

# Northern Adirondack Central School District

January 12, 2021 – 6:00 PM Held Via WebEx

Regular Meeting of the Board of Education

Ellenburg, NY

## Roll Call:

Paul Gilmore-Virtual  
Phalon Miner- Virtual  
Bryan Trombley- Virtual  
Steven Bartlemus- Virtual  
Willie Venne- Virtual  
Trevor Finley- Virtual  
Mark DeCoste- Virtual

## Public Virtually Present:

Leslie LaBarge , Brett Smith , Jay Bouchard,  
Robert Witkiewicz, Michael Loughman,  
Danny Jarvis, Erika Nernson, Gregory  
Poupore, Jason Thompson, Kelly Gilmore,  
Kim Spoor, Kiersten Decosse, Marcy  
Peryea, Mark Reif, Tricia Brassard, Troy  
Lapoint, Tiffany Leonard, Penny Pombrio,  
Amanda Coryea, Anika Knight, Emma  
Dominic, Richard Harriman Sr., Natasha  
Lashway and Barbara LaBombard.

## Others Virtually Present:

James Knight, Jr. - Superintendent  
Brian Tousignant - Business Manager  
Brittany LaBombard- District Clerk

Mr. Gilmore Board of Education's President, called the meeting to order at 6:15 PM. Roll Call was done by each Board Member announcing their name one by one.

A motion was made by Mr. DeCoste seconded by Mr. Venne and passed unanimously to go into Executive Session, at 6:21 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. Miner seconded by Mr. Bartlemus and passed unanimously to come out of Executive Session, at 6:38 PM.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

A motion was made by Mr. Miner seconded by Mr. Trombley, to pass meeting minutes from previous meetings. Mr. Gilmore -abstained

- December 8, 2020 Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Six Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

## **Superintendent Knight's Report**

Good Evening! I've gone back and forth with what to share on my 1st report for 2021. Mainly because there is so much of the important information that I have to share that is not positive. Plus, I like many of you are exhausted by the COVID Virus with the political and economic landscape that surrounds us. When we last had in person instruction on December 22<sup>nd</sup> the decision had been made to attempt returning to our in person hybrid model on Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup> and all staff report to campus to work from here on January 4<sup>th</sup>. However, after meeting with all the other area superintendents and Clinton County Health Department before the end of 2020 forced a different thought process. Even though we already adopted a cautious plan it became clear that the anticipated post-Christmas and New Year's surge accompanied with the increase in positive COVID-19 cases in the county post-Thanksgiving was troublesome. Prior to January 4<sup>th</sup>, we witnessed new daily positive case records for a string of days that were triple what they were prior to Christmas as it became the norm for 70 plus positive cases per day. It was only a matter of time before the Clinton County Health Department would start contacting me about staff and students. When the health department explained that they were a couple of days behind in issuing isolation orders and that they were no longer focusing on quarantine orders. It prompted me to ask the faculty and staff to work from campus sparingly. Remember that isolation orders are for individuals that test positive and quarantine orders are for those who have been in contact with a positive case. Since the 1st of the year, because of the health department notification and staff letting me know NAC has had 4 students and 4 staff members test positive with 6 other students on quarantine orders. However, I am well aware that there are more than that within our district that they just have not had a chance to inform me of. That being said we are aware that we have had people informed on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of a 10 day quarantine that they needed to remain quarantined. These are the exact reasons that we decided to extend our pause until the 25<sup>th</sup>, which some of our neighbors have done as well. County Health Department also shared the dire situation with CVPH which prompted them to move to their emergency disaster level 1 response. Mainly because of the number of COVID cases in the hospital and the heavy push on the ICU both with COVID and NON-COVID.

On an encouraging note bit of news surroundings COVID vaccination. Currently our school nurses, counsellors, physical, occupational and speech therapists and school psychologists have been able to receive or at least sign up to receive the vaccine soon. As of this week tier 1 B has been opened up for registration in the portal. Which includes the rest of school employees' keep in mind as the Governor has mentioned we have yet achieved 700,000 vaccinations in New York State. In tier 1 A, there are 2.1M people and in tier 1 B, there are over 3M all requiring 2 doses of the vaccine. Hopefully over the next couple of months we can all be vaccinated. But keep in mind what was stated in last night's New York presentation by the New York State Department of Health, we will still not be in the clear with the needed 70 to 90% herd immunity threshold until there is a pediatric vaccine and more availability. Which our Governor mentioned today in his 2<sup>nd</sup> installment of the State of the State address might not be until the end of the year.

As far as, The State of the State, Cuomo mentioned that potential 20% cuts to education as part of trying to bridge the 15B dollar gap in the state budget is possible. He is hopeful that the Federal Government will help but we do not know that for sure even though we have reported some reductions already. We just recently received our Pre-K Aid from last year. The words I stress is 20% of state funded payment was withheld directive from the division of budget dated: July 21st, 2020. Even though we expected this, this is the first we have seen it in action. The date suggests a very disgusting lack of willingness by the state to be transparent. They knew that they were going to cut that amount from that portion back in July and they just admitted that to us. I know not only myself but Mr. Tousignant worry about where else the cuts will come. As you guys have noticed those of you that are attending we had initially scheduled a budget planning session for tonight. At this point, we have no idea where to begin the budget planning even though Mr. Tousignant will share some information a little bit later. With that being said we're nervous about what may be reduced before this year is over. Keep in mind that even though we increased our local share of the budget by raising our taxes more than that around still relies heavily on New York State Aide over 60% of our overall budget. If those numbers are cut by 20% or even 10% that is more than we would like to see happen. Hopefully the Federal Government as Governor has mentioned actually comes through and is able to help the entire state but including all schools.

As we move forward, remote learning will continue to be a part of our educational process. In an effort to help out with Wifi situations I had applied for a mini grant a couple of months ago through The American Association of School Administrators. We were fortunate enough to receive an award of \$2500. Which is earmarked to purchase more Wifi hotspots in an effort to help not only our students but some of our staff that are still struggling to have decent Wifi at their own homes as well. Currently NERIC representatives are getting a quote for me and as soon as we have the quote we will act on that money and get more Wifi hotspots.

The last bit of positive news is that our above ground bus lifts have arrived and today our mechanic crew received training on how to safely use them. I believe it was a productive training. I did not have an opportunity to attend but Mr. Tousignant and Mr. Bouchard did attend some of the training today. So if there are questions related to that, they would be the ones to ask.

At this point in time I know one of the topics that I mentioned in my presentation is a topic up for discussion in regards to our current pause. I would ask that at this point, any board members that do have questions or comments in regards to that topic to please just announce who you are so the attendees you cannot see us on the screen will know who is speaking. Please start the conversation.

Board Member Mark DeCoste-

I'm not a big fan of that pause learning or the out of school learning. The only ones that are losing here are the kids. For example, Saratoga County has over 6000 students. They've missed 3 days of in school since the beginning of the year and by the end of this week, they have missed a total of 8 days of in school learning. They have more students. They have more positive cases. They have more of this more of that just based on the numbers, but yet they can attend school. Those kids down there are above ahead of our students up here. Our kids are getting further and further behind. I'm just concerned these kids are just losing. If they can do it in a bigger district,

why can't we in a remoter area succeed here or get through this? That's just my opinion, but it's just not a good thing for the kids.

Superintendent Knight-

I appreciate your opinion, Mark. I will actually not share statistics and different things at this point in time but I know you had mentioned Saratoga before and I can tell you that some of the statistics that I have seen contradict some of what you're sharing. But then again, what is the difference between in person partially and in person fully is very different. I totally accept and appreciate the fact that throughout this entire process our kids are the ones that are academically missing out on a normal school year. However, as I mentioned to the board members, and I've mentioned to those in the community my emphasis as school superintendent has shifted throughout the COVID crisis. It has shifted from making sure that the priority of our school district is to provide a valuable education to the priority being the health and well-being of all of our students and staff. Therefore, that is my number one reasons these decisions have been made by committee and with the support of the Clinton County Health Department and other school districts in our area.

Board Member Paul Gilmore-

Are there any other school districts in Section 7 in Clinton County on pause until the 25<sup>th</sup>?

Superintendent Knight-

Currently at this point in time in Clinton County, Beekmantown is paused through the 25<sup>th</sup> as is Saranac as is Ausable and we keep getting updates. Northeastern is not fully paused they're trying to bring in their elementary. However, they've been inundated with cases. Chazy has tried to remain open because of their small status CVES and CV-TEC are closed through the 25<sup>th</sup> for in person learning. They actually had a situation where yesterday alone, they had 5 positive cases, which would have impacted their campus greatly. Keep in mind that our pauses here are very different because we were behind in technology our elementary is very susceptible to not being able to go from an in person setting, which we have kids in 5 days a week, to a remote setting overnight. This type of pause prevents the emergency closure. What I mentioned before in my presentation the numbers that I had mentioned would have caused quarantining of multiple people. As we know in school cases sometimes upwards to 100 to 200 people based on how people are clustered. With that being said, that is what we're trying to prevent at this point in time while we know that there is a surge in our community and across the country. Plus, we're being conscious of what's going on at the hospital at this point in time.

Board Member Bryan Trombley-

I got a couple of questions for you in the past. Like, if we had more snow days in the winter time and we had to add days at the end of the year. That was important. I think the days were in the 180's do we risk not having in person learning? Is that a concern with continued pausing? Can you just explain that to me our continued pause?

Superintendent Knight-

There are schools in New York State who have not stepped foot in their school buildings yet this year. Some even since COVID started back in March with all the adjustments made by the State and the allowances for hybrid in person. Quite frankly, as Mark had mentioned, maybe the

school district in Saratoga with larger buildings. I don't know how many students they are bringing in on a daily basis but to remain the socially distance that we're supposed to we are limited to a number of students. Which is why we are at our best with hybrid our K through 5 students who we wanted to be here are here every day. Then we have the schedules that we have from 6 through 12. So, we're not losing any days.

Board Member Bryan Trombley-

When you have these discussions with the County Health Department that pertain to vaccine roll out and using positive cases to dictate our decision making. What is the proposed end game? As we see our school staff and community getting 2 doses of the vaccine they're becoming immune but can still pass the particular COVID virus around. Are we going to use positives cases to dictate these decisions?

Superintendent Knight-

Well, hopefully not, I'll be honest with you, I hope that the vaccine at some point in time allows us the ability to be safer on campus. The reality is we're talking about herd immunity. We added all of our staff members and all of our students to herd immunity. They're saying 70 to 90% covered by a vaccine. If our campus was broken down right now about 20% of it is made up of employees. Those of us employees are the ones who are in tier 1B category and I have mentioned before our students don't even have the ability to get a vaccine at this point in time. At this time there is not a vaccine for children under 16. So down the road and listening to the Governor today and others we're now hoping for 2022 almost to be in a situation where we can be here with more of the masses. I guess the idea of the vaccine and not being an expert is that it doesn't prevent you from getting it. It doesn't prevent you from sharing COVID. But it may prevent you from getting real bad cases.

Board Member Bryan Trombley-

My concern is mainly the point of my question is we're using positives to dictate our decisions. We have a very small percentage of people who are actually positive in Clinton County, even as we speak with our highest numbers. If we keep traveling along this road and not having enough staff at the Clinton County Health Department we could be out of school for a significant amount of time, with consistent decision making. What's our end game? When are these officials going to say? You know what we need to start moving through this?

Superintendent Knight-

Sadly, I can tell you that all of the superintendents at this point in time with the surge and everything else that's going on around us expected the Health Department or the State level to free information. The same to what they did this past spring when in our area we had very few cases. Now we have more. But across the state we have reached the levels of probably yellow, orange and red, which would have been in place a month ago. But now that's all been changed by the Governor in different situations. In an effort I think to keep things open or try to get things open they have allowed for more exposure to happen. We're not getting any real direction from the Health Department as of yet.

Board Member Bryan Trombley-

That is frustrating for me as a parent and as a healthcare professional in Clinton County seeing that. It's very difficult. If we're going to work by science and numbers, I really don't know if these decisions are being made with those true numbers. You mentioned faculty and staff being in school sparingly. Can you just kind of give me a download on your plan there?

Superintendent Knight-

It started back on the 4th for those who can administer the remote learning from away from campus and for those who have to come in and make packets staggered the times that they're coming in. The principals have been doing a great job of helping create that so that all staff are not together congregated so that you don't have 10 people around the copy machine at a time. In regards to cope to transmission. That has not been done there is only 1 person in every school district who can be held accountable. That's me, so when these decisions are being made they're truthful that is one of the biggest reasons spinning around in my head. Granted, I don't necessarily agree that it can be pinpointed that it was the cause of a school district that somebody got sick. I honestly don't want to be the one who ends up in court with that case either.

Board Member Bryan Trombley-

Jim, I appreciate it as long as just keep us in the loop with that particular aspects please.

Superintendent Knight-

Will do, thank you. I can tell you that the extension that we just experienced some of that was also not only because of the current surge and the fear of what's going on in the community and hospital.

Board Member Trevor Finley-

I know when we were actually able to meet in person in the gym at the elementary school the principals there and they were very passionate about the staff and the kids. How do the teachers and administer feel about having kids in person and stuff with the surge. What's the staff's temperature? So to speak as far as that goes? I mean, did they still are they in agreement are with the pauses?

Superintendent Knight-

I think first and foremost, it's important to explain that every staff member here on campus wants all students back. However, there's a greater fear in the area. I think up until the last few weeks for many people in our school district and community it was something that was happening, but it wasn't really impacting them. Unfortunately, with the fact that we have so many of our own people that have tested positive that have been put on quarantine it's become a reality for a lot more people within our community and there's a sense of nervousness. I think people are also aware that a surge was expected. I mean, we just had 3 major gathering holidays. Everybody told us that if you gather, there will probably be closing cases. And that's kind of what's happened. You know, we went from before Christmas averaging about 15 to 20 new cases a day to going over 70 new cases per day. That trend hasn't really slowed down much. Now we're also nervous about the new strain from the UK, another new strain from South Africa.

Board Member Trevor Finley-

Overall, our school district has been way ahead of this thing or more cautious than any other school districts have been. And I'm confident in our ability to keep people safe, but I want our kids in school.

Superintendent Knight-

I totally agree with that. I can tell you and I know I'm jinxing myself, but we are the only school district left that has not had to close due to a positive case on campus. However, some of that has been because of our cautious response to Thanksgiving and now the post-Christmas, New Year's holiday.

### **Personnel – Appointments**

<b>Employee</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>	<b>Pay Rate</b>	<b>Comments</b>
A. Anne Taylor	Teacher –Aide/ Student Aide; Sub. Teacher	District	1/13/2021	\$12.50/ hr; \$90.00/ day	

A motion was made by Mr. Venne and seconded by Mr. Bartlemus to accept personnel appointments.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried

### **Financial:**

A motion was made by Mr. Finley and seconded by Mr. Miner 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. Miner to accept the Budget and Treasurer's Report.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

### **Reports to School Board:**

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

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried

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

- 1 .Food Service Report
2. Custodial – Maintenance Report Mr. Bouchard-

Touch base on the new post lifts in the Bus Garage and how he attended part of the training today and that is seemed to go well. They were able to see the jack stands hold the buses and the system seems to work quite well. He believes that the system we have is going to be functional and efficient for us down the road. But to make it fully efficient we need to get the bay cleaned out that has the old post lift currently is. In the next week or 2 we need to get at the removal of that in ground post lift in and try and get that taken care of in a relatively quick manner. He also updated us on the pool and the leak it had the week of Christmas. The seal in the basement for the filter had popped off causing a leak. They had the pool water pumped out of the basement and are in the process of getting it back up and running as well as getting some kind of float system in the future to avoid this happening again.

3. Student Association Reports and Bank Reconciliation Reports

4. Administrators

5. NATA

6. CSEA

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

### **Public Comment**

Richard Harriman-

BOCES Rep went over how we can go online to review the updates on the BOCES project. That he doesn't have much to report because their meeting is tomorrow night. He did ask Mr. Bouchard if they plan on tied down the new concrete to the old in the Bus Garage.

Mr. Bouchard- Yes we are.

Danny Jarvis-

Asked about additional jacks for the bus garage. The ones we have now with the height level do not make it the easiest for brake work.

Superintendent Knight-

I believe that company our mechanics work together today to try to locate another company that might have lower stamps. It sounds like that's a positive that there may be something available.

Amanda Coryea-

I actually have two concerns. One which I have spoken to the middle school principal about. I'm questioning are the google meets and if they are being monitored at all by someone other than the teacher or are they strictly between the teacher and the students.

Superintendent Knight-

I'll answer that question and quite frankly teachers with master's degrees having the meets monitored was not something that has been a practice. We've trusted our staff to conduct themselves like they do in their classrooms. They are open and available to observation but it's not something that is an established schedule.



Amanda Coryea-

Okay, it's predominantly known that bullying is not tolerated when it comes from students. I'm wondering what it is for school stance when it comes to faculty. It has been witnessed by multiple people on multiple occasions. What policy do you have in place when it comes to a teachers acting in bullying behaviors towards their students?

Superintendent Knight-

Fortunately, over the last few years the DASA policies have become a protection in regards to bullying and harassment. That's not only student to student but it is adult to adult or it is parent to staff members' staff member to student all sorts of things. Basically, a report would have to be made at the building level. There's an extensive amount of research that goes along with it a lot of rebuttal back and forth. Everything is investigated and that's kind of the process that has to be followed. I believe our DASA policy should be readily available if it's not easily for somebody to find they can call any of the buildings and receive any of that information.

Amanda Coryea-

Thank you.

Board Member Mark DeCoste-

I know we spoke about this at the last meeting last month but was brought to my attention about school assignments and when they are due, For example, at 11 o'clock at night or 12 o'clock at night on Sunday evening. When they're given out on a Thursday or Friday whenever the packets are given out I don't know, I'm not that familiar with the process. They should at least give them until Monday the way it would be in the past as if you were attending school.

Superintendent Knight-

I think that is a case by case situation and I can send you as a parent of students who attend the district some of those assignments are given with a week to perform and they have been given like, a midnight on Tuesday is the deadline to submit. The assignments are technically due for that Wednesday so those situations are accurate and I think appropriate and I don't believe any of the assignments are being given say today. Those deadlines that you're hearing about are usually multiple day deadlines and I can tell you that in talking with some of the principals that is where the issue has been with. We've asked before and I sent out a message recently that stated: we have not asked our parents to teach their students. We have simply asked them to make sure their students are being involved with the education. Any of the teaching should happen from our teachers. But our teachers need to be reached out to, for that additional help in regards to teaching the students.

Natasha Lashway-

I'm actually calling about the remote learning. My daughter has been a high honors straight A student since she's been in kindergarten and she's having a problem with the remote learning. They only go to school on Fridays. There's so many people who want the remote learning and so many that do not want it. I don't understand why the elementary kids are going 5 days a week. Like my son. Right now he's doing remote and on Wednesday they'll drop off a packet. We have

laptops and internet and all that here and we're accessible to have online learning from my children. However, when we go on the google classroom he had one google assignment for the whole entire week from Mrs. Peryea. All of his work is on paper. I don't mind, but he doesn't have any teaching being done to him and he is an elementary school student. He's doing fine with that. I can help him but my daughter she has French and I took Spanish. I don't know how to speak French. I just don't understand how we can't have a middle school and high school in-person session more than once a week if they're having trouble and struggling.

Superintendent Knight-

Well, the piece that you mentioned at the end about struggling and having trouble if that is the case I would suggest reaching out to the building and asking for the potential opportunities. In regards to why our 6th through 12th grade is not in as often as our K through 5<sup>th</sup> we had to establish our social distancing right down to what we could put on buses at the beginning of the year and our population. That is here on any given day and is full capacity for what we can transport. Fortunately we have a lot of people that have taken it upon themselves to transport their own children this year. This has given up some spaces on the bus because there were extra spaces in the building but we could only transport so many students. But I would suggest reaching out to the teacher's directly and not building principal and seeing what kind of plan can be developed.

Natasha Lashway-

I've talked to her teachers. I've talked to her guidance counselors and she's having a hard time with this. It's hurting her and not just educationally, but mentally. When near the top of your class and never have struggled in your life. Now you feel like you're not good enough due to lack of teaching. Brian, one of the board members who is medical. I've been medical since I was 16 so he knows this virus is serious, and I'm not taking it as anything less and now there's new strands. The COVID virus is a viral infection such as the flu, so there's going to be different strands and it's going to spread. I work in a health care facility as long as mask are being worn and people are washing their hands there's no reason that there isn't kids in school. You've had a couple of board members say that some school districts with more people in them than what we have. Our county is small so the numbers look more because there's less of a population. Anything we could look into for middle school and high school students that are having a similar problem with the remote learning. I do appreciate all your time. I hope you all stay safe and thank you.

### **New Business:**

- Next Budget Work Session January 26, 2021
- Next Board Meeting February 9, 2021

A motion was made by Mr. Trombley and seconded by Mr. Venne to approve Corrective Action Plan (CAP) FY 18/19 External Audit NYSED Financial Office of Audit Services Survey 5.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried

- Discussion of Policy 5152 ADMISSION OF NON-RESIDENT STUDENTS

The current policy was read by Mr. Knight and brought up for discussion on changing tuition rate/ grandfathering in current students and maybe not allowing new non-residents to attend district. Will be on next agenda to talk more in depth. Board Member Mr. Miner wanted to table for next meeting. Board members agreed to put on next board agenda for a topic of discussion.

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

No Comment was made

**Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Mr. DeCoste and seconded by Mr. Miner and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM.

All Board Members present voted yes – motion carried.

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