



## Board Meeting Minutes

August 11, 2020 – 3:30pm

The mission of Grand Peak Academy is to develop students of great character, who are culturally aware, accepting of diversity, appreciators of history, arts, mathematics, and sciences, and are prepared to meet the challenges of the world today. We value parental partnership through direct involvement in classroom and school activities and community stewardship through our support of local charities and hosting of community events.

The Board shall use the Mission and the Plan for Success (Academic Success, Economic Sustainability and Character Growth) as the filter for all decision making.

1. **Call to Order** (3:38pm) –
2. **Roll Call** (3:39pm) – Chris Dempsey (President), Brandon Henry (Vice President), Steven Teague (Secretary), Jen Reishus (Treasurer), Scott Hunter (Principal), Nicole Parker (Assistant Principal), Melissa Maldonado (Assistant Principal), Valerie O'Brien (Business Manager), Marcia Billingsley (Registrar)
3. **Approval of August 11, 2020 Board Agenda** (3:40pm) – Brandon motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Stephen seconded the motion. Motion passes 4-0
4. **Approval of August 4, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes** (3:40pm) – Brandon motioned to approve the meeting minutes as presented. Steven seconded. Motion passes 4-0
5. **Comments from the Public** (3:41pm) – Chris Dempsey read a statement on behalf of the board. No other comments
6. **Discussion Items**
  - a. **Return to School Plan** (3:48pm) – Chris reviewed that D49 announced last night that they have shifted their Return to Learn plan to begin with all students online starting August 17<sup>th</sup>. Based on a staff survey sent out over the weekend, 53% of staff would like us to follow D49's Return to Learn plan, 32% of staff would like us to follow our original plan of students in all grades returning to the building on Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, and 15% of staff would like us to come up with a new plan. The administration team spent the day working on plans and reaching out to the district and were able to confirm that we can have security, nutrition, SPED, Health and subs if we were to open in person learning prior to the rest of the district. However, busing would not be available. Steven noted that while subs are supported, we are not clear exactly how many subs are planning to return to subbing for this year given the pandemic. Therefore, it may be hard to have subs actually pick up shifts. Immediately following the District announcement, our Board asked the administration to assess and determine options going forward. It was noted that the District attended a meeting with the county health dept and other area superintendents just prior to making their announcement. At that meeting the county supplied data showing that the rolling average of cases over 14 days has been in the "very high" level since July 11<sup>th</sup>. They cautioned that even though that number is turning in the right direction, it is still remains high. Test positivity is higher than recommended, at or above the recommended 5% since July 1. Hospitalization and death rates are the most well controlled of the metrics. However, we are playing with people's lives. Children are not as routinely the carriers; however we do have to worry about the adult staff. The goal post changes so much that it may seem that we are not doing anything and are not proactive, however the staff has spent a considerable amount of time working with the

data and guidance. Staff will be trained tomorrow on how to handle COVID cases. In response we have two options, Option A follow the district. Option B GPA Staggered Start Plan, begins Aug 17<sup>th</sup> for 2 weeks k-2 will be in the building with 3-8 online. Aug 31 would transition to k-5 in person and 6-8 online only. The plan for grades 6-8 to return to in person is tbd based on data. Chris reminded us that right now parents are struggling to figure out how to get their kids care figured out, however, it is possible we could have rolling quarantine disruptions. We feel the more responsible plan is to have k-2 in the building to teach the youngest how to handle online training if the school is to close or have quarantine closures down the road. It also gives staff time to learn what we need to fix as we go forward and as we increase the number of students in the building. In either case, everybody that has chosen online will not be affected, and will start online from the beginning. This option was an attempt to meet in the middle and to focus on younger learners that need to know how to go online. If we open too soon this could all be a moot point and we could all be home soon anyway. There are roughly 300 students in K-2, with 30% of those being online we are able to socially distance more.

**Online questions – Parent said thank you for considering a compromise. She noted that the kids in the preschool are so happy to be in school. Will we still have the same teachers if we end up following the district and moving the entire school to online? Mr. Hunter responded that it should be mostly the same.**

**Parent asked if we expect any changes to the calendar going forward. Mr Hunter responded that we do not expect this to change the calendar at this time as we will probably use streaming school for snow days to make up the time.**

Chris commented that the staff are just as important in this decision as anybody. Some parents have reached out in distain. We have not taken this decision lightly. Our employees need to be valued and supported. Their views need to be taken into consideration. Brandon commented that either way there is not really a win. We are in a really tough position. If we decide to go a different route we are saying that the professionals that have worked on the district plan and the research that went into it is not important and could impact us down the road. We partner so well with the district, making a move against what they are doing could cause issues. Brandon is supportive of personal responsibility. If staff, admin and parents all feel we are ready, then he does not want to stop that. However, any decision we make is difficult. This is not an easy and light decision. Please show some grace and understanding. It did cause a lot of concern for peoples' safety and health. Chris commented that we cannot contain our bubble. There is always a large opportunity to spread illness. We are not here to consider peoples feelings on COVID, we are here to consider how to move forward with keeping our students and staff healthy.

Teacher said Thank you to the board, the staff appreciates being asked and considered. As a teacher, they don't want to die. They don't want to get sick. They just want a decision to move forward. Any decision that is made, the staff will appreciate. Are we prepared as a school to have kids in the building? There hasn't been COVID training yet, we do not have stickers on the floor, how should classrooms be handled. There are a lot of logistic things to be fully prepared to be in school that are still outstanding. If we start in person and have to close in a couple of weeks teachers would need to teach from home. None of the teachers want to do that, they want to teach from the building. Chris commented that we did have a decision three weeks ago, just more information came up that needed to be considered. Teacher felt that nobody really asked the teachers what they wanted till last Saturday. The staff said go with the district, but here we are still trying to decide. Scott commented that ELCPH has made a decision that it does not look

safe for schools to go back right now. He is concerned that he does not feel like we have enough context to analyze the data enough to make a decision. Knowing that the district met with ELPC for probably 2 hours yesterday before the announcement came, he has a hard time thinking that decision making was now thorough and not well thought out. Therefore he leans more towards Plan A to follow the district.

Teacher comment: Its not that teachers aren't willing to risk being here, there is just a lot of unknown with kids coming in the building on Monday. We have some direction on lunch and recess but there has not been a lot of preparation for in person learning which is where a lot of the teacher stress has steamed from.

Teacher comment: Mother of three with 2 D49 students at home that are non GPA and will need to somehow manage having those kids at home online while teaching in class.

Teacher comment: The vote the teachers gave this weekend did not include the option we are considering now. This is a substantial change that would have been nice to give feedback on. However, her vote was to follow the district and she would stay with that vote.

Chris apologized for the miscommunication. We are here now and are ready to make the decision. Brandon commented that for the people online it was difficult to hear at the last meeting. Parent commented that an article was posted by the CDC that more people have died by suicide than COVID. As related to children, germs are part of the deal, if a teacher is concerned about germs they should re-evaluate if this is the best job for them. We need to look at how this disease impacts children.

Parent: Echos that this job is extremely difficult and its really hard to balance the right thing to do for our students and teachers. One solution, is there a process we can implement with waivers to accept personal responsibility, such as a pledge to continue social distancing outside of schools to promise not to bring it in. Feels its so important for kids to be back in school. Brandon commented that we did consult with our attorney about liability. There is a question about morality and personal responsibility. It would be a nice social agreement for students and parents but there is nothing really enforceable. It is a nice gesture though.

## **7. Action Items**

- a. **Return to School Plan (4:33pm)** – Chris reminded the board that we have option A or Option B to vote on. Steven motioned to vote on the item at hand. Brandon seconded the motion. Brandon asked for clarification. Scott feels comfortable with his own safety but he is concerned about going against the district and county. Brandon noted that his own children will be online so it does not impact the decision he has already made for his children. Chris said it bothers him that the staff does not feel prepared. He thought they were and he apologizes that we are not. Jen said it is very important to her that everybody concerns are heard and that if we are not prepared we certainly need to take that into consideration as well. Motion passes 3-1 with k-2 will be in person beginning August 17th.

8. **Board Member Communication (4:42pm)** – None

9. **Other Business (3:40pm)** – None

10. **Adjournment (3:41pm)** –