

Lexington City Schools
School Board Meeting Minutes
October 7, 2020

The Lexington City School Board met on October 7, 2020, at 5:30 pm, via Zoom Video Conference. Present: Dr. Timothy Diette, Mrs. Tammy Dunn, Mr. Owen Collins, Dr. Mollie Fox, Dr. Glenn Sullivan, Mrs. Rebecca Walters-Superintendent, and Mrs. Julie Nicely-Deputy Clerk.

Dr. Diette, School Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Upon motion of Dr. Fox, seconded by Dr. Sullivan, the Board approved the Agenda.

There was no Public Comment.

Mrs. Walters opened with a recap of administrative efforts since the last School Board Meeting on September 30, 2020. Administrators have responded to many individual emails and questions, continued to reflect on and consider feedback from families, and reviewed daily community data levels and updated guidance from Virginia Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and local health experts. Principals and counselors continue to work with families and individual students to monitor engagement and progress and work on ideas to support students who are struggling by looking at in-person supports and community resources.

Mrs. Walters gave a presentation on *Planning for a Return to In-Person Learning*. Mrs. Walters shared four main areas of focus: feedback from teachers and staff, additional strategies for consideration, Virginia Department of Health guidance and community data levels, and consideration of next steps.

Teachers have concerns regarding their ability to effectively plan and deliver both in-person and virtual instruction, small group instruction, and social distancing in classrooms. Some teachers are in favor of an immediate return to in-person learning while others feel that the division should be more cautious about bringing students back into the building. Administration and Human Resources will meet with individual teachers who have concerns with returning to in-person instruction.

Additional strategies to consider with phasing students back into school include working with specialists to determine the safest way to deliver in-person instruction and likely utilizing asynchronous instruction for specials for virtual learners. At Lylburn Downing Middle School (LDMS), teaching duties may need to be streamlined to focus on in-person or virtual classes. This remains a challenge with teachers who teach at multiple grades as the only content area teacher for their course(s). At H. Waddell Elementary School (HWES), each grade level may have a dedicated virtual teacher (this plan may necessitate teacher reassignments and staffing modifications). Principals at both schools will work to prioritize teacher planning and professional learning on Fridays. The division may need to consider hiring an additional paraprofessional at each school to support instructional needs.

Consultation with the Virginia Department of Health and local Health Department will continue as will daily review of community data levels. As of October 7, 2020, Lexington City remains at the “highest risk” of transmission for schools based on the number of new cases per 100,000 persons within the last fourteen days. The Virginia Department of Health recommends a phased approach to bringing students back into school buildings focusing on the implementation of five key mitigation strategies: consistent and correct use of masks, physical/social distancing to the extent possible, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, cleaning and disinfection, contact tracing in collaboration with local health department.

Current consideration of a phased approach to returning to in-person instruction could include the following timeline:

- At the October 14, 2020 School Board Meeting, the Board may wish to consider moving forward with a return to in-person instruction for Kindergarten and First Grade students to begin the week of October 26, 2020.
- At the October 28, 2020 School Board Meeting, the Board may wish to consider a return to in-person instruction for Grades 2-3 to begin the week of November 9, 2020, with Grades 4-5 returning the week of November 16, 2020.
- At the November 11, 2020, School Board Meeting, the Board may wish to consider setting dates for the return of Grades 6-8 starting later in November 2020.

Following Mrs. Walter’s presentation, Board question and discussion ensued:

- Mrs. Walters and Mrs. Camden, HWES Principal, assured the Board that full representation from HWES faculty had been received regarding a return to in-person learning
- Mrs. Walters explained that additional paraprofessional support at each school would assist with the provision of the dual in-person and virtual instruction model
- Mrs. Walters clarified for the Board that the staggered approach of bringing HWES students back in groupings of two grade levels at a time would give both students and staff more time to acclimate
- Dr. Sullivan raised the concern that the October 28th Board meeting date may not give the Board enough time to make an informed decision to move forward with transitioning Grades 2-3 back into the building as they would have less than a week of experiences to review from the return of the first grouping
- Local university transmission rates and their importance in determining a return to in-person instruction were discussed: Mrs. Walters emphasized that local university data changes daily and should only be one data point in decision-making. Dr. Diette suggested that if Covid-19 local university cases continued to be high, the Board should examine community transmission rates in relation
- Dr. Fox asked if a student needed to quarantine could that student participate in a virtual learning model to which Mrs. Walters responded in the affirmative noting that staff would work with families in this situation.
- Mr. Collins emphasized the importance of continuing to maintain a quality virtual instruction program and expressed appreciation for the hard work and flexibility of Lexington City Schools’ staff. He stated he was encouraged by the current return to in-person learning plan.

Dr. Diette thanked division staff and the community for their effort and input.

There will be a Rockbridge County School Board Meeting on October 13, 2020, at 5:00 pm at Rockbridge County High School. Dr. Fox will attend.

The next Lexington City School Board Meeting is scheduled for October 14, 2020, at 5:30 pm via Zoom Video Conference.

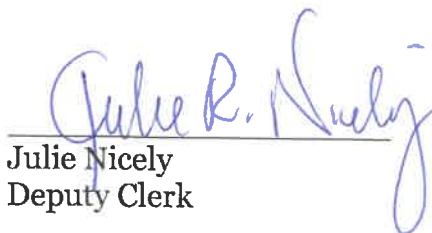
There will be a joint Lexington City Council and Lexington City School Board meeting on October 15, 2020, at 7:00 pm.

There will be a Special Called Meeting of the Lexington City School Board on October 28, 2020, at 5:30pm, via Zoom Video Conference.

Upon motion of Dr. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Collins, the Lexington City School Board adjourned at 6:22 pm.



Timothy Diette
Board Chair



Julie Nicely
Deputy Clerk