

**Trail board oks full reopen** By ROBERT L. BAKER PRESS EXAMINER Aug 12, 2020

The Lackawanna Trail School Board approved on Monday a Phased School Reopening Health and Safety Plan that calls for a total reopen on Sept. 10 but some students and families may opt for distance learning out of safety health concerns.

Contingent upon Pennsylvania’s reopening status later this summer, faculty will return for two in-service days on Sept. 8 and 9. The school year for students will run from Sept. 10 to June 9.

For more than two hours the board and administration fielded calls remotely through the Zoom meeting.

Superintendent Matt Rakauskas said that based on surveys, the district believes that around 200 persons will be signing into Trail learning through a virtual platform that will be synchronized with what students are getting by attending the brick and mortar elementary center or high school

He noted that all students will be getting Chromebooks that will be used in either setting.

High school Principal Mark Murphy said he was taken aback by pictures in the national media with crowds of students in a Georgia school, and he would never put his students in that setting.

Still, when the pandemic settles, he is looking forward to the day when all students can get the face-to-face instruction that contributes to a best educational outcome, and won’t have to rely on virtual learning unless that serves their needs.

Board member Michael Mould spoke passionately for close to 10 minutes acknowledging many of the precautions the administration, faculty and staff have taken this summer, and will continue to do so.

And, sure the numbers are low in Wyoming County, he said, but there were lingering concerns about transportation, social distancing at recess, and cleaning.

“It’s going to put a terrific strain on our resources, and I’m not sure we can do it,” Mould said. “I feel it is my responsibility to do what is right at this time, and I vote no.”

Joe Ross also voted ‘No’ while also applauding everyone for their efforts to make it work.

The Phased School Reopening Plan passed 7-2.

To provide another forum to answer parents’ questions, the district is planning a Town Hall Meeting Thursday, Aug. 13, at 7 p.m. Instructions as to how to sign on should be at the District’s website at www.ltsd.org

The board had some discussion about amending the school’s athletic opening plan which currently had fall sports practices opening Aug. 17. There was discussion of changing to Aug. 24, but also concern that PIAA and the governor would be meeting Aug. 21, and it could be changed then or eliminated altogether. The decision was to table the matter.

The board did approve a Lackawanna Trail Emergency Instruction Time Resolution for the school year ahead so whatever hours were subsumed during the pandemic would be in alignment with Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines.

The Trail board approved RNs Maureen Mahoney and Lorie Tweed to be school nurse substitutes for 2020-21; and approved substitute nurse contracted services with CareGivers America Medical Staffing LLC as well as Interim Healthcare.

The board also adopted changes in school policies addressing Nondiscrimination/Discriminatory Harassment-School Classroom Practices, Nondiscrimination of Employment Practices, and Bullying/Cyberbullying.

In extra-curricular appointments, the board approved Lauren Keyes as the Cheerleader Football Advisor, Alexandra Tompkins as the Cheerleader Basketball Advisor, and Jessica Bentley as the Assistant Volleyball Coach, all for the 2020-21 season, but made it clear they would not be paid if the season is canceled, according to the Lackawanna Trail Education Association bargaining agreement

Extra-Curricular Volunteer appointments included Dimitri Gnall as a volunteer Boys Basketball Coach, Kelly Martin as a Volunteer Videographer for Varsity Field Hockey, and Rochelle Coleman as a Volunteer Varsity Field Hockey Coach, all for the 2020-2021 season.