

Orange County School Boards Association

7 Panel Lane, Florida, New York 10921

Phone: 845-325-9244 Email: karyn.meier@ocsba.com Website: www.ocsba.com

MINUTES: DELEGATES' MEETING February 3, 2021 VIRTUAL

In Attendance: Bill Boss, Ed Estrada, Bill Hecht, Jean Pavek (OU-BOCES), Sandy Nagler, John Pasichnyk, Frank Sambets (Chester), Larry Berger (Cornwall/OU-BOCES), Brendan Carty (Cornwall), Martha Bogart (Goshen/OU-BOCES), Mathew Buckley, Susan Selser, Sarah Hadden (Greenwood Lake), Faith Aprilante (Highland Falls), Karen Brooks (Marlboro), John Williams (Middletown), Joseph Flaherty (Minisink Valley), Staci McCleary, Dawn Tauber (Monroe-Woodbury), Kristin Graessle (Pine Bush), Linda Van Horn (Port Jervis), Meg Vaught (Tuxedo), Sarah Messing, Brad Conklin (Valley Central), Dave Eaton (Warwick), Robin White (Washingtonville), Karyn Meier (OCSBA). **Guests:** Brad Conklin, Valley Central

- Call to Order** President Joe Flaherty called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM and led all in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Secretary's Report** Secretary Robin White asked for a motion to approve minutes from 12/2/20, which was m/s/c.
- Treasurer's Report** Karyn Meier presented the financials on behalf of Faith Aprilante. She asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for 12/02/20, which was m/s/c.
- President's Report** President Flaherty noted that our guest speaker for the March 3rd meeting will be Regent Frances Wills who will share comments and answer questions. We'll also review meetings with our legislators.
- Executive Director's Report** Exec. Director Karyn Meier gave an update from the COLSBA meeting held during NYSSBA's Capital Conference. She noted that OCSBA's virtual Workshop for Prospective Board Members will be offered at two different times, March 20th at 9:00 AM, and again on March 23rd at 7:00 PM. On behalf of John Redman, she shared that Pastor John Williams will represent Area 9 on NYSSBA's Diversity, Equity & Inclusivity Committee, as well as John Pasichnyk on NYSSBA's Awards Committee, and Bill Boss on NYSSBA's Resolutions Committee.
- OU-BOCES Report** COO Bill Hecht reported students were welcomed back in-person to many school districts on January 19th, and that many districts continue to battle with contact tracing, quarantining, etc. At his monthly Chief's meeting, superintendents discussed school calendars, Regents' testing (January tests cancelled, still waiting to hear about June), and had Senators Skoufis and Martucci present for discussions regarding quarantining guidance etc.
- Capital Conference Review** A brief review was given of sessions and speakers that were featured at NYSSBA's virtual Capital Conference.
- Virtual meetings with our legislators have been scheduled throughout February, and all legislators have been sent copies of NYSSBA's Priorities as well as OCSBA's Legislative Priorities.
- OCSBA 2021 Legislative Platform & Appointments** While many of our priorities focus on financial need out of necessity and because this is the time of year that the state legislature is working on the state budget, very in-depth conversations were had regarding our students and their mental health and well-being. Many districts face significant struggles meeting student (and staff) needs and addressing trauma.
- A question was raised that if and when federal monies are provided to the state, how will that money be allocated, and will there be restrictions placed on how money is used.

Questions arose regarding how to address athletic programs, from managing health restrictions, as well as the additional financial costs that arise for current situations.

Further discussion addressed the need to tell the stories about how school districts are currently faring, to emotionally connect with our legislators, and to be able to tie those stories to the extreme need for real financial support. While this is our goal every time we engage in advocacy, this year is not a typical year and we need to emphasize district/student needs even more.

Some additional points that were shared during our legislative discussion included comments regarding:

- Concerns over how and if anyone running for election to their school board this year will get their petitions signed given pandemic conditions.
- The challenge of providing a safe place for our children to learn and grow.
- How to address inconsistency in health guidance from county to county.
- How to address concerns over physical & mental health of faculty and staff, and our ability to help teachers obtain vaccinations

Delegates Comments/Concerns

Delegates continued conversations about the well-being of our school districts as the pandemic continues. Each district present gave a brief overview of their main concerns or general comments:

- Reviewing a packet of information received from OC Health Department including the need for alerting parents to the risks of participating in athletic programs during the pandemic, OC Code of Conduct for Sports, COVID 19 Athletic Participation waiver, and a draft board resolution to permit students to participate in higher risk sports
- Handling extreme pressure from parents who are pressuring sports programs to return
- Struggles of keeping buildings open especially when staff members need to quarantine
- Why do the rules seem to be different for conducting a gym class versus how a sports program can be run?
- In addition to parents wanting sports, boards are also fielding questions regarding other activities such as band, or after school clubs, or dramatic plays and musicals
- Concerns over the lack of interaction between young children and the impact that might have on their growth and development
- Some creative ways that several districts are handling the arts to allow students to participate was shared.
- A question arose over the possibility that students may self-select to use remote learning for the duration of their sports program so that they don't get caught up in a quarantine situation.
- There are some concerns over teacher burn-out.
- The need for on-site testing when a district is in a "yellow zone".
- Commending everyone on how creative all the districts have been in making things happen for our children, and despite the difficulties, people are doing an amazing job which needs to be remembered and highlighted as well.

Adjournment

President Flaherty thanked all for attending. Motion to adjourn was m/s/c at 9:33 PM.

"We can create a healthy cycle... While this pandemic has been insanely terrible, we have to realize that it helped us to become self-aware and helped us realize that we can't go back to normal. We need to go back to better. Take what we learned, and continue to learn, and help these students."

-Zahraa Abdul, NY State Youth and Government
at NYSSBA Capital Conference