

# Northern Adirondack Central School District

December 8, 2020 – 6:00 PM Big Gym in Elementary

Regular Meeting of the Board of Education

Ellenburg, NY

## Roll Call:

Phalon Miner-Present  
Bryan Trombley-Present  
Steven Bartlemus- Present  
Willie Venne- Present  
Trevor Finley- Present  
Mark Decose- Present

## Others Present:

James Knight, Jr. - Superintendent  
Brian Tousignant - Business Manager  
Richard Moore  
Brett Smith  
Justin Rider  
Amanda Rider  
Richard Harriman Sr.

## Absent Excused:

Paul Gilmore

Mr. Miner Board of Education's Vice President, called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM.

Attendance was taken by Brittany LaBombard, District Clerk, Six Board of Education members were present for this evening's meeting. With one excused absents Mr. Gilmore, Board of Education's President.

## Presentations:

### **FY 19/20 External Audit Report- Stephen Wood, CPA (Boulrice & Wood CPAs, PC)**

Our audit was for the year 2019-2020 with a modified opinion meaning that there was no modifications to the information that Mr. Tousignant gave. The district is in good order knowing the fiscal situation here at Northern Adirondack. He thanked Mr. Tousignant and Mr. Knight for a very tidy audit that was completed a month and a half earlier than last. For any questions he would be happy to answer, Mr. Tousignant has his information if needed.

A motion was made by Mr. DeCoste seconded by Mr. Bartlemus and passed unanimously to go into Executive Session, at 6:05 PM. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss a matter of collective negotiations pursuant to article 14 of civil service law (The Taylor Law).

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. Finley seconded by Mr. DeCoste and passed unanimously to come out of Executive Session, at 7:05 PM.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. Finley seconded by Mr. Trombley, to pass meeting minutes from previous meetings.

- October 20, 2020 Regular Board Meeting Minutes
- November 10, 2020 Regular Board Meeting Minutes

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

### **Superintendent Knight's Report.**

I apologize as it is a lengthy one. Good evening I will start this report with information shared and discussed during the Clinton County CSO's weekly meeting with the Clinton County Health Department. This morning we learned that Clinton County went over 100 active cases number for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time with 21 new cases yesterday and 5 double digit days since last Tuesday. This was predicted as it follows the incubation period directly after a gathering holiday. We are not currently an area deemed a "yellow zone cluster" which requires a 3.5% or higher positivity rate of tests for the 10 consecutive day period of time with at least 12 new cases per day, however we are trending that direction with a 3.3% positivity rate and a 12.7 new daily case average. The health department expects double digit days to continue through this weekend at least. The 9 Clinton County Schools reported 31 new positive test between students, teachers, and staff yesterday on their state reporting dashboard. These numbers are based on when school districts become aware of a positive lab tests, NAC was lucky to have only 1 which was of a fully remote student. What we need to be aware of is situations which is going on in our bordering districts. They currently have 4 confirmed cases with 2 more pending and others home sick resulting in over 100 quarantine and the most disturbing point being that all of their cases have been unrelated which almost prompted the CCHD to do something they have not yet done, which would have been to place the entire district in quarantine. The thought of that idea made all involved very uncomfortable, however the CCHA said they might be forced to go that route in future situations, because it would be an effective way to minimize and possibly eliminate any further spread. Like NACS, Plattsburgh City Schools decided on a 2 week in- person pause after Thanksgiving. Last week they were informed of 3 positive cases (2 students and 1 teacher) which would have resulted in all over 200 people being quarantined if they had been in-person. In an article from last Friday's Press Republican their superintendent stated that the aforementioned cases and others in the area justified their shift to remote learning. I would like to publicly echo that statement and follow up that John Kanoza the Clinton County Health Department Director encourages schools to take a 2 week pause after gathering holidays. Dr. Fauci actually predicts that the 2 weeks following the Christmas and New Year's holidays will lead to the greatest surge yet. With that said, I am working with our district leadership team on a plan to pause again for 2 weeks after New Year's, until Tuesday the January 19<sup>th</sup>. The announced pause allows us to determine our fate without the worry of an emergency closure which harms our elementary the most because of family planning and school planning with the possibility of teachers being quarantined and unable to produce remote lessons.

Another topic of great interest is the lack of State Health Department or Governor's Guidance on the status of the high risk winter sports. All winter sports that we have are considered "high risk" NYSPHSAA has mentioned that they might make a decision of sorts prior to the Christmas break is nothing else has been done. The rationale behind that is January 4<sup>th</sup> is the protectoral start date for high risk winter sports and with no guidance there is no start date to match. NYSPHSAA is getting tired of waiting for the state.

This Friday the NAC Drama Club will be streaming a Virtual Play – 10 Ways to Survive Life in Quarantined it will be streaming on the Broadway app on demand all day Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> and admission will be \$6.00 and must be paid for through the app. Each one of you received in your packet information on the play and we have extras if anyone else is interested in viewing the play.

On a positive note one of our high school teachers won the grand prize in- Dunkin Raise the Cup, which boots a check for \$5k for the school plus \$5k for her and a free laptop for that is worth \$1500.00, free coffee for year for the teacher and 60- \$10 gift cards to Dunkin for all her students.

At this point I would like to share a copy of the upcoming budget planning calendar and note that is will most likely be a challenge to guess more than it is normally before April this year. Despite the Governors constitutional obligation to give a predicted budget plan by January 19<sup>th</sup> it is guessed that this will be less than complete if the words of the NYS director of the budget Robert Wujica's are true. He recently said," if we get to the mid-year point with no federal AID, we'll work with the legislature to ensure school district need is accounted for in any actions going forward". A grim interpretation of this statement was given by the NYS council of school superintendents to mean- "without federal help, " withholding " to date could be converted into permanent cuts; and nay further cuts would be made in a more targeted manner". At this point there still isn't a new federal stimulus package and the one being discussed is less then what might be needed. Also the largest monthly aid payments to schools arrive after the New Year for a couple of months, which if they were cut by 20% would hurt the most. As you are aware the 20% idea is not uniformed and would impact a district like ours who relies heavily on stat aide much more than those who don't.

Mr. Knight asked Mr. Tousignant to give us a brief update regarding the budget and where we are at from his stand point.

Mr. Tousignant –

### **Handed out attached**

The front side is the small government assistance payment that was reduced by 20%. We would of normally had received \$38220.00 but this year we only received the 80% giving us \$30576.00 instead. The more telling story is on the back of the page with lots of different number to digest. But if you look half way down the page to payments by month you will see January is a

relatively small payment then the bigger payments began February and right through June. So in those 5 month we get roughly 70% of our aid for the school year. To echo what the superintendent said early it's great that we still got our full aid right till March but if they do end up doing the full blown 20% cuts for future payments it will likely happen at the worst time for us. Those five months alone add up to a little over 7 ½ million in aid and 20% cut would be basically wiping out one of the 5 payments completely so that would be million and a half dollars. There is definitely still a tremendous unknowns as you read you read on the cover page part of your packet there is still no funds received on the 19/20 Pre-K Aid receivable or on our SSBA Round 1 Claim; approx.: \$425k on those two items. Our three months of food service is roughly around \$200k that we haven't received yet months of October, November and December. So as mention the Governor is supposed to be pushing out some kind of budget information for next year. There is still a lot of uncertainty for this year let alone to try to book ahead a year. But it is what we are dealing with.

Mr. Knight thanked Mr. Tousignant.

Not to give our Governor any slack but what like Mr. Tousignant has mentioned is true this will be a different year all together and hard to get everything ready for January. If you're familiar with the budget process school districts every year put together a budget calendar and have multipliable work sections that have to be planned ahead. This year we might have a couple meeting before we even have any solid information.

At this time if there is any question regarding anything just talked about we can discuss before we move one.

Board Member -Mr. Trombley: What happens if the whole district is quarantined? Every teacher and student, what happens to the parents, do they not go to work? How does the health department interplay with parents jobs?

Mr. Knight: All Staff and students will be quarantined but parents of quarantined students will still have to go to work because they will not be under quarantined. Then becomes the issue of who will be watching my quarantined child?

Mr. Trombley: If we get to Yellow Zone can we doing testing here at the school?

Mr. Knight: We are not certified yet. We are in the process of getting certified, everyone in the area is trying. If we get to the yellow zone according to the Health Department they should have enough test for the school districts if needed.

**Financial:**

A motion was made by Mr. Bartlemus and seconded by Mr. DeCoste to accept the Schedules of Expenditures (Warrants)

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. DeCoste and seconded by Mr. Bartlemus to accept the Budget and Treasurer’s Report.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

**Questions By Board:** Mr. Trombley- Do we have room in our budget for funding new students to the BOCES Program? And is the experience prorated?

Mr. Tousignant – Yes we have room and we are billed only the days they attend.

**Reports to School Board:**

A motion was made by Mr. Trombley and seconded by Mr. Bartlemus approve the CSE recommendations.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried

**There were no updates to the following:**

- Food Service Report
- Custodial – Maintenance Report
- Student Association Reports and Bank Reconciliation Reports
- Administrators
- NATA
- CSEA

**The Board opened the meeting for public comment:**

**Richard Harriman Sr.** gave a quick update on the BOCES project. He stated that everything is running smoothly. We are on budget. He doesn’t have his board meeting till next week so apologized he didn’t have any more of an update. **Mr. Knight Made Public aware that Mr. Harriman represents Northern Adirondack CSD on the BOCES Board.**

**Justin Rider** – I have four children that attend NACS and with a wife working full time and I am running a farm remote learning is not working. Can I have a show of hands from the Board Members that have children in school?

**Amanda Rider-** So after every holiday or get together you are talking about shutting down school again.

**Mr. Knight** – typically this is not the question/ answer part to the public but being that we are on the topic I do not mind answer questions. With that being said this is not an ideal situation for our students. But putting the school on a “pause” seemed like the best decision giving the raise in cases and predictions to the aftermath of the holiday get together. Plus it gives the parents time to get everything in order versus an emergency closure. Going this route of “pause” still allows us to bring staff in and for them to prepare work for our students with no lag. Where if we closed because of a positive case our staff would not be allowed to come in and prepare work for students. I get it the remote situation is not ideal and it is evident that it is not the best learning process for some students. We prefer them here five days a week and we are fortunate enough to have our k-5 kids here the five days a week. I sympathies and I get it.

**Amanda Rider-** Well then how long are we going to keep doing this? We have been dealing with this virus for almost a year now. Are we going to be shut down for two weeks every time we have a large gathering? You are going to fail these students.

**Mr. Knight-** I don’t necessarily think that is the case. I have had questions regarding after February break. February break isn’t a time of massive gatherings but these holidays are. All of the others throughout the United States, July 4<sup>th</sup> was a big issue, Labor Day and Thanksgiving has become a major issue. The expectation of Christmas / New Year’s holiday will be one of the biggest surges yet. We are bases this off public data and information collected by experts in that field. I personal do not want to take any breaks.

**Brett Smith-** Are we going back to school on Monday?

**Mr. Knight-** Yes we are

**Brett Smith-** So my understanding is there will probably be a three week break during Christmas?

**Mr. Knight-** Two weeks beyond New Years.

**Brett Smith-** I have a middle school student. All I hear is about how long we are going to shut down or when we are going to be shut down, but nothing about getting these middle students back in school five days a week. There is other schools that have all their kids is school.

**Mr. Knight-** The only school that is doing this is Beekmantown but they still only have a percentage of their kids going fulltime and the other percentage has to remote learn all year

without a choice. The reason why 6-12 are not in school 5 days a week is because we do not have enough room. Per New York State they have to be six feet apart and wearing mask as of right now in order to get our 5<sup>th</sup> graders in school we have them in the middle school gym. That is what our numbers are based on. I would love to have more of our kids here every day. That is not ideal but seems to be working.

**Brett Smith-** There is no plan to get more kids in school?

**Mr. Knight-** Not unless they change the criteria, if they change to 3 feet instead of 6 feet we then can make some changes. But as of right now they have not made any changes. Our plan would be to bring in everyone if we could but we are not allowed to.

**Brett Smith-** I get it. It just sucks.

**Mr. Knight-** I 100% agree with you. There is not a day that goes by I wish everyone could come back.

**Richard Moore-** Some students are doing great online my daughter is fine she is in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and able to work on her own. Whereas my son is struggling he needs extra help in Math and Reading don't get me wrong the teacher is great and doing all she can do. But this is hurting him I see these kind of kids falling further and further behind. That is the part that drives me nuts. I mean we all want our kids to be better than we were.

**Mr. Knight-** There is nothing that you just said that I don't agree with. I can tell you one thing that is frustrating from this side of the table is some of the recent reports saying "it is safe for the kids to be in school and is a safer environment" It is a complement that schools are considered safe. But if someone does get sick the impact numbers are what is making this not safe. For example a student tests positive and affects two teachers and their classrooms. That is an issue.

**Richard Harriman Sr.-** Some information if you can get your chrome book to hook up to the TV it helps the kids out.

**Brett Smith-** Spectrum is getting hooked up tomorrow in Chazy Lake.

**New Business:**

A motion was made by Mr. Trombley and seconded by Mr. Bartlemus to approve next board meeting on Tuesday, January 12, 2021.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried

A motion was made by Mr. DeCoste and seconded by Mr. Bartlemus to approve FY 19/20 External Audit Report.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried

A motion was made by Mr. Finley and seconded by Mr. Trombley to adopt LGS-1 Retention.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

**The Board opened the meeting for public comment.**

**Mr. Knight-** if you have any questions that do no portent to the Board I will be happy to stay and answer those questions.

**Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Mr. DeCoste, seconded by Mr. Finley and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:50PM.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

Brittany LaBombard, District Clerk  
N.A.C.S. Board of Education