

Freedom PTO Meeting via Zoom

November 10, 2020

PTO President, Wendy Simpson called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm and welcomed BASD School Board President, Mike Faccinnetto.

Mr. Faccinnetto

Spoke about current topics in the district that relate to Covid-19. The increase of positive cases in the area is a big concern. At this time, the district is remaining open, however, conversations have focused on what a short-term closure in the district would look like. The administration would like to be ready if/when a closure would happen. Current thinking would be that the hybrid students would move to live zoom instruction from home on the days they would typically be in school.

The School Board hears parents' concerns, ranging from some wanting schools to close, to others who want to move forward to 5 days in school learning. At this time, Mr. Faccinnetto assures us that the school board supports Dr. Roy and his administration regarding decisions being made in conjunction with the state and local agencies/health bureau.

Mr. Faccinnetto discussed steps they are taking to improve the current learning options. Dr. Roy and the administration are committed trying to give e-learning students more support. They are looking into the possibility to having more synchronous instruction in the 2nd semester.

Mr. Faccinnetto thanked the teachers, parents, and everyone who have shown patience and gratitude during these last few months.

Active Covid-19 cases can be found on the district website. One concern is that with the increase of community spread, teachers and staff have been exposed to the virus, making it necessary to quarantine themselves. This scenario is not sustainable if the number of teacher absences keeps increasing.

A parent asked the question if the school board has to approve a school closure. The answer is no.

Mr. Faccinnetto spoke about the budget. We will see the effects of the economy as a result of the virus. Many places where we receive tax revenue - landlords, shopping, etc., will create a loss in revenue.

A question was asked about this year's budget and if we are fully funded. The answer is yes. In January 2021, budget talks will begin again for the 2021-2022 school year.

A question was asked if there has been any charter school/funding reform. The answer is no. There was a mention of special education funding, but topics have been unable to get to the House floor for a vote.

Local and state elections next year. 4 seats open on ballot. In the Spring, pay attention to social media and keep good candidates on the board.

Mr. Faccinnetto thanked everyone for their time. He welcomes questions or comments via his email, which can be found on the BASD website.

Mr. LaPorta, FHS Principal

Mr. LaPorta would like to take the time to remember a retired, former teacher from Freedom High School. Paul Fierro, who lost his battle with ALS on Sunday, was a treasured member of the Freedom Family and will be greatly missed.

Mr. LaPorta reports that they have not yet seen any in school spread of the virus. There is a large volume in quarantine, however. The lack of in school spread shows that their mitigation plans are working and students are being cooperative. The problem lies in people getting lax in outside settings, going out in social situations/gatherings.

He notes that BASD is one of the largest school districts in the state and we have not shut down. Many others have.

Mr. LaPorta shared a screen share of the video he made, along with Ms. Leeson, with the current plan for a short-term closure. In short, Hybrid students will have live Zoom instructions on the days they would normally be at school. This scenario also gives the E-Learners the opportunity to have synchronous learning all week long.

The link to this important video can be found on the district website

The Tuesday before Thanksgiving is now an “at-home” school day. Remote learning for **ALL** students, with live zoom throughout the day.

Reminders:

- Encourage your children to have a regular and healthy schedule
- Commit to regular school attendance
- Online days: eliminate distractions. For example, no phones, social media, etc.
- Check Parent Portal regularly and keep on top of your children’s grades
- Initiate communication.

Q & A

A question was asked if the Arts will be able to continue. Mr. LaPorta states that we will see some creativity in the weeks ahead:

*Choral concert at BASD stadium on Monday, Nov. 16

* Theater: “A Christmas Carol” will be recorded on 11/17 and available for purchase through an online link and you can watch from your own devices.

* Chorus: On Friday, Nov. 20, a collaboration between Freedom and Liberty, named Christmastime in Bethlehem, with the help of a production company. Unsure of release date.

Sports:

Football: games continuing. Freedom/Liberty game will be rescheduled. Will be on either Friday, 11/20 or Wednesday, 11/25.

Winter sports will have an open gym period. Each team gets one hour inside per day. Wrestling, strength, and conditioning has to be outside. Practice up until 12/14/20, then competition starts 12/15. Only in-county for competitions. Nothing over Christmas break.

Is Rifle team allowed to compete? Yes.

Are off-season sports allowed to take part? No, no inside workouts, but can gather outside, weather permitting.

Academics:

Would a school closure be effective immediately? Yes.

What is the threshold for a shut down? Ms. Leeson answered this question, stating that they would need to see possible in-school spread, or if there were so many under quarantine that they run out of teaching staff or have very low student attendance.

Are choir and band able to move inside for cold weather? It has been advised that there is no signing or instrument playing while indoors. We have been fortunate with warm weather so far this year. For now, bundle up for these activities outside.

Wendy reminds everyone that clubs and group meeting schedules are posted on the website.

Mr. LaPorta reports the school board has decreased the amount of community service hours needed for graduation for the Class of 2021, going from 60 hours down to 30 hours. Clubs give you an automatic 15 hours (once, per 4 years)

A question was asked if VoTech students will have a conflict with live zoom schedules if a closure happens? The VT is aware of the schedule.

Treasurer's Report: Jason Testa

No new activity in October. Balance remains at \$6152.52

No money coming in and none going out currently.

Budget proposal will be changing and hopefully we will have a new one by January.

The board requests that money (\$500) will be taken from the enrichment/wish list line and given its own line for the Guidance Dept. to help with their outreach/Resource Room. Motion to approve: Kathleen Sweeney; 2nd by Marie Brown.

October Meeting Minutes; found on website. Motion to approve Jason Testa, 2nd Lori Wall

PAC: Marie Brown.

Covid-19 information from the PAC meeting has since been updated and reported tonight by Mr. Faccinetto.

Concerns about student engagement, mostly for E-learners. A survey was sent out and will be finalized. They will look at the answers, share the results, and see how they can improve moving forward. Results should be available at the end of this week.

Old Business: We are in the process of re-writing the bylaws since our funding has ceased. Please email Wendy if you would like a copy of the current bylaws and wish to help revise them. We are hoping to have a draft by the January meeting and finalize by February.

Wish lists for the departments are on hold for this year.

Guidance Office will be creating a sign-up genius for the Giving Tree. Look for more information on that soon.

A parent commented on the convenience of PTO meetings being via Zoom. It is easier for many.

Wendy thanks everyone for coming. Next meeting will be January 19, 2021.

Meeting adjourned at 9:03pm.