

**Task Force to Study the Advisability of Starting the School Year After Labor
Day
Thursday, April 17, 2014 (11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.)
DEDO Large Conference Room
Dover, Delaware
MINUTES**

Attendance:

Glenn Byrum, Grotto Pizza Inc.
Susan Francis, Delaware School Boards Association
Senator Gerald Hocker
Terri Hodges, Delaware PTA
Adele Jones, DSEA
Phyllis Kohel, Milford School District
Paul Kuhns, Deli Days Food Service
Keith Martin, Hotel Rehoboth
Linda Parkowski, Delaware Tourism Office
Ronald Pierce, Delaware School Boards Association
Eric Ruth, Delaware Tourism Office
Representative Stephen Smyk

The meeting of the Task Force was called to order by Chairperson Linda Parkowski at 11:08 a.m.

Approval of 2/26/14 Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting was made and approved by Paul Kuhns, seconded and approved by all.

Guest Speaker

- Linda Parkowski introduced the guest speaker via conference call, Kristian Harvard, to the board. Kristian represents the Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association (VHTA) as the Director of Government Affairs.
- The group was provided with documents from the VHTA—Pre-Labor Day School Start Dates Negatively Affect Family Travel, Economic Contribution of Virginia's Travel and Tourism Industry and the Economic Consequences of Shortening the High Tourism Season, Tourism Generates Instant Revenue for Virginia and Promote the High Tourism Season.
- Kristian discussed the history of the legislation in Virginia which was first introduced in 1987 and which eventually led to all Virginia public schools being mandated to start after Labor Day.

- There are currently 4 types of waivers in Virginia to allow schools to start before Labor Day and are handled on a case by case basis. The waiver legislation is included in this email.
- Virginia has not seen any impact on education performance for the students by starting after Labor Day.
- A positive economic impact has occurred with 210,000 jobs supported by tourism dollars.
- In 2010 the Defined Start Study was completed that reflected a \$369 million economic impact loss if the legislation was repealed.
- Virginia has also been able to shift general funds to teacher salaries and education with support for 13,000 teachers and the ability to save schools money.
- Virginia has seen a 37% energy savings with starting school after Labor Day.
- Virginia's school year is 180 days and it is up to each school to decide on their school calendar starting after Labor Day.

Delaware Task Force Discussion

- Phyllis Kohel, Milford School District pointed out that Delaware requires 1060 hours vs. Virginia's 990 hours of school time.
- Glenn Byrum, Grotto Pizza, commented that Virginia has been studying this for 20 years with little negative impact on education. He questioned if there has been any negative feedback in Virginia. Kristian stated that the pushback has been on the issue of local autonomy and the argument on student success. They developed research to prove that there has been no impact on student performance. Also, travel and vacation planning are negatively impacted when school starts before Labor Day.
- Adele Jones, DSEA, asked for more information on waiver system in Virginia and what is VAEA's position. Kristian stated VAEA also was for local control.
- Senator Hocker sees no negative impact on starting school after Labor Day. Schools in his districts have proven that it can be done. He also pointed out that education is a very large part of the state budget and that any increase in economic activity will be beneficial to school districts. Education system is 1/3 of state budget and will be in trouble if we cannot create more jobs. Senator Hocker also stated that we are in the highest cost per student and the lowest tier in test score results; we need to get more 'bang for our buck'.
- Phyllis Kohel clarified that there is a 10.7 day difference between Delaware and Virginia
- Senator Hocker questioned if funds are used effectively while revenue is decreasing; Phyllis agreed since Milford has already lost \$1.9 million and school referendums are hard to get passed.
- Linda Parkowski reminded the group that education is only 1 of 3 tasks they are charged to report on.
 - The 3 tasks are:
 1. The education system, including the academic calendar, planning, administration and facilities use
 2. The economy
 3. Summer tourism

- Glenn inquired about local control and if schools start at the same time they can then develop their own calendars to meet the days needed. The answer was yes.
- Senator Hocker reported that the due date of the task force recommendation has changed and is September 30th; it has passed the Senate and currently in the House.

Path Forward Discussion

- Information need on Virginia school waivers; 30% of schools get waivers
- Open discussion at next meeting on your organizations position in order to deliver report to the Legislature by end of June

Public Comment

Terri Hodges, Delaware PTA pointed out that the focus should be on student based decision making. Also, since Delaware is a Common Core state a 30-40% decrease in student proficiency is expected. There is also expected to be an impact on test scores due to Common Core testing date changes which may be further enhanced if the school start date changes. PTA's membership is divided on this issue but will vote with their majority. Kristian responded that parents and students have been very positive about starting after Labor Day and how this allows for family bonding and spending time together on vacations. Terri inquired about economic impact and calendar difference. Kristian responded that the calendar difference starting before or after Labor Day is only 8 days. It is easy to be creative in working the 8 days back into the calendar. In Delaware the difference would be approximately 10 days. Terri also inquired if there are real dollar amounts of what has been funneled back into education, Kristian did not have an exact figure but education in Virginia is a high priority.

Terri later inquired of the group if New Castle students get jobs in Sussex. Paul Kuhns responded that yes they do get students from all over the state and that many families have properties in Sussex. Senator Hocker also pointed out that it affects school employees also as they get hired at the summer locations.

Mike Hanlon, retired educator and grandparent, inquired about data availability for increased jobs for students if there is a post labor day start as well as any changes to sports mandated start dates.

Ron Pierce, retired education and DSBA board member, noted that he experienced both school starting in the late 90's before and after Labor Day and that he could not see a difference in the students and that they would fidget at the end of the school year no matter when it is. He also does not see the temperature as an issue. Costs for utilities and education are always increasing so anything that we can do to improve the economic impact to help the students is a positive.

Sean Carlson, WDDE was in attendance.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m.