

**MINUTES  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**333 Market Street | 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126**

**May 6, 2020**

The 356<sup>th</sup> special meeting of the State Board of Education was convened virtually on Wednesday, May 6, 2020. Due to public health measures being implemented across the Commonwealth to address COVID-19, members of the Board and members of the public participated in the meeting virtually via webinar and teleconference. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Meeting Act of 1986. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Karen Farmer White.

**Attending:**

James Agras	Sandra Dungee Glenn	Jonathan Peri
Carol Aichele	Anne Griffin	Arynn Pratt
James Barker	Pamela Gunter-Smith	James Roebuck
Nathan Barrett	Jeffrey Keeling	Curt Sonney
Jamie Bracey-Green	Maureen Lally-Green	Ashley Svec
Nicole Carnicella	Wayne Langerholc	Karen Farmer White
		A. Lee Williams

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the March 18, 2020, meeting of the State Board of Education were approved on an **Agras/Dungee Glenn** motion.

**CHAIRPERSON’S REMARKS**

Ms. Karen Farmer White recognized the sacrifices and flexibilities of citizens across the Commonwealth during the COVID-19 pandemic and thanked the essential workers supporting critical needs. Ms. Farmer White also acknowledged Teacher Appreciation Week and the resourcefulness and dedication of Pennsylvania educators as they deployed new plans for virtual learning with little time to prepare.

Ms. Farmer White then introduced the Board’s newest high school student member-elect, Eva Rankin, from the Upper St. Clair School District. Ms. Rankin will start a two-year term as an advisory member of the Board in July.

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**

Matt Stem, Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, provided a report on the Department of Education’s response to COVID-19.

Deputy Secretary Stem shared that throughout the pandemic, the Department’s top priority was ensuring the health and safety of students and school communities. Within weeks of

school closures, Intermediate Units developed a technical assistance support system for superintendents and teachers across the Commonwealth. Recognizing that many school districts did not have direct access to online learning programs, the Department mobilized resources to provide virtual access to every content area for high school and elementary students. The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) also provided resources to assist educators and parents address the unique challenges of supporting students with disabilities in a distance learning environment.

Deputy Secretary Stem shared that the Department recently submitted a one-time application to secure federal resources from the Elementary and Secondary Education Emergency Relief Fund to assist with the pandemic's impacts on school entities.

Dr. Jonathan Peri thanked the Department's administration for their guidance during the pandemic.

Ms. Sandra Dungee Glenn asked if the Department had considered extended-day learning opportunities and help from advocacy groups to assist with such efforts to make up for the hours that students have missed. Mr. Stem shared that he recently discussed community-based partnerships and that, given the extended nature of closures, are engaging in activities to try to find ways to foster those partnerships.

Dr. Jeffery Keeling asked about the availability of funding for distance learning in the fall. Mr. Stem shared that current state funding for online learning is provided until June 30 and, although the goal is to see these programs continue, there currently is not a mechanism for extending those services into the summer and the next school year.

Dr. Jamie Bracey-Green asked Mr. Stem to provide context for data shared regarding the 380,000 students currently benefitting from Department-supported online learning platforms. With 1.74 million students in the Commonwealth, Mr. Stem said Department-support virtual platform are reaching roughly 22% of students. Dr. Bracey-Green suggested that funding from the CARES Act for professional and teacher development might be well-utilized by cascading from the state-owned universities to private colleges to high school and elementary education. Dr. Pamela Gunter-Smith agreed that moving from face-to-face learning to online learning is not an easy transition and that many resources are needed to support online pedagogy. Judd Pittman, Special Advisor to the Secretary on STEM, shared that through a partnership with PBS in western Pennsylvania, the Department is working with graduate students and professors from Carnegie-Mellon University to provide technical assistance in professional development in online learning.

Dr. Gunter-Smith asked how the Commonwealth will assess the deficit in learning from virtual instruction. Mr. Stem shared that the Department will need to find a way for Intermediate Units to gather data and engage research partners with surveys in measuring learning gaps.

Dr. James Barker and Ms. Dungee Glenn both shared their thoughts on the upcoming new normal in school districts and how they believe students will need assistance due to current learning platforms not benefitting all students equally.

**PRESENTATION**  
**PROGRESS REPORT ON EFFORT TO UPDATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN**  
**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY**

Judd Pittman, Special Advisor to the Secretary of Education on STEM, presented a progress update on a Board-directed effort to update the Academic Standards in Science and Technology and Environment and Ecology. Mr. Pittman presented a landscape that included feedback from initial stakeholder outreach sessions conducted by the Department in early 2020, along with an overview of current science education research and a comparison of science standards across the nation. Mr. Pittman also discussed the application process to solicit educators to serve on Content Committee Teams that will draft updated standards. He presented recommendations for educators to serve on a Content Committee and Steering Committee for consideration by the Board. Mr. Pittman noted that additional opportunities for input from the both the Board and public will be available as the standards move through the regulatory review process.

**INFORMATION/DISCUSSION**  
**CHAPTER 2 (SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION)**

Chair Farmer White invited discussed on standards for school district organization that were developed by the Board in the late 1960s and later published as Chapter 2. For unknown reasons, Ms. Farmer White said Chapter 2 is not included among the regulations of the Board published in Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code. Mr. Thomas Howell, legal counsel to the Board, explained that the standards recently were located by a research archivist in the Legislative Reference Bureau (LRB). He discussed their relationship to the Washington Township Independent School District matter and other school district boundary change requests that may come before the Board. Mr. Howell then presented potential next steps for the Board to consider on Chapter 2.

Dr. Jonathan Peri asked if the burden should be left to LRB to forward and incorporate Chapter 2 into Title 22. Mr. Howell responded that the burden is on the agency, in this case the Board, to request a corrective amendment to republish the standards.

Hon. Maureen Lally-Green asked how this new finding positions the Board with Commonwealth Court. Mr. Howell stated that he was not able to find this publication until after the Washington Township matter had been argued and note that the court was concerned about publication of these standards during the argument. Mr. Howell said, on behalf of the Board, he requested that the court permit him to submit a brief on the publication of the standards and that such brief was submitted.

**INFORMATION/DISCUSSION**  
**ERIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLAN**

Chair Farmer White said the hearing on the Erie County Community College Plan, originally scheduled for March 18, 2020 in Erie, was postponed due to COVID-19 and concerns related to large gatherings. Ms. Farmer White said recent social distancing guidelines and stay-at-home orders issued in response to the pandemic have created conditions under which it is not possible for the Board to gather in person to conduct a hearing. She noted that the motion

adopted by the Board in November 2019 to undertake a hearing in this matter stated that a hearing would be held no later than within six months, and said that self-imposed timeframe would end on May 14. In light of that, Ms. Farmer White invited discussion among the Board about how to proceed on consideration of Erie County's plan to establish a new community college.

Members discussed options on how to proceed presented by counsel Thomas Howell, and debated either appointing a hearing officer to conduct proceedings or having the Board conduct the hearing online using a virtual platform. Members determined to extend the timeframe for conducting a hearing beyond May 14 and, given the uncertainties surrounding when social distancing guidelines may be modified, take necessary measures to conduct the hearing virtually in June. The Chair noted that she would call for a motion to adopt a new format and timeframe for the hearing later in the meeting.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Meg Riley, school counselor in the Mechanicsburg Area School District, thanked the Department for its guidance during the school closures due to COVID-19. Ms. Riley also acknowledged Dr. Judy Bookhammer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association, who will step down from that position in June 2020. Ms. Riley thanked Dr. Bookhammer for her vision, passion and leadership in advocacy on behalf of school counselors.

The following individuals offered public comment in support of the Erie County Community College Plan:

Kim Clear – Member, Erie County Council  
Freda Tepfer – Erie County resident  
Carl Anderson – Member, Erie County Council  
Gary Lee - Erie County Director of Administration  
Sydney Zimmerman - Erie County United  
Bob Casillo - Erie resident; former Erie School Administrator  
James Kutz - legal counsel to Erie County  
Charles Mock - Interfaith Committee Chair, Empower Erie  
Andre Horton – Vice-Chair, Erie County Council  
Jason Brendal – Erie County resident  
Ejay Fyke, Erie County resident  
Lenaire Ahlum - Susquehanna Valley Community Education Project  
Amanda Burlingham – Erie County resident  
Scott Rastetter - Member, Erie County Council  
Kumbia Fayia – Erie County resident

The following individuals offered public comment in opposition to the Erie County Community College Plan:

David Jeffery – Erie County resident  
Randy Barnes – Erie County resident

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **SCIENCE STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

A motion to approve the Science Standards Content Committee and Steering Committee members as recommended by the Department of Education was made by Lee Williams and seconded by James Agras.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

### **CHAPTER 2 (STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION)**

A motion to request that the Legislative Reference Bureau publish a corrective amendment, pursuant to 45 Pa.C.S. § 901, to ensure that the standards for School District Organization, which were deposited with the Legislative Reference Bureau on August 17, 1970, and then published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, be published in the appropriate title of the Pennsylvania Code was made by Jonathan Peri and seconded by Rep. Curt Sonney.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

### **HEARING ON THE ERIE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLAN**

A motion to reschedule the postponed hearing on the Erie County Community College Plan to occur over the course of two days through a virtual format such as Zoom or WebEx in June 2020, or the first possible time the necessary virtual format is available to the Board, and to conduct the hearing consistent with all existing procedural orders of the Board relating to such hearing was made by James Barker and seconded by Jonathan Peri.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

### **RESOLUTION HONORING KIRK HALLETT**

A motion to approve a resolution honoring the service of Kirk Hallett, member of the Board who resigned in early 2020, was made by Lee Williams and seconded by Maureen Lally-Green.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

### **RESOLUTION HONORING ARYNN PRATT**

A motion to approve a resolution honoring the service of Arynn Pratt, Senior Postsecondary Student Member whose term ended in May 2020, was made by Maureen Lally-Green and seconded by Sandra Dungee Glenn.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

**RESOLUTION HONORING ASHLEY SVEC**

A motion to approve a resolution honoring Ashley Svec, Senior High School Student member whose term ended in May 2020, was made by Maureen Lally-Green and seconded by James Agras.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:41 p.m. on a **Dungee Glenn/Lally-Green** motion.

*Stephanie Jones*  
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Stephanie Jones  
Administrative Assistant