



GLOUCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Parent Advisory Committee

March 19, 2021 (9:00 a.m.)

Welcome & Introductions – Dr. Clemons welcomed members and referenced the attention Gloucester County Public Schools (GCPS) has received in the news lately. In addition, Dr. Clemons thanked Jessi Kittrell (Peasley) for her participation in one of the interviews.

Return to Learn Update – Governor Ralph Northam was at Bethel Elementary School on March 8 to visit a school in a division that has been successful with in-person learning. The Governor has asked all schools in Virginia to return to some form of in-person learning by March 15. About one-third of divisions in Virginia have been completely virtual since March 2020. GCPS will be moving to four days per week of in-person learning beginning Monday, March 22, for students with disabilities in grades 6 -12, and all hybrid students on April 19. Currently, one-third of our students are still remote, therefore the asynchronous day on Wednesdays is still necessary. Dr. Clemons referenced Senate Bill 1303, which is now on the Governor’s desk and would require in-person learning for all divisions in the fall. Dr. Clemons believes by returning to four days per week now, GCPS will be better prepared for a full return to five days per week in the fall. Space will not allow some classrooms to have six feet distancing with the return of hybrid students four days per week, however guidance from VDOE and VDH indicates that while six feet is the standard, three feet with masks, is acceptable. The CDC is considering this as well. Anything less than 6 feet does count as close contact and could cause a classroom to quarantine. Mrs. Kittrell expressed a desire for more hands on learning when students are in the buildings, however wondered if teachers would still be using Canvas to allow for an easy transition in the event students need to be quarantined. Dr. Clemons indicated students would still be utilizing Canvas in some form and teachers have been provided new technology that will provide additional benefits. Mrs. Kittrell asked about plans to address the impact the pandemic has had on students’ grades. GCPS is trying to add additional days to the calendar for 2021-22 and other measures will be in place to assist students with the loss of learning, including summer programs.

Local Sales Tax Funding Update - The FY’22 budget is in the process of being approved and includes a 5% salary increase for staff. The increase is based on the General Assembly’s proposal for the state to fund 5% raises for SOQ positions, which would require a local match. Dr. Clemons referenced the School Board and Board of Supervisors (BOS) Joint meeting held on March 16. During the meeting, questions were asked by Robin Rice, School Board Chairperson, about the County Administrator’s proposal to use a portion of funds raised by the sales tax to pay for debt service. Dr. Clemons does not support this use of the funds and noted the sales tax legislation was passed for new construction and renovation. The School Board is seeking an opinion from Mark Herring, Virginia Attorney General. Dr. Clemons added that when plans were being discussed for Gloucester High School (See “GHS master Plan” on the GCPS website under “GCPS Highlights”), options were discussed for a completely new school, major renovations, or minimal renovations. A new school was not feasible for the county financially and the BOS would not support a major renovation, leaving the 40+ million project currently planned. Dr. Clemons cannot support the county spending 39 million for debt service and GHS remaining the way it is, with only addressing infrastructure needs (roof, HVAC, etc.) and not enhancing the academic needs of a fifty-year old building. Gloucester was

fortunate that the Sales Tax Bill passed in the General Assembly and by the citizens at the ballot and what is being considered by the BOS is not the intent of the legislation.

Michelle Stone shared that the "Vote Yes for Gloucester Committee" feels misrepresented. The group is now putting information out to the public to bring attention to what has happened. Mrs. Stone went on to say Gloucester needs to provide enhanced career and technical offerings in our schools instead of busing students to New Horizons. Our children are our future and the BOS needs to recognize the investment we should have in our students.

Dr. Clemons encouraged members to go review the Master Plan Study. The BOS is not looking forward to the future regarding what can be done to make Gloucester better and what is needed specifically at GHS for the long term is not being met.

Adjournment---10:21a.m.

Future Meeting Date/Time: May 21 (2:00 p.m.)