

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES**

December 16, 2020

The Montgomery County Board of Education convened in a special called meeting on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 6:00 pm at the Montgomery Central High School Auditorium. Board members present were Steven W. DeBerry – Chair, Tommy Blake – Vice Chair, Bryan Dozier, Cindy Taylor, Lynn Epps and Sandra Miller. Dale Ellis attended virtually. Jesse Hill was absent

Chairman Steve DeBerry called the meeting to order and moved to adopt the agenda as shown. Bryan Dozier made the motion with Lynn Epps seconding. The agenda was accepted with unanimous approval from the board.

During the public comments period Sharon Swanke spoke thanking the board for keeping our staff and students safe this far. She expressed her concern for the future safety of our community with the current high number of positive COVID 19 cases. She stated there is a light at the end of the tunnel with vaccines becoming available, however, months away.

Chairman DeBerry advised that Superintendent Dale Ellis and Sandra Miller were attending virtually.

Chairman DeBerry called upon Dr. Dale Ellis for his recommendation. Dr. Ellis shared the recent information regarding COVID cases concerning Montgomery County Schools' staff and students as follows:

Total number of employees quarantined due to COVID (from July 1st to present) – 225

Total number of employees positive for COVID - 32

November Staff numbers:

Quarantined- 68

Positive cases- 11

December Staff numbers (as of 12/15/20):

Quarantined – 38

Positive cases- 7

The last month and a half represents an amount greater than 50% of the total positive cases and slightly less than 50% for quarantines in MCS since July 1. In short, as the disease has accelerated in the community, it has had an equally adverse effect on MCS. Our efforts to force employees to adhere to guidelines does nothing if those same guidelines are not followed in the community.

North Carolina is now averaging in excess of 5,000 new cases per day, with highs on some days topping 6,000+.

Montgomery County is one of 48 RED (Critical spread) counties in NC. We have a positivity rate of 13.6%. Our worst week for positives was a total of 101 for the week of 11/29. The last week we have access to was 12/6 with 84 positive cases. The positive cases the week of 10/4 when we last acted on this matter was 28 positive cases. The current positive cases realize a pandemic that is significantly worse than it was during the last review.

I have seen no evidence to suggest that the numbers should be expected to significantly improve through the Christmas season.

Dr. Ellis stated ultimately students need to be in the classroom, however, with the information given it his recommendation to the board to delay the return of students from January 5, 2021 to January 19, 2021 hoping to avoid an inevitable spike in cases from the Christmas holidays. The board discussed the importance of cleaning supplies to be provided to schools for return of students. Communication to parents must be emphasized for the option for online registration for the spring semester. Bryan Dozier made a motion to approve Dr. Ellis's recommendation with Tommy Blake seconding. The motion was accepted with unanimous approval from the board.

Chairman DeBerry asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bryan Dozier made a motion with a second by Sandra Miller, the meeting was duly adjourned.

The next regular meeting will be held Monday, January 4, 2021 at 6:30 pm at the Montgomery Central High School Auditorium.

Steven W. DeBerry, Chairman

Dale Ellis, Ed. D., Secretary