



Mokena School District 159

Board Highlights for July 21, 2021

Communications

BOE: None.

Public: Erin Barton expressed her concern about students and staff not wearing masks when returning in August. Rebecca Kastys asked the Board to consider letting parents choose whether their children should or should not wear masks when students return in August. Mike Sheridan asked the Board to stand up for the kids and vote “no” to wearing masks when returning from summer break. Erica Cullen said “ditto” to Mrs. Kastys comments to the Board. Frankie Pretzel urged the Board to let parents make the decision for their own children regarding wearing masks. Brian Dombrowski shared his concern about students wearing masks when returning in August and the negative effect it will have on them. Joy Kokolus asked the Board to turn the power back to the parents and make it optional to wear masks. Amanda Montgomery stated there is not enough data on Covid-19 in children and asked the Board to please follow the American Academy of Pediatrics’ recommendation to wear masks when returning to school. Jill Tridgell urged the Board to make it mandatory to wear masks when returning to school in August.

MTA: None.

MCSA: None.

PTA/MEF: Laurie Kornmuller and Samantha Tunney shared the exciting news that Fall Fling will be back this year! It will be held on November 5th at the Alley Grill and Taphouse and they asked everyone to save the date. Mrs. Kornmuller shared that MEF will, once again, provide calendar magnets. Mrs. Tunney commented that if anyone is interested in becoming a PTA member to register through the new PTA website at mokena159pta.org. Membership is \$15 per family and \$10 for Staff. She also shared that the PTA will organize Spirit Wear for all three schools this year. A link to the store will be sent out a week before school starts.

Presentation – MJH Parking Lot – WOLD Architects

Kirsta Ehmke provided a proposal to the Board of Education for the Summer 2022 Civil Work project. The anticipated budget for the MES and MIS School Walk and Curb Replacement will be \$329,700. Ms. Ehmke shared 2 options for the MJH Parking Lot project with an estimated cost of \$500,000 for Option 1 and \$960,000 for Option 2. Mrs. Staley requested a quote for a 3rd option creating approximately 96 extra parking spaces. The Board of Education asked questions and they were answered.

Discussion – COVID-19 Mitigation Update

Attorney, John Fester, spoke to the Board about what will be different this year than last year; there will be no Remote Learning. Mr. Fester shared the options for returning to school in August. Option A: All staff and students wear masks regardless if vaccinated (most restrictive approach); Option B: Masks required for students and staff who are not vaccinated (middle of the road approach); Option C: Masks recommended but not mandated. Mr. Fester commented that the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois State Board of Education have the governance over schools, not the CDC. Mr. Fester advised the Board to look at the Matrix within Mokena’s zip code and reserve the right to change the plan if necessary; maintain flexibility. Mr. Fester advised, regardless of the option the Board chooses, the district should continue with 3- foot social distancing, contact tracing, air purification measures, and thorough daily cleaning by the cleaning crew. The Board thanked Mr. Fester for his guidance.

Information Reports

Superintendent – Dr. Cohen

- COVID UPDATE - The 60448 zip code is seeing approximately one case of Covid-19 every other day or every third day. The rate of community transmission is 5 x lower than it was in May and 70 x lower than it was in November of 2020. Current transmission rates of Covid-19 are 4 x lower than the State’s definition of minimal transmission. Will County has the third highest vaccination percentage of all counties in Illinois.
- Special Services Staffing Update – The number of students moving into 4th grade with IEP’s is large for the 2021-22 school year. The caseload is now at 16 which is too large for one special education teacher to manage. Fourth Grade will need an additional 1.0 FTE to split both

educational services as well as case management duties. During the 2020-21 school year, the district paid approximately \$63,000 for a .6 FTE Speech Language Pathologist through a contractual agency. The district chose to post this position and bring it in house for a cost savings.

- MIS Project – Administration is seeking approval to move forward with the classroom renovation of Room 131 by putting up a wall in the middle. One side will be devoted to Occupational Therapy and the other side will be designated for small group work. OT currently does not have a designated space.
- Safety Meeting – The district held its required annual meeting with first responders to review our safety plan. One issue that came up was the use of terminology (soft vs. hard lockdown). Another issue was the fact that many radios have dead spots in our buildings. The district will be looking for ways to solve this problem, including the potential of adding signal repeaters within our buildings.

Assistant Superintendent of Instruction – Dr. Johnson

- Dr. Johnson thanked everyone for making her feel so welcome to the district!
- Summer School Update – The attendance rate of the program at MES was 86%. Bus transportation was offered to all students; 31 students were transported by the district. The program focused on teacher identified priority grade-level standards in reading, writing, and math. A huge thank you to the 8 teachers, 2 building aides, 1 nurse, and Mrs. Chorley for their continued dedication to students into the summer months! After the MJH Summer Program is over, the principal team and Dr. Johnson will work together to identify ways to monitor the progress of students who took part in the program to measure program effectiveness.
- e-Learning Plan – The State of Illinois approved an option for school districts to adopt an
- “e-Learning Plan” that gives districts the choice to utilize e-Learning days in lieu of emergency days. Over the next month, a group of teachers and administrators will be meeting to develop an e-learning plan for the district based on the requirements found in Section 10-20.56 of the Illinois School Code (105ILCS 5/10-20.56). The School Board must hold a public hearing on the plan and the district hopes to bring this plan to the Board for approval at the August meeting.

Director of Student Services – Ms. Cirone

- Ms. Cirone welcomed Dr. Johnson! Ms. Cirone mentioned how wonderful it was partnering with District 843 for the ESY program which was housed at MES.
- After piloting the Encore adapted curriculum this summer in an ESY specialized instruction classroom, the district will be purchasing this for all specialized instruction classrooms in the district utilizing IDEA grant funds. The encore curriculum is aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards and provides individualized rigorous access to the general education curriculum.
- Student Services department is currently looking to fill the following positions: 1.0 FTE Resource Teacher at MIS; 1.0 FTE Speech Language Pathologist; 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional at MES; 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional at MIS.

Chief School Business Official – Dr. Shaw

- Finance Report – Posted on website.
- Covid Expense Update – The district spends all the CARES Act supplies revenue on technology to support online learning and all the building supplies on PPE. The local budget was spent on PPE supplies and the local building expense was enhanced cleaning furnished by the previous custodian contractor, ABM.
- Status of CMAR-RFQ Timeline – RFQ recommendation committee review on 8/5/21; RFQ interview list released on 8/5/21; Interview process on 8/16-8/19; committee recommends firm for Board approval on 9/1/21; award by the Board of Education on 9/29/21.
- The district is pleased with the first few weeks of the transition to Alpha for custodian and maintenance services.
- MJH Parking Lot Repairs - Before the full replacement of the parking lot is completed, there are some potential issues with pot holes that need to be addressed this summer, only repairing those zones in the parking lot that would be safety concerns.

- The roof top unit above the MES school office needs to be replaced. The lowest quote is \$24,950.
- Budget at a Glance – meetings with principals and directors are being held. Budgets are being adjusted for the 2021-22 school year. First draft will be reviewed in the August finance meeting.
- Summer Projects – MES Tuckpointing; MES Gym Floor; MES and MJH concrete work; MES generator removal; MES gym leak tuckpointing; MES lighting project, gym painting, MIS parking lot boring; MJH, MIS and MES gym floor refinishing.
- Transportation registration numbers have dramatically risen and it is anticipated that close to normal registration numbers for the 2021-22 school year; starting the new school year with 8 routes and transitioning to 9 routes as the ridership numbers increase.

Director of Technology – Mr. Smith

- Summer Projects - Tech Team mounted all TV's at MJH and currently moving on to MIS; the department is working on the Chromebook handout earlier than in past years; new website content creation process is continuing and we hope to have the site up by the start of the school year; the department will be making some changes to the district's wireless network; SOPPA list is up and running.
- Classlink will be the district's new account management platform. There are several aspects of the platform that will benefit the district: Data automation, account provisioning, automatic login portal.
- Staff Updates – PC upgrades have begun for the 21-22 school year. Teachers will be bringing their laptops in for reimaging.
- Community Garage Sale – The district will be having a garage sale of old tech equipment on August 6th. We will be selling old staff laptops, desktops and projectors for very low prices.
- Skyward – The district rolled over to the new school year on June 24th. The following week was used to create the 21-22 online registration portal.
- Erate 2022 – All the infrastructure purchased in the 2015-16 school year is due for replacement. The district will be relying heavily on the FCC's ERate program for hardware procurement which will save 40% on our costs. The goal is to have everything picked out this summer so the department can narrow down the RFPs needed for the ERate process. This is a full year process so much more to follow going forward.

No Principal Reports this month

Action Items that were approved include:

- Previous Month Minutes
- District Bills
- Personnel – Classified New Hire: Emily Knutson. Classified Reassignment: Amy Novotny; Eileen Arsieh. Certified New Hire: Jenna Wasso; Stacy Lavelle. Certified Long-Term Sub: Laura Garza-Wojciechowski. Certified FTE Increase to .80: Kelly DiFiore.
- Consent Agenda – 1) MJH parking lot repairs; 2) MES roof top unit; 3) Food Service salaries
- Policy Revisions – 1st Read
- MIS Renovation at a cost not to exceed \$15,000
- Architect Fees for Civil and Concrete work at MES and MIS Summer 2022 projects

For the Good of Mokena

- Mr. Everett shared that TJ Kremmer (former reporter of the Mokena Messenger) is now editor for the Mokena Patch. Congratulations Mr. Kremmer!
- Mrs. Zielinski shared that Mokena Miracles is having their Dine and Donate fundraiser at the Mokena Creamery on August 5th from 3pm-8pm and to please attend the Joliet Slammers game on August 13th to support the Mokena Miracles.
- Mr. Andresen mentioned the Lion's Firecracker Dance was a success! All proceeds go back to the community. Mr. Andresen thanked the PTA and MEF for bringing back the Fall Fling!

Respectfully,

Submitted on behalf of Dr. Mark A. Cohen, Superintendent