

Roseland Board of Education

Scott Gorman, Board President

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Joint Statement

As we continue to work together to arrive at the best possible solutions to the challenges presented by the global COVID-19 pandemic, we wanted to take a moment to provide an update as to the challenges we face relating to the return to in-person instruction at the Lester C. Noecker School. Of course, our response to the pandemic has already required us to make many sacrifices, and compliance with health and safety recommendations, such as those relating to social distancing, brings about new challenges.

We recognize that, as a result of social distancing requirements that are designed to reduce the likelihood of an outbreak of COVID-19, the Roseland Board of Education has been forced to suspend the practice known as “courtesy busing” for the upcoming academic year. In years past, the Board has provided transportation to students living within two miles of Noecker, although it is not obligated to do so. This service has been provided, in large part, because the Board recognizes the hazards that the vast majority of students would face if they were required to walk to Noecker. The Board had budgeted to provide courtesy busing for the 2020-2021 academic year. However, in order to comply with the social distancing recommendations from the New Jersey Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of students who can be on a fifty-four-seat bus at a given time is now limited to eleven plus siblings. This tremendous decrease in capacity has resulted in a substantial increase in the cost of transportation, and, as a result, it is simply not financially feasible for the Board to offer courtesy busing. We hope parents will understand, though, that the decision not to provide courtesy busing for the upcoming academic year is based upon the increase in the cost of transportation that came about after the Board approved its budget and in no way suggests that courtesy busing will be eliminated permanently in the future.

Recognizing that the suspension of courtesy busing will result in many families needing to find alternative arrangements for children to get to Noecker in the Fall, a meeting was convened with Superintendent Deanne Somers, members of the Roseland Police Department, Captain John Matheis of the Roseland Office of Emergency Management, Mayor James R. Spango, Board President Scott Gorman and others. Among the topics that were discussed was the possibility of the Borough providing crossing guards to assist those who would be walking to Noecker and a review of the overall risk profile of our sidewalks. After carefully considering this issue, it was determined that it would not be prudent to have crossing guards because crossing guards would be insufficient to address the hazards associated with walking to Noecker. The Board and Mayor Spango wish to be clear that they are not encouraging families to allow children to walk to Noecker given the hazards, such as walking alongside busy streets that do not have sidewalks. Indeed, Board of Education President Gorman made clear that: “Families that do not select the ‘remote only’ option will need to decide for themselves how their children will get to and from Noecker. Although we cannot prevent students

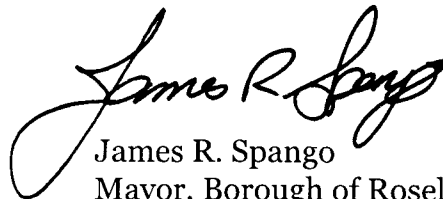
from walking to Noecker, we would strongly encourage parents to be mindful of the dangers associated with walking.”

We are pleased that the Borough and the Board enjoy a positive relationship and we will continue to work together to meet the transportation and safety challenges that we will face when Noecker re-opens in the fall. Mayor Spango emphasized that “we understand and appreciate the financial constraints in creating a responsible budget. The one-year elimination of courtesy busing places the board and borough in precarious positions. After performing studies, the Borough, in good conscience, will not provide crossing guards as it will not keep our children safe. We continue to work with the BOE to find unique ways to obtain funding to keep our children as safe as possible in school.” We will be exploring ways that our respective public agencies can share medical resources and safety assessments to work toward our mutual goal of doing what is best for families in Roseland.

Signed,



Scott Gorman
President, Roseland Board of Education



James R. Spango
Mayor, Borough of Roseland