

**MAINE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT #37**  
**November 17, 2021**

The Regular Meeting of the School Directors of RSU #37/MSAD #37 was held at Narraguagus Jr./Sr. High School on Wednesday, November 17, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. to consider and act upon the following items of business:

**Board Members present:** Jeffery Beal, Stephen Dunham, Everett Grant, Shelby Greene, Bethany Hartford, Grace Kennedy, Ronald Kennedy, Debra Murphy, David Perham, and Tiffany Strout

**Board Members absent:** Chris Chartrand and Mark Wright

**Other persons present:** Ronald Ramsay, Denise Vose, Susan Meserve, Lorna Greene, Maria White, Mary Ellen Day, Todd Emerson, Lori Mathews, David Mathews, Ron Smith, Ron Green, Dawn Fickett, Donna Haire, Moriah Nichols, Anna Emerson, Leann Beal, Elizabeth Chipman, Kandi Robertson, and Annie Morris. Also joining via Zoom were Ronie Strout, Jodi Hedberg, Krystal Jordan, Amanda Kowalsky, Dick Paul, Harry Thompson, Denise Curtis, Nicole Shaw, Eric Brooks, Yvonne Hayward, and Dianne Farren.

**MINUTES**

**A. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS**

1. **The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Debra Murphy.**
2. **RE: APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 27, 2021**  
**ACTION:** Motion by Grace Kennedy, second by Jeffery Beal, and voted (710-yes, 97-abstentions) to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2021 meeting as printed. (Hartford abstained as she was absent.)
3. **RE: REPORT—SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS (Including Legislative Updates)**  
**INFORMATION:** Supt. Ramsay reported on the following items:
  - The Board's annual meeting will be held on December 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. prior to our regular December meeting.
  - We have seen a local surge in Covid-19 which resulted in us going remote from November 15<sup>th</sup> until after Thanksgiving. Regular in-person instruction will resume on November 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - The district is partnering with Maine Public Health Nursing to offer a vaccine clinic in our district on 11/30 and 12/21. Thank you to our school nurse, Amanda Tozier, for her work setting it up. The district is not mandating or recommending the vaccine, simply offering a site for anyone interested. This is for students, staff, family members, or anyone that might be interested.
  - We are also looking at the possibility of pool testing. He noted that it's not something we really wanted to do but the rules almost force you to in order to keep from quarantining grades of students every time you have a positive test. More information is being gathered and will be brought to the board. We would not be able to begin until after the new year anyway due to the time it takes to get set up.
  - Winter sports are getting ready to begin and we hope to offer as normal a season as possible with fans in the stands (wearing masks as long as a mandate is in place). The MPA rules are out today, and we'll be reviewing those.
  - Our ESSER III application has been approved. Some of the things being funded include Covid subs, summer programming, technology, attendance/truancy coordinator, heat pumps, and renovations at the CTE. We put \$250,000 in the grant for heat pumps around the district. The proposal we've received would not allow us to do all schools. The facilities/maintenance subcommittee will meet soon to look at that and decide how to proceed. He envisions a phased-in approach to eventually do all four schools.

**4. RE: REVIEW OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**INFORMATION:** Supt. Ramsay noted that expenses are inline with where we would expect them to be at this time of year and there are no concerns.

**5. RE: ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS (Including Professional Development, ESEA, and G/T)**

**INFORMATION:** Denise Vose, Director of Special Education, noted that it has been very busy with IEP meetings, annual meetings, triennial meetings, etc.

Susan Meserve, Principal at Harrington, reported an enrollment of 119. Students have completed the NWEA testing. They held a successful Trunk-or-Treating with 19 cars on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Parent-teacher conferences went well with in-person, on-line, and telephone conferences. Teachers and other staff are busy meeting with students virtually, preparing packets/assignments, and helping deliver meals to remote students.

Lorna Greene, DW Merritt Principal, noted an enrollment of 96. They also completed testing and parent conferences. Remote learning is going well. Teachers are checking in with students every day. The book study continues for professional development. PLC meetings are being held regularly. The ESEA Performance Report has been submitted and accepted by the state. Title I staff are reaching out to students virtually. The hikes for G/T students have been completed. Students enjoyed the hikes and will each receive a guide to Maine hiking trails.

Maria White, Principal at Milbridge, reported 127 students are enrolled. There was a good response to the parent/teacher conferences. Students are excited to get back to a more normal winter sports schedule. They have missed competing. A Veterans' Day program was recorded and posted for parents and community members to watch. A new PTO group is starting up at the school soon.

Mary Ellen Day, Narraguagus Principal, noted that there are 314 students enrolled, with 112 in the junior high and 202 at the high school. Fall sports awards were held on November 4<sup>th</sup>. Parent conferences were held with about 43 parents. The junior class held a craft fair last weekend. Lisa Emerson produced a Veterans' Day video that was posted on the school site. Teachers are using Google Meet to teach students while remote. They are meeting every period of every day. Winter sports have been delayed due to remote learning but will begin on November 29<sup>th</sup>.

**6. RE: SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**a. Athletics/Student Activities-none**

**b. Curriculum & Instruction-none**

**c. Negotiations & Grievance-none**

**d. Policy & By-laws-none**

**e. Facilities, Maintenance, Safety & Transportation-none**

**INFORMATION:** Supt. Ramsay noted that we will be scheduling some subcommittees soon to work on some things.

**7. RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**INFORMATION:** Leann Beal stated she doesn't feel what the district is doing is working as related to COVID. She has researched the CDC and DOE websites and wonders what exactly we must follow. According to what she's read, masking is optional. What about quarantining? She understands these are difficult times and the shut down was not just due to COVID but also transportation issues. The district needs to be creative and look for solutions.

Annie Morris said remote education is not working. Her children are doing packets for two weeks. We are 1.5 years into this. The district is not doing anything different as far as online education. We need to do better. Teachers are communicating but not teaching them. The high school and junior high have that, but our elementary kids deserve the same.

Grace Kennedy wondered why we can't allow kids to come that want to and if parents are willing to transport, and then do remote with the rest of our students? Mr. Ramsay noted that his hope is that the time of year (with Thanksgiving break) and closing would slow the virus. It is disjointed to have some kids in person and some at home. It also becomes an inequitable situation of haves vs. have-nots when some kids have transportation and others do not. A lot of our staff are online every day with students. Others may not be as much, but hopefully all are reaching out to students.

Amanda Kowalsky noted (via zoom) that she feels teachers in the district are doing all that they can with what they have and the current situation.

Kandi Robertson asked who is on the board subcommittees and how can comments from the public be brought up at subcommittee meetings.

**8. RE: AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS**

**ACTION:** Motion by Everett Grant, second by David Perham, and voted (unanimously) to table this article as there are no adjustments needed tonight.

**B. OLD BUSINESS--none**

**C. NEW BUSINESS**

**1. RE: HIRING JUNIOR HIGH BASKETBALL/CHEERING COACHES**

**ACTION:** Motion by Everett Grant, second by Bethany Hartford, and voted (unanimously) to ratify the hiring of the following junior high basketball coaches as recommended by the Superintendent:

**DW Merritt:** John Batson, boys; Sally MacLean, girls

**Harrington:** Lucas McLain, boys; Jeffery Chick, girls

**Milbridge:** Richard Parker, boys; Donald Parker, girls

**2. RE: HIRING HEALTH TEACHER AT NARRAGUAGUS JR./SR. HIGH**

**ACTION:** Motion by Everett Grant, second by David Perham, and voted (unanimously) to ratify the hiring of Rachel Gray as a long-term substitute health Teacher at Narraguagus and moving her to a probationary teacher contract once she becomes certified as recommended by Supt. Ramsay.

**3. RE: HIRING EVENING CUSTODIAN AT MILBRIDGE ELEMENTARY**

**ACTION:** Motion by Everett Grant, second by Bethany Hartford, and voted (unanimously) to ratify the hiring of Billie Jo Cornellier as evening custodian at Milbridge as recommended by the Superintendent.

**4. HIRING SPECIAL EDUCATION ED TECHS**

**ACTION:** Motion by Grace Kennedy, second by Everett Grant, and voted (unanimously) to ratify the hiring of Hilary Oliver and Kimberley Robinson as special education ed techs as recommended by Superintendent Ramsay.

**5. RE: HIRING SUBSTITUTE BUS DRIVER(S)**

**ACTION:** Motion by Everett Grant, second by Bethany Hartford, and voted (unanimously) to table this article.

**6. RE: HIRING SUBSTITUTE TEACHER(S)**

**ACTION:** Motion by Everett Grant, second by Grace Kennedy, and voted (unanimously) to approve Catherine McDonald as a substitute teacher as recommended by the Superintendent.

**7. RE: CONSIDERATION OF MASK MANDATE EXTENSION**

**ACTION:** Supt. Ramsay noted that it has been since August 18<sup>th</sup> when the board voted on this, and he was authorized to implement a mask mandate if conditions warranted so. Because it has become more and more difficult to explain to some people why we are doing this, as some suggest he is just carrying out his own personal views and not those of the board, he felt it would be good for the board to revisit the issue .

The three-week extension this time was done because of Thanksgiving break and the timing of data on positivity rates and case numbers. He felt it made more sense to wait until we had data available after the holiday.

Everett Grant noted that at the August 18<sup>th</sup> meeting he made a motion for a mask mandate at that time, which was defeated; however, a motion from Ronald Kennedy to do exactly what we are doing now was supported by the board. He feels that Supt. Ramsay is handling it well and would like to see us continue with that method.

Ronald Kennedy noted that he had hoped that masks wouldn't be needed, but we need to keep everyone safe. So, for now, he thinks we need to keep doing what we are doing.

Tiffany Strout said she is for parent choice when it comes to masking students. The guidelines from the state are vague and don't make a lot of sense.

Shelby Greene asked when does masking end, and if we lift the mandate, what will that do to staffing? Mr. Ramsay noted that he hopes that if we do pool testing and our numbers go down, then we can lift the mandate in the new year. He noted that a high percentage of staff members are scared or worried about the virus. There has been pushback even this week about being in the buildings. He feels if we lifted the mask mandate right now, we could potentially lose staff and have no replacements for them.

Ronald Kennedy noted that he is not in favor of doing pool testing but wishes the state would do away with contact tracing.

David Perham noted that we have to make decisions within the guidelines from the state, whether we like them or not.

Supt. Ramsay noted that if we decide to do pool testing, it is optional for parents to sign their kids up. It could help with quarantining as students in a pool test don't have to quarantine unless they are positive. Vaccines would help with that as well, but he again reiterated that we are not requiring vaccines.

Leann Beal noted that she understands that her position is extreme the other way and isn't recommending that anyone jeopardize their licenses or jobs by not following guidelines, but she would ask that administrators and the board look at the requirements and build a policy that fits our district. Not all schools are strictly following the CDC guidelines. At what point is the board allowed to make its own policy?

Annie Morris said it doesn't make sense what we are doing. Kids are losing out. Does the board have the ability to decide to not follow the recommendations? Kids need to be in school.

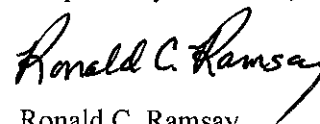
Dawn Fickett was asked to read the motion that was approved in August. It is as follows: "Motion by Ronald Kennedy, second by Chris Chartrand, and voted (769-yes, 232-no) that the Board authorizes the Superintendent to revise the current School Re-opening Plan to remove references to mandatory masking, except on school busses, and all other COVID related protocols that are no longer mandated by the CDC and DOE. The school board recommends masking in schools but is leaving the choice up to each individual at this time. If at any time circumstances change to include a much higher case rate in our county/community, or a significant increase in positive cases in our schools, or the state of Maine changes from a recommendation to a mandate, a mask mandate may be implemented by the Superintendent in consultation with the Board Chair and Administration. ("Yes" votes: Chartrand, Perham, Greene, Wright, R. Kennedy, Strout, Beal, G. Kennedy, Hartford; "No" votes: Grant, Murphy, Dunham)"

Motion by Everett Grant, second by Bethany Hartford, and voted (542-yes, 205-no, 60-abstentions) to reaffirm the action taken at the August 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, leaving it in place as is until conditions change. (G. Kennedy and Strout-voted no; Greene abstained.)

**8. RE: ADJOURNMENT**

**ACTION:** Motion by Tiffany Strout, and voted (unanimously) to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Ronald C. Ramsay  
Secretary to the Board

**NOVEMBER 17, 2021 MEETING SUMMARY**

**A. INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS**

1. APPROVED Minutes of the October 27, 2021 regular meeting as presented;
8. TABLED agenda adjustments;

**B. OLD BUSINESS-none**

**C. NEW BUSINESS**

1. APPROVED junior high basketball coaches DWM-Batson/MacLean; Harrington-McLain/Chick; ML-R Parker/D Parker;
2. HIRED Rachel Gray as health teacher at NJSHS;
3. HIRED Billie Jo Cornellier as evening custodian at Milbridge;
4. HIRED Hilary Oliver and Kimberley Robinson as special education ed techs;
5. TABLED hiring substitute bus driver;
6. HIRED Catherine McDonald as substitute teacher;
7. RE-AFFIRMED vote from August 18<sup>th</sup> giving Superintendent authorization to implant mask mandate when/if needed.