

## 12/16/20 - Regular Business Meeting

Present - Patrick D. McCabe, Roxanne Rebmann, James Grant, Deborah Forrestel, Robert Masse, Heather Cayea, Jody Brege, Erik Polkowski, Cynthia Tretter, Vaughn Maracle, David McLeod, James Andres

Jim - 7pm. Call meeting to order. Pledge to the Flag. We do have a presentation tonight from Campus Construction on our Capital Project Phase 1 and our Transportation Update.

Vaughn - Good evening everyone, thank you very much for allowing us the opportunity to come in and do a presentation on where the Capital Project stands right now. We've got three of us. I'm Vaughn Maracle from Campus Construction. With me tonight is Dave McLeod, Project Manager here on site, and of course, Jim Andres. We've got a three part update to give you. Part one will be the photo update that's in each of your board packets. We'll kind of walk through some of the spaces that we've completed to date. Then part two, Dave is prepared to outline what's left in the Capital Project and a brief timeline of those. Lastly, we'll talk about the bus garage, the transportation facilities. Still some work. Flipping over to this 21 page packet, pleased to report that the ongoing project is on schedule and on budget. The first slide is the elementary school main office. Just a few images, I'm sure some of you have seen this phase completed. We got this done in early fall for the staff over there. Phase 2, the Business Department is complete. That was done at the school year's beginning. CPL did an excellent job with some of their choices of finishes over in that space. Phase 3, the elementary school clinic renovation, adjacent to the elementary main office. That area was actually completed just in time for the school year. An improved space for the health department. The next couple pages are some changes we were able to introduce in the locker room areas, both the boys locker rooms and the girls locker rooms have additional changing space. The next page is an elementary school classroom to demonstrate one of fifteen new restrooms that we put pre-existing and again, the users are appreciative. The next page are some improvements that we made in the gymnasium, some window replacements. The next page, one of the big items with this project was to install bathroom facilities near the gymnasium. We have these just about wrapped up, in talking with Dave and Jim, will be wrapped up about mid-January. The next few pages demonstrate some miscellaneous scopes of work that we've been doing. New strobes, part of the security system. We've installed roughly 50 in the classroom, installing about 50 new strobes throughout the campus. That scope of work is going to do larger areas, high noise areas, where it's possible students wouldn't hear the PA announcements. The thought would be that the strobe would indicate a lockdown.

Pat - You can see two on either side of the walls here. There's some in the kitchen areas as well. Dave and I and Jim, I think, walked around to locate all the places of installation.

Vaughn - The next few images, we've done a lot of site work. Some aesthetic, some utility, if you will. This image below is the ramp down to the basement doors. That's new as well. The next page is some new concrete slab work that we've done throughout the district. Pour new slabs right out near the district office. That work turned out great, the site work has been doing an excellent job. Next few pages demonstrates some of the stairs that we put in, railings. That turned out great throughout the campus. This set of stairs had railings. Next page is work that we did in the back and up front for some railings. After that we get into some more of the retaining wall and landscaping reconstruction that we've done. If you ride around the campus, it's apparent the improvements are well done. Next image is the retaining wall out near the track. Again, that retaining wall with the new entrance looks nice. The next image is work that's ongoing, replacing several of the doors. I forget the count, but

Dave - There's 40 total and we've done, at the end of the week, we've done 21.

Vaughn - Excellent. That's going to be addressed and conclude the installation of the doors throughout the campus. Next page is roofing improvements. Last spring we got a head start on it and that scope of work went great and on time. Lastly, the very last phase is some of the ancillary work that we're doing. Split systems for air conditioning

throughout the data closets throughout the complex. That will help protect your technology equipment. With that, I'll turn it over to Dave to talk about what's next.

Dave - In focus of some of our work, a lot of this work is moving forward more so at the end of this school year, end of June. The elementary school kitchen, we have a replacement rooftop unit, which serves as ventilation and air conditioning for the cafeteria and 18 areas within the elementary school. Similarly, at the middle school we have also a rooftop unit that's being replaced, ventilation ductwork also for the kitchen and air conditioning as well. The elementary school, we have 10 classrooms where we have the heating ventilating and air conditioning piece of equipment, commonly called unit ventilator, being replaced. We're all set for that. We can keep going here at the end of the school year. We can't do these inside the school year proper because of course, it would move teaching out of those classrooms, and we have limited areas able to do that. Next item up basically within the high school proper here, we have about 70 heat pump units, which are also heating ventilating, air conditioning units, that we're replacing in classroom and office areas. That functions in the two story building that we're in now. That will all be done during the summer. The big chunk of work that we have left to do with the main boiler area within this building. We have a couple steam boilers that are coming out and some ancillary equipment associated with that. Inside that space we will now put two smaller steam boilers and three small hot air heating boilers to accommodate functions that we need here at the school. That will all get done in the summer. We will try to get started earlier in spring, like maybe mid-May to get started with that work. We have temperature control system upgrades, cabling systems that are being replaced throughout the building. They are starting on some of the cabling, we can some of those run off this week, and forward toward the end of the month. We have a domestic water heater that's got to be replaced down near the boiler. We also have across the way, in the main athletic building, we have a pool water heater that will be replaced as well. We have a few exterior doors that basically still need to be replaced, so we will wait until we have time to do that because many of those have door access controls and we need to get a little further along with our temperature control system to accommodate the function that they have. The last item that we have is basically a storm drainage upgrade along the east wall of the middle school classroom wing. Basically, that will help pick up some of the drainage coming off the hill as it comes down that area, which gets pretty soaked. Basically, there's some storm water that's coming into the building, so we will try to eliminate that. That will be done in the summer as well. That and those will function as our main items left. We got a pretty good jump on everything else. At this point, we will have a busy summer.

Jim A - Additionally, we also got the whole camera system changed out. All new cameras are put in place and that's all operational as well. Did you mention that?

Dave - Basically, I was focusing on what was yet to be done.

Jim A - Yeah.

Vaughn - With that, if you recall back to when we went to recommend it, and accept it for phase one project, we were significantly under budget. We had a significant savings back then. When the team started to look into the transportation facilities, there were three major issues up there. The underground fuel tank had issues that we wanted to get into sooner than later. There was also drainage issues up at the transportation facilities. And lastly, inadequate space around the bus parking area. It had limited inspection for them and outdoor maintenance. What we've done is pull together a scope of work. A relocated fuel pump station that makes a little bit more sense up there from a layout standpoint. Secondly, this allows us to get working on the relocated fuel pump area. Second is drainage with the use of an underground storm water retention system up there. This will eliminate some of that runoff issue that's been a problem. Third, bus parking area for inspection and maintenance. There's going to be a new block here over and also new lighting over on that side along with a new wood timber guardrail system. Lastly, some fencing and gate at the entrance. Timeline to get it done, we're thinking about contracts for scope of work, site demo contractor, an electrical contractor, and a fuel island contractor. Again, utilizing those phase one project contractors for that scope of work. Currently, we have the plan in to SED for their review. It takes typically about a two and a half, three month

process right to get those to Albany for their review and approval. We're looking at mid-late January, it might be to get their review of the plan. If all goes to plan, we would like to by mid-February and then hopefully come back and get something drafted for the board for approval. Construction for this project will be about April, May to get started. With that, any questions at all?

Pat - I'd just like to comment that a project of this size in a normal year is a challenge. During a pandemic, it's even more challenging, right from the beginning. Campus, Vaughn, Dave, and Jim have been great partners with us, and I speak for Cindy too. It's not just the slides that you saw this evening, it's the whole financial picture of the whole planning of the project that has been instrumental, and I know that I speak for Cindy when I say how grateful we are to have the relationship we have with you and with CPL. Mr. Polkowski has been an amazing part of the team. His knowledge of the campus, his knowledge of the community, community needs, and his construction background and knowledge has been instrumental too. I just want to thank you, quite honestly, for the partnership. It was important that the board hear from you. I give them regular updates, but you're the experts in the field.

Vaughn - Thank you very much. I think we all know it's been an extremely challenging year.

Pat - We've also seen a great deal of responsiveness to the needs of the district. I know when Dave and I need or Jim and I need, there's often things that they're uncovering through the project and this is the opportunity to address them. Now I know we call access wiring spaghetti, it's removing some of the spaghetti that's leftover from previous projects and invest in these needs now or if I had come to them with them, either Mr. Polkowski has brought to my attention or my own volition, they find a way to make it happen and keep it within budget. I don't know if the board has had an opportunity to get around as much as you would in a normal year, but I believe the new elementary entrance was supposed to be done on schedule. I haven't even walked down to that end of the building today.

Dave - They're putting the finishing touches on probably tomorrow, for sure by the end of day five. That should all be in place. It's standing right now.

Pat - I didn't mean to interrupt discussions from the board, I just wanted to make those comments.

Jim - I just wanted to echo Mr. McCabe's comments that it's amazing and fantastic that you're on time, on budget, that the bids went as well as they did so we can address the approaching critical need at the transportation island because we've talked about that in the past. That's a disaster waiting to happen, so we're happy that you're moving forward on that. Mr. Polkowski, any comments?

Erik - I would say the only comments I would make is that this project in general was not kind of your pie in the sky, something where somebody can see a lot of improvements, so to speak, because a lot of things, talking about ventilation systems. It's not something that necessarily moms and dads see, but the students experience and it builds upon your campus and educational environment. However, there have been some physical changes that I don't think the public has gotten the full grasp of, again, because of the limited access to the facility. The wall along the track, the wall along the back, the stairs, all these sorts of things that have so much to do with the day to day operation of the building, as a unit. Once those things start to get realized where parents are coming into the health office or to the elementary office. The actual people that are physically using the space that it has become much, much more effective and it just makes the project work a lot better. The benefits are there not just for the actual use, but performance, appearance. It hits on everything. It's been great to work with them because like Mr. McCabe said, we've been able to identify what's there, what's been needed and to work within those confines to make sure that everything can be done in a timely and logical fashion. Particularly with the bus and transportation. I think it has been a win-win so far.

Jim - Certainly, the restrooms by the performance will be greatly appreciated when we can utilize the performance gym.

Vaughn - We will certainly be back no later than early-spring timeframe, hopefully with some bids to put in front of you.

Jim - Alright, thank you very much for coming out tonight. Item #3 on our agenda is Hearing of Individuals and Delegations. This is a time in the board meeting where the district residents may address the Board of Education with comments relative to issues not individual people. Comments are to be submitted to the District Clerk in advance of the meeting. We have no public comments or questions. We will move on to Item #4 The Superintendent's Report.

Pat - Mrs. Tretter will join us to present something brief. It's some informational slides to show our board members. I asked our Business Official, Mrs. Tretter, to be part of this. This evening we wanted to share some foundational information as we begin the budget process. We'll be talking about the political landscape, if you will, and some foundational information that we know at this moment. I'll forewarn you, A, it's limited at this point and time, B, it's not all that rosy. Nonetheless, this is where we're starting. You can see the slide that in a typical year, around the end of January, the Governor releases his initial draft, then legislature addresses that, then there's some back and forth. Ideally, we have a state budget by the beginning of April. This is not a typical year. There has been no announced changes to this timeline at this point, but changes are something that we might have to reckon with at some point in the future. If you've been following along with any of his press briefings or in the newspaper articles. I just read one today shortly before the board meeting. The Governor keeps reiterating that he's relying on the federal government to come through with the fiscal package to help the state overcome some of the burdens encumbered by the pandemic. The slowdown of the economy and excessive costs. I heard him last week Sunday in a press conference say even if the federal government will provide us with some relief, he's not taking tax hikes off the table and he's not taking off a reduction of revenue or funding to municipalities and school districts, and so on. He's kind of foreshadowing a bleak fiscal picture. As recently as today, the NYS Office of Divisional Budget said you can expect a spectral deficit of \$8.7 billion, but that number can go as high as \$15 billion in the absence of federal relief. That's a much wider gap than we've seen in many, many years. If you went to that extreme, that highest number. You're talking about a 15% projected state spending gap than previous years. All of that is on the slide up there, we don't know a foundation number. We never do at this point of the year, but we certainly don't now. Let's turn the next couple of slides over to Mrs. Tretter. Again, some foundational information about revenue and then expense.

Cindy - Well, as the slide indicates, and if you know CPI is running below 2%. It's likely we'll have a tax cap that has limits below 2% this year. Our ability to levy tax will be somewhat inhibited. BOCES puts out sort of a legislative quarterly update, and I do want to highlight a couple of items from that update for you. The NYS Department of Budget did a mid-year update. They released it on October 30th, and they're projecting it will be a total loss of NYS revenue around \$63 billion through fiscal year 2024. There were three measurement periods after which the state would have been able to adjust our current year revenue. Based on April, which was the very first monthly measurement period, the budget director already has the authorization to reduce our aid. The state leaders are not on the same page. Shocking, I know. I was watching the governor's presentation last week when he turned it over to his fiscal advisor, and his fiscal advisor assured the reporter that asked the question that there have been no withholdings of aid to this point, and I can tell you every single payment that we have had due has had 20% held to date. They're not even relaying information accurately. I don't know if they're even talking to one another, but every single payment, including our lunch reimbursements have had 20% withheld. Now I think they're getting a little bit caught up in semantics, so withholding it but not calling it a cut, which means they could remit it at some point in the future until they decide to make it permanent. I think that's a little bit of gamesmanship. I do want to highlight that sales tax October 2020, year over year change was about 5.2% reduction. As Pat indicated, the estimated reductions for school aid is going to range between \$8.2 and \$15 billion this year. I think we're probably, likely going to be seeing things like we saw back with the Gap Elimination Adjustment. The hope is that they'll take into consideration high-needs districts versus the low-needs districts. I do think it's interesting to note that even though NYS Gaming Revenue is down 95%. That certainly is an area that the state takes in quite a bit of their funding, so that is a significant hit to their revenue, which would be in turn, a hit to our revenue. Our unemployment claims have gone very high. We budget less than \$10k for unemployment claims. We paid about \$28k the last three months of last fiscal year, and we paid over \$50k for the first two quarters of this current fiscal year. Although the state has recently indicated that we may be able recoup some of those claims in the

form of the federal CARES funding, they have not been able to tell us how we recoup it, when we recoup, or if indeed we will recoup it. I'll keep you posted on that, but those claims are running quite high. We are well aware that there are multiple fraudulent claims. We continue to challenge them every single month when they occur. The state is processing all claims, making all payments. We have yet to find out whether when they determine they are in fact fraudulent, they'll recoup the money from the person receiving the funds, if they'll restore it to our account or not. I did want to report that we did receive the county CARES funding, which was about \$162k. We also applied for FEMA funding for about \$26k, most of which was denied. We just found out today that FEMA denied all the schools FEMA applications. They said that all of our purchases of the plastic dividers, the masks, the sanitizers, the gloves did not truly qualify as FEMA qualifying PPE. That was really just normal reopening costs. All the schools have been denied. I'm sad to report that. All of that will weigh into the challenges that we have ahead as we kind of deal with revenues.

Pat - You mentioned the tax gap and you mentioned something about the anticipated expenses. There's just two more slides that I would ask that you address to the board and anything else you want on the expense side. Before we do that, does the board have any questions on revenue?

Cindy - We do know that the state has set their estimates for their retirement systems. The teachers' retirement system, they've indicated that rates will likely be between 9.5% and 10%. The ERS side, Tier 4, which is the bulk of our members, it ranges from Tier 1 through Tier 6 at this point, Tier 4 is the bulk and that will be about 18.3%. Workers' Comp, we have yet to find out our Workers' Comp rates for next year. I will keep you posted when we obtain more information on that. Of course, you know we're hoping to have a final resolution on the AFA contract. However, we have our administrator's contract and our non-instructional unit, as well as our managerial-confidential employees, and several of our independent contracts that are also up this year, who will have to have negotiations before we can really set salaries. We'll do our best to estimate throughout the budget process for those.

Pat - I wanted to share with the board what Mrs. Tretter was describing when she talked about and provided me this information on the slide. She talked about the 20% withholding. Again, not entirely clear whether it's a cut or not at this point. It's something to be mindful and sometimes actually seeing the categories and the associated dollar amounts is helpful. I don't expect a line by line analysis. Any general comment on this?

Cindy - Sure. If any of you have kind of gone out to the state site to look at our school aid payments, we get payments throughout the year. Some of the payments are made by them withholding our money, then payment our TRS bill. Other times we know exactly what the state's supposed to give us based on expense-driven aids or other types of aids in our outlook reports. To date in every single category, we've got special ed, access cost, UPK, My Brother's Keeper Grants, we've got a lunch reimbursement claim, we've got BOCES Aid, Native American tuition, Native American transportation, we've got the full gambit on that screen. Those are just the aids that were paid from July through that point in November. Every single one had the 20% withheld, we did not get our full payment. I think it's interesting that the state in one of Governor Cuomo's press conferences indicated we haven't withheld anything. Not true.

Pat - Cindy, correct me if I'm wrong, but this is our aid withholding to date. If you were to play this out, it would materialize into a cut of 20% on all of these categories, I believe it's in excess of \$3 million. When we think about next year, and we think about revenue, bear in mind that 20-2021 year we were held to the 19-20 funding from SED. Then there was the Pandemic Adjustment where that \$162k was pulled out with the federal money to replace it, we don't know if that federal money, there's a lot of unknowns at this point. For illustrative purposes only, I wanted to share this slide with you. Mrs. Tretter mentioned that 2010-2016 Gap Elimination Adjustment. It was the state's way of saying we have to slowly reduce revenue or expenditures going out and money going into school districts. That was a long six years for any of us in education that lived it. It was painful. This potentially would far exceed that experience that we had from 2010-2016 by a significant margin.

Bob - How are we positioned right now financially to ride this out? How many years can we financially make the gap up and not feel the

Cindy - It depends. It depends on what money we get this year, the current year that we're in versus what they're projecting for next year. I'll be in a much better position to answer that question once I have a couple more factors. We're hoping that we're going to, like you said we have those three measurement periods, so far they've told us nothing with regards to it, except they are withholding the money and telling us they're not. They published our outlook reports for this year. The outlook reports remain unchanged, which means the state is saying everything we told you were going to get last year when you were budgeting, is still what we're telling you you're going to get, but we're not telling you what you should be getting. We're not going to call it a cut yet. They're dancing around this whole thing. I think that's because they're waiting to find out if there will be federal stimulus that will somehow fill in their gap, and then they'll decide how much, if any, they'll trickle down to schools. I wish I could answer that, and I'm not trying to be evasive, but soon as we have some more data we will.

Pat - We know there's two different schools of thought within the Democratic-controlled legislature between the governor and the legislatures. I think the legislatures want to go in and get the budget processed before the holidays. The governor is saying no, we need to wait until after, until January to even begin because he wants to see what's going to come out of the federal government. They can't even agree to when to start the process. All of that tells me it's going to be delayed, and we're going to be burning the midnight oil at the last 12th hour before we really know anything. I'll show you the last slide.

Jim - Can I just ask a question before you get to that? Now that shortfall that you're showing that they've withheld over \$300k. That does not include the transportation aid from last spring that they withheld, or denied, as well. That number if you could refresh my memory?

Cindy - Right. Pat and I just did our survey on that. We tend to generate about \$1.3 million in transportation aid, which runs about 70% of total expenses. They may deny another \$400k just on that. Although there's conversations happening about that as well. That just happens to be all the specific aid categories just within that particular snippet of time. We get the bulk of our aid after November. We'll have to see. I will say this, to address Mr. Masse's question. I thank this board profusely for having the foresight to not listen to the state and stay at the 4% level. You're looking out for our kids. We'll be in a much better position than other districts. How good of a position, I don't know. We'll see, but thank you for doing that because we'll be able to weather the storm longer than we would have if we stayed within that 4%.

Bob - Not the reason for my question, but thanks for saying that because we are positioned pretty good. You have to look at what's going to be 20% based on that I would think, right?

Pat - The state is projecting about a three year recovery period provided the pandemic and the associated costs, and the healthcare, the economy begins to revive over the summer. They're looking at a three year recovery period. I would imagine schools and municipalities will be longer than that. The state is going to continue to withhold some money. The state also has money in fund balance, if you will, that they can draw on, but using reserves you have to be careful. If you come to rely on reserves, you can deplete them very quickly. It's not just Mrs. Tretter and I, or even the Board, we work with financial advisors to help with this process as well.

Erik - I just have one question. I don't know, just being a forethought because the question is going to be more along the lines of Mr. Masse's question in regards to maybe to help understand the situation to the community in regards to transparency, is there any way to do some sort of, once you have a little bit more definitive number, and it does look like this will be more like the gap elimination that we had previously, and obviously this one looks like it will be more drastic with the potential for longer, just to do a comparison between because we knew what happened at that point and time and we knew sort of actions within the district had to take place, try to do a comparison to say this is what we had before. These are the actions we had to take. This is what we're looking at now, just at least so there's some sort of, I

mean it's a slap in the face, but the community is going to see that all of a sudden this is the potential that could happen. Whether it's to rally them to try and motivate some advocacy or just to come to the realization that some of these other programs or aspects or positions that are available in the school, this is the potential impact that's going to be there. I just would like to be ahead of the curve and say this is where we were, this is how bad it was. This is where we are now, this is how bad it is. This is the potential as to what we're going to see now. Not that it's not all doom and gloom, but just in preparation because that's going to be the kickback.

Pat - I think community awareness will be huge. I will say it's already being covered by the local media, which is helpful. On the screen behind me are some proposed budget goals for the board to consider. These are not program-specific, they're more or less mindset. We'll talk with dispositions how the board could approach the budget process. You can see working to maintain a strong fiscal understanding while preserving instructional programs. Consider creative solutions to staffing, scheduling, and instructional delivery that will support the student experience. What we're talking about there is surviving, if you will, drastic cuts. We might need to really examine our instructional delivery model, examine our staffing, think how to utilize existing staff in creative ways to make sure our kids are getting the best program possible. Develop a balanced approach to address the fact of reduced state funding, as you mentioned Mr. Masse, the consideration of reserve. We will probably need to talk to the community a lot about tax levy. Other ways to reduce our own spending, while still addressing all those needs that we have in terms of safety, instructional programming, and other fiscal obligations that we have as a district. Finally, find ways to work collaboratively with our stakeholders. I think communicating the budget to the public. These are some that Mrs. Tretter and I discussed together as potential goals for the board. We'll leave it to you to consider. We have more time in the budget process, we don't necessarily have to respond this evening. We should probably refine or define our budget goals at our next meeting or adopt these if you find them favorable.

Jim - I think one of the things that will benefit us this year is the timeline and the process that you implemented last year. The additional information and transparency that was provided as we started and early on in the process, so we're not getting into May or late April, and we have to approve the budget and we're just starting to see the dramatic impact that's going to happen. Continuing to share the information as soon as we see it and continuing to talk about what options do we have involving all of the stakeholders within the building to work creatively and to reach out to the community is going to be important.

Pat - That's a great segway, Mr. Grant. I made a reduced itinerary, if you will. These are all representing board meeting dates. Obviously, in our overall budget development calendar that we use internally is about four pages long and has a lot more specifics to it. You can see in the slide behind me, kind of the sequence of presentations or updates are important steps to the board. We will over time, those dates will disappear and we will get all the way down to our budget vote date. Anything else for Mrs. Tretter or I on the budget process?

Bob - I think you're on the right track as far as looking at, we're going to look at the tax gap, we're going to talk about that. I think that responsibly, we need to make sure that we look everywhere that we can save money and show the community because school tax is only one thing that's going to go up in NYS if you watch, they're going to be grabbing every which way. Anything we can do to kind of enhance our side, clean up, maybe do things a little less costly, utilize people in different areas. I think that's really important because I'd like us not to go all the way to the top if we can help it. I think that part of the conversation, Mr. McCabe, is really important.

Jim - I think as Mrs. Tretter pointed out, even though going all the way to the top is going to be very minimal this year.

Bob - 1.9%

Cindy - Last year was 1.9%.

Bob - Right.

Jim - It is important to look at all of the areas and try to continue to be as fiscally responsible and aware of the community's needs regarding taxes. Agreed.

Bob - Because the state's going to try to take it every which way. They're not going hungry. They're looking for it.

Pat - Sure. As always, I want to thank Cindy. She's a great partner to work with. She's exceedingly knowledgeable, and she does a great job of keeping our district in good fiscal standing. Thanks for coming out tonight too, Cindy. I appreciate it.

Jim - Before you leave, I'd like you to stay for the discussion of Mr. Alexander's proposal on the buses.

Cindy - Sure.

Pat - In your packet, it's really for informational purposes only, I did provide a presentation from Mr. Alexander about the purchases of three buses and a van, as part of the district's ten year replacement cycle. Some additional information and perhaps questions if you have them to Cindy. We have 37 busses in our fleet. Several years ago, the district adopted a bus replacement cycle, taking us from a 14-year cycle down to a 10-year cycle. I know at that time the district brought in a transportation consultant to assist the district in the process. A brilliant idea because the warranty on the buses is ten years, so if you're doing a 10-year cycle, there's cost savings there because you really start to incur the greatest expenses in maintenance and service to the busses as you get close to the 10-year warranty cycle. A wise decision I thought and whatever superintendent and board was involved in it. To give you some context, in 19-20 there was a replacement of three large buses, 66 passenger buses and a wheelchair bus, a smaller bus. In 20-21, three more buses and a small bus. 21-22 as per the cycle, three more buses and a smaller bus. It will take the whole ten years to get through the entire fleet in kind of an incremental process. We do trade the buses in for some value and apply that to the purchase of the new buses. I know Mrs. Rebmann will send out information, paperwork, a resolution, projected costs, or any other legal requirements to our district's attorney, I believe is our bond's attorney as well, and could provide a resolution to the board in an upcoming meeting sometime in January.

Jim - My question, just to confirm, that we've moved this to a second resolution on budget day to support the purchases of these buses, correct? I just wanted to clarify that.

Pat - I do have, and I apologize I didn't put copies in the board packet, but I will provide you with the one page timeline of the replacement cycle and the projected associated costs. I'll put that in, I'll submit that to Mrs. Rebmann for the next board meeting.

Jim - Thank you.

Pat - I wanted to update the board this evening on more information on our COVID-19 testing as well as our school operations. I included to the board my most recent letter to the community that outlines the test results. All of my communications to the community are on our website. I know you know, but just by way of quick recap. We did successfully complete the testing. We were actually over 20% of our population. In total 274 tests. 272 of those were negative. Two positives. Overall was 0.7% positive. Significantly lower than the 8.4% for our yellow zone. As a result, demonstrated that there is no, that the school building and district, is not a transmitter, if you will, of the virus. Because we're yellow zone, no additional testing is required. On Monday, I'm sure you all saw, the governor released his updated micro-cluster zone maps. While there were no changes for Akron, you saw where Genesee County and Niagara County, larger portions of them were also designated yellow zone. The other thing is the zone designation changed from just a pure positivity rate to positivity and a greater emphasis on hospital-bed capacity. I have family members who work in the medical field, and they've described how they're looking and creating additional beds. That's going to further kind of lower those zone designations. The other important thing that happened was a decision by the Erie County Department of Health on Friday to change the criteria for determining close contacts. You're probably familiar that a close contact is

if you're within 6 foot of someone else, mask or not, for more than ten minutes. So someone's positive, you're within 6 feet of them for greater than ten minutes, you're considered a close contact. The second criteria that Erie County had was one on exposure duration. If you were exposed to someone, regardless of distance, for more than 60 minutes, you are a close contact. It was cumulative. I'll give you an example. Let's just say a student is positive, we found out a student is positive. We start with contact tracing. We say ok, this other student was with that child for 42 minutes in period one and another 42 minutes in period 2. The cumulative of that was more than an hour, that's close contact. On Friday the county did away with the 60 minute exposure criteria. Dr. Bernstein, the County Health Commissioner, sent a correspondence to eliminate that based on the 3 months of data they collected, hundreds of investigations that showed student to student transmission was extremely rare in schools. It kind of substantiates what we're hearing across the state and within our own county. Despite high rates, there's very little evidence of student to student transmission in schools or student to teacher transmission within schools because of all the safety protocols that we have. Everyone is wearing their masks, frequent hand washing, keeping the 6 feet. The effect of that is we should see a lot fewer individuals being told to quarantine for 14 days without that criteria in place. We sent in excess of 300 students home as close contacts this year, so far. Most of them were because of the duration. For the most part, you're not within 6 feet from someone at school. Definitely a significant development. I had said to the community and to you, the board of education, that our ability to provide in-person instruction is depending on our ability to test, our ability to maintain staff, and evidence that there is no viral spread within school. If we thought the virus was being spread in school, we would go to remote. We've successfully completed testing. We have encountered the staffing shortages, but I would anticipate so long as there's no further quarantine orders or isolation orders, our staffing levels should resume to a level that will allow us to continue operations. So far, both in Akron and really the state, there's little evidence of viral spread. We are kind of encountering a new challenge, however. That is one of public sentiment. One concern that parents and some staff have is if I go to school or if I send my child to school, we're going to get the virus. I understand that concern. I'm hearing it from a variety of sources. They're heartfelt expressions of anxiety and no matter what the County Executive says, the Commissioner of Health says, I say, they're still nervous. We saw it just before Thanksgiving a big uptick of parents not wanting to send their kids to school. Actually, 40 students, K-12. That shift has a dramatic effect on our ability to provide consistency in educational programming. It's very challenging when a child, who's supposed to be in your room, is no longer on that roster. Maybe they're in another environment, but you haven't planned for that. It's disruptive, not only for the teacher, but quite frankly it's disruptive to the child's learning. I don't have an immediate answer to that, but I did want to share that phenome with you because it's something that we're dealing with and our teachers and administrators are dealing with. A lot of folks said I just don't want my child to get COVID-19, we have to quarantine over Christmas. Again, there's no real evidence to say that you're going to contract COVID-19 at school, but it's a legitimate concern. I've shared with you, I've shared with our school district community my personal perspectives, and that is based on what pediatricians and educational researchers have told us all along throughout the pandemic. The best place for a child to learn and to grow and to be successful is in in-person instruction. I believe we have a responsibility to keep our kids safe. I believe we have a responsibility to meet what is in the students' best interests. Again, I respect the sentiment of folks that are out there. If you will let me get on my soap box for one second, and then I promise I'll be brief. My background is in curriculum instruction. You know, curriculum is about providing direct, meaningful instruction, assessing where our learner is, giving them immediate feedback using instructional resources, and engaging them in the application of skills. That curriculum is circular, it's a wheel. That's where the word comes from. That wheel gets fractured, broken when you have kids moving from in-person to then remote. No, I did not, it was very difficult for me to make the decision that was a no-brainer, it had to be made, to remote. Now I'm concerned about families wanting to choose the instructional delivery model based on what they're hearing in the media. Again, I understand it, for me knowing what I know about student development and student learning, I know any kind of instability, whether at home or at school, detracts from the individual's ability to learn. We need to move forward. We need to move forward as a school district. I believe that we can resume school after the recess. I believe that our staffing levels should stabilize at that point, but we need to monitor. If our staffing levels, we get an uptick and we don't have the appropriate staffing, perhaps we can't. I know of other schools in the orange zone, testing this week. They're reporting similar results to ours. I have already started to draft a letter to the community, but there's a lot of blanks because I, like everyone else,

have been in a wait and see moment. This is really just an update to the board, but I'm also going to ask the board, because many of you have children and grandchildren here in school, your perspective? Whether or not, I don't want to put you on the spot, but I'm sure your own personal sentiment or sentiments within the community about in-person learning. It's important for me to hear from as many sources as I can. I don't know if you want to share or not share and talk to me later, but I'm just trying to give you a flavor of what we're experiencing.

Jody - I've spoken to a few families where their kids were hybrid and they pulled them to the remote. When we had the one week where everyone was remote, you Google-meeted every period, which is what you're doing now. It seemed to be better for that family because it wasn't, you're hybrid, and then you're home. The kids said they just learned more because they're getting instruction every single day, every single period. In some cases, some of the parents had to pull because of their spouse's jobs, where if you or anyone in your family is quarantined, then you're out of work for two weeks. I know that is a situation that I know we have going on in the community. I personally want my kids in school five days a week. They need to be in school five days a week, which I know we cannot do. I think the hybrid model, I don't think they learn as much. I think Madison and Marissa are learning more this week with everyone on the same page than when they were hybrid. I don't know if anyone else wants to

Pat - I appreciate that.

Jody - But I want my kids, I feel they need the interaction mentally for them, but when it comes to the way the learning is, I think when everyone's on the same page doing everything the same. They're generally getting instruction, they're getting taught, they're on the Google Meets, they're learning. I think it's been better. You're next.

Bob - I would agree. The hybrid is not the answer. Obviously, full remote is what we have to do for right now. I see it as not nearly as productive. Not to say the teachers aren't making a good effort, because I have seen that. I have been really pleased with the effort of at least my daughter's teacher and what they're doing. Their accessibility, they are available, willing to help outside of just here's your class. I will say some of the anxiety I think from the public that you talked about, while we don't have any cases, but when my phone goes off, my phone rings, I have to go see this, and I get a message from Mr. McCabe. I get that then the next day another one comes, or maybe it's two days later, but I think I just heard this, what's going on? Then there's another one. It's overkill, and I know you probably have to do it, but that leads to anxiety of people saying what's going on at the school? You say the rates, they're very low, and it's a very safe place for students to be in, I have no problem with my student being here, but that's one thing I have heard and seen. What's going on at that school? Everyday we get a new letter.

Pat - I'm really glad you brought that up. A couple of things. First of all, I think our teachers are doing an outstanding job, whether fully remote or in the hybrid. It's dramatically different from what we're all used to. We'll never compare to what we all would prefer, which is a traditional school year. Having said that, the work that our teachers are putting into it and our administrators are putting into it, is exceptional. I'm sure they're exhausted. I'm sure they're ready for a break, but they should be highly congratulated for the effort and the work they're doing. The alerts, the community expected, they wanted to know if there's a positive case. Going back to September and October, they wanted to know if there's a positive case in my child's school, I want to know about it. I made that commitment to make sure that within minutes of it happening, we were communicating to everyone. Having said that, I think we've all grown accustomed to the fact that the virus is within our community and knowing that minute if there's a positive case may not be necessary. In my letter I did say beginning this week, there will be a letter posted every Friday that identifies whether or not we had a positive case, where it happened. If you want to get the update, you can go right to our dashboard and check out whether we had a case. That adjustment, I would agree those alerts heighten the anxiety, and I wrestled with it. I'm a transparent person, if I told you I'm going to tell you what's happening, I'm going to tell you. I also recognize that they're disruptive to your personal life and professional life and maybe causing undue alarm. Here's the reality, the virus is all around us. There's going to be positive cases, whether you're at home, in the community, or at

school. Question is, where are you most likely to contract it? You're most likely to contract it at home in a social gathering. I don't want to belabor this, but if any more from the board wants to share.

Heather - I can share my experience. We've been fully virtual. I have a high schooler and two elementary kids. I think the reason why we picked that is because there was some health concerns with one of my kids, but also the consistency. I didn't think we would make it as long as we have. I thought we would be out sooner. Now that we know it's not spreading at schools, we didn't know at the time, I feel more comfortable. I would definitely send my kids back at some point this year. I do fear how they're doing this year, but I've also seen from some other families that have been going and then going to remote learning. It's very challenging for them to switch, just with trying to work from home. Kids switching back and forth is very hard on the kids, so in that respect I'm happy that we've been consistently out because we have a phenomenal virtual teacher. She's just working with that class. At one time when they were switching back between the regular class and the virtual teacher, that was confusing for the kids as well. I'm hoping things will get better so that they can go back, but you know, I think the issue we have too is that we can't have everybody come back.

Pat - What we're encountering here in Akron is going on literally in every other district. What we need to do though is have stability in programming, parents electing, they were asked at the beginning of the marking period to make the commitment, and for the most part they have. It's the parents that are now changing their minds mid-marking period, it's extremely disruptive to the child's educational programming and also for our ability to provide educational programming when class sizes and class rosters and PowerSchool and where did the child leave off is all over the place. Again, the district is going to need to provide consistency, but also insist on consistency from the community. It is a partnership that we're working on. I met with the administrative team earlier this week on how we can message that more clearly.

Heather - As an educator, I've seen that too with students, where in the same situation I have a student that's faltering back and forth and just getting behind because of it. Also, this week we were supposed to be fully remote, our district changed their mind. It's a relief to the kids because they want to be in school. Relief to me because I think they do better in school.

Pat - I appreciate everyone sharing their perspectives because I do think you represent the community. It's helpful to hear. A couple of final things, as anticipated, there was another change in athletics. You just never know when it's gonna be, you just know there's going to be one. Section 6 said today and they have moved winter sports from the previously announced January 4, 2021 start to January 18, 2021 start. What's interesting in their announcement is that they didn't distinguish between low-risk and high-risk. Swimming is on the 18th, I'm to assume that basketball, wrestling, and cheer may be on as well because they just said winter sports. We will monitor that.

Jody - When it comes to sports, I have a really hard time with them delaying the start when we know there's no school spread, colleges are playing basketball, there's swimming. Professional athletes are doing all of those sports, and we keep pushing this off on our kids.

Pat - Yeah.

Jody - It's frustrating.

Pat - I can only tell you what is reported to by the state. I do know that there is significantly more testing in the college and professional level.

Jody - But we had fall sports, I know it was outside.

Bob - Do they give a reason for this? Why? They just tell you what it is?

Pat - Just because of viral spread across the state.

Bob - It's a blanket, due to COVID.

Erik - I think they don't want to make the decision that someone might say wrestling or basketball is high-risk, but we can do swimming because it's low-risk. What they're doing is clustering everybody together instead of looking at it from the standpoint of whether one is truly more relative to the other, in regards to impact.

Bob - I think it is Section 6 as a whole.

Pat - Yeah. It did come right out of NYS. I did put out another opportunity for sign-up. We only have 7 boys and 10 girls for swimming. Last year, I think we had 30 girls, 15 boys. Parents are kind of waiting, so another message went out today. The N-O League hasn't had any kind of consistent decision on what to do with modified. Again, I'll keep you updated. Last thing, we have put in for a purchase order through Ronco for approximately \$13k to upgrade our PA system within the pool. The equipment was never really properly fitted for that area to begin with, and it just deteriorated over time. We're waiting for a proposal through Suburban Electric, who's one of our contractors through the capital project, to then incorporate the insulation through the capital project. I just don't have a timeline yet. That was a very long superintendent's report.

Jim - There is a lot to cover and a lot of important decisions given the state of the pandemic. Thank you very much. Item #5 is Minutes. Our recommended action is that the Akron Central School Board of Education hereby approve the meeting minutes from November 18, 2020 and December 2, 2020. Consent items #5A & 5B.

Debbie - Moved.

Jody - Second.

Jim - Any questions or comments on these minutes?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Thank you. Item #6 Personnel Instructional. Our recommended action is that the Akron Central School Board of Education upon the recommendation of Patrick D. McCabe, Superintendent of Schools, does hereby approve the following Instructional items, consent #6A-6D.

Bob - Moved.

Jody - Second.

Jim - Questions or comments?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Thank you. Item #7 Personnel Non-Instructional. Our recommended action is that the Akron Central School Board of Education upon the recommendation of Patrick D. McCabe, Superintendent of Schools, does hereby approve the following non-instructional items, consent #7A-7G.

Heather - Moved.

Erik - Second.

Jim - Questions or comments? Mr. McCabe, Mr. Kenline, who is not here today called me earlier to question an item. Were you able to connect with him? I believe that's the change we made in the agenda, correct?

Roxanne - Yes, we removed an item, and yes I talked to Mr. Kenline.

Jim - Ok, thank you. I just wanted to confirm that.

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Thank you. Item #8 District Items. Our recommended action is that the Akron Central School Board of Education upon the recommendation of Patrick D. McCabe, Superintendent of Schools, does hereby approve the following district items, consent #8A-8C.

Bob - Moved.

Debbie - Second.

Jim - Questions or comments on these items?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Thank you. Item #9 Special Education. Our recommended action is that the Akron Central School Board of Education upon the recommendation of Patrick D. McCabe, Superintendent of Schools, does hereby approve the following special education items, consent 9A-9B.

Heather - Moved.

Debbie - Second.

Jim - Questions or comments?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Thank you. Item #10 are the financial reports from September, October, and November of 2020. Our recommended action is that the Akron Central School Board of Education approve the financial reports for September, October, and November 2020 as submitted by District Treasurer, Susan Brewer.

Jody - Moved.

Debbie - Second.

Jim - Are there any questions on these reports?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Thank you. Item #11 School Board Correspondence. Thursday, January 7, 2021 is the Budget and Finance Team at Erie 1 BOCES from 6:30-8:30pm. Thursday, January 14, 2021 is the Delegate Assembly at Erie 1 BOCES from 6:30-8:30pm. Monday, February 1, 2021 is Investigation in the Aids of Geosocial Data via Zoom from 6:30-7:30pm. See Mrs. Rebmann if you want to register. Thursday, January 21, 2021 is the Legislative Team at Erie 1 BOCES from 6:30-8:30pm. I have not seen any indication from BOCES whether or not those meetings will be remote or in-person. I'm assuming if things don't change with the zones, they will be remote, as they were with the last round of meetings. Upcoming dates. Wednesday, January 13, 2021 is our Board of Education Workshop Business Meeting, location to be determined, but I'm assuming we'll continue to be in this high school with the public invited via Zoom at 7pm. Item #13 Hearing of

Individuals and Delegations for Non-agenda Items. I'm assuming there's no input from the public. Board discussion? Anyone have anything they would like to add? I do have one item. You may have seen that Joe O'Malley is stepping down as associate director because she's been appointed to serve on the Tonawanda Board. I just want to thank her for her service. She has been a fantastic advocate, not only for local school districts, but also in the state of New York and her service directly to the Kenmore Board is appreciated. I just wanted to recognize her service to education. Item #14 Executive Session. We do have a need to go into Executive Session for negotiations. If I could have a motion please?

Heather - Moved.

Erik - Second.

Jim - Any questions or comments?

Roxanne - Motion carried.

Jim - Alright, we are in Executive Session at 8:20pm. We do not intend to conduct any business after we conduct Executive Session. I wish to thank the public for joining us tonight. Thank you very much.