

MINUTES OF AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 14, 2020

An emergency meeting of the Board of Education of the Long Beach Unified School District, County of Los Angeles, California, was held in the Community Room of the Administration Building at 1515 Hughes Way, Long Beach, California, on March 14, 2020.

Present: Members Benitez, Craighead, Kerr, Meyer, and Williams

Absent: None.

Call to
Order

President Williams called the special meeting to order in the Community Room at 9:00 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Member Craighead.

Call for
Agenda
Items/
Adopt
Agenda

President Williams asked if Board Members had any items listed on the agenda for separate action.

It was moved by Member Kerr that the agenda be adopted as published.

The motion carried. The vote was unanimous with all five members participating in the vote.

Hearing of
Public
Testimony

President Williams asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Board on matters of school district business listed on the agenda.

There was no reply.

Hearing of
Public
Testimony

President Williams asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Board on matters of school district business not listed on the agenda.

There was no reply.

New
Business

Res. 031420-A,
Emergency
Resolution

Chris Steinhauser, Superintendent of Schools, stated that this has been a challenging week and that things are changing very rapidly. Many discussions have taken place at the state and local level, with local partners such as the City of Long Beach and the Health Department, as well as the County Superintendent of Schools. It is recommended that we close all schools for at least three weeks, due to the spread of the virus. Many experts believe that it would take five weeks for the virus to peak, so the recommendation is for schools to stay closed until after our spring recess, or April 20.

This is a crisis. Mr. Steinhauser commended his team, as they have been remarkable in rolling out a plan in a very short period of time to address the needs of over 70,000 students and 10,000 employees. We realize that there are many concerns with the continuity of learning, child care and other family needs and we are all sympathetic to them. Our Nutrition Services Branch will serve meals at all the schools beginning on Monday.

This resolution needs to be approved so that other things can be done, if needed, and he noted that additional information will be shared as we move forward.

Staff have prepared videos addressed to our students, families and staff. He thanked all the teachers, as they were giving out textbooks and instructional materials before the students left. We are not a perfect district but Long Beach is a special place.

Jill Baker, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, stated that she feels supported by the Board and the coordination with the City has been wonderful. Our staff is getting coherent information and clear next steps from the City and the Health Department as we decide on what to do in the following couple of weeks. We want to be really thoughtful and not just send things home rapidly.

Member Benitez stated that there is so much information floating around and many networks of folks, and sometimes it is not always accurate. It is important to highlight that the information posted on our website and social media can be easily copied and shared.

Dr. Benitez also cautioned that this is a short-term closure and that there is a possibility that we might have to extend it. He thanked the staff for everything they've been doing and knows they lead with kindness, grace, compassion and overall humanity. The resolution upholds and reflects our ability and the necessity to be nimble at this time.

Superintendent Steinhauser replied that our district chose this difficult decision instead of closing for only two weeks. Pamela Seki, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, and her team are contributing to the development of many different ways for students to be engaged in learning after the first week, with a focus on high school credits.

Member Kerr reassured everyone that our messages will be in various languages and means, and she gave kudos to the great graphic used by Nutrition Services. We are looking at ways to be innovative and provide even more access than usual, acknowledging that we know schools are the safest and most stable places for some of our children.

Dr. Baker added that any donations may be given via the Long Beach Education Foundation (LBEF) through Dr. Lucy Salazar. These donations will be used to assist our families, such as internet access.

Member Craighead stated that this was a huge decision and it wasn't taken lightly. She trusts the team to be capable in working on this and being preemptive, which will help us to deal with the situation. It was absolutely necessary but she also cautioned not to panic.

Member Meyer acknowledged that things will get tougher, and he heralded the superintendent and his staff because we have a great team of leaders. He trusts them and we will find a way to prevail.

Dr. Baker stated that basic translated information will be posted at every school, to ensure everyone is aware of the closures. Administrative staff will be asked to assist in the meal distribution for the first few days. Staff is working on a plan to involve our students in the communication to the community.

Dr. Benitez reminded all parents and guardians to update their preferred method of communication in the Parent Vue portal.

Member Kerr noted the research around the importance of the sense of community during a crisis. She encouraged everyone to take care of each other especially the elders in the community.

President Williams added that the Mayor stressed this point at the press conference the previous day.

Member Craighead moved approval of Resolution 031420-A, Emergency Resolution Delegating Authority to Take Necessary Action to Protect Students and Staff from the Spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

The motion carried. The roll call vote was unanimous with all five members participating in the vote.

Report of Board Members

Members Kerr and Benitez thanked and appreciate all the staff.

Member Craighead shares the sentiment. She witnessed firsthand how people kept a cool head in the middle of the crisis, and was very impressed.

President Williams stated that at the press conference, the message was very consistent as to what needs to be done and that the community needs to pull together for this. All district staff goes out their way to do what is necessary for the safety and health of our kids, and it is deeply appreciated.

Member Benitez inquired what the process would be if another emergency meeting was called, or if we needed to adjust the scheduled meetings.

Brent North, district attorney, replied that by the Governor's executive order, the new rule is that any board member may participate via telephone conference. An established location needs to be identified, and as long as there is a majority, the vote will be done on a roll call vote. An emergency meeting may be called within one hour's notice.

Superintendent's Report

None.

Announcements

None.

ADJOURNMENT

President Williams adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 in the Administration Building, 1515 Hughes Way, at 5:00 p.m.

Leticia Rodriguez
Assistant Secretary