

Swan River School District #4
1205 Swan Hwy
Bigfork, MT 59911

April 30, 2020

The Swan River School Board of Trustees met in special session on Thursday, April 30, 2020 via Zoom conferencing at 4:00 p.m. to discuss business to come before the board. Brooke Johnston, Board chair presided over the entire meeting.

TRUSTEE MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Brooke Johnston, Dan Elwell, Luke Adamson, Nels Hammack and Linda Stewart

NOTE: Brooke Johnston, Linda Stewart, were on Zoom meeting from homes

TRUSTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT:

Principal Marc Bunker, District Clerk Dee Johnson were present on site Via ZOOM and various audience members present on devices via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting called to order at 4:02 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

A: Consider to adopt a motion declaring a state of emergency
"I move the board declares an unforeseen emergency within the meaning of that term as set forth in Title 20, Chapter 9, Part 8, to become immediately effective and to continue through June 30, 2020. This motion is based on COVID-19 risks; in recognition that the Governor's waiver of student instruction time will expire on May 7; and in recognition that the Governor's April 22, 2020 Directive implicating Executive Orders 2- 2020 and 3-2020 specify that elected school boards and their districts that adopt their own declaration of emergency will continue to receive all state funding, including transportation funding."

Motion: Luke Adamson

Second: Nels Hammack

Passed unanimously

B: Consider opening school or staying closed for the duration of the 2019-2020 school year after May 7, 2020. Per directive from Governor Bullock giving the district's authority to make that decision.

Brooke asked board members to give their thoughts

Dan stated that he is against closing. He feels the statistics show that the numbers of cases has been in decline for 16 days, out of 429 confirmed cases there have been 14 deaths. In 3% of deaths none have been under 50 years of age.

Dan feels for him, it is not about school being closed, but what are the effects of children with school closed. There seems to be a surge in alcohol, drug abuse, suicide and this putting children at risk. Why do we not respond to whooping cough or the flu the same way? Is there any way possible to get better results? In what situation would it take to open school?

You can't beat education being in brick and mortar. Numerous causes of suicide is social distancing.

The health dept and Governor should be ones making this decision and not putting it on school boards. The Administration and teachers and staff are doing a fantastic job of remote learning and can do a fantastic job preparing to come back. The guidelines to wearing masks are recommendations not law.

Luke feels that we should continue to keep school closed for the remainder of the school year. The liability and safety and what could happen outweighs the reopening. He feels that allowing certain children who need the extra help would be a consideration on a limited one on one basis with approval from administration

Nels feels the surveys sent out were helpful and he can relate to both sides. Although Dan brought up great points, Nels would like to see school remain closed but accessible to special needs and those struggling in their remote learning.

Linda feels that remaining closed for the rest of the school year

for the safety of the students and teachers is what's most important. With only 2 weeks left of school would disrupt the students normal at this point.

Brooke also feels remaining closed with remote learning is what's best. The students needing extra help can be left up to the teachers and our focus should be on making sure we can re-open when school resumes in the fall.

Mr. Bunker appreciates all points made but his recommendation is also to remain closed for the duration of the school year and focus on reopening in the fall. Marc recommends also having limited one to one support on site for students needing extra help with Teachers.

Brooke states that the majority opinions of the board tell that we should remain closed and asked for public comment.

Sue Sandy asked what scientific data the board is basing their decisions on? Feels that fear is off the charts and some doctors are supporting this.

Brooke stated the board is volunteer positions and are not experts on scientific data and relies on health department recommendations and what the mission statement is for Swan River School.

Luke stated that the information we are receiving keeps changing and we have no comprehension of the scientific or medical and can't base decisions just on science and we have a responsibility for the protection and liability of school.

Lori Elwell would like to see the school reopen on a limited basis and this would do the kids good mentally with only 4 weeks to be back to school and see their friends. Feels the Focus is more on physical health and not mental health.

Nels agrees but doesn't feel there are enough days left and too much preparation would have to be done to continue.

Jessica Plunkett feels that the kids could potentially spread to grandparents or elderly and this is a concern.

Natalie McGill is against opening for the rest of the year. She feels safety is more important, and that it could cause more fear, anxiety and confusion and rushing back to school is not feasible. Sherianne Schow feels the flattening of the curve in the valley has been great and vacationers will be starting to come in which will cause more exposure.

Shanna Burchwell Seventh grade teacher stated that SRTA have met and are unanimous about staying closed and read the statement from the Teachers.

Dyra Schmidt asked if there is another plan in place if the board votes to reopen and school resumes after May 7 and the numbers go back up for COVID. Brooke stated that we can't really answer that right now. Stephanie Tinney also agrees to staying closed but bring students back on a very limited basis for extra help.

“I move that the board of trustees continue with the closure of Swan River School for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year and deliver offsite learning in accordance with Montana law and adopted School District emergency policies 1900-1912

Motion: Luke Adamson

Second: Linda Stewart

Opposed: Dan Elwell

Passed by majority

C: Consider approval to place ad in circulation for the purpose of hiring a full time IT Person

Luke: Definitely need an IT person. Right now we have an amount budgeted and was clarifying that the motion is to run an advertisement, get candidates and see what we can afford.

Linda: Also sees the need for an IT person who knows what's going on and our needs and in favor of hiring those who know

more about it.

Nels: Met with Shelley and toured what we have in place in the school and also feels an IT person is needed. His eyes were open on our needs and system of the school and time and energy Shelley has put in.

A daily maintenance is needed and right now that pulls Shelley from 5th grade duties. Nels feels a Full time position and not part time is needed. After the ad is sent out \$40-\$45 should be considered. There are many upcoming changes and the IT person hired needs to be in school daily and in line with school values, staff, and cares about our school. Feels a person and not a company would be best fit.

Dan: 100 % agree's a classified person with invested interest in school is needed. His biggest concern right now is budgeting and would like a dollar amount from the Technology committee. A full time person is great for 1 year at a time and maybe scale down afterwards. Consider running a technology levy in the future to support this position.

Brooke: Also met with Shelley & Beau and went through the process. Agrees we need an IT person in the building helping staff and students and maintaining our technology. Feels we are not yet sure what we want and need and need a full time person to get the system in place. She feels \$35 and up per hour is not unreasonable. Beau and Shelley said we could possibly scale back 2nd year. We should not put a dollar value on this and see what's out there.

Marc: We have people knowledgeable about technology, and all have taken steps to do more with technology. An IT person would allow Teachers to do what they are really good at. Marc recommends to pursue and advertise and see what's out there also.

Shelley: Agree's with what everyone says, and give's kudos to former people who got this computer lab going, with Buds help,

and appreciate's the team support.

Dan asked Shelley for a number. Shelley is not comfortable and feels the price is not her decision. Dan said he is asking if the committee can come up with a number. Brooke stated at this point, the motion is to just approve placing an ad to hire a full time person.

Motion to place ad for full time IT person

Motion: Nels Hammack

Second: Dan Elwell

Passed unanimously

D: Consideration of suspension of District Policy 1310 for the purposes of consideration of adopting MTSBA Model Emergency Policies after one reading.

Not applicable for our school because we already have this in place.

No Motion necessary

E: Consideration of adoption of District Policies 1900-1912 after one reading in accordance with policy 1310

Motion to approve policy #

1900-1901-1902-1903-1904-1905-1906-1906-1907-1908-1908F-1909-19101910F1910F21911-1912

Policy # Covid -19 emergency policies

1900 approved

Motion:Nels Hammack

Second: Luke Adamson

Passed unanimously

1901 Covid-19

1901 approved

Motion: Linda Stewart

Second: Luke Adamson

Passed unanimously

1902 tabled Marc would like to wait on this and change grading language

1902 tabled

Motion: Luke Adamson

Second: Nels Hammack

Passed unanimously

1903 Marc recommends option # 3

1903 tabled

Motion: Luke Adamson

Second: Dan Elwell

Passed unanimously

1904 N/A

1905 Marc recommends option # 2

1905 approved

Motion: Nels Hammack

Second: Luke Adamson

Opposed Dan Elwell

Passed by majority

1906 Marc recommends option # 2

1906 tabled

Motion: Luke Adamson

Second: Nels Hammack

Passed unanimously

1906 P tabled

Motion: Luke Adamson

Second: Linda Stewart

Passed unanimously

1907 approved

Motion: Nels Hammack

Second: Luke Adamson

Passed unanimously

1908 & 1908F tabled

Motion: Dan Elwell

Second: Nels Hammack

Passed unanimously

1909 approved with option # 1

Motion: Dan Elwell

Second: Luke Adamson

Passed unanimously

1910 1910F & F2 tabled

Motion: Dan Elwell

Second: Nels Hammack

Passed unanimously

1911 tabled

Motion: Nels Hammack

Second: Luke Adamson

Passed unanimously

1912 N/A

Dan would like some work sessions to set parameters before school resumes in September.

Brooke mentioned Budget work sessions and principal Evaluation needs to be done and to plan on some meetings in May. Dan suggested we have our regular May 11 meeting before we plan on other meetings.

Dan stated Luke and himself are on the budget committee with Dee and can report back to the board. Brooke thought this was

fine but the whole board should go over the budget with Dee at some point.

Dan would like to wait on the budget meeting until we get more information on numbers. Brooke felt it would be the end of May before we have any numbers for the budget.

Dan would like to say that although he may have a difference of opinion with the board on school openings he stands behind the decision of the board and respects the board members. He will represent the decision that was best for the school and that they are united as a board on this decision.

Adjourn:

Motion to adjourn meeting at 4:35 p.m.

Motion: Luke Adamson

Second: Dan Elwell

Passed unanimously

Brooke Johnston, Board Chair

Dee Johnson, District Clerk