



GLOUCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Teacher Advisory/GEA Zoom Meeting
November 23, 2020 – 4:30 p.m.

Dr. Clemons welcomed everyone and thanked those who attended the November 4 Board of Supervisors meeting and/or expressed their support. Dr. Clemons and his family are greatly appreciative. Members also briefly shared some good news with the group.

Update on Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) – On November 4, the Board of Supervisors awarded over \$923,000 for bipolar ionization units to be installed in Gloucester County Public Schools. Prior to that, \$520,000 had been awarded for student Samsung Galaxy Tablets and MiFi devices. In addition, at a special meeting held on November 17, the Board of Supervisors approved 1.397 million for the purchase of twelve school busses and two hundred fifty additional Chromebooks and carts. These funds coupled with those the School Board received directly through the CARES Act, come to nearly 4.5 million dollars. The Sales Tax Referendum was also passed by citizens. This will enable the Board of Supervisors, if they approve, to add up to a one cent increase in sales tax, for no more than twenty years, to be used for school renovation/infrastructure.

Update from November School Board Meeting – Delegate Keith Hodges and Congressman Rob Wittman, were recognized at the November School Board meeting. Also recognized was Captain John Schick, who will be leaving Gloucester Sheriff's Department after twenty-nine years, to be a Chief of Police in Colorado. Michelle Stone and Beth Gibson were also recognized for their efforts in promoting the Sales Tax Referendum through the "Say Yes to Gloucester" campaign. Dr. Clemons is expecting Senator Tommy Norment at the December 8 School Board meeting and looks forward to thanking him publicly for his efforts in presenting and supporting the sales tax referendum (SB224) bill in the General Assembly.

ELT Updates

Chuck Wagner, Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services, informed members that all teacher laptops have arrived and are currently being imaged. Laptops should be ready prior to winter break and may begin to be issued as early as December 7. Teachers (and later students) will have the ability to use interactive screens with stylus to automatically display to the class or at home from their computers. GCPS has been able to take advantage of resources through the CARES Act that will provide much needed and long overdue equipment to our students and staff. Technology department staff are being trained on the new technology and additional staff will also be needed to maintain the increased supply of devices.

Bryan Hartley, Executive Director of Operations, indicated additional positions would also be needed in transportation. Mr. Hartley expects delivery of the twelve new buses to begin on December 14. Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization units will be installed by December 28 in all HVAC units in the Gloucester County School Division. Installers will work around classrooms schedules. Mr. Hartley indicated these units are cutting edge and will remove viruses from the air.

Heather Lucas, Chief Financial Officer, indicated the budget process is underway. Dr. Clemons also noted that GCPS will need to hear what the Governor plans in regards to holding divisions harmless due to losses in enrollment as a result of the pandemic.

Lisa Jones, GCPS Division Nurse Coordinator, indicated GCPS staff and students are doing great with mitigation strategies for COVID-19, with adjustments being made when needed. Mrs. Jones will be sending staff an email regarding travel precautions as we approach the Thanksgiving holiday. Dr. Clemons informed members of a video Mrs. Jones made and is now available on the GCPS

website and also thanked Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Blankenship for their efforts in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) training of staff. In response to questions about staff who are unable to maintain six feet of distance with their students, Dr. Clemons said six feet should be maintained whenever possible, but when it isn't, all possible mitigation strategies should be taken. Any staff member with individual concerns, should contact his/her supervisor.

Rachel Blankenship, Executive Director of Human Resources & Compliance, indicated additional PPE has been, and will continue to be, provided where needed. Substitutes are assigned to specific buildings and to date, most teachers have been covered. Please encourage anyone who may be interested in applying to be a substitute, to contact Mrs. Blankenship. Human Resources is hiring substitutes as quickly as possible.

TAC Items

Lisa Sheesley (Abingdon) inquired about students who are virtual, but not doing the work or those who are supposed to be in person, but haven't attended. Dr. Clemons is aware these situations are occurring and will need to address the issue as well as consider how to proceed going into the second semester. Some considerations discussed included having students qualify to remain virtual, ability to maintain six-foot distancing and continuing to provide virtual instruction to maintain enrollment.

Brian Teucke (Page) expressed his appreciation for all GCPS has done during this pandemic and doesn't believe any other division is doing it better. Mr. Teucke presented a question from Page, regarding the availability of tuition assistance. Mrs. Blankenship indicated much of the available funds have been allocated, but anyone interested should apply as soon as possible, and the Human Resources Department will work to provide assistance as funds allow. Page staff also inquired about the requirement to provide nightly classes, and indicated very low to zero participation. Dr. Clemons doesn't intend for anyone to be working an unreasonable amount of hours and will review the situation.

Megan Harris (Peasley) asked if classes return to fully remote, will special needs teachers remain in the buildings and will those teachers receive a stipend? Dr. Clemons is hopeful we will not return to fully remote, and will continually monitor cases, rates, and factor in the mitigation strategies GCPS has in place. In addition, Mrs. Harris asked if teachers would be allowed to remain in classrooms if teaching had to return to fully remote, which Dr. Clemons indicated would need to be determined. Peasley staff also inquired about changing the COVID screening questions to say "if someone has traveled out of the state" instead of "out of the country." Mrs. Jones, indicated that risk in Virginia is no more or less than in another state and that Virginia doesn't currently have a quarantine. The screening questions are broad and if someone is referred to Mrs. Jones, she will ask additional questions to make a determination.

Christy Phillips (Achilles) inquired about concerns at GHS she was made aware of, concerning children completing Canvas classes in school and not receiving live instruction. Tricia Dowdy (GHS) indicated this is what was relayed from the beginning, and that other than labs, all instruction is resting in Canvas. Ann Marchant-Jones (GHS) added that while in class, she is teaching students both in her classroom and on Zoom and some labs cannot be done, only demonstrated due to social distancing. Mrs. Phillips believes some classes are not doing as much as Mrs. Marchant-Jones indicated was being done in her classroom. Dr. Clemons doesn't expect students to be solely on Chromebooks in the classroom and will reiterate that to the GHS administrative staff.

Dr. Clemons closed by thanking everyone for all they are doing. He is proud to work with the staff in Gloucester County Public Schools. Gloucester is a success story and will approach the pandemic day by day. Currently, Dr. Clemons has all intentions of maintaining the hybrid schedule following the holiday. Dr. Clemons wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving!

Adjournment - 5:49 p.m.