

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Arkansas School for the Deaf met for their monthly meeting February 22, 2022

Present: Dr. Sam Atcherson, Chair; Susan Pack, Secretary; Robert Fagan, Board Member; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; Priya Gupta, ASB Parent Representative; Will Gorum & Jonathan Smith, Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community

Dr. Sam Atcherson called the meeting to order at 5:07. The next meeting was scheduled for March 15, 2022 at the Arkansas School for the Blind.

Joint Agenda

22-J-002 Motion to approve Joint January, 2022 Minutes

Susan moved to approve, Rob seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items

22-J-005 Motion to Extend Mask Requirement Until February Meeting

Dr. Atcherson asked to hear from Mr. Caton on this.

Mr. Caton said that the Blind school's numbers had dropped and that he did not think we had any cases at this time. Vicki Crump verified that the Blind School did not have any active cases but that the Deaf school did. Mr. Caton said we were going in the right direction. He stated that he knew we couldn't keep people in masks forever; that we were going to have to show some flexibility, but at the same time his feelings were mixed. He stated that he had not seen much discussion from other school districts on what they were doing. He asked Vicki if she had a perspective on her end from what she was seeing. She stated that she could see that people were tired of wearing masks and that she could live with the Stoplight System.

Dr. Dickinson said that she sees the Stoplight System as a good approach, as it allows you to be very reactive to the situation. She said that the deaf students were very challenged when it came to wearing the masks. She said she supported the Stoplight system at this time.

Rob asked that if we go with the Stoplight System does that mean that tomorrow people are not wearing masks.

Dr. Dickinson said that you would just have to look at the area and see if it's spreading. It would allow us to respond and react to each specific area.

Susan stated that she was in favor of the Stoplight System and that the Superintendents and Vicki could make their own decisions.

Priya said that she knew everyone was tired of masks but that immunizations were low at schools and that she did not think that wearing masks affected the education system as it did at the Deaf school. She said that she would like to see the Mask Mandate continue at the Blind school until at least Spring Break but that the Deaf school needed to look at the balance with education and masks.

Mr. Caton stated that the vaccination numbers were low with school age children and that we had to look at what protection the masks were giving us right now. He asked the Board for ASB to keep the Mask Mandate in place until Spring Break because he would like time to gather opinions from staff, parents and community to see how they felt. He would like to bring that information back to the Board.

Dr. Atcherson said it was not out of the question for ASB to continue with the Mask Mandate and for ASD to decide what buildings to use masks in by using the Stoplight system, as they had different populations.

Holly asked how the Stoplight system would look at ASD. Dr. Dickinson said that she and Vicki would sit down together and look at each situation individually.

Vicki said that since her building was on the Blind school campus and she was part of shared services and in an effort to keep everyone safe she wanted to keep masks being worn in the infirmary. She did not want a Deaf school child to come in and think that they were an ASD kid so they didn't have to wear a mask.

Dr. Atcherson thought that was a good point and said that shared services employees needed to wear masks when they were around others.

Rob asked if ASB's Mask Mandate could be looked at again at the March Board meeting instead of waiting until after Spring Break.

Mr. Caton agreed.

Susan moved for ASB to continue with the Mask Mandate until the March Board meeting and for ASD to go with the Stoplight system. Rob seconded. Motion carried.

Discussion Items- Facilities

Dr. Dickinson stated that she really appreciated the Governor giving us 6 million dollars for both the Deaf and Blind schools. She said that 4 million would be used for the new health center and that the other 2 million would be used for the new water and electrical system. She said she could talk about the health center. She said she was very excited about it and that it was going to be designed for deaf and blind people. She said it would house their health center, audiology, optometry and mental health.

Mr. Caton said that we were still studying what we could include in it. He stated that we were still not sure about the Low Vision Clinic being in it, but that we were very appreciative of the Governor and Secretary Key. He said we still needed to look at how we could use our existing infirmary space.

Dr. Atcherson asked what the Low Vision Clinic was.

Mr. Caton explained that it was a supplemental vision service for our kids, as well as public school kids. It looks at their functional vision and also catches things that might be going on. He said that it had been in existence for 40 some years and was started by Senator Boozman. He said that it serves our students and also serves as a gateway for public school students to our school.

Susan asked how it was funded.

Mr. Caton said that it comes out of general revenue but that recently Dr. Doan had donated some of his own equipment to the school.

Dr. Dickinson asked Roy DePriest to talk about the water and electrical upgrades.

Roy explained that there will be a new water main and that the water service to each building will be replaced. This will improve our volume and water pressure. He also stated that with the new electrical service it will actually be that Entergy is taking ownership of the system, it will no longer be the schools. It will be Entergy's responsibility to deal with the storm situations and outages and to do the needed upgrades.

Dr. Dickinson said that these projects happen because ADE has been advocating for us. She thanked Gina Windle.

Rob asked about the timeframe for the health center.

Dr. Dickinson stated that the timeline mandated it had to be done by 2023. She said we were still doing a feasibility study. There may not be time to tear down the old building for it.

Mr. Caton said that the funding had to be spent by June of 2023 so that we had to have a very aggressive schedule.

ASB Agenda

22-B-002 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Rob moved to approve, Susan seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items- None

Discussion Items- None

Superintendent Report

Currently there are no active COVID cases on campus. Maybe the variants have gone away for us and we will be able to get back to some of our normal spring and end of year activities.

We are still working on completing our CRDC.

We are excited about our additional funding.

The Governor gave a 2% COLA increase to state employees

Our wrestlers participated in the State tournament and were able to hold their own. One was able to go back for an extra day. I am proud of their accomplishments.

We held our annual Poetry Outloud event. It looked a little different this year. We made all of our students take part in it, instead of giving them a choice. I appreciate Ms. Kindrick. This competition is important to develop their speaking skills as well as their confidence on stage. Diya Chakraborty will represent us at State. Lucas Harris was our runner up.

Our FBLA organization has had a successful year. All 4 of our students qualified on a regional level and will go to State.

The Music Department is gearing up for our Talent Show and Spring Concert.

We had Spirit Week this past week in preparation of our wrestlers going to the State tournament. Lots of different outfits were worn and Friends of ASB decorated the main hallway.

The Peewee Cheerleaders will perform at the UALR Men's Basketball game on February 25th.

Millie Nordman has filled our Computer Science teacher position. She will also help with adaptive tech.

ADE has given us some part time assistance in our IT Department.

Health Services has interviewed for 1 position. Our CNA will start on March 1st. Currently we have 1 contract nurse and we are trying to get another.

We are currently closing out on Phase 1 of the cottage and working on our grant for Phase 2.

Susan stated that she attended the School Board Training and that one thing she learned was that there was training for teachers for being mandated reporters and now Board members were mandated reporters. She asked about training for the Board members.

Mr. Caton said that maybe the other Board members could access the same information Susan got from the online recording of the seminar, and that if they needed to be registered to do so to let us know and we would take care of it.

Susan stated that those videos were just telling about the training.

Dr. Atcherson stated that he still encouraged the other Board members to watch them and that we would explore what mandated reporting training is available.

There being no further business for the Arkansas School for the Blind the meeting moved to the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

ASD Agenda

22-D-002 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)

Susan moved to approve, Rob seconded. Motion carried.

Action Items- None

Discussion Items- None

Superintendent Report

Dr. Dickinson stated that there were lots of good things going on at ASD.

We have had to have 2 closings one due to COVID and one due to snow.

We had Spirit week and Homecoming. Our King was Gavin Fields and our Queen Shelby Lehman.

Our basketball team and cheerleaders went to the Louisiana School for the Deaf and were a part of the Cajun Classic. We faced a team that we haven't played against since 1930- Florida

School for the Deaf and Blind. Our girls won the sportsmanship award. Cheer came in second place. Track starts tomorrow so people are busy.

The Arkansas Deaf Career Center has a new Career Coach, Andrea Akins. This position is part of a partnership between Arkansas Career Education, Arkansas public schools and UA- Pulaski Technical College. There are about 30 Career Coaches in public schools across Arkansas.

Our work-Based Education classes are off to a great start. Six of our ELEVATE clients are enrolled in an intense Driver's Ed course.

Our Education Leadership team right now is focusing on meeting with each teacher. We want to make sure data growth is showing. We just implemented a new Classroom Walkthrough app called DigiCoach.

We're hoping that next time you're in here it will look differently. We have gotten approval to have a screen that pulls down and a podium a stage, microphone and a sound system. We use this room all the time and these things will make it more functional.

There being no further business for the Arkansas School for the Deaf, Dr. Dickinson asked that before the meeting be adjourned that they go into Executive Session.

When the meeting opened back up it was shared that we had had 2 resignations. One being the loss of an RN. It was stated that this was a clinical nursing shortage for both schools. It was stated that the Board needed to talk to the Superintendents to see what needs there were and what they needed to do as there was an immediate problem that needed to be addressed.

Susan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rob seconded. Motion carried.



Dr. Sam Atcherson, Chair



Susan Pack, Secretary