

Public Opinion

From: John Cammisa <bballjc4@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 9:04 AM
To: Pamela Petschke; Jeffrey Houle; Ryan Korobkov; Jonathan Schantz;
Chelsea Berry; Maria Seddon; Theodore Locke; STGRSD
Superintendent; Joseph Turmel; Michael Pescitelli
Subject: Public Opinion

This is a combined effort of the boys and girls soccer teams to communicate our feelings towards your decision making process. We would like this read aloud at the next school committee meeting.

Dear Superintendent Willard and School Committee,

We never thought we would say this, as we have always had so much pride and demonstrated our love of this school, but to say we are disappointed to be associated with Southwick Schools is an understatement.

Most recently, Palmer and Chicopee re-voted with new evidence, and they are allowing their students to play soccer. We feel there is a hidden agenda, and you have not been honest with us

Superintendent Willard, you asked us adolescents to meet just you and Chairman Houle without parent supervision. We did so. This was in hopes you were trying to do what was best for us, and realized with all the other towns playing, we could come to a mutual agreement. We feel you deceived us and utilized that meeting to give us confidence, while gaining ammunition to find a way for us to not play. We left with the task of finding if we would have enough players to do a full remote schooling program which would enable us to play. We easily hit those numbers, and all forms were sent and filled out by the parents, not us.

We want you to answer these questions for us.

1. Do you know something that all the other schools that have voted to allow fall sports do not?
2. If so, what do you know? Did you share it with them?
3. If no, do you think you and the school committee are smarter than every

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other

superintendent and school committee?

4. If yes, then what are you teaching us kids?

5. If no, then why wouldn't you do what everyone else has deemed safe, unless there is a hidden agenda?

Answers to all your questions and statements:

1. You stated that you are concerned about transportation.

A. It is our parents decision on who we can or cannot go in a car with. Not the

schools. Fact is, if we are in school, those who do not have their licenses, carpool with the same kids who would bring them to practice. Is it okay to let us get to school, but somehow dangerous for anything else? The solution is quite simple. The coaches get a list of pre-approved players that their son or daughter can leave with, if they are not able to pick them up. In fact, you have this in place

in Woodland. If a parent cannot pick a student up, they have a list of who can, and if it needs to be someone else you must contact the school.

B. If Intramurals were approved, how do you expect these students to get there if

transportation is such an issue?

C. How do you expect Golf to handle this situation? There are players who are on

the golf team who do not have their licenses. How is transportation not an issue for them?

D. The answers to these are just an excuse for you to not allow fall soccer. It is clear

to everyone that there is not a transportation issue. For years, kids have carpooled to and from school and practice. Once again, it is their parents decision to allow their children whom they can get a ride from, not the schools.

2. Your comments on safety

A. Fact 1: Your teachers are living their lives and going out. They are not in a

bubble. There is just as much of a chance that they bring it into the school system as a student would. It hasn't stopped them from living their lives. If you want proof, just look at their social media pages.

B. Fact 2: You have students and teachers coming from other towns and districts.

These teachers have children who are attending schools where fall sports are allowed. If fall sports are so dangerous because of cross contamination, how can teachers come in to teach and bring cross contamination directly into the schools.

C. Fact 3: You have hundreds of kids in your middle school and elementary school

playing sports or other activities all over the state. The risk of them contracting

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and spreading far outweighs the playing in our MIAA bubble, where we would play against Westfield, Agawam, West Springfield, Holyoke. We all have close friends in these towns, and we hang out with them on the weekends as it is.

D. Fact 4: The town of Southwick's sports are allowing the kids to play other towns and go to school.

E. Fact 5: Some of the highest contamination occupations are working at restaurants or grocery stores. We have multiple athletes that have worked those jobs over the summer. However, with fall sports, where it has proven to be virtually zero contamination, with a mask and outside. Would it not be safer to do that than working while going to school?

F. A number of us will be joining Roots league on Sundays, where we will be playing with college students, other towns, and prep schools. If we can play high school, we would remove ourselves from this league.

G. The CDC recommends wearing a mask when in close contact in a confined space. This means being next to the same person for more than 15 minutes. None of this applies in soccer. Again, our risk is virtually ZERO.

H. The fact is, you cannot control whether someone gets the virus or not. It has been proven through months of playing that there is virtually zero chance of contracting, while outside with a mask on, especially following the MIAA rules. The last thing we will say is, if we have soccer, we are going to follow the protocols, but if not, we will not be playing intramurals. We will get together with

other towns, and we will play, and there are no rules in place for that. By not allowing us to play soccer, you are essentially increasing the risk of teachers, which seems to be your biggest concern. So we ask, would you rather us do this under the strict guidelines of the MIAA while following the safety protocols, or just

do our own thing where there are no guidelines set in place for us?

I. The fact is, the only way to keep everyone safe is to live in a bubble and do remote learning,

We would like to address the plan of action for IEP students. We are concerned as the majority of fall athletes are being punished, for the athletes who have to be in school. It has been proven

that players are competing outside the high school, and are going to school every day. The

health board has deemed a season is safe. So the problem we feel, is that the committee isn't

comfortable with allowing a season, or some deal was made where athletics were not involved.

There is a simple solution. Let the players who have an IEP play, as there are only a few, or do not punish the 90% majority of athletes and take away their last chance to play competitive

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soccer because you aren't comfortable. All other schools have been in preseason training and playing other towns and there has not been one athletic case in our area yet from HS sports.

We would like to know the procedure, in the case that the school shuts down due to an increase in cases, for these IEP students who will have to remotely learn. We were forced to choose remote learning to gain a consideration to play, even though other towns have not had to make this decision, we shouldn't be punished for finding our own alternatives.

Equity, the quality of being fair and impartial. A term used frequently over the course of the fall athletics discussion. But now we as athletes, aren't being treated with equity. Golf has been given their season back, with no remote learning or IEP restrictions. Is golf not a risk? Are there IEP students on the golf team? (Yes I know there are) Will golf not have trouble with transportation? Golfers still have to be able to find transportation to their athletics, why was this not something brought up, when giving them their FULL season back? All other fall sports have been given an "intramural" season, or their season's been stripped or postponed to a so called, "Fall 2." So how does golf not pass any of these boundaries all the other sports have? If you speak so heavily on equity, then we should all be given our season, in regards to this decision. How can you give one group of athletes a chance to play, but not the rest. The term, inclusion, refers to the idea that the individual is included with the group. In our scenario, fall sports are the group, and each sport, are the individuals. If you want to look at it that way, then you are essentially allowing 20% of the group to acquire different opportunities. That is not equity. I do not wish for another sport to have their season stripped, but this is incorrect, and proves that we are not being given all the information. It proves that there is little correlation with the words spoken at the meeting, and the true feelings of the speakers.

Adults have always told kids that life isn't always fair. A highschool team is not punished because one student cannot keep their grades up. If they struggled in school, then that is their

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issue, and the rest of the team does not have to stop playing. Yet you are willing to punish the majority, because you won't allow a small percentage of IEP athletes, to attend school, and be included in sports. Has there been any communication with the school and these IEP learners, whether or not they would rather have no season, or not punish everyone because of their academic needs. Was there an offer given that they can participate in training, just not attend games. Questions and solutions that have yet to be determined, yet the decision to strip sports from everyone was fairly simple.

You are wrong here and it continues to be proven.

We understand that you think you are doing the right thing, but what you haven taken away from us cannot be understood or explained. Your logic has so many flaws. You say you are protecting, but there is exposure everywhere. You say transportation is an issue, yet you approve intramurals with the same issues and no solution. Thank you to the few members, Jon and Ryan, who have heard the rational reasons for having sports, looked for solutions, and voted in favor of fall sports.

We ask you to really think about what was said. Has the board of health provided their recommendation to the school committee? Most other schools had this opportunity, and they stated the importance of having a season for their mental health and the limited risk. We have done our research. We know the facts. We know we are not the risk. The real risks come from being in a confined space, without a mask, with contact, for more than 15 minutes. None of which applies to us.

We feel the last meeting did not come to a conclusion. It was proposed that an intramural season would satisfy, and some had more questions before voting. We are here to say intramural is not an acceptable solution, and we do not want it. We request that you take to heart what we have said and vote again.

If our message is not read, and our voices are not heard, then we will send our unified message

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to all news outlets, who will demonstrate the injustice we have experienced during the last few weeks.

The boys and girls soccer team.