

LEARN BUILD LEAD

Fremont Joint School District No. 215
Special School Board Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2020
Held at Fremont School District Office
Via Zoom/Livestream Facebook
Meeting Time 5:30 p.m.

Attending: Bonnie Moon-Board Chair
 Jon Bailey-Vice Chair (joined at 5:40 p.m.)
 Tia Cherry-Trustee
 Julianne Hill-Trustee
 Byron Stutzman-Superintendent
 Hali Mackert-Clerk/Treasurer

Chairman Bonnie Moon called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. A quorum was present.

Trustee Tia Cherry made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Trustee Julianne Hill. All “ayes”, motion carried.

Chair Bonnie Moon said this is a clarification meeting. Trustee Tia Cherry asked for this meeting, and I agree. I don't want to keep us long, but after the Boise meeting and the direction we have received, I think clarification and communication district wide is needed.

We excuse Trustee Shawn Dye who turned in his resignation as of December 1. We will be discussing his resignation at our next regular meeting on Thursday this week, he will be missed. I've seen him as a strong voice with common sense, and a steady leader who tried to put aside his own agenda for the good of this district.

Following the Motto of our District, Learn, Build, Lead, I believe there are some things we need to learn. I've received many emails and phone calls, that told me there is a disconnect in our understanding of the Governor's order and what responsibility the School Board has locally. Where did this confusion come from? I've actually had parents forward to me some of the correspondence they got from the State Board of Education, which was super helpful to understand. So, I just wanted the board to understand where we are.

Chairman Bonnie Moon said as of Thursday we were hopeful that the Governors order would change, and it didn't change. We received a letter from the State Board of Education, pretty much directing us to hold up to that order. Then what was very confusing, is that patrons got a different letter. So, Byron and I researched this. We found out that there was a blanket email that my patrons got back from the State Board of Education, basically thanking them for contacting them and the information would be forwarded to their board members. The confusion was the wording at the bottom of the short email encouraging patrons voice their concerns at the local level. That's when we all got inundated from our patrons. A retraction was then sent from the State Board apologizing for their miscommunication in their email.

So unfortunately, that's where a lot of the miscommunication came. I don't even know if Boise is clear on how the Governor's order is to be interpreted. So, I think people are still working on this, even in Boise at a different level.

I just want to say I'm thankful to a district that I live in that has integrity and has been trying to do their best to follow the order and doing what they can to support our students. It has been crazy and for you that have been on the frontlines. It has been hard; it has been hard in our district. We're all trying to understand the order.

Superintendent Byron Stutzman said first of all, I sent that robocall out and it caused quite a bit of angst last Thursday, and that was not my intent at all and for that I am sorry. My goal was to let parents know that the Administration is working to do what they can, and it's my hope we continue to work together. I know that as Chairman Moon said, the Idaho Association of School Administrators, and Idaho Athletics Association are working to come up with better guidance for us, but currently the Governor and Directors order is what we have to live by. So please have patience with us as we work through all of this, I know parents and patrons are really having a difficult time with this, but we aren't the enemy. As the Governor said in his last address, it's the virus that's the enemy. So, let's work together and figure out how to do this the best we can, and things will change as we go along. As far as the order goes, we are still at the 10-spectator rule, but my hope is we'll change and will continue to be able to massage that to do better with what we have.

Trustee Tia Cherry said I made a lot of phone calls to representatives, IHSA, board of directors. It's really interesting the interpretation and counsel that they give. One of them cheered on Soda Springs too, and the initiative that Soda Springs is doing, and I applaud them as well. It's interesting because one lady I talked to help create the liability act of the transmission of COVID. She did say Idaho State Board of Education, falsely claimed when they said we could lose our liability. She said we worded that very specifically that you would have to be willful and reckless, not just negligent. She said the reason they did it, is because they wanted to give businesses and schools and other entities, the ability to not be afraid of lawsuits and threats. She said now it's been used against us as a threat, and she's very not appreciative of that, and she knows other representatives aren't as well. She said the worst that can happen is you would get a misdemeanor, which comes at the local level. She wanted to remind us that IHSA and State School Board does not have a police force, but Governor Little does, and he's choosing not to use them and is leaving it to the local level to enforce.

I've called the Governor's office and asked who is going to enforce this and they all keep passing the buck, but none of them are willing to do anything. Who's essential? Parents are essential, band kids are essential, cheerleaders are essential. We are calling students non-essential, and that's one of the things they said, is we could get in an ethics lawsuit. I asked about the band parents and asked if they could sue us on an ethics lawsuit as well, and they said we have ethically violated their rights because they are not an athlete.

Trustee Jon Bailey said the only thing I would add, is I have spent countless hours on the phone with the Governor's office, State Board of Ed, EIPH, IHSA, representatives, just trying to see what we can possibly do. We have had a lot of patrons mad at us, thinking somehow that Sugar was doing something glorified. I would want to tell the patrons, we are on the same page, we're on the same team. We want this as much as everyone else. We are just trying to operate within the law, and find ways to get creative in the process, so that we can still maintain some order and balance, while trying to get as many people to attend a game as possible. I guess I just was appreciative of the State Board clarifying. So many patrons got the same email that so many of us did that was confusing, and them sending the clarifying

statement was appreciated, and a lot of the angry voices that were screaming at me hopefully got the email as well. I think nobody wants to go to a ball game more than I do, I have kids playing and I want to make sure I get a chance to watch them. Be patient with us as we continue to do this and know we are running as fast as we can.

Chairman Bonnie Moon said I hope we have more to add after more meetings are happening. We have a Thursday night board meeting, and we hope we get more clarification. I wanted to quote this from the Governors order Section 1 under gathering that applies to our extracurricular activities, "Extracurricular activities, including athletics, practice, matches, performances and games may continue. Participants necessary for the extracurricular activity to occur include, but are not limited to, players, instructors, coaches, officials, and personnel to broadcast the activity. Attendance by non-participants, including spectators, remains subject to the requirements specified in this Order, including but not limited to. So, it says in here, included but not limited to. I know our administrators are doing the best they can to help patrons understand, and when patrons understand and we do work together, it's a great thing for our kids to see. I would like to invite our Leadership Team to continue to look at all extracurricular activities.

Trustee Julianne Hill said my one comment is all their decision making is driven by the numbers. I think we need to try to get those numbers down to where we can open up. I'm grateful that we can open up and that we can participate, and we can watch their games through technology. I'm grateful for all of the great services that we have out there, and everybody is working together to try and make bad things better. If we can be patient and try our best to get those numbers down, working together, and that's the way things will open up.

Trustee Tia Cherry ask the leadership team to look at who is essential. I know there are a few school districts who are including parents from both sides as essential, and you can't tell me they're not. It's like you said but not limited to, and everything I read says may and are we willing to take that risk for our patrons, our taxpayers. I know it's something I'm willing to do, but like you said this is not an action item meeting, but after we here from IHSAA, we can always make adjustments.

Chairman Bonnie Moon said we will watch for any further information and if something comes up, we will add it to the agenda for Thursday.

Trustee Tia Cherry made a motion to adjourn at 6:02 p.m.