

MINUTES**North Dakota High School Activities Association
November 16, 2020, Valley City, ND**

The Board of Directors of the North Dakota High School Activities Association began their meeting on November 16, 2020 via conference call. President Jordan called the meeting to order at 11:00 am.

Members present: Jordan, Diegel, Schoch, Johnson, Brandt, Jundt, Fridley Bertsch, Rerick, Baxley, Baesler
Others present: Patti Aanensen, Larimore

Motion by Rerick to approve the agenda. Second by Diegel. Motion carried unanimously.
Motion by Schoch to approve the consent agenda. Second by Fridley. Motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes
 - a. November 4, 2020

The Board discussed Governor Burgum's Executive Order 2020-43.

Fetsch highlighted the areas of Governor Burgum's Executive Order affecting NDHSAA sports and activities. Baesler indicated the Governor's office will not be sending general FAQ's with guidance to assist schools in implementing their plans locally as schools have indicated their request to maintain local control on implementation in their schools.

Jundt applauded the Governor for taking measures to slow the spread. He also indicated there are others in the community that are questioning why other organizations such as the Bismarck Bobcats are allowed to practice and have fans.

Baesler indicated the importance of K-12 education has been elevated and the Governor places a high emphasis of K-12 in-person learning in the classroom. The Governor identified the top three groups in North Dakota that are a priority. ND needs to keep hospitals open, to keep long term health care staffed with infection free staff and continue with K-12 in-person instruction.

Rerick questioned why the line was drawn between collegiate and high school athletics and activities. Diegel indicated the biggest worry in people he has talked to is the use of the word suspension and the fear suspension will lead to cancelation. He wanted to know what measures will be taken by NDHSAA schools to get back playing after December 14, 2020. Suggestions would be requiring participants to wear masks and not allowing fans at competitions. Baesler urged school leaders to report their online learning status in PowerSchool correctly as required to increase data available for the Governor to make future decisions. Fetsch indicated previously to the Governor's office the NDHSAA Board would be supportive of other measures such as a mask mandate and/or no fans at contests. Jordan was concerned with the inconsistency of not being allowed to lift weights at schools however students are able to go to a wellness center and lift weights.

Baesler urged Board members to remind coaches and athletes this sacrifice for the short term is for the benefit of the long term and everyone needs to do this for a reset. Jundt indicated their local park and recreation facilities are open to the public, however their programs are closed through December 14, 2020.

Jordan questioned if the Board would be interested in sending a letter of support to Governor Burgum. Rerick is not in favor of a letter of support until more information on the Executive Order is available. He would like to find out more information on the reasons for the Executive Order. At this time, we do not know the details of the Executive Order, we only know the "When" and "What". The purpose of order seems to be so our kids don't get sick with nothing communicated for any other purpose. Data does not support the theory of activities spreading COVID.

Johnson stated data in Valley City regarding COVID-19 and activities shows fewer than 30% of all COVID-19 cases in Valley City are from students participating in activities (8 total). Baesler indicated the Governor needs credible data from schools on how many schools are shut down due to COVID-19. Jundt stated he received information concerning the Bismarck Bobcat Hockey team and the reason they are allowed to continue is because they are a for profit business. Rerick stated many Grand Forks parents of hockey participants are looking for private ice time to allow their children to continue skating and practicing.

Jordan indicated his coaching staff is upset as schools are already doing a good job of mitigating this by not allowing public into their schools. Johnson explained to the Board he met with 12 high school students last Thursday and their number one issue is mental health. The students excluded several other mitigating strategies in this decision and indicated schools are willing to do anything to give kids the opportunity to participate in activities. Jordan indicated it is the job of ND administrators to do the best thing for kids, and mental health issues are extremely important.

Fetsch suggested a need for committee meetings to develop guidance for member schools.

The Board questioned if the Governor would be willing to change the language of the Executive Order. Baesler indicated it is unlikely changes in the Executive Order would occur before December 14, 2020. The time until that will be used to collect data. Baesler indicated the time period chosen was done to include two COVID-19 incubation periods.

Schoch questioned if the ND Department of Health is in support of this Executive Order because it is the best for kids. Baesler indicated the ND Department of Health understands the importance of in-person learning and co-curricular activities. Jordan questioned how many schools are at risk of closing due to COVID-19 outbreaks or inability to find staff/substitutes. ND DPI does not have the data requested. Schools are struggling with the inability to fill substitute staff positions and indicated multiple school districts are at considering school closure and in-person learning and due to staffing shortages.

Baesler questioned what NDHSAA reaction would be if parents organize sports and activities for in-season. Fetsch stated under current regulations students would be suspended 6 games for every one game they play in within their season.

Jundt stated there is real fear among coaches and athletes if they are not doing something someone else will be and they will be falling behind in their sport/activity.

Sport specific things to address. Fetsch shared a working document of FAQs to provide to member schools to include.

- Virtual practices/workouts.
- Number of practices prior to competing – hockey – wrestling junior high.
- Game limitations.
- Updated winter sports calendar.
- Website deadlines for pictures, cutlines, rosters and schedules.

Bertsch stated in listening to the multiple plans/ideas that communities will implement to work around the Executive Order, if there would be value in asking/petitioning the Gov. Burgum to allow practices for winter sports/activities with stipulated criteria (ex: use of masks, hand sanitizer etc.). Diegel state the idea was worth asking. Johnson indicated any request to the Governor should be very detailed. Johnson also wanted to thank the NDHSAA staff for their continued effort to successfully conclude fall activities. Despite the challenging times, he is very proud to be serving on the NDHSAA Board and representing students in ND.

Fetsch indicated in the spring of 2020 the Executive Committee did a major portion of the groundwork to form the policies that were put in place. Motion by Johnson to recommend the Executive Committee compile a letter to the Governor requesting the allowance of practices and resuming activities using additional mitigation to ensure the safety of NDHSAA students and bring a draft to the full Board for consideration. Second by Brandt. Rerick and Jundt indicated they would like to have additional information from the Governor on the reasons for the current Executive Order. Jundt stated he received information indicating the NDHSCA was planning to submit a letter to the Governor requesting reconsideration. Jundt felt a fragmented approach may not sway the Governor’s mind. Roll call vote. Motion carried (7-3).

Executive Board will meet Monday, November 16, 2020 at 4:30 pm.

Next Board meeting will be held November 17, 2020 via conference call at 9:00 am. Meeting adjourned November 16, 2020 at 12:31 pm. Statewide member school update is scheduled for Tuesday, November 17, 2020 at 2:00 pm CST.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Schell
Assistant Director

Signed:  Approved Date: 11/24/2020