

MORTON UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

November 17, 2020

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of Morton Unit School District 709 held November 17, 2020, at the Morton Education and Administration Center.

REGULAR MEETING

Call to Order and Roll Call –

President Shad Beaty called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Members present: Dr. Shad Beaty, Mr. Jeff Schmidgall, Mr. Kevin Austin,
Mr. Tim Braker, Dr. David Cross, Mr. Tom Neeley. Mr. Bart Rinckenberger

Reports –

Administrative –

Superintendent's Report –

Dr. Hill reported that:

- schools are not impacted by the Tier 3 mitigations going into effect on November 20.
- the District does not have plans to take a pause from in-person learning before or after the holidays.
- current numbers as of today – 6 staff positive out of approximately 400; 12 students positive out of 2,850. Currently quarantining 270 students, which means 90% of students are in school. Quarantining of healthy, but possibly exposed staff and students has kept the spread of the virus under control. He credited Dr. Smock and the principals for going over and above to keep everyone as safe as possible.
- plans are underway for an open house at MJHS in mid-January. Details will be announced soon.
- two indicators were added to the District Dashboard based on the desired outcomes for the 2020-2021 school year.
 - Safe classrooms, successful outcomes academic indicators
 - Safe classrooms, successful outcomes climate indicators

SAT Results –

Dr. Teater reviewed results of the SAT test that was given to all seniors this fall. The test was postponed last spring due to COVID-19. He pointed out there was much lower state and total participation compared to the number of students that participated at MHS.

GROUP	2020	2019	2018
MORTON	199	221	219
ILLINOIS	35,270	138,984	137,863
TOTAL TESTED	150,255	960,054	432,341

Morton's mean score was down slightly, but given the students were participating in remote learning last spring, administrators are pleased with the outcomes.

President's Report –

Dr. Beaty commended Dr. Hill and Dr. Smock for their transparency on communicating COVID-19 numbers and making decisions to safely educate our children. One of the safest places for children to be is in the classroom. The board is committed to moving forward with the current plans unless something unforeseen changes.

Dr. Hill added there are other districts in the area continuing with in-person learning. Some districts are having staffing issues due to quarantines. Currently, Morton has a sufficient number of substitutes, and will add more as they become available.

Mr. Rinkenberger commended teachers for keeping the standards high and not using the excuse of the virus to lessen their expectations of students.

Discussion Items –

IHSA Basketball Participation –

Dr. Hill reported that the IHSA has suspended its decision for winter sports until November 19. Athletic Director Scott Jones reviewed winter sports guidelines if basketball were to be allowed. He noted that MHS winter athletic programs have been adhering to the IHSA guidelines during their offseason workouts. As of November 16, the basketball programs have been conducting basketball activities following the IDPH Level 1 mitigation standards, as set by the IHSA. No official tryouts or practices will take place until additional guidance is provided by the IHSA and MCUSD 709 Board of Education. Mr. Jones expects the IHSA to push back the season, probably to January with Tier 3 mitigations.

Board members stated their stance on the issue.

Dr. Beaty – is disappointed in today's decision by the Governor, forcing athletes to go outside of the state to compete. Not allowing sports and activities is not good for our children's mental health. He is in favor of allowing students to play. He challenged the Board and the administrative team to get creative in finding ways for physical activity. Mr. Rinkenberger – this will continue until people say "no more." It is time to do that. He agrees to let them play.

Mr. Neeley – school boards asked the Governor for local control and so far have had it as far as determining between in-person, remote, or blended learning. We need to continue

to push the envelope of local control to keep students in school safely and allow sports participation.

Mr. Austin – agrees to let them play and would encourage scrimmage games if nothing else.

Mr. Schmidgall – feels badly for athletes that train year round for their sport. We should push forward as far as we legally are able.

Mr. Braker – agrees we continue to push the envelope.

Action Item -

Action on Resolution to Authorize Transfer of Funds from Working Cash Fund to Bond and Interest Fund and Partial Abatement of the Working Cash Fund –

In order to partially abate the bond levy, money must first be transferred from our working cash fund to ensure the payment. This action ensures the funds are available from the working cash fund to the bond and interest fund. This needs to be approved prior to approval of Action Item B. Board members first discussed Action Item B.

Action on Resolution to Partially Abate Bond Levy –

At the November 3rd Board of Education meeting, the Board approved a levy utilizing .46 CPI as opposed to the full CPI of 2.3 in recognition of the potential impact of COVID-19 on the taxpayers. Another option in recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on taxpayers is to abate the bond levy by the additional amount being taxed through utilizing the 2.3% CPI. The total dollars abated would be \$700,000 and the abatement process would not permanently reduce the general levy dollars available to the district in the future. Dr. Hill explained that doing this would provide tax relief for the upcoming year and would preserve the levy rate.

Mr. Schmidgall questioned the timing and why this option was not considered in earlier discussions. Dr. Hill explained solutions to provide relief for all taxpayers were being researched while looking out for the long-term interests of the district. Mr. Schmidgall feels the normal process was not followed and he is bothered from a procedural standpoint. Dr. Beaty added there was a significant financial concern for the district following the last meeting. This is an alternative means to offer tax relief. Mr. Braker agreed with Mr. Schmidgall that the timing is perplexing.

Dr. Beaty noted that abatement is temporary. Levy reduction is permanent and compounds over time. This will prevent cutting into reserves. The Board wants to be able to add STEM classrooms and continue to make other improvements. We do not want to get to the point of cutting staff that was hired for Morton Moving Forward.

Mr. Austin noted this is a more creative option he was hoping to see. He suggested the Board still needs to prioritize facility work planned for this summer. Cutting back on what projects are done this summer will help support the taxpayers as well.

Mr. Schmidgall replied that a strawman is being built. The budget numbers do not back up the strawman. The numbers look better this year than in the last four years. Dr. Hill responded that we need to look to the future past the next two years.

While appreciating Mr. Schmidgall's passion, Mr. Neeley added that an attempt is being made to solve a problem. To his knowledge, there is no other PTELL district that has not levied to the maximum allowed. We would be doing a disservice to the students and the community not to. This proposal is being fiscally responsible and thinking of the taxpayers.

Motion by Mr. Neeley, second by Mr. Austin, that the Board of Education approve the Resolution to authorize transfer of funds from the working cash fund to the bond and interest fund and partial abatement of the working cash fund.

Roll Call: Yea 4 Nay 3 (Braker, Rinkenberger, Schmidgall)

Motion carried.

Motion by Mr. Neeley, second by Mr. Austin, that the Board of Education approve the Resolution for the partial abatement of taxes as presented and amend the tentative levy to include the maximum extension increase of the CPI rate of 2.3%.

Roll Call: Yea 4 Nay 3 (Braker, Rinkenberger, Schmidgall)

Motion carried.

Discussion Item –

In light of new information regarding the state budget, the Board discussed approved work going forward. At the November 3rd meeting, the board approved going out for bids for \$1.3 million for various projects. Dr. Hill asked the board members if they want to move forward with the original plans knowing there will be less revenue. Mr. Austin suggested that just roofs be done this summer. Mr. Neeley asked if input from the Leadership team could be given before making a final decision. Dr. Cross noted he agreed to the abatement hoping that STEM labs could be completed this summer. The Board decided to prioritize targeted projects at the December 8th meeting.

Consent Agenda –

Motion by Mr. Schmidgall, second by Dr. Cross, that the Consent Agenda be approved as presented:

Approve Personnel Report

Approve September Treasurer's Report

Approve Minutes of the November 3, 2020, Committee of the Whole Facilities Meeting; the November 3, 2020, Regular Meeting; and the November 3, 2020, Regular Meeting Closed Session.

Approve Bills and Payroll

	Bills 11-6-20
Ed. Fund	\$76,236.08
Bldg. Fund	537,469.39
Trans. Fund	12,046.68
TORT	198.00

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried.

Closed Session -

Motion by Dr. Cross, second by Mr. Schmidgall, that the Board of Education enter into closed session for discussion of Personnel and Purchase/Sale of Property (**5ILCS 120/2 115 ILCS 5/18**)

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried. The board entered closed session at 8:04 p.m.

Motion by Mr. Austin, second by Dr. Cross, that the Board of Education return to regular session.

Roll Call: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried. The board returned to regular session at 8:32 p.m.

Adjournment -

Motion by Mr. Rinkenberger, second by Mr. Austin, that the meeting be adjourned.

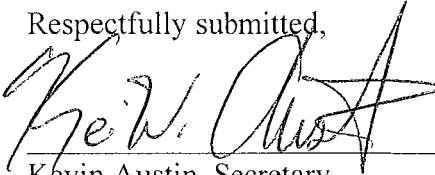
Voice Vote: Yea 7 Nay 0

Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

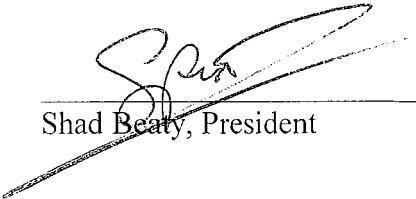
Recorded by,



Respectfully submitted,



Kevin Austin, Secretary



Shad Beaty, President