Meeting:  NYSPHSAA COVID-19 TASK FORCE

Date:  Tuesday, June 30, 2020 Video Conference Call

Topics Discussed:
Recap of June 10th meeting, Updates from Governor’s Office, NYS Ed Dept, NYS Dept of Health, Proposal to Address Six Potential Scenarios for Athletics in 2020-21, ezSCN App presentation, Social Media & Media Inquiries, Next Steps for this Committee

1. Welcome
NYSPHSAA President Paul Harrica called the meeting to order at 9:02 am. He noted the many inquiries the NYSPHSAA staff is getting since the last meeting. Paul noted that at this time there is very little definitive information to examine as we wait for guidance from NYSED and Governor Cuomo’s office.

2. Review of June 10th meeting
Dr. Robert Zayas introduced special guests at today’s meeting: Paul Bailey from Total Concussion Management, Jenna Halpin, a student at Locust Valley High School who serves on the NYSPHSAA Student Athlete Advisory Committee, and NYSPHSAA’s two interns Laurel Hay and Tim McCarthy. He recapped the June 10th COVID-19 Task Force meeting. Robert noted he updated the summer guidance document after receiving information from Governor Cuomo’s office pertaining to a prohibition of on-campus activity hosted/operated by the school. Scott Barker asked about the interpretation on hosting outside groups on school campuses. Robert responded that he will reach out to the Governor’s Office to ask for additional information. Adam Stoltman echoed that additional clarification would be beneficial for the member schools throughout the state.

3. Update from Governor’s Office Terrance Pratt / Lobbyist Kevin Banes
Paul Harrica indicated Terrance Pratt could not be on the call today and asked if NYSPHSAA Lobbyist Kevin Banes had any new information. Kevin spoke with the Governor’s Office yesterday and said there is no additional information at this time and stressed patience at this time.

Paul Harrica introduced Karen Hollowood, Anne Lanoue and Darryl Daily from the NYSED. Darryl noted NYSED extended certification deadlines so coaches can complete requirements before the winter season. Certifications can be done online or in-person. NYSED noted they do not have information on the national organizations but there’s a COVID web site that has pertinent information. He noted coaches should reference the national agency where they got certified. He also said there are physical therapy and physician offices that are certifying as well with proper social distancing. Robert clarified psychomotor skills must be demonstrated in person. Karen mentioned the Board of Regents Re-Opening Schools Task Force has met on four occasions and guidance is expected following the July 13th Board of Regents meeting.
Karen indicated there has been no guidance provided pertaining to the screening of students for COVID-19 related signs and symptoms. Karen noted at this time, the CDC is not requiring screening. Karen brought attention to many logistical concerns related to screening (i.e. reliability and validity, when screening is conducted, equity and language barriers, compliance with Ed Law 2 D, etc.). Robert confirmed the guidance will be released on July 13th. Karen said it presented to the Board of Regents on July 13th and is typically released the same day. Robert asked if it was going to be streamed. Karen was not sure.

5. Update from NYS Department of Health – Jill Dunkel
Paul Harrica introduced Director for the Division of Nutrition, Jill Dunkel, for an update. Jill stated she did not have any updates at this time. She thanked Karen for allowing her to participate in their Task Force meetings. She said they are continuing to be involved in a high level of testing and that tests are showing a low infection rate in our state at this point. There is a concern about transmission in young adults. She said NYSDOH is encouraged by the guidance on summer camps, daycare, recreation and public transportation that has recently come out.

6. Proposal to Address Potential Scenarios
Paul Harrica referenced the potential scenarios the committee was provided. Robert referenced the scenarios were presented at the June 10th meeting and that these are simply starting points. He wanted the NYSPHSAA membership to also see the scenarios, so they understood the work of the Task Force and that contingency planning is being conducted. Paul indicated schools and sections will ultimately decide on participation of their sports programs. He asked for feedback.

Robert indicated #1 was the most optimistic. #2 and #3 provide some form of athletics, while #4 and #5 do not provide for athletics in the fall. He spent time on #2 and #3 since they have numerous complexities including venue sharing and athlete participation. He indicated revisions are expected soon from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee pertaining to the risk assessment of sports (low, moderate, high). Robert referenced Track & Field and why it may be beneficial to have it in the fall which is considered a low risk sport. #4 and #5 would call for the start of the school year without athletic participation which may result in condensing all three seasons into three ten-week seasons. #6 was a scenario that made each section independent in their decision to decide on athletics.

Dennis Burkett asked about the proposal that moved sports to different seasons (softball and baseball in the fall) and was concerned the least likely season to happen is fall which could mean baseball and softball may be lost again if fall sports were canceled. He also indicated the concern of shortage of officials with shifting sports seasons in addition to facility sharing for sports now competing for time in the same place. He was in favor of three sports seasons to be condensed into ten weeks each. Robert explained there will be careful thought into any of the proposals and recommendations and decisions will not be made too early in case things change.

Jim Mackin agreed with Dennis and had a concern about moving seasons around and the volume of students going out for certain teams. He also indicated July 13th is too late for schools to receive guidelines from NYSED and the Governor’s Office, and that there can’t be mixed messages about what is permitted and what is not. Paul Gasparini amplified what Jim said and stated he preferred to have a plan now so school leaders can work from that and pivot later if needed. Robert referenced comments from the Governor on “Meet the Press” Sunday noting there was still two months left prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Ivan Katz commented the Governor’s Office cannot make a decision because the virus is changing every day. He noted to look at all the options because what is happening nationally is driving the conversation. Adam Stoltman suggested coming up with several scenarios so we have flexibility. He said we should explore expanding the season into July to give more time for participation. Jim Wright suggested abandoning any plan for the fall and rather set a later start to sports. Jim Mackin agreed so there is a plan for us to operate from but can always adjust. Robert noted there is danger in making a decision too early and too late. Chris Ceruti agreed with Robert to keep the August 24th fall sports start date but also have a
later start date. Her concern was the season adjustment scenario and not being able to have football, wrestling and boys lacrosse at the same time because of multi-sport athletes and facility concerns. Dennis Burkett said he doesn’t think we need to abandon August 24th as the start date but should look at “polishing” the condensed season plan.

Scott Barker commented that Robert’s document was a plan to start from with phases in it and the scenarios happening as we gather more information closer to the school year. Carl Normandin stated maybe these scenarios can be put in a planning document with deadlines to help us plan. He indicated whatever way you cut it, 2020-21 is a transition year with numerous changes we have to adjust to. Paul Harrica noted schools will ultimately decide on their offerings of sports. Robert noted the Governor may also modify what low, medium and high-risk sports are. Carl Normandin preferred not to share the possible options outside the Task Force yet and thought it would be best to have more discussion as a Task Force and put in a plan. Jim Mackin agreed. Adam Stoltman also agreed and also suggested removing dates in the scenarios.

Robert asked the group what they thought was the next step. Ivan Katz said the public perceives every time we meet something should happen and that we should inform them we are evaluating current information and we should be careful what we’re sharing since people may think it’s a finalized plan. Paul Gasparini agreed wholeheartedly and asked what happens if one school offers a sport and another school doesn’t. He suggested an FAQ document. Chris Ceruti said we should think about 4-5 seasons, so we keep participation balanced and athletes don’t have to choose between sports that get moved to the same seasons. Robert respectfully disagreed that we shouldn’t release anything and feels it may be helpful to release some scenarios, so everyone has a place to start from. Jim Mackin said we can make both work in releasing some information but indicate we are awaiting guidance from the Governor. He fears if a detailed plan is sent out it could cause chaos. Scott Barker said we need to take into consideration if you put this plan out to the membership, what happens with a coach who is a three-sport coach. He also noted it would be helpful to get feedback from our membership. Ivan Katz indicated people are looking for direction but we don’t have direction. We do not have enough information at this point and should be careful how we put things out. Adam Stoltman said it would only be fair to give our administrators some sort of plan so they can start from some point.

Paul Harrica clarified the group’s next steps: Have Robert revise the possible scenarios document, indicate these are just concepts being considered, and ensure the first two paragraphs explain these are possibilities and everything is contingent upon the Governor’s guidance.

MOTION made by Ivan Katz to accept the next steps. SECOND by Jim Wright. DISCUSSION: Chris Ceruti asked if there is anything else, we can put in these documents? Robert said he would certainly like to have the Task Force add proposals and ideas.

Paul Harrica said Robert will revise the document and make it clear it is a work in progress and we are looking for feedback from our membership. Jim Wright asked where we share the information. Robert explained he will revise the document and it could be released by each Task Force member to the people they represent (ex: superintendents, principals, athletic directors, etc.). Adam Stoltman said it may be wise not to list definitive decision dates in case we get clearance to start sports sooner. Ivan Katz said if we include caveats ad nauseum that indicate this can change with the Governor’s orders or “if permitted by the Governor” it will avoid people running with it. VOTE: 21 in favor. 0 against.

7. ezSCRN by TCM Platform Demo
Todd Nelson introduced Paul Bailey from TCM and gave a brief overview of the app ezSCRN. Paul gave a demonstration of the app. Todd reported that Karen Hollowood (who had to leave the call) wanted to reinforce the app meets the security requirements they are looking for. Robert expressed a desire for the COVID-19 Task
Force to discuss the app at the next Task Force meeting and potentially recommend it to the membership as a beneficial way to screen students if a school district wanted to implement a screening tool.

8. Media Inquiries & Social Media
Robert Zayas reiterated any inquiries should be directed to him or NYSPHSAA Director of Communication Chris Watson, who has set up a video press conference for Robert to answer questions about the Task Force later this afternoon.

9. Next Steps
Paul Harrica indicated Robert will make revisions to the document, the Task Force will review it to provide feedback, then Task Force members can release to their constituents when it is final. Paul said all we can do is hope for the best with the Governor’s Office providing information and guidance for schools sooner rather than later.

10. Next Meeting
Robert Zayas will send out a survey to ask about a future meeting date in July.

OTHER
- Adam Stoltman asked if Superintendents could be sent the potential scenarios document before it is distributed to the membership.
- Kathy asked if we should plan a two-hour time slot for future meetings. Paul confirmed yes.

ADJOURNMENT - Paul adjourned the meeting at 11:12 am

Minutes respectfully taken and submitted by NYSPHSAA Assistant Director Joe Altieri; reviewed/approved by President and Chair Paul Harrica & Executive Director Dr. Robert Zayas on 6/30/20 @ 5:51 pm prior to distribution