

River Valley School District
Thursday, November 19, 2020
Special Meeting
Middle School Library
5:30 pm

- *The public was able to view this meeting live on our River Valley YouTube Channel.*
- *Anyone who attended the meeting in person was required to wear a mask and follow social distancing.*

Present: Nelson, Jennings, Young, Maier, Iausly, Bettinger, Cates, Strozinsky
Absent: McGuire, Kelsey Olson (Student Representative)
Admin: Glasbrenner, Krey, Radtke, Blakley, Peterson, Kjos
Others: Luke Thatcher, Kasey Maxwell, Jordyn Wendhausen, Shawn Duren, Judy Ettenhofer, Paula Wedige (Administrative Assistant)

President Jennings opened the meeting. She noted that the meeting had been properly posted and notice had been provided to the appropriate media and each School Board Member. Young moved to proceed with the legal meeting. Iausly seconded. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on Approval of Agenda

Maier moved to approve the agenda. Bettinger seconded. Motion carried.

Consideration & Action on Recommendation from Sauk County Public Health to Have Virtual Learning From Monday, November 30, 2020, to Friday, January 8, 2021

Jennings summarized the recommendation from Sauk County Public Health to have virtual learning from Monday, November 30, 2020, to Friday, January 8, 2021. It was clarified that this is a recommendation and not an order. The Board will discuss three items: whether to have virtual learning or in-person learning between Thanksgiving and the New Year, whether to continue winter co-curricular activities as planned, and the number of spectator passes allowed for winter co-curricular activities.

Glasbrenner noted that our decisions to date regarding in-person and virtual learning have been based on data. With the help of Sauk County, we have interpreted the data and have reacted accordingly. He stated that we are now getting less assistance from the County as they are relying more on districts to build their own data.

Jordan Wendhausen, School Nurse, stated that we've noticed statewide COVID spikes five to seven days after each holiday. We then react to the spike. Because of this trend, Wendhausen is recommending that we have virtual learning during the week following Thanksgiving break (November 30 to December 4) and the week following Winter Break (January 4 to 8). If we have in-person learning during the weeks in between those breaks, we would react to COVID data as needed, as we have in the past.

Glasbrenner noted that even on days when we are in virtual learning, about 50 students with specific needs still report for in-person learning using social distancing and safety precautions. Also, we have continued to offer co-curricular activities taking into consideration these four

points: activities are not compulsory and families make the decision to participate; there is added responsibility for participants to follow rules in order to continue this privilege; there are additional safety precautions, including temperature checks and grouping kids in pods; and activities are important for the social and emotional health of teenagers.

Jennings likes the recommendation to plan for virtual learning during the week following each of these two holidays, using the data we have about COVID spikes after holidays. She wants to have in-person learning on the other days between the holidays and be reactive, if necessary, like we have done to date. Cates agrees and wants to look at facts and data trends and feels that school is important for students and staff for education and economics. Maier also agrees and thinks that school is good for mental wellness and is a safer place for kids since he believes they gather when not in school. Strozinsky thinks we should react to data. Iausly noted that our district is a reflection of the community as a whole. The community has to be responsible since we are reacting to them. The data shows we are going to have spikes after holidays and then we will be forced to go virtual when we do. He noted his kids want to be in school and the “yo-yo” between in-person and virtual is difficult for them. He feels that the County is taking the easy way out when they only give a recommendation and then asks each district to make the decision.

Young feels that a recommendation from Sauk County carries a lot of weight and thinks we should have virtual learning through January 8. Nelson noted some parents feel that the County recommendation is legitimate with the holidays. Another said her child with an IEP that comes to school is doing well and her other child at home struggles. Nelson is scared about what the holidays are going to bring and “flip flopping” is difficult when we return in-person and then have to go virtual a few days later. Blakley and Radtke agree that the going back and forth between the two methods of instruction is difficult for students, families, and staff. It was noted that some families don’t have the resources when kids are at home for virtual instruction.

Wendhausen noted that when we are virtual, we lose the contact with parents and the data. Some do call, but we ask that all do. The county is contacting us with county testing site information but not with clinic setting data. We rely on families to be honest. Krey noted the same issue with staff in that the data is only as good as what we are given.

Bettinger asked if a week of virtual learning after each holiday is enough since a person can get sick up to 14 days after exposure. Bettinger thinks we should rely on the community to be responsible, and if they aren’t, then we react. He wants to keep in-person learning and stress to families to be responsible and “self police” if they are gathering and stay home after holidays. Kids are struggling with not being around friends, not learning well at home, could be dealing with depression, and are checking out of school.

It was noted that both St. Johns and St. Lukes are having virtual learning for the week following the Thanksgiving and the New Year holidays.

Jennings moved to have virtual learning the weeks of November 30 to December 4, 2020, and January 4 to January 8, 2021. Cates seconded. Bettinger thinks it is hypocritical to have co-curricular activities if we don’t allow in-person learning. Glasbrenner reiterated the earlier four points of why co-curricular activities might be allowed to continue. Iausly noted that these two weeks of virtual learning following holidays act as buffers. Glasbrenner stated that there is no data to support that transmission has occurred due to co-curricular participation. Nelson believes

continuing co-curricular activities is an incentive for kids to follow safety rules so they don't lose these privileges. Iausly added that winter co-curricular activities have closer interaction and they are held indoors.

Roll call:

For the motion: Cates, Iausly, Jennings, Maier, Nelson, Strozinsky

Against the motion: Bettinger, Young

Abstain: N/A

Absent: McGuire

Polled vote was 6-2 in the affirmative with 1 absent. Motion carried.

Hegland, Activities Director, shared that he hopes to continue winter co-curricular activities.

Jennings moved to continue with winter co-curricular activities as planned. Maier seconded. It was clarified that this means winter co-curricular activities would be held during both in-person learning and virtual learning weeks. Our conference has agreed that all players will be masked, along with other precautions. Young, who is involved with the high school musical, is fearful but sees the kids having an amazing experience, and they have no appetite to curtail their activities. Strozinsky reiterated there is no data to support that transmission has occurred due to co-curricular participation, nor that schools are the cause of the virus spreading. Bettinger stated then it should be safe for students to have in-person learning.

Roll call:

For the motion: Cates, Jennings, Maier, Nelson, Strozinsky

Against the motion: Bettinger, Young, Iausly

Abstain: N/A

Absent: McGuire

Polled vote was 5-3 in the affirmative with 1 absent. Motion carried.

Hegland, Activities Director, believes we should allow only two spectator passes per participant for winter co-curricular activities, as we did for fall, when that number was decided and agreed upon by the conference. We are the only district in our conference that voted not to increase the number of passes for winter to four per participant. He further believes that passes should be used only by parents or guardians so they are present in the event of a participant emergency. Jennings supports allowing more spectators per participant at our co-curricular events and letting families make the decision to attend or not. Iausly would like to keep the same process we used for fall as the virus spread is getting worse right now.

Iausly moved to allow two spectator passes for each co-curricular participant, as was done during fall activities. Cates seconded. Young asked if the use of the passes was restricted to parents and guardians only. They are not.

Roll call:

For the motion: Cates, Iausly, Jennings, Maier, Nelson, Strozinsky, Young

Against the motion: Bettinger

Abstain: N/A

Absent: McGuire

Polled vote was 7-1 in the affirmative with 1 absent. Motion carried

Young moved to adjourn at 6:45 p.m. Iausly seconded. Motion carried.

Submitted by Paula Wedjge for:

Deborah Nelson Deborah Nelson, School District Clerk