



GLoucester COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DIVISION LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING
April 14, 2021 - 8:30 A.M.
(Virtual Zoom Mtg.)

SUPERINTENDENT/DIVISION UPDATES – Dr. Walter Clemons

Dr. Clemons welcomed everyone. Hybrid students will begin the fourth quarter on a four day in-person schedule beginning Monday, April 19. Dr. Clemons fully anticipates being back to five days a week in the fall and expects the increased in-person schedule will help prepare for next year as well as benefit students at the end of this year.

(Dr. Clemons allowed county members to provide remarks at this time.)

George Baines, Deputy County Administrator indicated he was impressed with what is being done in the schools and the quality being provided to students. Gloucester County is trying to complete the upgrade to the Legacy System, which is also used by the GCPS Finance Department, by June 30. The county received a grant for wireless internet that will offer some competition to Cox Communications. Details should be known by the end of the year. The FY'22 County Budget is close to being completed. In addition, the County Technology Department is closely monitoring security, in light of information received regarding localities across the country who have received ransomware attacks.

Gloria Williams, Community Engagement and Public Information plans to post information on the county website illustrating broadband availability by area. Bobbi Longest has been hired as the Administrative Associate in the Community Engagement office and Mrs. Williams is working to fill the coordinator's position at Petsworth. Mrs. Williams thanked members for their participation in the Educational Foundation's Virtual 5K, noting 177 people registered for the event. Mrs. Williams also plans to reach out to Brian Hartley and Lisa Jones regarding requests for community use in our facilities.

Updates from April 13, 2021 School Board Meeting-Dr. Clemons indicated budget discussions are ongoing with the Board of Supervisors (BOS). The BOS will hold a meeting on April 15, but is not expected to adopt a budget for FY'22 until later this month. The School Board will need to know the final allocation from the BOS before moving forward with plans in the budget, however based on the GHS Master Plan, the School Board did approve a full renovation for GHS at the meeting held on April 13. These plans had been scaled back based on the BOS's desire to not increase real estate tax rates. Dr. Clemons does not agree with the direction the county is taking with regards to the sales tax revenue and indicated in his opinion it is a very short term sighted approach that will only cost the county more money in the long term. This is not what was advocated for at the General Assembly. Only nine school divisions in the Commonwealth have been granted an opportunity to use sales tax for major school

construction and renovations. This will be a huge loss for Gloucester and the future of GHS. It could also make it difficult for this type of legislation to go forward again in the General Assembly. This is not what is best for students and families in Gloucester.

The School Board is also looking at calendar considerations for both a pre or post Labor Day start for the upcoming school year.

Commencement for the Class of 2021 will be held June 12, with a rain date or dates being planned. Details are currently being discussed.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATES

Dr. Chuck Wagner, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services informed members summer school plans are underway and principals have received a list of teachers who have applied. The size and scope of the program is being determined. If the calendar proposal for the new school year is a pre-Labor day start, it may limit the summer program to July and not go into August, but that will need to be discussed. Dr. Wagner expects the School Board may vote on the calendar at the work session on April 22.

Heather Lucas, Chief Financial Officer indicated the lowest bid for the baseball field at Page Middle School, is now almost double what the field would have cost if it had been done seven years ago (\$285,000 compared to \$554,556) and one bid was over a million. GCPS has ten buildings to maintain and will always have maintenance needs. There will always be CIP projects. Tee Ann Floyd will be reaching out to bookkeepers regarding the end of the year budget balances. Any upcoming benefit changes will be communicated to staff. Mrs. Lucas is currently waiting on the approved budget to determine what will be possible for FY'22.

Rachel Blankenship, Executive Director of Human Resource & Compliance said buildings have been cleared of excess furniture in preparation for the return of students to four days per week of in person learning. Purchased desks and partitions have been received, with the exception of Peasley M.S. If anyone has extras, please contact Mrs. Litton. Any buildings in need of long-term substitutes, even if not in the same classroom, will be able to compensate those substitutes with long term substitute pay.

Brian Hartley, Executive Director of Operations expressed his appreciation to the Operations Department for all that has gone on behind the scenes to prepare for the four days per week of in-person learning. Del Dautrich, Safety Manager, will be retiring from GCPS, with Thursday, April 15, being his last day.

Lisa Jones, Director of Nursing said Gloucester is in a good place regarding community transmission in regards to returning students to four days of in-person learning. Most employees have been vaccinated, however it is still necessary to practice social distancing and maintain safety measures currently in place. Let her know of any needs. Dr. Clemons added that an additional COVID vaccine opportunity through Walgreens was offered to the approximate 200 employees who had initially indicated they were not interested or who had not responded.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Tanya Deckard, Director of Transportation is working to remedy capacity issues on buses with students returning four days per week. The first two bus radios are being installed today (April 14th) and all bus radios will be installed by May 6, with training for drivers occurring in two weeks. Transportation has just instituted a new software application for bus information that will provide a bus number, stop location and pickup and drop off times based on the address and school provided. Any changes provided by families should be updated within twenty-four hours. The bus tracking app for parents will be offered to Special Education buses in about two weeks. Mrs. Deckard appreciates everyone's support, adding that on Monday, April 12, three thousand nine hundred meals were delivered. That was a huge success for Transportation and Food Services.

Dr. Clemons asked about how parents will be notified about the bus tracking app. Mrs. Deckard indicated the bus driver would contact parents and the information is also on the website. Dr. Wagner asked if the radios could come through on one of the county channels. Mrs. Deckard indicated there are three main channels, but additional channels could be added to communicate with the Sheriff's Office. There isn't a way for schools to talk directly to the buses. All communication must come directly from base to the main transportation office who will communicate to drivers. Drivers could be notified if there is a situation at a building. There is also an alarm that can be used to alert one or all drivers of emergency situations.

Dave Miller, Facilities Manager said his team is installing the petition guards for tables and new furniture at Peasley M.S. Water coolers and bottle filling stations have been ordered and each school will receive two. End of the year projects are being planned. Let Mr. Miller know of any summer maintenance needs you have as soon as possible.

Jimmy Viars, Grounds Manager has his crew working hard to maintain the grounds and fields of the ten GCPS properties. Dr. Clemons indicated an additional grounds position is currently in the proposed budget and asked for patience.

Scott Mecca, Technology Director mentioned the ransomware many divisions have experienced. GCPS is doing everything possible to fight against these attacks. If you receive unusual emails, do not respond to them and let Mr. Mecca know.

Scott Shorland, Construction Manager agrees with everything said regarding projects on the CIP. Costs increase every day we postpone. The Page M.S. baseball field needs to get established and design work for the new transportation facility is proceeding. A lot of activity is occurring and Mr. Shorland is hopeful to get started on the GHS design soon. Mr. Shorland said bids are typically valid for up to sixty days.

Steve Patton, Director of Food Services expressed appreciation from his staff who were very happy to receive the bonus given. Mr. Patton also asked if principals had any concerns regarding the changes occurring with meal deliveries beginning April 19. An all call message will go out to parents to let them know food will be coming home with their child(ren) on Tuesday afternoons. Drivers are aware students will be taking meals home. Students are required to wear masks on the buses and will not be eating on the

buses. Mr. Patton suggested staggering students' dismissal times by a minute or two as they are picking up meals and heading to the buses.

OTHER ITEMS SHARED

Dr. Wagner thanked principals and assistant principals who nominated teachers on WAVY TV 10's website. Laura Longest at Achilles will be doing an on-air interview.

Currently, about 20% of staff have participated in the mental health training module. Please remind your teams to go to SafeSchools to complete the training module, which takes about twenty minutes to complete. The additional webinar, planned for some staff, may be postponed.

Thanks to those who participated in the Purple Star program at Petsworth Elementary School. Dr. Clemons indicated Achilles Elementary School and Gloucester High School have also received this recognition.

Mrs. Deckard recognized an employee in her department, Troy Le'Duck, who went through the GHS internship program and recently received his Craftsman Mechanics Certification.

ADJOURN – 10:00 A.M.