

The scheduled meeting of the Germantown Hills School District #69  
Board of Education July 13, 2020 was called to order at 7:01 p.m.  
by President, Jason Hunt

Pledge of Allegiance

Members Present:	J. Hunt	D. Mair
	G. Weinman	K. Williams
	E. McAllister	S. Nafziger
	T. Edwards	M. Braskich
	L. Hanson	
	R. Baker	
	J. Hanks	

No Members Absent

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS, PUBLIC COMMENT AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Teachers: E. and A. Loring, K. Kauffman, S. McAllister and M. Babcock attended the meeting. Also present: J. Wallace and J. Kamell.

J. Kamell spoke on the possibility of the school year (in-person attendance) be delayed, the attendance policy, air filtration in the classrooms, smaller class sizes and then guidelines for: activities, subs, specialists, locker rooms and PE.

All board members received the following email:

Hello, I am writing you as a concerned parent of 2 kids that attend GH#69. I came across this article & it really resonated with me. I wanted to share this with you because it mentions many of the concerns I have, as well as other members of the community have about returning to school as early as this Fall. I have also sent this to Mr. Mair, as well as both principals at Germantown Hills #69. While the article doesn't mirror our district exactly, I mainly wanted to share it with you due to the points that are made regarding concerns for the safety of our kiddos and staff members. I know these decisions you are all making are beyond difficult, and I very much appreciate your time and attention to this matter.  
Best regards, Shannon Monckton (parent of an incoming 4<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> grader)

The article is as follows and written as sent (format was changed to make it more readable)

*This is long but worth the read. A parent from a Northern Virginia School District wrote this days before every family had to vote on which schooling model they were choosing for 20/21 To our fellow FCPS families, this it gang, 5 days until the 2 days in school vs 100% virtual decision. Let's talk it out, in my traditional mammoth TL/DR form.*

*Like all of you, I've seen my feed become a flood of anxiety and faux expertise. You'll get no presumption of expertise here. This is how I am looking at and considering this issue and the positions people have taken in my feed and in the hundred or so FCPS discussion groups that have popped up. The lead comments in quotes are taken directly from my feed and those boards. Sometimes I try to rationalize them. Sometimes I'm just punching back at the void. Full disclosure, we initially chose the 2 days option and are now having serious reservations. As I consider the positions and arguments I see in my feed, these are where my mind goes. Of note, when I started working on this piece at 12:19 pm today the COVID death tally in the United States stood at 133,420.*

*"My kids want to go back to school" I challenge that position. I believe what the kids desire is more abstract. I believe what they want is a return to normalcy. They want their idea of yesterday. And yesterday isn't on the menu.*

*"I want my child in school so they can socialize" This was the principal reason for our 2 days decision. As I think more on it though, what do we think "social" will look like? There aren't going to be any lunch table groups, any lockers, any recess games, any study halls, any sitting next to friends, any talking to people in the hallway, any dances. All of that is off the menu. So, when we say that we want the kids to benefit from the social experience, what are we deluding ourselves into thinking in-building socialization will actually look like in the Fall?*

*"My kid is going to be left behind." Left behind who? The entire country is grappling with the same issue, leaving all children in the same quagmire. Who exactly would they be behind? I believe the rhetorical answer to this is "They'll be behind where they should be" to which I'll counter that "where they should be" is a fictional goal post that we as a society have taken as gospel because it maps to standardized tests which are used to grade schools and counties as they chase funding.*

*"Classrooms are safe" At the current distancing guidelines from FCPS middle and high schools would have no more than 12 people (teachers + students) in a classroom (I acknowledge this number may change as FCPS considers the Commonwealth's 3 ft with a mask vs. 6 ft position, noting that FCPS is all mask regardless of the distance). For the purpose of this discussion we'll say classes run 45 minutes. I posed the following question to 40 people today, representing professional and management roles in corporations, government agencies and military commands: "Would your company or command have a 12 person, 45 minute meeting in a conference room?" 100% of them said no, they would not. These are some of their answers: "No. Until further notice we are on Zoom". "(Our company) doesn't allow us in (company space)." "Oh hell no." "No absolutely not." "Is there a percentage lower than zero?" "Something of that size would be virtual." We do not even consider putting our office employees into the same situation we are contemplating putting our children into. And let's drive this point home: there are instances here when commanding officers will not put soldiers, ACTUAL SOLDIERS, into the kind of indoor environment we're contemplating for our children. For me this is as close to a "kill shot" argument as there is in this entire debate. How do we work from home because buildings with recycled air are not safe, because we don't trust other people to not spread the virus, and then with the same breath send our children into buildings?*

*"Children only die .0016 of the time". 302 dead children are the Calvary Hill you're erecting your argument on. So, let's agree to do this: stop presenting this as a data point. If this is your argument, I challenge you to have courage equal to our conviction. Go ahead, plant a flag on the internet and say, "Only 302 children will die." No one will. That's the kind of action on social media that gets you fired from your job. And I trust our social media enclave isn't so careless and irresponsible with life that it would even, for even a millisecond, enter any of your minds to make such an argument. Considered another way: You're presented with a bag with 189,000 \$1 bills. You're told that in the bag are 302 random bills, they look and feel just like all the other, but each one of those bills will kill you. Do you take the*

money out of the bag? Same argument, applied to the 12,487 teachers in FCPS (per Wikipedia), using the “children’s multiplier” of .0016 (all of us understanding the adult mortality rate is higher). That’s 20 teachers. That’s the number you’re talking about. It’s very easy to sit behind a keyboard and diminish and dismiss the risk you’re advocating other people assume. Take a breath and think about that.

If you want to advocate for 2 days a week, look, I’m looking for someone to convince me. But please, for the love of God, drop things like this from your argument. Because the people I know who’ve said things like this, I know they’re better people than this. They’re good people under incredible stress who let things slip out as their frustration boils over. So, please do the right thing and move on from this, because one potential outcome is that one day, you’re going to have to stand in front of St. Peter and answer for this, and that’s not going to be conversation you enjoy.

“Hardly any kids get COVID.” (Deep sigh) Yes, that is statistically true as of this writing. But it is a cherry-picked argument because you’re leaving out an important piece. One can reasonable argue that, due to the school closures in March, children have had the least EXPOSURE to COVID. In other words, closing schools was the one pandemic mitigation action we took that worked. There can be no discussion of the rate of diagnosis within children without also acknowledging they were among our fastest and most quarantined people. Put another way, you cannot cite the effect without acknowledging the cause.

“The flu kills more people every year.” (Deep sigh). First of all, no, it doesn’t. Per the CDC, United States flu deaths average 20,000 annually. COVID, when I start writing here today, has killed 133,420 in six months. And when you mention the flu, do you mean the disease that, if you’re suspected of having it, everyone, literally everyone in the country tells you stay away from other people? You mean the one where parents are pretty sure their kids have it but send them to school anyway because they have a meeting that day, the one that every year causes massive outbreaks in schools because schools are petri dishes and it causes kids to miss weeks of school and leaves them out of sports and band for a month? That one? Because you’re right – the flu kills people every year. It does, but you’re ignoring the why. It’s because there are people who just don’t care about infecting other people. In that regard it’s a perfect comparison to COVID.

“Almost everyone recovers” You’re confusing “released from the hospital” and “no longer infected” with “recovered.” I’m fortunate to only know two people who have had COVID. One my age and one my dad’s age. The one my age described it as “absolute hell” and although no longer infected cannot breathe right. The one my dad’s age was in the hospital for 13 weeks, had to have a trach ring put in because she could no longer be on a ventilator, and upon finally getting home and being faced with incalculable time in rehab told my mother, “I wish I had died.” While I’m making every effort to reach objectivity, on this particular point, you don’t know what the heck you’re talking about. “If people get sick, they get sick.” First, you mistyped. What you intended to say was “If OTHER people get sick, they get sick.” And shame on you.

“I’m not going to live my life in fear.” You already live your life in fear. For your health, your family’s health, your job, your retirement, terrorists, extremists, one political party or the other being in power, the new neighbors, an unexpected home repair, the next sunrise. What you meant to say was, “I’m not prepared to add ANOTHER fear,” and I’ve got news for you: that ship has sailed. It’s too late. There are two kinds of people, and only two: those that admit they’re afraid, and those that are lying to themselves about it. As to the fear argument, fear is the reason you wait up when yours kids stay out late, it’s the reason you tell your kids not to dive in shallow water, to look both ways before crossing the road. Fear is the respect for the wide world that we teach our children. Except in this instance, for reasons no one has been able to explain to me yet.

“FCPS leadership sucks.” I will summarize my view of the School Board thusly: if the 12 of you aren’t getting into a room together because it represents a risk, don’t tell me it’s OK for our kids. I understand your arguments, that we need the 2 days option for parents who can’t work from home, kids who don’t have internet or computer access, kids who needs meals from the school system, kids who need extra support to learn and most tragically for kids who are at greater risk of abuse by being home. All very serious, all very real issues, all heartbreaking. No argument. But you must first lead by example.

*Because you're failing when it comes to optics. All your meetings are online. What our children see is all of you on a Zoom telling them it's OK for them to be exactly where you aren't. I understand you're not PR people, but you really should think about hiring some.*

*"I talked it over with my kids." Let's put aside for a moment the concept of adults effectively deferring this decision to children, the same children who will continue to stuff things into a full trash can rather than change it out. Yes, those hygienic children. Listen, my 15 year old daughter wants a sport car, which she's not getting next year because it would be dangerous to her and to others. Those kids of decision are our job. We step in and decide as parents, we don't let them expose themselves to risks because their still developing and screen addicted brains narrow their understanding of cause and effect. We as parents and adults serve to make difficult decisions. Sometimes those are in the form of lessons, where we try to steer kids towards the right answer and are willing to let them make a mistake in the hopes of teaching better decision making the next time around. This is not one of those moments. The stakes are too high for that. This is a "the adults are talking" moment. Kids are not mature enough for this moment. That is not an attack on your child. It is a broad statement about all children. It is true of your children and it was true when we were children. We need to be doing that thinking here, and "Johnny wants to see Bobby at school" cannot be the prevailing element in the equation.*

*"The teachers need to do their job" How is it that the same society which abruptly shifted to virtual students only three months ago, and offered glowing endorsements of teachers stating, "we finally understand how difficult your job is" has now shifted to "suck it up and do your job." There are a myriad of problems with that position, but for the purposes of this piece, let's simply go with, "You're not looking for a teacher, you're looking for the babysitter you feel your property tax payment entitles you to."*

*"Teachers have a great chance to being killed by a car than they do of dying from COVID." Per the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), the U.S. see approximately 36,000 auto fatalities a year. Again, there have been 133,420 COVID deaths in the United States through 12:09 July 10, 2020. So no, they do not have a great change of being killed in a car accident. And, if you want to take the actual environment into consideration, the odds of a teacher being killed in a car accident in their classroom, you know, the environment we're actually talking about, that's right around 0%.*

*"If the grocery store workers can be onsite what are the teachers afraid of?" (Deep breath) A grocery store worker, who absolutely risks exposure, has either six feet of space or a plexiglass shield between them and individual adult customers who can grasp their own mortality whose transactions can be completed in moments, in a 40,000 SF space. A teacher is with 11 "customers" who have not an inkling what mortality is, for 45 minutes, in a 675 SF space, six times a day. Just stop.*

*"Teachers are choosing remote because they don't want to work." (Deep breaths) Many teachers are opting to be remote. That is not a vacation. They're requesting to do their job at a safer site. Just like many, many people who work in building with recycled air have done. And likely the building you're not going into has a newer and better serviced air system than our schools. Of greater interest to me is the number of teachers choosing the 100% virtual option for their children. The people who spend the most time in the buildings are the same ones electing not to send their children into those buildings. That's something I pay attention to.*

*"I wasn't prepared to be a parent 24/7" and "I just need a break" I truly, deeply respect that honesty. Truth be told, both arguments have crossed my mind. Pre COVID, I routinely worked from home 1-2 days a week. The solace was nice. When I was in the office, I had an actual office, a room with a door I could close, where I could focus. During the quarantine that hasn't always been the case. I've been frustrated, I've been short, I've gone to just take a drive and get the hell away for a moment and been disgusted when one of the kids sees me and asks me to come for a ride, robbing me of those minutes of silence. You want to hear silence. I get it. I really, really do. Here's another version of that, admittedly extreme. What if one of our kids becomes one of the 302? What's that silence going to sound like? What if you have one of those matted frames where you add the kid's school picture every year? What if you don't get to finish the pictures?*

*“What does your gut tell you to do?” Shawn and I have talked ad infinitum about all of these and other points. Two days ago, at mid-discussion I said, “Stop, right now, gut answer, what is it,” and we both said, “virtual.” A lot of arguments I hear people making for the 2 days sound like we’re trying to talk ourselves into ignoring our instincts, they are almost exclusively, “We’re doing 2 days, but...” There’s a fantastic book by Gavin de Becker, *The Gift of Fear*, which I’ll minimize for you thusly: your gut instinct is a hardwired part of your brain and you should listen to it. In the introduction he talks about elevators, and how, of all living things, humans are the only ones that would voluntarily get into a soundproof steel box with a potential predator just so they could skip a flight of stairs. I keep thinking that the 2 days option is the soundproof steel box. I welcome, damn, beg, anyone to convince me otherwise.*

*At the time I started writing at 12:09 PM, 133,420 Americans had died from COVID. Upon completing this draft at 7:04 PM, that number rose to 133,940. 520 Americans died of COVID while I was working on this. In seven hours. The length of a school day.*

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by E. McAllister with a second by L. Hanson to approve: the June 8, 2020 Board of Education Regular Session minutes, the Treasurer’s Report, the current Bills & Payroll, the June, 2020 Activity Journal and Issue 103 Press Plus Board Policy Updates (2:125, 2:160, 5:60, 5:150, 5:280, 6:135, 6:280, 7:70, 8:10, 8:30 & 8:110)

Roll Call Vote: Yeas – R. Baker, T. Edwards, L. Hanson, G. Weinman, E. McAllister, J. Hanks and J. Hunt

Motion passed with 7 votes

## **ACTION ITEMS**

A motion was made by L. Hanson with a second by G. Weinman to approve FY21 Board Meeting Dates.

Voice Vote - Motion Passed

A motion was made by E. McAllister with a second by J. Hanks to approve the Dairy and Bread bids for the 2020 – 2021 School Year from Prairie Farms and Alpha Baking Company.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas – T. Edwards, L. Hanson, G. Weinman, E. McAllister, J. Hanks, R. Baker and J. Hunt

Motion passed with 7 votes

A motion was made by J. Hanks with a second by L. Hanson to hire Hayla Peters and Danielle Matarelli as Kindergarten Aides.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas – L. Hanson, G. Weinman, E. McAllister, J. Hanks, R. Baker, T. Edwards and J. Hunt

Motion passed with 7 votes

A motion was made by J. Hanks with a second by G. Weinman to hire Vicky Garey as Cheerleading Coach.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas – G. Weinman, E. McAllister, J. Hanks, R. Baker, T. Edwards, L. Hanson and J. Hunt

Motion passed with 7 votes

## **OTHER BUSINESS, REPORTS, DISCUSSION AND INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

**Legislative Updates** – All board members received a packet of guidance from ISBE and IDPH about the transition for back to school in August.

**Report on Back to School Planning and Staff and Parent Survey Results** – D. Mair discussed the Back to School Plan and the Staff and Parent Survey results in detail. All of these are on the school website and they will be sent by email blast to all district families.

**Unaudited FY20 Financials and Updated FY21 Budget Figures** – D. Mair shared the unaudited FY20 budget figures as well as the updated budget figures for FY21. The next step in the budgeting process is to meet with the Finance Committee members. In August D. Mair will provide a budget presentation and the budget will be adopted in September.

**End of the Year Woodford County Sales Tax Distribution** – Board members received the end of the year Tax Distribution Report. Sales tax revenues dropped roughly 15% in the months of April, May and June due to COVID-19. This decrease will be reflected in the FY21 budget.

**Press Plus Policy Updates Issue 104**- All board members received Press Plus Policy Updates – Issue 104. The updates will be discussed in August and voted on in September.

## **OTHER BUSINESS BY BOARD MEMBERS OR ADMINISTRATION**

- E. McAllister spoke on the involvement of the school nurse during the school year.
- J. Hunt spoke on the hard work the administration, teachers and staff are doing and on the tough decisions the school and the parents have to make.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by L. Hanson with a second by T. Edwards to adjourn the board meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Voice Vote – Motion Passed

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President  
Jason Hunt

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Secretary  
Greg Weinman