

I. Call to Order

Call to Order: Chairman Riedel

Present: District 1 – Joe Arnold
District 2 – Malissa Morgan
District 3 – Melisa Jahner, Vice Chairman
District 4 – Amanda Riedel, Chairman
District 5 – Jill Holcomb

Ken Kenworthy, Superintendent of Schools
Tom Conely, School Board Attorney

Invocation: Superintendent Ken Kenworthy
Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Chairman Riedel

II. Opening Items

Washington, DC Field Trip - Yearling Middle School

Superintendent Kenworthy welcomed Board members and guests. Mr. Kenworthy stated that the Emergency Meeting was called as the Washington, DC field trip is scheduled to leave in about twelve hours and did not want to wait until after the 6:00 p.m. Board meeting to make a decision and then notify parents, students and staff. The purpose of the deeper conversation is information heard on a conference call at 2:00 today with the Superintendents Association. It was shared that the Governor announced a public health State of Emergency. The Commissioner strongly recommended no out of state travel as it relates to airplanes. He did not announce a travel ban, but a strong recommendation against air travel. He also announced that the K-12 population is the least vulnerable and a low risk for the virus. At this time, no one under the age of 27 has had the virus.

There are 44 students, staff and chaperones scheduled to attend the field trip. Student cost is \$1337, adult chaperones slightly more.

Mr. Kenworthy stated that he is looking for direction from the Board. Board Policy allows for this emergency meeting.

Flamingo Tours has been contacted and said they understand the predicament and that the governor declared a state of emergency, but the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has not issued a travel ban. The Tour group abides by the guidance of the CDC. Flamingo Tours will not offer a refund.

Mr. Kenworthy offered a few ideas:

- Do nothing and the trip goes on as planned. Again, the age group is low risk and least vulnerable population.
- The District may cancel future trips.
- The District may ask parents/guardians to sign waivers.
- The trip goes on with an opt-out provision. If they choose not to go, it is nonrefundable.
- Cancel the trip altogether.
- Would the Board consider mitigating the cost of the trip, approximately \$54,000?

Mr. Kenworthy asked the Board to select a scenario or provide another one. Member Arnold stated that there are concerns and the most at risk are the elderly and immunocompromised. He stated that the District should make the parents aware of the concerns and let them make the decision.

Vice Chairperson Jahner stated that she likes Mr. Arnold's idea and would also like to have parents sign a waiver. Member Holcomb said that she agrees with the comments, but will chaperones feel safe and still agree to go. She stated that the District should not prohibit the trip and parents should sign a waiver. Ms. Holcomb also supported the opt-out and a refund for parents, so the cost isn't the issue in signing a waiver.

Member Morgan agreed that it is the parent's choice. She also agreed with the opt-out provision and the reimbursement of expenses. The virus does not affect the younger population but those with underlying conditions. The underlying conditions could also affect chaperones. The Commissioner of Education did not ban travel but future field trips should be looked at.

Superintendent Kenworthy stated that there are currently 19 cases of the virus between Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC.

Megan Williamson, teacher at YMS and field trip sponsor, met with the 8th graders attending the field trip earlier today to update them on last minute travel plans. Ms. Williamson distributed several hand-outs with information on the virus, student travel and safety to the Board. She announced that Southwest Airlines is doing extra cleaning and putting the safety of children first. Ms. Williamson said speaking as an educator, the students need the experience. The group will be traveling with lots of sanitizer, wipes and will be encouraged to wash with soap and water often.

Chairman Riedel asked if there were any additional comments from the public.

Mr. Kenworthy stated that 1 parent called and 1 parent visited. One parent had reservations, the other parent had two students going on the trip and said if they weren't going, he wanted a refund.

Katrina Cook, teacher at NES, with two students attending the trip, stated that this is a great opportunity. Students could be exposed to the virus while shopping or school. Parents could opt-out if they have concerns. She thanked Board members for their kindness and understanding, but asked that they let the student go.

Member Morgan asked if as a Board they offer a refund for the parents that opt-out and let the parents make the choice.

Minutes of
Okeechobee County School Board Emergency Meeting
March 10, 2020
2:30 p.m.

Motion:	Melisa Jahner made a motion to allow the students to travel to Washington, DC with a provision to opt-out.
Second:	Joe Arnold
Discussion/Additional Information	Superintendent Kenworthy stated that the chaperones should be able to opt-out as well.
Vote:	5-0 In Favor
Motion:	Melisa Jahner made a motion that the students opting out would receive a refund of the portion that they paid, chaperones would receive a full refund.
Second:	Joe Arnold
Vote:	5-0 In Favor

Principal Krakoff, YMS, stated that he is comfortable with what he is hearing and that the parents have a choice. He told the Board that he appreciated their offer to reimburse parents.

All parents will be contacted to attend a meeting tonight at 6:00 p.m. or at 2:30 a.m. when meeting the bus, to sign the waiver in person before the student boards the bus.

There was discussion about future trips. Superintendent Kenworthy stated that everyone should postpone purchasing, or if they have to purchase, purchase travel insurance, although the insurance may not cover all travel interruptions.

Many schools will be traveling to theme parks in the next months. The Board stated that they can continue with their plans.

III. Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, on a motion by Malissa Morgan, seconded by Joe Arnold, the Board adjourned at 3:10 p.m. The next regular meeting of the School Board is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 10, 2020, at 700 S.W. 2nd Avenue, Okeechobee, Florida.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Signature on File _____
Amanda Riedel
Chairman

Signature on File _____
Ken Kenworthy
Superintendent of Schools