

Turquoise Trail Charter School  
Governance Council Special Meeting Minutes  
February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

**Members Present:** Matt Pahl, Alejandra Rodriguez, Hannah Mazur, Victoria Schweizer, Wendy Flood, Ruth Center, Sammi Triolo, Amber Romero

**Members Not Present:** Floyd Trujillo

**Non-voting Members Present:** Chris Eide, Miranda Gonzales, Christie Berg, Harry Phillips, Leticia Garcia, Maya Mirabal

**Also Present:** Francesca Margaritondo, Tammie Padilla, Sonya Jacobs, Mark Kolokoff, Amy Oler, Kendall Perez, Mary Ellen Dannenberg, Samantha Brown, Roberta Cole, Kaylyn Tiedeman, Deborah Busemeyer, Rasanjana Bhandari, Nikki Doles, Nadine Roybal, Toeni Tillman, Melissa Martinez, Karen Weigle (arrives at 6:04pm), Jim Williamson (arrives at 6:05pm).

**I. Call to Order – Open Session 5:35pm.** It was determined there was a quorum. Meeting called to order.

**A. Roll Call** – Introductions made.

**B. Approval of Agenda:** Motion made by Hannah Mazur to approve the agenda as is and seconded by Alejandra Rodriguez. Roll Call Vote: Sammi Triolo – Aye, Alejandra Rodriguez – Aye, Hannah Mazur - Aye, Ruth Center – Aye. Wendy Flood – Aye, Matt Pahl - Aye, Amber Romero – Aye. The secretary, Victoria Schweizer - Aye. Passed 8 – 0.

**II. Discussion** – School Re-opening: Chris Eide explains to the board why he requested this meeting. He goes over what happened at the school this past week after the Governor’s announcement. The very next day a poll was presented to the staff, asking very generally their feelings on returning to school. 87% of the staff voted in the negative area of this poll. The leadership committee convened later that day after they’d met with their teams to get a more informative feedback from them. 2 primary issues were found – 1, reliable access to the vaccine and 2, time to prepare for all of the educational and operational complexities. We had a Gathering of the Pack (GTP) the next day and hosted a town hall style zoom meeting which ended having a much larger demand than we expected. Asked questions, listened and took notes. The next day, the admin team listened to everything that they heard individually. At GTP we heard about the same thing as from the staff. We took the same poll at GTP and the results were not quite as much in the negative (only 54%). We’d anticipated a stronger divide and a need to avoid pitting parents and families against the

staff. We asked how the community felt about the need for the vaccine to be made available to the staff, and for more time to prepare. They were very understanding of that. They also wanted to make sure the most vulnerable could get in person when they could not before. Hearing the main 2 themes, a proposal was created for the board.

1 – Over the next several days, we would like to come up with a list of our students who are most vulnerable. Not only the most obvious, but also those who are falling behind. The list is the highest priority based on this research made by the Principals and Ms. Garcia.

2 – the staff needs reliable access to the vaccine. We know the health providers are doing an amazing job. However, we do need to know reliably and predictably when school staff can get a vaccine.

Therefore, we believe that producing a petition with our community that will also have support from other school communities, we hope to gain access to reliable predictable vaccines sooner to be able to return sooner feeling safer. We all want to return; we just want to feel safe. If we time getting the vaccine, the second and the wait period for effectiveness, we will have enough time to prepare for a return to school. We want to unify the community in one voice of saying: “help make us safe so we can come back”. There is already some media coverage on some of this to this very effect – union leaders, community leaders and in Colorado the Governor has changed the prioritization of teachers. We know we lack an understanding of all of the complexities and we are not commenting on how they can improve on that; we are simply commenting on our desire to return to school and how we can safely do so.

What level of data do we have from the poll? We just did a simple anonymous one at GTP. It is not very high level.

Question: Could the poll be redone to get more information? Maybe with different wording? Maybe we should be educating the community a bit more before we take a poll? The wording should have less emotions in it.

Answer: We had around 200 people in this meeting which is more participation than we’ve had in a while and our past surveys have not been as well responded to either. We do believe this was the biggest number of families we were going to hear from. We wanted to gauge the emotion from the teachers because they do know how safe it is at the school. That being said, we can definitely improve on the wording going forward.

Proposal – a second poll with more information for the community and better wording.

Question: What is in addition to what we've already done in regards to sanitation and ventilation? Is there more operationally that needs to be done?

Answer: In the main we are fine. The additional step is a visit from the fire marshal. The PED claims it would take about 2 weeks to pass clearance with the fire marshal.

Question: if there are too many students that want to come in? are we going to hire more teachers, move teachers around? What does this look like?

Answer: We are not sure yet. We would be meeting with teachers and staff before we determine whether that is something that we could actually do and would do more in addressing the strategy around that action.

Another poll is a good idea that is not anonymous as well as a review of what resources we have available for this.

What are we willing to do and what is going to be the best thing going forward? SFPS is already addressing a first wave of students with IEPs and parents need to commit. Their second wave will come after the number of spots is established.

Question: The vaccine takes 4 weeks to be effective how much time will the students realistically have in school?

Answer: That depends on when we get the vaccine. If we get it now, they might be back by mid-March which would be good for many. We also need to look at summer school. If we get this going now it'll make the chances of live summer school better.

Question: How many teachers are willing to come back without a vaccine?

Answer: We are not sure about teachers, but the poll showed 9 individuals.

Question: What kind of preparation are you talking about?

Answer: We have built and scrapped plans several times for operational, but the teachers will also need time to come in and prepare – 2 – 4 weeks would be enough.

Question: When exactly would this actually start?

Answer: Not until we have reliable and predictable access to the vaccine. We would need to think about what the hybrid model or models would

look like and how we would manage that. But not until we know for sure we can do this in earnest.

Question: The data is showing that being in school is safer than anywhere else. Why do teachers want to have the vaccine?

Answer: Our governor has been saying: stay home, stay safe; there is too much fear now and we want the teachers to feel safe.

A concern is for many years NM has been ranked 50<sup>th</sup> in the US on an educational scale and now we're falling even further behind. We now have an opportunity to start steps towards in person/hybrid learning. However, if we don't start soon, we will be at more of a disadvantage. Health Care workers have gone a long time without vaccines. Also what was the end game if a vaccine were not in sight? We do need to know how to prepare and how to move through it. We would love to see those who want a vaccine to be able to get it immediately, but we need to put the children first.

We need to take the teachers' concerns seriously and support them because they are the ones providing the service. We need to ask them to see if there is something we can do to make them feel safer in the building and should not force them into doing something that could make them feel uncomfortable.

We should not fall too much behind, but it comes down to are our teachers willing to come into a building with the measures that have been great as far as sanitation, ventilation and pods, traffic ... it proved to work. With all of these measures. Then we need to ask parents if they would be willing to have their child come in.

We all want our lives to go back to 'normal' which is not an option right now. Experiences of hybrid did not provide as much stability as was expected. Many schools started in hybrid, and then closed. Due to the COVID protocols, they had to close grade levels due to symptoms, then staffing became a problem. What we want is not on the table right now. With the protocols, this will not provide the stability that people are looking for.

If we could modify a feedback instrument for families and staff. We should prioritize students who are behind, and if we have a feedback mechanism from both families and staff we can make these results evolve. We will also be able to watch other schools as they open up and learn from them.

Maybe something done on a weekly basis as the emotions and feelings on the situation evolves.

We should not ignore the teachers' initial feelings. The proposal is a good first step. However concurrently to this plan, we should start the consecutive waves of how the staff changes in their first impression. Everybody should understand that everybody wants teachers to be vaccinated. Nobody doesn't want them to be, but the priorities that the Governor has set, are to vaccinate first responders, health care workers, and people 75 years and older. Now, people with underlying conditions can come in. There are places who opened incorrectly, however every entity receives a very finite amount of vaccines. If they choose to vaccinate the teachers, others who might need it more might not receive it. Certain people would be jeopardizing the clinic or health center they work for if they sign a petition.

It doesn't make sense to prioritize the teachers when the school is so safe and others need their prioritizing.

Shall we split the proposal or ask for amendments?

We are going to open a public forum for those who would like to speak to the board.

Jim Williamson: has 2 sons in 7<sup>th</sup> grade – wants to thank the staff for all they have done in the virtual environment. But believes sons would do better at school. Maybe they could all wear masks to help elevate the safety.

Maya Mirabal, MS Teacher – What two or three plans do we need to look at? Where do we go forward? This will become a push from the federal government. We need to decide which direction we would like to go moving forward.

Leticia Garcia, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher – More teachers would be on board if we could get an actual plan of how things would look. Maybe students would have shields, or tables instead of desks. If they have a better idea of what it'll look like, they might be more amenable to the plan. We only have a little bit of experience from a few classes. We don't know how that would look if everyone came back. We need a plan before being asked who wants to come back. Give them a picture and be willing to change it if things don't work.

Melissa Martinez, Kindergarten Teacher – Same as Leticia Garcia. Also for those parents who don't know. They might be more open if they have an

idea of what it would look like. That would also be better than asking them what would work for them.

Roberta Cole, Staff Member – The council really needs to understand that ES is easier to contain than MS. MS has hormones, attitudes, switching classes ... If MS had a really good plan on how to have their classes with switching and kids, it would be safer for them to come back.

Public forum is closed.

Sammi Triolo – We need to have a plan, for learning, for safety, and the resources to support said plan. The poll would help find the resources. And we need a plan for if someone gets sick. The implementation needs to be guided but what is feasible and practical.

Hannah Mazur – It is very difficult to declare what something is going to look like and then if it doesn't work, there could be a greater backlash. Maybe there should be a proposal for a start for the most vulnerable students. Then a plan needs to be created.

We need to add a timeline to this.

Chris Eide responds to the board – some of the teachers have agreed that a safety campaign to assure the safety of the building, that would help them be willing to come in.

The communication with staff is necessary. We are going back and it is before the fall. We have too many students that we cannot fail.

Request – another proposal for the board for next Monday needs to be made instead of voting tonight.

Chris Eide requests that we do polling which would require benchmarks to be hit for the plan to make sense. We have had instances of families dropping off students who were exposed and did not tell us, just dropped them off. The trust is broken because of this. Just to show the level of complexity of what we are dealing with.

**III. \*VOTE – Plan Regarding Re-opening** – Chris Eide requests the first component of the plan be removed. The second piece may be mutually exclusive – the petition. He requests a conversation around the first 2 points: reliable and predictable. We've been given too many different dates about when to expect the vaccine that makes planning too difficult. We don't want to jump over anyone in need.

There are CDC guidelines about thresholds for schools. The schools are particularly safe when strict guidelines are kept in the community. If we

are running a tight ship, that is especially when our schools are staying the safest. Our kids are struggling the most.

What are we saying is reliable – communication of when vaccines will truly be available? Tell us when we are going to get the vaccines and please hold to the timeline.

We are not asking for anything new.

Are we going to continue with the word “petition”? Yes, this might be able to help the health care community. Also this could really help bring the community together as something to unite on. We need a school that will properly serve our kids. We need to at least raise awareness of the issue if nothing else.

Motion made by Alejandra Rodriguez to support the petition as amended and seconded by Hannah Mazur. Roll Call Vote: Sammi Triolo – Aye, Alejandra Rodriguez – Aye, Hannah Mazur – Aye, Ruth Center - Nay, Wendy Flood – Aye, Matt Pahl – Aye, Amber Romero – Nay, the Secretary, Victoria Schweizer – Aye. Passed 6 – 2.

Options for the various plans involved in re-opening and keeping the community safe. Also polling and how it would impact the return to school plans.

Chris Eide – a tiered plan starting with all teachers in the building – here’s the model, then 75%, 50% and finally 25%.

Tabling the second half of the plan and requesting the head administrator come back at his earliest convenience with a plan, no later than Monday.

Motion by Sammi Triolo, seconded by Hannah Mazur to table and reconvene no later than next Monday with a new plan. Sammi Triolo – Aye, Alejandra Rodriguez – Aye, Hannah Mazur – Aye, Ruth Center – Aye, Wendy Flood – Aye, Matt Pahl – Aye, Amber Romero – Aye, the Secretary, Victoria Schweizer – Aye. Passed 8 – 0.

**IV. Adjournment of Regular Session** – Motion made by Amber Romero to adjourn the special session and seconded by Alejandra Rodriguez. Roll Call vote: Sammi Triolo – Aye, Alejandra Rodriguez – Aye, Hannah Mazur – Aye, Ruth Center – Aye, Wendy Flood – Aye, Matt Pahl – Aye, Amber Romero – Aye, the Secretary, Victoria Schweizer – Aye. Passed 8 – 0. Adjourned: 7:30pm.