

**RSU 56 Board of Directors Minutes
Amended Board Meeting Agenda
December 8, 2020- 6:30pm**

**(This meeting will be held live at Dirigo High School. The board meeting will also be available via
livestream on the RSU 56 Facebook page.)**

School Board Members Present: Barbara Chow, Bruce Ross, Samantha Noyes, Natalie Sneller,
Brad Dyer, Don Whittemore, Joe Brissette, Larry Whittington (6:43)
Connor Weston (student rep)

School Board Member Absent: Konstantin Aslanidi, Angela Cushman, Angela Varnum, Carl Lueders

Staff Attending: Pam Doyen, Brian Keene, Cathy Arsenault, Jesse Heath,
Heidi Connelly, Beth Edwards, Bethany Meehan-Poulin, Charlie Swan,
Jason Long, Brandy Bordeaux, Cindy Petherbridge, Kristin Arsenault,
Rebecca Fletcher, Gena Cloutier, Stacey Gilbert

Also Attending: Marianne Hutchinson

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Barbara Chow, Board Chair, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:35pm. She welcomed everyone on zoom and Facebook. Also did audience introductions that were live at the meeting.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

1. Motion to adjust the agenda to include:

VII Supt. Report: Reporting out hiring of coaches

Addition of hiring of part time secretary at DES (verbal adjustment)

XI Executive Session

Motion: B. Ross

Seconded: D. Whittemore

Passed Unanimously

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

1. Minutes of the November 24, 2020 RSU 56 Board Meeting

Motion: B. Ross

Seconded: D. Whittemore

Abstain: D. Whittemore, S. Noyes

Passed

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

No communications at this time

NEW BUSINESS

1. Library project request for approval (Kristin Arsenault and Cindy Petherbridge)

Kristin and Cindy gave a presentation to the board for a New Shelf Proposal

Region 9 Shelf Project Proposal:

Goal: To have a functioning library where materials are organized, there is adequate shelf spacing, and that is not visibly overwhelming for students and staff.

To fund this project through fundraising efforts.

Project Purpose and Goals:

To provide shelving that allows for proper care and spacing of the library collections for many years to come.

Create an opportunity for a community project between Region 9 and the T.W.Kelly Middle School

To be cost effective as well as provide valuable experience for the Region 9 students.

Motivate school pride.

Why is This Necessary?

Books are overcrowded beyond weeding.

Books need to be removed from the top of shelves to reduce an over stimulating environment for learning, and avoid an unsafe situation where books can be knocked down from the top of the shelves.

The current fiction shelving is inefficient. The shelf has “lips” on either end which books can become hidden behind. In order to prevent this from happening, bookends are placed on the shelf, which reduces the shelf space by 2 inches on either side, and can damage the spines of books.

The library is the first visual the community has of the school when walking into the classroom area. Having a well organized and visually pleasing space will increase pride and sense of effective learning.

Project Steps

1. Contact Superintendent Doyen for approval

2. Contact Region 9 and see if this is a possibility ←←←

3. Have students come to the middle school and measure for shelving

4. Figure cost

5. Fundraising: “Buy a Foot” “Dedicate a Shelf”

6. Buy materials

7. Build

8. Celebration and unveiling of “New Library” around an open house.

B. Ross asked when they expect to hear from Region 9?

B. Dyer feels this is not a priority- Need to get kids back to school

B. Chow- it takes time to get in line for Region 9 to do projects. Also waiting on Region 9 to get more details

C. Petherbridge- We wanted to get our ducks in a row and looking at this as a 5 year plan. We do need to have the planning stages ready.

After much discussion it was decided there was not enough information at this time to vote. It was asked if they could get some information on cost and come back at a later time.

Motion: Did not Vote- Tabled for this meeting

OLD BUSINESS

1. COVID update (Pam Doyen)

Updating on where we are now with COVID- In Sept we had a case and we went out for 72 hours, then had 3 more cases that put us out for 14 days. Made it till almost the end of Nov, had a case went out for 72 hours. While that was being investigated we had several more cases, we went out for 14 days. We were just coming off the 14 days last week. We did not have enough BD/Cust so we came back with DES on Thurs & Friday last week. The MS & HS came back on Monday. Right now we're all in-person learning at all the schools. Our nurses at both schools have been quite busy and we have a contracted service nurse at the HS through the CARES money and she's also been very busy. Any students or staff that have any symptoms get sent home, hopefully staff don't come to work if they have any symptoms. The nurses have been quite busy through all of that.

We met as the Collaborative Team to discuss the plan when we were out 72 hours and then came back together when we were out for 14 days. We will walk through the changes the Collaborative Team worked on.

At this point in time I've not heard from parents except for them saying Thank you for keeping our kids safe and for making the decisions you're making. I've not heard from the other end as some of you have indicated that you are hearing. At this point in time parents and staff are very supportive of the times that we have to be out. I am certainly open to hearing the other side of what parents are saying.

B. Chow asked for Pam to go through how the evening tutors are working out.

Pam said that with the CARES money they were able to get Online Coordinators up to second grade at DES and one that does 3-5. We have one at the MS and one at the HS. They keep track of all the students that have chosen to learn virtually. They are the ones that do not come into our buildings at all. In addition to the Online Coordinators we have a number of people who are working evenings who are tutors. They connect with both students that are working virtually and ones that are in-person but are struggling during this time. We've tutored a number of kids since this started. A number of kids are getting back on track at all the schools.

J. Long- We have had success in transitioning a number of students back into the buildings between Oct & Nov. There are good weeks and bad weeks with all of this. I've had students that got to passing with the evening tutoring and then fall away again, with poor attendance. I've had other students that that was the thing that made a difference for them. I've constantly changed what's offered for the virtual learners who are home. I'm constantly changing what's offered and when. The biggest change we did for the MS when we went fully remote is that I sent the students home with a schedule of when they needed to be online, basically from 9-1:30. They zoomed for every class and were in with other students. That was probably the biggest change that we've had while remote. We've changed things in the manner of how we track attendance. We were able to take attendance period by period for the normal in building students that were then remote. Some of the students that have chosen virtual have done so for many reasons, some maybe due to home situations, maybe they have to help babysit younger siblings, which is why the evening tutoring may be helping so they can get the help they might not have been able to otherwise.

The last few days I'm hearing from some parents that they want their kids to go virtual, not because of anything more than if their student became a close contact they would have to quarantine according to CDC guidelines and they don't want to have to do that during the holiday season.

B. Dyer- Voiced frustration that that sounds like is always Sunshine and rainbows...Need to get kids back in school. Stop the regiment.

B. Chow asked Brad what he would like the board to do. We have changed from the beginning that if we are in yellow as a county we still open. There were not enough staff (bus drivers) to run all the buses. We opened DES when usually it was all or nothing, until we could run the buses for all the schools. I feel we have tried to adapt. I don't feel we can open and stay that way. We do have kids that are out virtually because they chose that for various reasons.

B. Dyer- I've been among thousands of people and I don't know of any one that has COVID. We need to get our "babies" back to school.

B. Ross- I guess I'm a little confused. Our schools are open. If families don't feel it's safe to send their students they don't have to but we can't go to the parents and force them to send them.

B. Dyer- They need to come back to school and interact the way they used. Not regimented.

Pam- I feel compelled to address the fact that you may not know anyone with COVID but we have students and we have staff that have been hit with this. We have students and staff that come to school everyday. It is a lot of stress, it's a weight on my shoulders to make sure staff and students are safe. It's really hard to do right now. We are doing the best we can, we have a framework that the Board approved that we are following. We have local control. We have formed the Collaborative team from many different

groups that have worked on the Return to Classroom Instruction and brought to the Board.

There was much further discussion regarding what should be done.

Larry's internet was going in and out...Back on the zoom at 7:11pm

2. Consideration of Collaborative Team recommended adjustments to the RSU 56 Return to Classroom Instruction (The Framework and recommended changes from the Collaborative team are attached to the minutes)

B. Dyer left the meeting at 7:33pm

Motion: D. Whittemore

Seconded: B. Ross

Yes- 6 No-1

Passed

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND CORRESPONDENCE

Superintendent's Report: Pam Doyen

It feels good to be back to in-person learning. Students were excited to return to school yesterday. Many students reported that they really struggle when we are in remote learning. Seriously hoping we get through to the holiday break without the need for further closures. Reminder to all community members that you can support the schools by being safe outside of school- wear your mask, so our students can stay in class.

Administrator's Report: Heidi Connelly

While navigating the legal regulations for special education services in a school district has been a challenge during the pandemic, overall the special education team for the district has done an excellent job adjusting and pushing forward. There have been many things that have resulted in increased flexibilities in our world due to the pandemic, but from a federal and state level none of those flexibilities applied to special education. All of the regulatory requirements that were in place prior to the pandemic remained in place for special education. Here are the things we have done to best meet the needs of our students and families during these challenging times.

- We've worked with parents to develop individualized remote learning plans for all students with IEPs in our district. This is a plan that is agreed upon and followed anytime the district must go remote or if a family has opted for fully remote learning.
- Along with academics we have continued to provide occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy as agreed upon in the remote learning plans when students are remote and have done so since the beginning of the pandemic.
- We have compared academic and functional data from prior to the pandemic and upon return to school this year and will be getting a third data point prior to the Christmas break for all students. We will use the data points to work with IEP teams to determine if COVID compensatory services will need to be offered on an individual basis this summer.
- We have set up BlueINk which allows us to send documents to parents electronically and for them to sign anything necessary directly on their cell phones or computers.
- We have been successfully holding our IEP meetings as scheduled since March using the Zoom platform.
- We had 12 past due evaluations from the Spring due to the unexpected shut down and have now completed all but 3 of those evaluations which are scheduled to be done before the holiday break. We have completed 3 of the 4 past due referrals as well.
- I was able to secure a complete kit along with the manipulatives for all of the Numberworlds levels with CRF funds allowing students to be able to use this math curriculum at DES without sharing materials.

Some other areas of update:

- Every 3 years the DOE audits the special education programs for a school district and this year is our year. This entails a desk audit of 20 plus files along with various other documents which must be completed by the end of January. They will then come and do an onsite visit in the Spring. I did set up professional development this Fall for all special education teachers with the DOE regarding the required paperwork and was thrilled that the guidance I have been giving teachers since my arrival in 2018 still reflects DOE expectations.
- Some of you may be aware that the speech assistant at DES who was providing direct speech services with the oversight of a speech pathologist resigned and her last day with our district was the day we left for the Thanksgiving break. I am pleased to share that this did not cause any interruption in services to students as I was able to expand our contract with Waldo County who

has already been providing excellent speech services to remote students and to all students at the middle and high school level for several years. We have hired an Ed Tech I who facilitates the

speech schedule and coordinates and collaborates with providers and teachers at DES to ensure all students are getting the speech services indicated on their IEP through the tele speech model.

- Some exciting news is that so far the data that has been shared with me indicates that many of our students have maintained their skills during these challenging times along with many that have continued to make progress. An example of this at the middle school level is that when assessed in Math only 2 of the 5 7th graders still require specially designed instruction in math as 3 scored in the average range when compared to same age peers. Many of the 6th graders scored in the normal range or only slightly low in one or two areas for reading. This is only one example of the academic growth for our students and is a great reflection of how hard our teachers and students have been working. I'm really proud of this team and to feel lucky to be part of it.

B. Chow- 2 questions: One with the pandemic can you talk about the out-of district and with OT/PT how has that evolved?

H. Connelly- It has varied for students. I think we have gotten really creative. We have purchased some items to send home and work with parents. There are some circumstances where it is not working so well it is because the students are not showing up. The OT has to look them up...that was more in the spring. If this is happening we are holding IEP meetings to get with the parent to problem solve to see what is getting in the way. The out-of district placement kids,,we now have 5 that are at Margaret Murphy. They have continued to attend since July. They are very restrictive there,,they were not allowing outside contractors so Heidi has had to work to get an outside contractor to help with some services. Had to advocate to get such as PT providers

Reporting of New Hires:

Mary Virgin-Brooks for the 2-hour per day secretary position at DES

Stipended and Coaching Positions:

Nicholas Karavas- Golf Coach, DHS

MS Nordic- Isaac White

MS Boys Basketball- Chandler Redmond

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Student Representative Report- Connor Weston- Everyone is happy to be back in school. I know there are some that struggled when we were out of school. Today I had my first meeting with the DOE. We met to do some brainstorming to see what some other schools are doing. The biggest topic was on Mental health and that counselors are there. Talked about mask break situations. Some people aren't getting enough mask breaks in some districts. We will meet again in January. We plan to meet monthly.
2. Policy Committee- Met 12/8- Going over policies- There are some MSMA law changes

3. Finance Committee- next meeting, January 12, 2021, 5:30. The Finance Committee will be meeting with the auditor. The auditor will then join the full board for an overview of the 2019-20 audit.

4. Curriculum Committee- Nothing new- Will change the meeting to 1/26/21-5:30

Minutes

Page 7

December 8, 2020

5. Buildings & Grounds Committee- Met with Kenny on 12/4. Quite impressive what's been done at all the schools. Safe & upgrading- Very fortunate with the CARES money- We have new buses, a lift bus, 2 small mini vans, an 11 passenger bus and a food van.
6. Negotiations Committee- Will meet after the holidays with Administrators
7. Personnel Committee- Nothing new

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

B. Chow- December is when we do the Superintendent Evaluation will be sent out- Some things Don't know so we have added a #5 which will say "You don't know". We will go over it on January 12th board meeting which is by law we need to do.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Enter into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. subsection 405(B) for discussion or consideration by School board of suspension or expulsion of a public school student. (follow-up report)

Motion: B. Ross

Seconded: D. Whittmore

Passed

Entered into executive session at 7:55pm

Exited executive session at 8:15pm

ADJOURNMENT

1. Motion to adjourn

Motion: B. Ross

Seconded: L. Whittington

Passed

Meeting adjourned at 8:18pm