

MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT 1 MEETING HELD REMOTELY ON April 27, 2020 AT 6:00 PM. (NOTE: These minutes are not official until approved by the Board. Such action, either to approve or amend and approve, is anticipated at the **May 18, 2020 meeting).**

Members Present: Stephen August, Chairperson; Lou Ensel, Vice Chairperson; Anita Brown, Megan Fuller, Bill Perkins, Lorna Ryan and Jennifer Ritch-Smith; Tanner Hennin, Student Representative; Patrick Manuel, Superintendent of Schools

Members Absent: Hayden Platteter

Others Present: Katie Joseph, Debra Clark

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson August called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm, conducted a roll call, and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson August recognized the administrators, teachers and parents for all their efforts during this unusual time. Mr. August reported that Superintendent Manuel and the administrators are working on coordinating a time when our students can return to school safely to retrieve their belongings.

APPROVE/AMEND MINUTES FOR APRIL 4, 2020

MOTION: Ensel

SECOND: Perkins

VOTE: Board (7-0)
Students (1-0)

TO: Approve the minutes of April 4, 2020 as written.

ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA

The agenda was adjusted make the Finance Committee Update Item 8.4 and include Item 12.5 under New Business to discuss an ad hoc committee to review our remote learning experience.

PUBLIC SESSION

Chairperson August read an email from RSU 1 parent Aaron Taylor on whether the Board is going to convene a planning committee to talk about possible issues regarding a safe opening of the schools in September. The Board also received an email from three parents with a request that the Board form an ad hoc committee to reflect on and assess remote learning and our continuous learning plans. The Board will be discussing this topic under new business as well as any updates from Superintendent Manuel and Assistant Superintendent Joseph. A copy of the emails will be attached to the official Board minutes.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Board member Ryan reported that the legislative session ended on March 17th. The federal government announced that \$13.5 billion will be released for Kindergarten through grade 12

education and Maine is targeted to receive about \$43 million. The Maine Department of Education has until July 1 to apply for those funds and any funds will be sent to the state and then the districts using the Title I formula. According to the emergency act, we can use some of the funds for the supports that Chairperson August spoke about during their last Finance Committee meeting. LD2167 afforded the district many waivers and extensions which included the continuation of our food service program as well as waiving compulsory school days and assessments. Budget timelines were extended, and remote Board meetings were authorized. Two key bills that came out of the Maine legislature were LD1918 which broadens the use of reserve funds from Capital Improvements to instruction and support. LD1855 legislation changes the definition of excusable absences to personal health which now includes mental and behavioral health.

MORSE BUILDING PROJECT UPDATE

Superintendent Manuel reported that the concrete will be poured this week on the deck on the bridge. Classrooms are being framed out from the third floor to the first floor and painting has begun on some of the interior walls. Metal siding is going up along the exterior of the auditorium. Elevators and stairs have been installed. The Building Committee is scheduled to meet remotely this week to talk about schedule and progress along with items such as the canopy, the sign on Congress Avenue, additional landscaping and the outside scoreboard on the turf field.

UPDATE ON CONTINUOUS LEARNING PLAN

Assistant Superintendent Katie Joseph reported that an updated communication was sent home to families and teachers regarding continuing distance learning through to the end of this school year. Teachers were able to go to their school using the safety protocols that are in place to make sure that we have the paper packets for our students that do not have access to the Internet. There have not been any adjustments made to the number of hours of work that is expected in each grade level as reported last month. A pickup day has been scheduled for May 1st for families to come in to get their packets and any other items. Ms. Joseph reviewed the data collected in terms of contact with families. The district averages about 85-90% contact with families. Principals, counselors and social workers have been doing a great job at trying to reach each family to make sure they have everything they need. The district is averaging about 70-80% of student participation in distance learning with some schools having a higher rate than others. We are looking forward to getting more feedback soon in order to start thinking about how long the distance learning will be continuing, what the plan would look like, what is working for our families, teachers and administrators, and how we can get better. Ms. Joseph will be applying for a \$5,000 COVID-19 mini-grant from the Department of Education which can be used to provide support to some of our students by bringing groceries and other supplies that we would normally provide to their homes. Ms. Joseph reviewed the percentage of class participation in each school and stated that three-fourths of our students are involved in remote learning.

Morse High School Principal Eric Varney reported that student class participation varies widely from class to class and that an average of 70% of the student participation has taken part in the classes. Mr. Varney is happy that staff has been able to connect with many of our families and students but does wish student class participation were greater.

Vocational Director Julie Kenny reported that the more academic classes are seeing a high participation rate, but a lot of the vocational students are working full time at this point and checking in on a regular basis.

Special Education Director Justin Keleher stated that the case managers are making regular efforts to contact families to offer any support they might need. Some parents have found it a

challenge to try to teach a student with a disability at home and we are doing our best to provide some virtual support such as speech, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

Assistant Superintendent Joseph expressed her appreciation to the staff that are working incredibly hard to do an excellent job of finding the balance between the joy and the connection and trying to continue as best they can with the academics.

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Board member Ryan reported that the Finance Committee held a remote meeting on April 22nd. The carryover from the 2019-2020 budget could be recognized to help offset the budget. Business Manager Debra Clark confirmed that the amount of carryover will be determined only after the fiscal year is closed and the audit performed. Using some of the funds from other cost centers, maintenance projects will be done this year to allow flexibility for next year. The perception may be that the district will have a large amount of surplus in our budget with the school closure; however, we still have salaries and benefits and contractual obligations. Although we don't have the revenues coming in for the Food Service Program, we are still providing our families with meals. The committee decided to have the second reading of the budget on June 8th to allow time to find out how the funds from the Coronavirus Cares Act will be distributed. Chairperson August suggested having funds in our budget to support summer or early fall tutoring, testing material or transportation for students who might need it. The Board had requested a list of those cost centers that may be down which was included in the Board packet.

Superintendent Manuel discussed the request from some parents to form an advisory group and reported that a survey would be going out to get more data to determine what the needs might be. The district budget meeting has been rescheduled to take place on June 30th and the budget referendum will take place on July 14th.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Business Manager Debra Clark presented the Board with the financial report for the month ending March 31, 2020. To date, we have spent \$23 million out of our \$33 million budget which is in line with previous years. Ms. Clark reviewed the cost centers that may see a savings due to our current situation. Ms. Clark and Foodservice Director Tim Harkins will be meeting to look at the foodservice account to transfer some funds into the account to cover the shortfall. Revenues are still coming in from the towns, subsidy and tuition. Ms. Clark stated that the district's end of the year balance may be \$150,000 more than normal.

BOARD GOALS

Board member Ritch-Smith stated that the Board continues to get monthly updates on the new school construction project. The district's RTI will be critical in years to come to help with learning deficits and social and emotional issues.

SECOND READINGS OF BOARD POLICIES

MOTION: Perkins

SECOND: Ensel

VOTE: Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Approve the second reading of the following RSU 1 Board policies:

- IHBAC – Child Find Policy
- BCA – Board Member Code of Ethics
- KE – Public Concerns/Complaints

- JLCB – Immunization Requirements for Students Entering RSU 1 Schools
- BEA – School Board Use of Electronic Mail

The Board discussed the language in Policy JJIAA – Private School Students – Access to Public School Co-Curricular, Interscholastic and Extracurricular Activities pertaining to charter students having an opportunity to try out and participate in any extracurricular activity in RSU 1. Board member Ryan suggested that the district have a form for parents and students to complete as part of the process like other districts.

MOTION: Perkins **SECOND:** Ryan **VOTE:** Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Table Policy JJIAA and have it go back to the Policy Committee for further discussion.

Policy JICJ – Student Use of Cell Phone and Other Electronic Devices – Board member Ryan asked whether the Board would consider prohibiting cell phones in the classroom unless there is a request for an exception provided by the teacher. Also, under Section A, Ms. Ryan thought that ‘school activities’ is a little broad on interpretation. Under Section D where the policy addresses recording in locker rooms and bathrooms, Ms. Ryan asked whether this is something that we can enforce and whether there are any consequences for the school for not enforcing it. Morse Principal Varney responded that while monitoring students’ cell phone use is difficult, every effort would be made to enforce the policy. Superintendent Manuel stated that administrators do the best they can do enforce the district’s policies. We need to have these guidelines doable and manageable.

Board member Ryan stated that Bath Middle School seems to have some success in restricting cell phone use and wondered if it should be included in the policy throughout the district. Principal Varney stated that he has had conversations about this with his staff and will continue to look into it.

MOTION: Perkins **SECOND:** Perkins **VOTE:** Board (6-1)
Student (1-0)

TO: Approve Policy JICJ with the letter and number sequence adjusted and revised the wording in Section A to read “school classes and activities.”

The Board reviewed Policy BEB Board Member Use of Social Media and agreed to remove the second paragraph.

MOTION: Ryan **SECOND:** Perkins **VOTE:** Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Approve Policy BEB – Board Member Use of Social Media with the second paragraph omitted.

PERSONNEL ITEM

Superintendent Manuel announced the retirement of Elise Copeland and thanked her for her 30 years of service in our gifted and talented program as well as all of her work with the Odyssey of the Mind students.

PUBLIC FORUM TO DISCUSS PROPOSED BUDGET

Superintendent Manuel reported that there is still a possibility of our subsidy being reduced at some point, but we can use any carryover that we have this year if there is a shortfall in state subsidy.

Board member Ritch-Smith stated that with unemployment and cost of living increases she would be interested in looking at the proposed budget to see if there are any areas we can reduce. Ms. Ritch-Smith felt that the two different areas to consider are what our students really need for success and what we want for our students and community. Ms. Ritch-Smith also asked if there is a way to delay the principle payment until next year and expressed her concern for the townspeople who will struggle with an increase in the mil rate.

Superintendent Manuel stated that the Finance Committee can hold another remote meeting; however, we would need some direction on what you would want to see for a decrease.

Board member Ryan would recommend that the Board look at the number of students that would be impacted should we decide to cut anything. Ms. Ryan also felt that delaying paying our debt service would result in the district paying more in interest and encouraged the public to weigh in on this discussion.

Vice Chairperson Ensel agreed that the budget as presented is responsible and would support bringing the Finance Committee back together if there are different options available to refinance or finance things differently.

Board member Brown expressed her concern about cutting back too far because we do not know how much remediation our students will need next year in order to catch up such as summer programming and support in the classroom. Ms. Brown also agreed that we would want to know the risks and benefits of moving our debt forward before.

Chairperson August asked that Superintendent Manuel and Business Manager Debra Clark to look at some of the items that Board member Ritch-Smith listed and to see if there are any that would significantly change the outcome of the budget. Mr. August also asked them to inquire about the question of debt and anything that may happen regarding the Coronavirus Cares Act.

PROBATIONARY TEACHERS

MOTION: Perkins **SECOND:** Ensel **VOTE:** Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Approve the entire list of probationary teachers as presented.

EXTEND MEETING PAST TWO-HOUR LIMIT

MOTION: Ryan **SECOND:** Perkins **VOTE:** Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Extend the Board meeting passed 8:00 pm.

REALLOCATION OF PERSONNEL

Assistant Superintendent Joseph reported that with the district's free and reduced lunch numbers continuing to decrease our Title I and Title II funding continues to be reduced as well because it is based on those numbers. This school year we received \$651,000 in federal funding while next year the district is scheduled to receive \$613,000. A representative at the

state told Ms. Joseph that the funding would be even less if the district was held to our exact free and reduced numbers but here is a policy where you can never lose more than five to ten percent of the funding. Ms. Joseph reviewed the district's current staffing in Title I and reported that because we were unable to hire an ed tech last year that salary was carried over to fund our current staffing levels. With the reduction in funding and no carryover from this year, we have been looking at our need to re-staff and restructure at our current programming with less funds. We have four Title I ed techs in the district and can promise them continued employment because we will be adding four new ed tech positions in our special education program. Since we won't be using ed techs in the Title I program, we will hire a teacher and a half. The administrators feel that by totally reconfiguring how students are being seen by attaching them to grade levels we will be able to still meet our student's needs.

Superintendent Manuel explained that the four special education ed techs are in the budget right now. The district had four behavior support personnel positions that we were unable to fill and hired long-term substitutes in these positions so this would not be an additional cost to the district.

Special Education Director Justin Keleher reported that the ed positions were in behavior support, resource room programs and one 1-1 support.

Superintendent Manuel stated that with one of our music teachers retiring next year the administrative team looked at the number of music classes, students and offerings. Their recommendation is to reduce a music position by .8 FTE while still providing all students in the district will have the same amount of chorus and band.

MOTION: Ensel

SECOND: Perkins

VOTE: Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Reduce four ed tech positions in Title I and reduce a position in the music department by .8 FTE.

FINAL STUDENT DAY DISCUSSION

Superintendent Manuel reported that discussions have taken place with several districts, Maine School Management and the Department of Education regarding when to stop remote learning for this school year. Some districts are ending on May 29th while others are continuing to June 12th. Our administrative team is proposing that we conclude our academic year on June 5th. Our staff would continue to work through their contracted days until June 18th. Dr. Manuel highlighted some of the activities, discussions and meetings that the staff would be involved in during this period of time.

MOTION: Ensel

SECOND: Ritch-Smith

VOTE: Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Conclude the remote learning in RSU 1 on June 5th.

AD HOC COMMITTEE

Chairperson August felt that creating an ad hoc committee to look at the remote learning experience in RSU 1 would give us an opportunity to look at the district's educational needs and our student needs. Mr. August suggested that Superintendent Manuel and Assistant Superintendent Joseph put together a scope of the committee and its membership and look at a timeline to see how this can be done effectively and efficiently in terms of bringing the findings back to the district and the Board in a timely way without impeding the work being done in the district. Any Board members that would like to participate in the committee may do so.

Superintendent Manuel stated that forming the ad hoc committee and getting a survey out to the community is the priority right now. A statement on the scope of the committee, recommendation on membership and the timeline will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

MOTION: Ryan

SECOND: Ensel

VOTE: Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Establish an ad hoc committee to look at the district's experience with its continuous learning plans.

NEXT MEETING AND LOCATION

The next regular Board meeting will be held remotely on Monday, May 18th at 6:00 pm.

ADJOURN

MOTION: Ensel

SECOND: Perkins

VOTE: Board (7-0)
Student (1-0)

TO: Adjourn at 8:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Patrick M. Manuel
Secretary