



## **Meeting Minutes for Regular Board Meeting on August 31, 2021**

### **Location: Virtus Academy of SC**

2407 Pisgah Road  
Florence, SC 29501

**Time: 6:00 p.m.**

Before the meeting began those in attendance had the opportunity to sign up for public comment.

Board Members in attendance:

Hill, Strickland, Tyner, Ducey, Washington, Atkins and (Coleman Call-in)

Meeting began at 6:02 PM

**Mission Statement:** Virtus Academy will advance student achievement by preparing students for civic and career success through rigorous academics, leadership development and project-based learning.

### **Announcement regarding Public Comment**

1. Welcome/Opening
  - a. Cameron Runyan- superintendent present
  - b. Mr. V- present
2. Dr. Thomas Ducey, Board Chair: Reading of School Mission
3. Roll Call
4. Oath of Office for Elected Board Member
  - a. Confidentiality, Ethics, and Conflict of Interest Declarations
5. Approval of Agenda
  - a. no objections for approval of agenda
6. Public Comment
  - a. Ducey stated the rules of the public comment
7. Steverson requested for public comment
  1. She wanted to discuss COVID since it was in the agenda. She mentioned the "COVID slide" and quarantine. Stated that she feels kids need to be in school. Instead of quarantine, if the student test negative, students are allowed to come back to school. She stated several times that parents and kids have come to her and stated they want to be in school. Stated that there are safety measures that we can do.
  2. Dr. Reyes stated that wanted to echo what Steverson stated. He is the founder and President of Butler Academy and wanted to state that he is here to support Virtus. He stated that he is hoping to collaborate with Virtus. Dr. Reyes read a letter that he sent to his parents. He shared statistics that Butler felt occurred because of Opting out of mask wearing. Stated that Butler had 202 days of face to face learning in the 2020-2021 school year and only 11 cases of COVID. This school year during the Opt-

out they had 12 positive cases the first week.

7. Approval of Minutes
  - a. Regular, July 29<sup>th</sup>
    - i. No changes needed to be made
  - b. Called, August 20<sup>th</sup>
    - i. No changes needed
    - ii. Washington and Tyner moved to approve the minutes
  
8. Charter Institute of Erskine Update (Representatives will be in attendance)
  - a. Runyan with updates
    - i. South Carolina General Assembly- Audit
      1. Erskine showed up to report what an authorizer should be doing
      2. Erskine was able to read report and analyze recommendations. To be effective, efficient, and a better organization, changes will be made. This may be a long process; however changes are happening for this reason.
      3. Runyan wanted to commend Nero about the strides that are being made in Special Education.
      4. Kids First Conference- September 28th and 29th Columbia Convention Center (School Boards are welcomed to come half day on the 28th with school leaders) 1 PM- there is a registration-Ducey has access to link and will share with the other board members
      5. Report Card Data- received that data from traditional schools, carter schools, etc data for state testing and COVID had a large impact on scores. Runyan stated that the scores were not pretty. He stated ways that this generation is being impacted academically and developmentally. Runyan stated the importance of having the kids in the classroom. Stated that this will not last forever- there might be a momentary discomfort.
  
9. COVID Report
  - a. Nero stated that she had Nurse Lee's notebooks
    - i. 24 positive cases
    - ii. unknown number that are being tested
    - iii. 151 students quarantined
      1. Ducey talked about reconstituting the COVID task force in the previous meeting. The following was discussed:
        - a. Nero stated that promoting vaccination- however only available to particular students
        - b. socially distancing challenges with full capacity at school
        - c. encouragement of wearing masks
        - d. staying home when sick
        - e. contact tracking
        - f. what are the days that students need to be quarantined?
        - g. Nero mentioned the possibility of new hire to help with tracking
        - h. encouraging hand washing/ hand sanitizing
        - i. Whole class quarantine- the teachers work the AP to come up with a plan for the class
        - j. If a student is quarantined but not whole class- student will work through Google Classroom but will not get daily instruction

- k. Attendance- with the current policy, if a student must quarantine- a code is put into PowerSchool
- l. Need to discuss what the policy of how many quarantine days are we going to allow per student
- m. Dr. Atkins- stated concerns that student would be able to come back to school until September 24th because he is quarantined.
  - i. Assembling those students who tested negative should not be the policy- suggested to look at options for letting students to come back
  - ii. Students need to be in school and need to be in a safe environment when at school- stated Duke University study. Less than 1% of schools with a mask mandate had an outbreak of COVID. Stated that he is aware of what the laws are- stated that we put into place mask mandate and vaccination mandate
  - iii. Stated that this is regional manner-stated that this area is a COVID center
  - iv. Major health crisis in our lifetime.
  - v. Urged board to take action aggressively- via mask mandate or vaccination mandate

Glenn Hill- Thanked Atkins for thoughts; stated that he has read studies about masks and stated the opposing side- no conclusion about effectiveness of masks.

Hill stated that the mask opt-out is state law and Virtus would not survive without state funding

Dr. Atkins stated the rebuttal of having a control in a study around COVID is unethical- thus not done, ever. Stated that virtual option is not a great option. He stated that the school can't survive without students. COVID is dropping the standards of education. He urged to look at options and look outside the box for options.

Tyner- stated that she felt it would get worse before getting better- encourages staff and administrators to wear masks. Urges that we have to have our funding and cannot mandate masks. Encouraged social distancing including 6ft apart. Start thinking about how to spread out the students more. (Cafeteria, lines, etc.)

Strickland- Doesn't see how we can do 6ft apart in the classrooms or school now that we're back at full capacity. He stated that the classroom sizes will not accommodate 6ft separation.

Ducey- two issues

1. How to keep children safe?
  - a. encourages mask wearing
2. How do we keep our kids in school?

DHEC has mandated that 14 days if exposed

Exceptions

1. if parents do not want to have their children tested-last known contact then wait 10 days and mask for 14 days while at school
2. get tested 5 days after close contact- if negative than can come back to school

Ducey encouraged to update Policy with DHEC guidelines

Ducey stated that does not want to go against state law and authorizer (Erskine)

Ducey cautioned against the mask mandate

Ducey implored parents to use masks and to be creative to allow mask breaks throughout the day.

Discussed the policy last year and how the mask policy worked.

Ducey expressed that he needs teachers and students safe and here. Spoke about children's ability to

adopt and resiliency. Made several pleads about wearing masks.

Ducey voiced that it is a priority to get Nurse Lee extra help manage quarantine time and possible new possibilities.

Dr. Atkins- asked if it was possible to word the policy to state “follow DHEC guidelines”

Glenn Hill- no we cannot because DHEC guidelines states to wear a masks

Dr. Ducey- 4 day mask after 10 day mask wearing is not a mask mandate because parents can opt out of coming back to school after day 10.

Dr. Atkins- if the parent requests a mandate in the school mask for school.

Dr. Ducey wanted to talk about “what ifs”

### COVID Policy Review and Discussion

- adopt DHEC guidelines
  - G. Hill stated this seems to be cycle being quarantined and coming back and then quarantining student
    - SC passed the COVID liability act-
      - as long as DHEC guidelines are followed- we are not liability responsible
      - Mary Allison stated that legal advice would be discussed in executive session
  - “throw the kitchen sink at issue”
    - Ducey reached out to the builder of the school
    - discussed options how to slow the spread
      - ventilation
        - quote requested for getting a window in each classroom
        - builder recommended something than be put into the ventilation system (~\$2,000)
        - Circulation system (~1 Million to equip all the classrooms) however larger spaces like cafe (~\$3,000)
        - HVAC filters are not designed for Hepa filter- require study and firm to come in
        - Want to discover different options for slowing the spread
      - testing
        - Being a testing location is very expensive
        - Dr. Atkins asked if a limited testing would be an option; to prevent quarantine- stated that some families would not be able to pay for test
        - DHEC website- free PCR testing- get QR Code- good for one week-2 days later get results- print results and return to school
        - Tyner mentioned that discussion of testing site was visited before- discussed parents might send students just for free test
      - vaccination
        - only 7th and 8th graders able to get vaccination
      - mask- against the law in SC to mandate mask

10. Monthly Budget Report
  - a. Ducey does not have a monthly budget report because switched new financial advisor
11. Principal's Report
  - a. Staffing Update
    - i. trying to hire permanent subs
    - ii. almost fully staffed with the exception of a few assistants
    - iii. Might have a person in mind to help Nurse Lee
  - b. Enrollment
    - i. 11 spots as of recent
      1. Runyan is working to fill spots
  - c. Board Packets
    - i. proposed have an electronic board packet to be more cost efficient
    - ii. resetting passwords is an option
    - iii. board members would bring their own device
    - iv. Ducey voiced that he would be willing to move to an electronic board packet-however would need internet password and access to the board materials a week before hand
    - v. G. Hill- asked what is the policy on printing
      1. teachers can ask for an increase on copies and get it (Hamilton)
  - d. COVID-19 Policy

Dr. Ducey thanked Runyan and Mr. V for their support and coming

Motion to move to Executive Session Tyner & Strickland- Went to executive session at 7:23PM

#### **12. Executive Session @7:23 PM**

**Return to General Session-Washington made motion to move out of executive session. Dr. Atkinson seconded. Moved out of executive session at 9:17 pm**

13. Action Items, if any, from Executive Session
  - a. Tyner made motion to approve LLI and Fast Bridge as needed. Dr. Atkins seconded. Mr. Strickland suggested hanging on to Fast Bridge Sole Source for audit purposes.
  - b. Mr. Washington made motion to approve adoption of Covid 19 Policy. Dr. Atkins seconded.
14. Good of the Order
15. Next Regular Meeting Date: September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021
16. Adjourn at 9:24