

RSU 56 Board of Directors Minutes
Board Meeting Amended Agenda- January 10, 2023- 6:30pm
(This meeting will be held at Dirigo High School. The board meeting will
also be available via zoom and live streamed on Youtube.)

School Board Members Present: Barbara Chow, Tim Kelly, Don Whittemore, Angela Cushman, Elizabeth Kelly, Larry Whittington, Deanna Dolloff, Bruce Ross, Carl Lueders, Joe Conron (Student Rep)

School Board Members Absent: Marianne Young, Natalie Sneller, Peru (Vacancy)

Staff Attending: Pam Doyen, Cathy Arsenault, Brian Keene, Charlie Swan, Gena Cloutier, James Hamalainen, Michele/Chris Araujo, Brianne Johnston, Stacey Gilbert, Andrea Palmer, Beth Edwards, Rachel Buck, Heidi Broomhall

Also Attending: Students: Isaiah Lovelace, Nela Dailey, Jasmine Tripp, Skylar O'Connor, Amaya Child, Alexis Cote, Ruthiegene Lovelace, Marianne Hutchinson

CALL TO ORDER AND THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Barbara Chow, Board Chair, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:30pm. Audience introductions were made. Everyone on zoom and Youtube were welcomed.

DHS Choir performed the National Anthem and Ob-bla-di

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Motion to add the following: **VII Supt. Report, Reporting of New Hires**

Motion: B. Ross

Seconded: L. Whittington

Motion Carried

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

1. Minutes of the December 13, 2022 Board Meeting

Motion: B. Ross

Seconded: D. Whittemore

Not Voting: L. Whittington, A. Cushman

Motion Carried

PUBLIC COMMENTS

3 Students: N. Dailey, A. Child & S. O'Connor spoke about the cell phone policy. They said they understand the cell phone policy and not having them on in classes...The issue they have is not being able to use other devices, such as their headphones. A couple of them stated that they use them to help with their anxiety and when they have them on with the music it helps to calm them. One student stated that their family is going through a rough time with an ill family member. They have a group chat and it's important for her to be part of it and know what is happening. Another student stated that she has mental health & health problems and sometimes throughout the day she may need her device.

COMMUNICATIONS

Pam communicated to the board regarding a letter she received from JMG (Jobs for Maine Graduates) regarding their request to have RSU 56 pay a portion of the cost.

JMG School Contribution Update:

We greatly value the partnership that JMG has with RSU56. Since the inception of our work together in 2018, JMG has been able to underwrite the entire cost for both programs at Dirigo High School as part of a statewide contract with DHHS which will be ending in 2025. One of the expectations of our agreement with DHHS is to build a 33% shared contribution from each of the districts in order to achieve sustainability. We are in the process of working with each of our school partners to ensure that each contributes \$27,000 per program per year by 2025-26- and would like to progress to that amount over the next 3 academic years.

- **The total contribution amount for your district for the 2023-24 school year will be \$13,500.**
- **The 2024-25 contribution will be \$25,000**
- **The 2025-26 contribution will be \$27,000**

We recognize that every school budget dollar is precious, so we don't ask for this increase lightly and we expect that this will be the only increase for the foreseeable future! We have worked hard to minimize any additional burdens placed on schools- especially in light of the COVID pandemic. Since our last contribution increase, we have added 41 core programs at schools across Maine and increased our Specialist starting salaries by \$7K. The total cost of a core program is now nearly \$86K annually, meaning that the local school contribution still covers **less than 33%** of the actual cost. The remaining expenses are paid for by our state wide partnerships with the DOE, DHHS, and many corporations, foundations and generous individuals that also see value in our approach.

We truly value our partnership with you and your school district, and we realize the success of JMG and our students would not be possible without your help.

Pam told the board this will need to be considered as an “Add-on” to the budget since it will be new to the budget from years past.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Initial 2023-24 Budget Conversation

Pam did a presentation on the initial budget process overview.

Key Considerations:

1. What's best for our students?
2. How do we support our current employees?
3. How do we respond to community concerns?

Process:

1. Administrators/Directors prepare budgets for their building/department.
2. Administrators/Directors meet with the Superintendent and Business Manager to review budgets.
3. Business Manager will compile a full budget.
4. Board will provide Administrative team a target
5. Administrative team will review full budget and adjust if needed.

6. Board to review full budget and “add-ons”
7. Board votes on FY 24 Budget to move forward to voters.

FY 24 Budget Timeline:

February 14, 2023- Budget presentations from DES, TWKDMS, DHS and Curriculum

February 28, 2023- Budget presentations from BGT and Special Education

March 14, 2023- Budget presentations from Technology, Nutrition and All Other

March 28, 2023- *Special Budget Workshop (invite constituents to work together, if possible)* Full budget to Board.

April 4, 2023- *Snow date for Special Budget Workshop*

April 11, 2023- Board to vote on Budget

April 25, 2023

May 9, 2023- Board to sign Warrants

May 23, 2023- Budget Hearing/Validation Meeting

June 13, 2023- Budget Referendum Vote in all four towns

Positives:

1. Potentially remain at 55% of EPS costs covered by state.
2. No unknown contract increases
3. DES interest payment will be about \$30,000 less
4. We have our \$277,500 for balance forward for the FY24 budget.

Uncontrollable Costs:

Water	Propane
Sewer (33% increase in Dixfield)	Negotiated contract increases
Heating Oil	Classroom Supplies
Diesel	Electricity (possibly 3x higher)
Gasoline	Health Insurance

Initial Board direction and thoughts on the FY 24 Budget?

Pam stated that the administrators are coming in super Lean....she is quite concerned with the uncontrollable increases that it is going to be a challenge is keep it as low as it's been the last couple of years.

B. Chow asked when the electricity negotiation would be done? Would it be before or after the budget? Pam replied that it will most likely be during the budget process.

Kenny has already started working on the cost of diesel. When he gets the best possible price he will lock in but it won't be as low as it's been the last couple of years.

B. Ross- The uncertainties are going to make it very difficult this year. The energy crisis we're dealing with is going to be an uncertain factor. We're going to need to be aware and prepared to be able to keep everything running. We may have to “overbudget” on some of these line and when we get final numbers it will be a little less. Feels sure we're not going to be as fortunate as we were this year with the prices. Preparing everyone that it's going to be a rough budget year for energy as we all see in our own homes.

D. Whittemore- I know things are going to go up that we don't have any control over. I also know if we're going to get a budget passed we're going to have to be careful how we raise it. We're going to have to trim everything we can in the beginning. If we don't get it down where it's reasonable the people will just vote it down and we won't have a budget to get passed.

Pam stated she has asked the administrators to come in flat, if at all possible. She knows that Mr.

Swan and Mr. Long and her are working on it in their buildings. She knows it will be Impossible for Kenny to come in flat in his budget. We're not going to come in asking for new things,...New things always go on the "add-on" list. When you see initial budget it will be what we currently have with the increase in salaries/benefits and any other line that we have control over will be kept flat. Since becoming RSU we have the positions that we can cut!. Anything else will impact what we can offer. We are pretty lean in our buildings in terms of staffing. She doesn't feel we're overstaffed in any building. If anyone retires or resigns we have serious conversations on whether we fill that position or not. Having the tough conversations as we go. I just want to make it clear as we go that we are Not Overstaffed. To start going backwards will impact programming.

C. Lueders- What are our projected numbers for students for next year? On energy & utilities a good figure would be about 17 ½ % increase, just his opinion.

B. Keene- The enrollment currently is 753- Looking at 745-750 for next year

B. Chow- feels it's going to be hard to do a percentage. We don't know how much the increase for gas and other utilities will be. Barbara asked if we this is the last year for COVID \$ or do we have one more year.

Pam stated there is one more year for the COVID funding.

B. Ross- just to follow up with what was mentioned about energy...one thing that has been positive for us is that we have done everything possible to update. We put new boilers in, new hot water heaters. All of our transportation, we have made the fleet newer, we've replaced the old buses. We've saved a lot of money on having to do a lot of repairs on older equipment. Over the last 3 years we've made our facilities as efficient as possible. This will hopefully offset and not using an old boiler that would use twice as much energy as the new. We just don't know what the price is that we'll pay for fuel.

A. Cushman- asked if Pam could go into a little more detail about JMG and what the costs would be compared to the past.

Pam: initially when JMG came to the board about adding Jobs for Maine Grads to RSU 56 there was no cost to the district in terms of the program. We basically just covered if they needed a sub or if they were going on a field trip. They have expanded, they have added extended learning opportunities. They have sponsors that pay for JMG. Those sponsors wanted to see that the schools find enough value in the programs to at least pay for a portion of it. Some schools are already paying that portion, Pam pushed back and held out last year. She met with them again this year and felt she needed to bring it to the board that they are still asking for us to come on and eventually pay 33% of the cost of the program. Our students find value in the program. They do resume building, mock interviews. They do a lot of preparation for real world work force when they leave DHS. It is a good program and even if we get up to the \$27,000 it is a good deal for DHS to have the program for that cost. We initially didn't hear that we would be paying for any of this when they gave the initial presentation.

A.Cushman asked how many students participate in JMG? I'm in support of it and think it's a benefit for some of our students.

Pam: initially JMG was at the MS & at the HS. We had so many students interested at the HS that we transitioned our JMG provider to just the HS. She has a full load. She basically has 6 classes of JMG, most of which have 12-15 or 16 students in them.

L.Kelly- Just to clear it up...Does JMG do what Guidance counselors used to do? Like skills for after graduation?

Pam: We still do some of that in our Future Perspectives Class and Cougar Paw. JMG is really to prepare kids to be ready to go into the workforce. This is hands on for kids, the teacher is here every day.

B. Chow- Feel like we need to see what the budget will look like with energy costs, when we get them.

Pam: Plan is to come in with the budget „with what we have, what it would cost to keep it and then any “add-ons” that we would have asked for, the way we have done it in the past if that is what the board is comfortable with. Again, Pam has directed the administrators to hold every line steady that they can. If the board is fine with that, that is what will happen. Does not know what that number will look like at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Region 9 Updates (Bruce Ross/Angela Cushman)

Met on January 4th, the first Wednesday of every month. Had a wonderful light show at Christmas time. The Adult Ed director will be leaving. Looking for someone to replace her. Did hire a new Administrator Asst for Adult Education. She is starting now. The Superintendent’s did not meet during Christmas break but will be meeting soon. They have been having some different companies come in and talk to students, Nine Dragons was one that went in. The solar company contacted the board to give them information to see if they wanted to sign on. There was a lot of mixed reviews from the board members. C. Lueders asked about the enrollment. Bruce said he didn’t have numbers with him but staying about where they were. Brian reported that we have 36 students from DHS going to Region 9.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Superintendent’s Report:

Pam reported that she attended the chorus concert at the Church on the Hill. Attended the chorus from DES- K through grade 6 which was held at DHS as well as the middle school and the high School bands. They did a phenomenal job all the way up through. Thank the board for supporting music and for Charity Webster and Jim Hamalainen for working tirelessly to move our music program forward in RSU 56. This Thursday & Friday Pam will be at the Maine School Superintendent’s Association Winter Convocation in Portland. The focus of the two days is “Leading with Empathy and Authenticity”. She will remain available by phone or email.

Administrator’s Report: Gena Cloutier, Nutrition Director
SY 22-23

Transition Back to NSLP

- NSLP- National School Lunch Program, we have now transitioned back to the traditional lunch program. The biggest change people outside of the nutrition department would see is no meals sent home.
- The waivers to allow for non-congregate feeding have ended. (If we needed to close school for a COVID related reason Gena could apply for a waiver)
- Reimbursement rates for Breakfast \$2.76, Lunch \$4.43 across the board

State of Maine now pays the parents share of the meal

Fresh Fruit and Veggie Program

Once again we have been selected to operate the USDA funded program. This is a grant that is intended to introduce students to a wide variety of fresh produce.

This program is being offered four days a week at both the elementary and middle schools.

We work closely with a supplier to introduce our students to produce they may not otherwise be able to try.

Dragon Fruit, Ugli Fruit, Dino Melons

Child & Adult Care Food Program

We are once again running this program at DES for the after school program. Students are offered a “Super Snack” which may consist of a “lunchable”, Quick Pick, tortilla chips and salsa, cereal and fruit.

Reimbursement rates for this program is \$4.33 per meal.

Smart Snacks

We are now running the A la Carte snack program at both the middle and high schools.

We are selling items that meet smart snack standards set forth by the USDA. All items are required to be under certain calorie count, sodium count and be whole grain. With this program we are making scratch made whole grain cookies.

Meals

By December 21 we had served 22,334 students breakfast and 33,020 lunches for a student population of 775. We are averaging 310 breakfast a day and 455 lunches along with sending out FFVP snacks and CACFP snacks. Our meal averages are climbing each month.

Supply Chain Assistance Monies

Due to the supply chain issues we have opted to receive funds from the USDA to help defray costs. This grant money has been offered to each school district. Funds are calculated by student population. For SY 22 we received \$17,310.67. We have recently received our round two of assistance in the amount of \$17,575.40.

These funds are to be spent of minimally processed food produced in the US

We have been using funds to pay milk invoices

Commodities Monies

We received over \$45,000 in funds to be spent of brown box items, DOD Fresh or NOI items.

Brown box- Meats, cheeses, vegetables, canned and frozen fruits.

DOD Fresh- Fresh produce we are able to order once a week from a central carrier

NOI- Net Off Invoice- a discount applied to a final product, example premade pizza, French toast, chicken patties.

Audits

We have made it through all program audits. Our programs were audited for the following programs over the course of the year-summer, CACFP, SNLP and procurement review. Minor infractions that have been rectified.

New Menu Items

Lots of scratch cooking going on-

Homemade rolls and biscuits along with utilizing wraps to make Taquitos

Pizza Crust

Meatballs

New “theme days” at the middle and high levels- Soup, Mexican, Asian, American, Italian Beef Stew with local beef, fish from the Gulf of Maine, scratch meals to hit the theme of the day.

Fully Staffed

For the first time in three years we are fully staffed and stable. We also have a couple of people willing to sub.

We have 8 employees ranging from 3 hours to 8 hours a day

New and Exciting Things

New freezer for the middle school

Meal vending machine- would connect to the computer system. It could be down the hall at the high school. Breakfast & lunches could be in it. Possibly after school snacks down the road.

C. Lueders: What is the average cost of breakfast/lunch? Gena: doesn't have that number but well within the plan

B. Chow: Know we used to get apples locally..Are there any other fruit/veg we are getting from local farmers? Gena: Have been working with Berry Fruit Farm from Livermore, he's out of produce this week. When buying from Berry Fruit Farm, can get back \$1 for every \$3 spent. siito Have bought some stew beef from Conants. Have gotten fish from the Gulf of Maine. Fishermen from the coast of Maine donate fish to the school systems.

B. Ross: Curious on the vending machines. Gena: the vending machine we are first starting with is being given to us. Gena put in for a grant. The grant was not awarded but they are willing to fund the machine if it is used for the after school program. Getting a free machine from another school district. It's an older version but it will hook into the computer system. It will be filled with a reimbursable meal. The reason for going that way is a person doesn't have to be standing there and it can be placed down at the other end of the hall and get some students there that may take some food.

B. Chow: Does every school get scratch food? Some of the meals that are all scratch goes to all three schools. Some are just offered at just the middle and high school.

B. Ross: How is the nutrition dept doing? Are there any big items that will be needed this year?

Gena: Not sure about the dishwasher. Not sure if it can be repaired or if it will need to be replaced. The refrigerator/freezer may need to be replaced, will have to speak with Kenny about that.

A lot has been replaced in the high school kitchen.

Reporting of New Hires:

Katie Morse, DES Special Education Learning Facilitator

Heather Merchant, TWKDMS Special Education Learning Facilitator

Tasha Chapman, DES Special Education Learning Facilitator

Devon (Fletcher) Nelson, DES Title 1a Learning Facilitator

Grace (Timberlake) Cookson, DES Title 1a Learning Facilitator

Kaitlynn Woollam, DES Special Education Learning Facilitator

Patrice Parker, DES ESSER behavior support position for rest of the school year

L. Whittington: asked about these positions. Pam explained that at the last board meeting the job description was voted on by the board. It is a transition position until they get their Ed Tech III certification.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Student Representative Report- Joe C. Athletics: Boys Varsity BBall are 9-0. Girls BBall are working hard...game tonight. Cross Country Ski team is struggling with the lack of snow.
Phone policy: some conversation about it. Heard that high school especially is about preparing for adult life, where no one can tell them they can't have their phone so they should learn to be responsible with it rather than not be able to have it. On the other side Joe has talked to teachers. Some feel it's a relief- some don't like the restrictiveness of the policy, where if a student is done with their work they could have their phone.
Next Friday the 1st semester of the school year is ending.
2. Policy Committee- Not met
3. Finance Committee- Not met. We'll know more on how things look when the heads of the departments/schools give their figures.
4. Curriculum Committee- Not met
5. Buildings & Grounds Committee- Meeting Jan 13th at 1pm
6. Negotiations Committee- Nothing
7. Personnel Committee- N. Sneller N/A
8. Ad-hoc Committee- Not sure of next meeting

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

L. Kelly asked how the buildings made out through the last rain/wind storm? No issues?

Pam stated that a custodian checked on each building during the day on Saturday when the weather was supposed to be really windy/raining. No issues in any of the buildings.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Enter into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. subsection 6A to discuss the evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools.

Motion: B. Ross

Seconded: L. Whittington

Motion Carried

Entered into executive session at 7:42 pm

Exited executive session at 8:17pm

1. Motion pertaining to executive session, if applicable

B. Ross made a motion to extend the Superintendent's contract another year, which would bring her out 3 years beyond this year.

Seconded: T. Kelly

Motion Carried

ADJOURNMENT

1. Motion to adjourn

Motion: B. Ross

Seconded: D. Whittemore

Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm

