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MAPLE RUN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

August 4, 2021 6:00 PM 28 Catherine St., St. Albans and ZOOM MEETING

MINUTES

Board Members present for the quorum in person - Peter Deslauriers, Alisha Sawyer, Nilda Gonnella-French, Grant Henderson, Katie Messier, Susan Casavant-Magnan

Board Members present for the quorum remotely - Al Corey, Jack McCarthy, Joanna Jerose, Nina Hunsicker

Admins Present - Stacie Rouleau, Joan Cavallo, Stephanie Ripley, Heather Ann O’Dell, Heather Fitzgibbons, Tim Viens, Brett Blanchard, Leeann Wright, Lisa Durocher, Angela Stebbins, Martha Gagner, John Muldoon

Visitors in person – Jeffrey Nelson, Jen Williamson, Pamela Willete, Erika Hamlin, Shaun Robinson, Reier Erickson, M. Hunkin, A. Boomhower, R. Hakey, Sarah Auer

Visitors remote - Reese Kelly

- 1. **Call to Order Meeting** was called to order at 6:10 pm
- 2. **Agenda Review** - Nilda added 8B Superintendent Report and 8C Board Announcements.

Grant Henderson made a motion to approve the agenda as amended; second by Alisha Sawyer

- 3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- 4. **Visitors** - Nilda received information for the board to review, it reiterates concerns over mask wearing from Bennett Dawson. Dr. Jen Williamson stated the harm of SROs in schools and would like mandatory masking of students. Sara Auer stated she doesn’t believe SROs belong in schools. Reier Erickson explained the fear of SROs in schools and stated there is no evidence it is safer. Jeffrey Nelson spoke about an article in the VT Digger, the Bennington School District having a lawsuit from a teacher regarding SROs. Jeffrey stated he will email the article to the board. Maryanne Hunkin asked the board questions on how police in schools help children succeed. Reese Kelly said he feels the same way as the other visitors and asked how the board will anticipate changes. Reese said we need to do what's right for students.

- 5. **Consent Agenda** - Nilda accepted the consent agenda with no objection.

- A. Approval of Minutes of July 7, 2021

- 33 B. Media Packet
- 34 C. Staff Changes

35 **6. Old Business**

36 A. SRO Committee Recommendation Discussion - Bill Kimball stated the leadership
37 doesn't see this as an easy decision. He stated we recognize that equity means
38 for all students and that is the position leadership stands with as a group. A
39 student poll was done with the BIPOC community and there is not a clear
40 majority. Bill listed the pros and cons the leadership came up with. The cons are
41 the position is person specific. If a student has a negative experience with an
42 SRO it can be a lasting experience. SROs are not trained in mental health and
43 some parents do not want SROs in schools. The pros are, we can request
44 replacements, parents feel safer, SROs in the school buildings can make good
45 relationships with children. SROs have supported mental health professionals in
46 the past. SROs are good at alerting schools of dangers so the school can be
47 proactive. Bill agreed that students have had bad experiences. Susan asked how
48 feelings are measured versus reality. Bill replied, feelings are fact for that person.
49 Alisha stated that this should not be a majority rule. Alisha also stated we
50 continue to equate SROs as employees such as principals and teachers. Katie
51 stated that some people do feel safe and there are people that do not feel safe
52 with an SRO in a school. Alisha said the voices that are in favor of it are the
53 majority. Alisha stated she is bothered by having people fix the issue, it should
54 be the board fixing it. Joanna Jerose acknowledged she supports Alisha's
55 statement. Joanna vocalized that she didn't believe a lot of what was said was
56 fact, it was feelings. Joanna doesn't see any facts supporting keeping SROs in
57 schools. Also, stated St. Albans has 3 police barracks in it, it doesn't make sense
58 that FCS doesn't have one and it's the furthest from these in town safety
59 resources. Joanna stated we need to make sure we are making a safe
60 atmosphere for students. Peter asked what Joanna proposed. Nilda said this is
61 not the time for that to be answered. Joanna stated the SRO committee didn't
62 have enough time to give more options in the recommendation. Nilda
63 mentioned she learned a lot about this process since she received the SRO
64 Report. She thought all administrators supported SROs in the current scenario
65 and that is not the case. There are examples of schools that don't have an SRO.
66 Katie asked if that would mean a police liaison. Nilda stated police do not need
67 to wear a uniform. Alisha said the current MOU stated they must wear a uniform
68 and Nilda replied that the MOU can be modified. Nilda received clarification of
69 the SROs serving in the role of a substitute teacher. Nilda noted, the SROs are
70 not being an educator in the traditional sense of the word but they are working

71 with the students as she understands it. Nilda mentioned another thing in the
72 recommendation is being able to describe what the duties might be for SROs,
73 suggesting to ask the administrators what they need. Nilda stated SATEC had
74 issues in the past and feels the need for an SRO and SACS just recently got SROs.
75 Nilda stated we didn't hear that it didn't work until it didn't work, we were under
76 the impression that it worked. Jack McCarthy stated he sees both sides of the
77 issue. His early belief was that there is no place in schools for police and when
78 the SRO program began it was free. The next year and following years the price
79 kept going up. Jack announced that he is very impressed with the people that
80 protest and people that come to these meetings. He said he understands people
81 with children of color feel fear, and it's seen across the country. He stated that
82 we need to do something about that and not neglect the people that are
83 concerned. He proposed to have someone in the schools that people can report
84 the issues to and should hire more staff as counselors if needed. Jack also stated
85 we need to study it further and address the concerns people bring. Susan stated
86 SACS recently got SROs and they do several things but listed a few such as traffic
87 control, have dealt with child pornography, and wellness checks. She stated that
88 should be done by the police department. Alisha said she meant to say are there
89 other systems of inequity in the school district. Bill said yes and Alisha would like
90 to talk more about that on a regular basis. Nilda stated she would not like to lose
91 sight of the police liaison and it sounds like it might be a viable option. Bill said
92 he contacted other superintendents and Essex did a great job working with the
93 community and a police liaison. Bill stated he is more in favor for a liaison. Alisha
94 stated there can be education from someone in the background and working for
95 us that can do this off campus, but we continue to say SRO. Katie stated she is
96 pro SRO but she has learned a lot and can understand what people are saying
97 and could possibly agree with the police liaison. Alisha asked to talk about
98 mentorship, how someone is paired up and asked if that is a real choice. She also
99 asked if school is the right place for this mentorship. Angela Stebbins stated that
100 it is not official, the student self-selects. She went on to say it's kids seeking out
101 that kind of role model, no pressure at all and it also helps students. Grant stated
102 he believes that the current system has some gaps, he thinks that the way Bill
103 summarized was good. He stated the benefits of an SRO is function as opposed
104 to person. Further, whatever those essential functions are we need to keep, any
105 obstacles should be improved not just removed and look at the underlying
106 cause, once it is identified it needs to be rectified. He is curious to see what the
107 next step is and what kind of schedule there is on voting for this issue. Nilda's
108 belief was the nitty gritty is the administrators job and the board may need to

109 set guidelines to say we need to cut the budget for the SROS but we don't know
110 enough about the police liaison. Nilda said almost all board members see the
111 need of improvement. Bill spoke with the police chief and the chief stated they
112 need a decision in August. Right now there are only 2 SROs available. Alisha
113 asked if there was an opportunity to change the MOU after it is signed. Nilda
114 asked can we make it an action item that we formulate guard rails for at least an
115 interim period. Alisha said the key is reporting and feels troubled that people
116 were unable to answer questions regarding SROs. She stated there needs to be
117 accountability. Susan cited the SRO item 8 recommendation and asked why isn't
118 that mandatory. She cannot fathom the amount of money that is being spent on
119 this. Further, we don't have the authority to review many items because it's
120 done through the police department. Joanna stated how things are done at NCSS
121 and is concerned how SROs are being used on a daily basis. Nilda said maybe the
122 board didn't exercise their rights correctly. Nilda stated we can have an action
123 meeting on the 16th after talking about this at the Board Retreat tomorrow.
124 Peter stated he is not as set in stone on this. He stated the board should make
125 the decision and then the administrators should be able to fine tune it. Nilda said
126 for the record, the board did not get the report until June. Alisha stated if it's an
127 equity issue the board should decide. Susan said the board doesn't have the
128 details and that the discussion is needed. Joanna stated the boards job is to be
129 open and objective. Nina stated that the board members have been doing that
130 and feels they are in a better place than June. She asked if August 18th would be
131 the day to take action. Joanna stated the decision needs to be made from the
132 report given in June. Al Corey commended the people that are making pleas to
133 end the SRO program and said they have only discussed this issue twice. His
134 hope is that VT is better than systemic racism. The decision will not be for one or
135 all but where it is comfortable. Grant asked what the consequence would be not
136 to have a decision by the end of August. Bill did not have an answer and stated
137 we need to know what the decision is because there are security concerns in our
138 schools. Alisha asked if that can be assigned to the administrators, to have them
139 talk to the security and FTEs. Bill said he feels the board needs to give direction
140 before. Bill said the board has approved an increase in mental health positions in
141 the last few years. Alisha said if safety and security is a concern she doesn't want
142 there to be gap in coverage. Grant said it is clear the SRO or police liaison is only
143 a component of the issues and asked what other policy and procedure is needed.

144 **B. Retreat Update (Bill Kimball) – Bill announced that the board will be meeting**
145 **with Mike Deweese at the retreat. Mike will bring information on how a board**
146 **properly monitors the system.**

147 **7. New Business**

148 **A. Award Contract Responsive Classroom**

149 **Katie Messier made a motion to authorize Maple Run USD to award the contract to**
150 **Responsive Classroom in the amount of \$42,000; second by Al.**

151 Joanna asked if it was for all schools in the district. Angela replied just for SATEC.
152 Joanna asked why it is not for the whole district. Bill said responsive classroom is
153 being used at SATEC and SACS is using Conscious Discipline. Grant asked what
154 COVID related problem it will solve. Bill state we know children have SEL issues
155 and we need to make sure staff is properly trained. Grant stated his concern on
156 catch up and he doesn't believe there is a need to catch up.

157 **Peter Deslauriers yeah, Alisha Sawyer yeah, Nilda Gonnella-French yeah, Grant Henderson**
158 **yeah, Katie Messier yeah, Susan Casavant-Magnan yeah, Al Corey yeah, Jack McCarthy yeah,**
159 **Joanna Jerose yeah, Nina Hunsicker yeah. The motion passed unanimously.**

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161 **B. Award Contract Restorative Practices Support**

162 **Al Corey made a motion to authorize Maple Run USD to award the contract of Restorative**
163 **Practices Support in the amount of \$250,000; second by Jack McCarthy.**

164 Bill said we plan to use this for 3 years and this is for all 5 entities. Bill stated the
165 suggestion is to use Holistic. Alisha asked if this work helps with the SRO
166 conversation. Joanna asked if there will be continued money for year 2 and 3. Bill
167 said it is planned out to FY25.

168 **Peter Deslauriers yeah, Alisha Sawyer yeah, Nilda Gonnella-French yeah, Grant Henderson**
169 **yeah, Katie Messier yeah, Susan Casavant-Magnan yeah, Al Corey yeah, Jack McCarthy yeah,**
170 **Joanna Jerose yeah, Nina Hunsicker yeah. The motion passed unanimously.**

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172 **8. Other Business**

173 **A. Warrants**

174 **Al Corey made a motion to approve the warrants, acknowledging that passage of this motion**
175 **will act as individual Board Member authorization of their signature on these warrants.**

176 **Second by Alisha Sawyer. The motion passed unanimously.**

177 **B. Superintendent Report** - Bill stated Summer Engagement has had tremendous
178 impacts on kids. He thanked his colleagues for the great work. Grant asked what
179 the COVID requirements would be. Bill replied that we have not received any
180 guidance from the AOE.

181 **C. Board Announcements - Nilda announced that the board retreat will be**
182 **starting at 5:30 and ending at 8:30.**

183 **9. Agenda for Future Meetings** - Implicit Bias training, anti-racism training, Recovery
184 update, Five-year plan, IT Study, SRO action, COVID update.

185 **10. Potential Executive Session** - No Executive Session

186 **11. Adjourn** Meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.