with some flexibility in their online learning time. Ms. Johnson suggested considering the implementation at the October 23 Board meeting.

Superintendent Gill reported that a multi person team has worked diligently to consider all angles of the potential reopening of school. She provided information on a number of ways that the District has prepared for the reopening of school, whether that is a hybrid or remote-only model. She reported that professional development has been planned for teachers to ensure staff are well prepared.

Mr. McFarland reported that while he stands behind his previous vote to provide in-person learning to those students that want it. However, he indicated that because the positivity rate has risen since that vote was taken, it may be necessary to now start remote only. He overviewed the evening's resolution. He suggested that the Board review data related to the positivity rate after starting school remotely to determine the best and safest time to re-open for in-person learning. There was then some discussion regarding the alignment of students and teachers for remote and hybrid learning.

Mr. Miller asked how much time has been spent preparing for in-person vs. remote learning. Mr. McFarland reported that as this relates to the current ongoing impact bargaining, it will be discussed in the Executive Session during the next regular meeting. Superintendent Gill reported that it has been her team's goal to prepare for both equally. She reported that neither the curriculum nor the pacing of the curriculum will change for the upcoming school year. She indicated that many teachers also took training over the summer to prepare for remote learning. Mr. Miller reported that it seems that the majority of questions fielded related to returning to school have centered around remote learning. He expressed concern about a number of issues related to remote learning. He asked that a standing agenda item be added to the Board meeting agendas to allow the Sangamon County Department of Public Health to present to the Board with data that may impact any decisions made related to returning to school. Ms. Johnson stated that the Superintendent is able to provide the necessary information and should be trusted to do so. There was further discussion regarding how a decision should be made to return to in-person learning.

Ms. Mathis strongly encouraged returning to in-person learning as she reported that almost half of the student population asked to return to school for in-person instruction and there are other social issues that impact the well being of students when they are not in school, such as the need for parents to work that do not have daycare. Ms. Johnso encouraged paying attention to scientific data.

Mr. Ringer encouraged making a decision to determine what the triggers will be to return to in-person hybrid learning. He asked that a plan be developed that will answer questions surrounding who the authority will be that the Board will listen to determine when school should open and what the positivity rate will need to be in order for that to happen. Mr. Miller reported that 8% is the IDPH trigger for mitigation. There was then some discussion regarding mitigation, appropriate social distancing in classrooms, staff safety, and sanitation protocols.

Mr. Zimmers motioned to end debate and take a vote. Mr. Miller seconded Mr. Zimmers motion to end debate. There was then some additional discussion regarding the data points that will need to be in place in order to resume in-person learning.

Upon a roll call vote being taken, the vote was: Aye: **5** Nay: **2**. The motion **Carried. 5 - 2**

Those voting "aye": Johnson, Mares, Miller, Ringer, Zimmers  
Those voting "no": Mathis, McFarland

Mr. McFarland then called for a vote on the original motion. Ms. Johnson motioned to amend the original motion to include that schools will not return to a hybrid model until at least October 23, 2020. Mr. Miller seconded the motion to amend the original motion. Ms. Mathis strongly encouraged creating a threshold related to the positivity rate for making a decision regarding returning to a hybrid model for the full student body. Ms. Johnson suggested reviewing the positivity rate on October 5, 2020, to determine if full hybrid classes should be open with the beginning of the second quarter on October 26, 2020 and not before that date. Superintendent Gill reported that there is a need to have some small group learning from the beginning of the school year for life skills students and students at the Early Learning Center.

Upon a roll call vote being taken to amend the original motion, the vote was: Aye: **4** Nay: **3**. The motion **Carried. 4 - 3**

Those voting "aye": Johnson, Mares, Miller, Zimmers  
Those voting "no": Mathis, McFarland, Ringer

Ms. Mathis motioned to amend the original motion to offer a hybrid model of learning to students in Pre-K through 8th grade with the start of the school year. There was no second to this motion.

Upon a roll call vote being taken on original motion, as amended, the vote was: Aye: **5** Nay: **2**. The motion **Carried. 5 - 2**

Those voting "aye": Johnson, Mares, McFarland, Miller, Ringer, Zimmers  
Those voting "no": Mathis, Ringer

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**4.1 Click here for information about public comment during the virtual meeting**

The following individuals addressed the Board regarding the return to learning:

Allison Acker  
Amber Loewe  
Ryan Renfro  
George Nielsen  
SD  
Darci Vespa  
Amanda Chahal  
Shaun Wilkinson  
Sydney Wilkinson  
Debra Graeber  
Susan Fischer Robinson  
Julie Hoffman

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**5.1 Next Regular Meeting — Monday, August 17, 2020, at 5:30 p.m. — Board Room**

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the Board, Mr. McFarland declared the meeting adjourned until Monday, August 17, 2020. The meeting adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

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Scott McFarland, President

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Julie Hammers, Secretary

Dated: September 8, 2020