

1 **MAPLE RUN UNIFIED BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

2 **September 2, 2020 6:00 Zoom Meeting**

3  
4 **MINUTES**

5 **Present for a Quorum via Zoom:** Jeff Morrill, Alisha Sawyer, Grant Henderson, Steven LaRosa, Susan  
6 Magnan, Joanna Jerose, Al Corey, Jack McCarthy, Nilda Gonnella-French, Nina Hunsicker

7 **Unable to Attend:**

8 **Administrators:** Kevin Dirth, Superintendent; Bill Kimball, Assistant Superintendent; Martha Gagner,  
9 Business Manager; Andrea Racek, Special Education Director; Stephanie Ripley, Early Childhood Director;  
10 Joan Cavallo, SACS Principal; Stacie Rouleau, SACS Assistant Principal; Leeann Wright, NCTC Director; Lisa  
11 Durocher, NCTC Assistant Director; Alexis Hoyt, Student Support Director; Jason Therrien, SATEC  
12 Assistant Principal; Angela Stebbins, SATEC Principal; Heather Fitzgibbons, BFA Assistant Principal; Sara  
13 Kattam, BFA Assistant Principal; Martin Kattam, Director of Technology and Innovation; Brett Blanchard,  
14 BFA Principal.

15 **Others** – Reese Kelly, Reier Erickson, Sarah Auer, Zach Scheffler, Nancy Keller, Mike Campbell, Mareaa  
16 Miles, Val Lipka, Lauren Dees-Erickson, Keith Jackson, Late LaRosa, Jen Williamson, Erin Rocheleau, Dot  
17 Goulet, Angie Strum, Linda Pacheco

18 1. **Call to Order** – Jeff Morrill called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

19 2. **Agenda Review** – Item 7D no Action, Add 7F – Update Employee status

20 **Al Corey made a motion to approve the agenda; second by Nina Hunsicker. The motion passed**  
21 **unanimously.**

22 3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

23 4. **Visitors** – Nancy Keller, Steve LaRosa’s wife, introduced herself and said she is very pleased with  
24 the school district and gave a shout out to everyone involved in opening the schools and she  
25 trusts administration to keep her children safe. She was surprised to see the article in Seven Days  
26 about a BFA resource Officer, and she thinks we need to take pause and rethink the SROs in the  
27 schools. Zach Scheffler also read the article and suggested this Board take a look at the role of  
28 SROs in the schools. An investigation into SROs and their presence in the schools is warranted.  
29 Kate LaRose stated (provided in writing) Earlier this summer a group of concerned citizens  
30 attended public comment to share their concerns about SROs in Maple Run School District. We  
31 shared national, statewide, and local data that said—irrefutably—that police presence in schools  
32 cause harm. They cause harm with a price tag of nearly \$250k tax payer funded dollars a year. In  
33 response, Superintendent Dirth shared anecdotal evidence- mostly his word and that of other  
34 administrators- that Maple Run is different, and that SROs don’t cause harm here. That  
35 somehow, against all odds, the SROs and SRO program work differently here and they buck  
36 national, statewide, and regional data. He shared this while signing a settlement agreement for  
37 the damage caused by an SRO against a student with a disability. A student who had an  
38 experience so traumatic that he never went back to school afterwards. Earlier this evening I  
39 emailed school board members requesting the following: Today Seven Days released an article  
40 that delved more deeply into SROs in schools. Please read it. Tomorrow there will be a statewide  
41 panel of students, parents, and educators examining the role of police in our schools. Please  
42 attend. As you read the article and attend the event, ask yourself what you can do as a school  
43 board member to keep all students safe and able to learn in our district. Finally, I request that the  
44 staff and SRO statements from the incident in question be released for all school board members  
45 to read. I request that all school board members watch the footage of the video of the student  
46 with a disability being taken to the ground, called a retard, and handcuffed and arrested in front  
47 of his peers. When you are done with that, I would like the same to be done with the 35 other  
48 charges that SROs have brought against Maple Run students since 2016. As school board  
49 members you are elected to ensure transparency and accountability in our education system, and  
50 you are elected to ensure the safety, learning, and success of all of our students. With all due  
51 respect, this requires more than the anecdotal words of our administrators. Reier Erickson spoke

52 to the SROs in schools. Jen Williamson also spoke to the article in Seven Days. Reese Kelly added  
 53 that he feels that SRO should not be in the schools. Students are fearful of police and this affects  
 54 their ability to learn. Mareesa Miles supported the speakers before her, and turned to the Mission  
 55 of the School, stating that if students are fearful, they are not able to be open to education. We  
 56 need to take a hard look at whether we are supporting our mission statement. Kathy Hutchison  
 57 supports the speakers before her. She was appalled after reading the article. She feels we should  
 58 get together a group of Board, Administrators, and community members to look at the needs  
 59 while we are looking at next year's budget. Angie Strum addressed the fact that it is not one bad  
 60 SRO Officer, but systemic problems. She would like to hear back from the school Board members  
 61 about how they are thinking about this issue and have it on a future agenda. Linda Pacheco spoke  
 62 about how her daughter was affected by SROs. It was not a good situation and has had lasting  
 63 ramifications. Kathleen Keenan shared her concerns and asked that she get more information  
 64 about our SROs. Her concern is that we are spending a quarter of a million dollars on this. She will  
 65 reach out to the Superintendent with her questions.

66 Alisha Sawyer, Joanna Jerosse and Nilda Gonnella-French joined the meeting.

#### 67 5. Consent Agenda –

- 68 A. Approval of Minutes August 19, 2020
- 69 B. Grants

70 The consent agenda was adopted.

#### 71 6. Old Business

- 72 A. [COVID19 Update](#) Kevin Dirth added to what he shared at the last meeting. School starts  
 73 on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September. Teachers have been in working very hard since the 19<sup>th</sup>, and we  
 74 feel ready. Some parents never returned their choices for their students and were  
 75 assigned to Hybrid. Once they realized, they made their choice and Virtual has risen. Bill  
 76 Kimball added that for the 280 K-12; about 60 are high school where we partnered with  
 77 Virtual High School. The plan is to start slow and get it right. K-8 are using their own  
 78 teachers. At the high school there will be advisors. Mr. Kimball explained some details of  
 79 Virtual Academy. Kevin Dirth introduced Val Lipka, the Maple Run COVID Coordinator. Dr.  
 80 Haag, pediatrician, is also helping us out through this. Dr. Dirth stated that there is a  
 81 possibility of a positive occurrence with meals - continuing free meals to all students.  
 82 Childcare has been an issue – with parents having to deal with their children while they  
 83 are working. It was the same with our own employees, so we are pulling together  
 84 childcare for our teachers so that we can open the schools. Sports will take place in some  
 85 limited degree. It is unclear at this point how long school will continue in this structure.  
 86 There will be notice of a change unless there is an executive order from the Governor  
 87 with little notice. The state is working out criteria for schools to determine if closing is  
 88 needed.
- 89 B. Construction Matters – Bill Kimball presented a slide show and discussed the updates.

#### 90 7. New Business

- 91 A. SATEC Desk Bids (**Action**) – SATEC has had to order 470 desks to allow social distancing  
 92 with full attendance. This will be COVID reimbursement expense. The selection is for the lowest  
 93 cost wooden top. The tables currently being used will be stored if they are not all repurposed.

94 **Al Corey made a motion to accept the bid from School Outlet for \$76,126.50; second by Jack**  
 95 **McCarthy. The motion passed unanimously.**

- 96
- 97 B. HVAC work bid at Fairfield (**Action**) - Bill Kimball explained the language from the State of  
 98 Vermont Coronavirus Relief Fund bill: "(f) Contracting with vendors; bidding exception.  
 99 Due to the public health risk posed by COVID-19, any project receiving grant funds under  
 100 the Program shall be deemed to be an emergency repair for the purposes of 16 V.S.A. §  
 101 559(e), and a covered school may enter into a contract with an independent third party  
 102 without the need to competitively bid the contract."

103 **Al Corey made a motion to accept the bid from TCV Building Automation Integrity for \$23,000; second**  
 104 **by Nilda Gonnella-French. The motion passed unanimously.**

105 C. ESP Side letter (**Action**) – Bill Kimball explained that we had an opening for an SLP with no  
 106 candidates, so it was changed to an SPA (assistant). Administration and the Union are  
 107 looking to have a side letter that this position is a one-year position.

108 **Al Corey made a motion to approve the amended side letter to include one-year only and with no**  
 109 **guarantee of continuing.; second by Jack McCarthy. The motion passed unanimously.**

110 D. Change in meal charge for reduced in-person meals - The Abbey is requesting a change in  
 111 the price they charge per meal with the reduced in person students the costs are more  
 112 than they had agreed to charge. While this was being worked on the USDA did a press  
 113 release that they are extending the Summer food program, which is free for all children so  
 114 at this time the change in charges won't be needed. Schools doing free and reduced  
 115 applications still need to be gathered because we don't know when this program will run  
 116 out of money and end.

117 E. \*Legal Issues -This can go into executive session with a finding.

118 Nina Hunsicker made a finding that that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the  
 119 Board or persons involved at a substantial disadvantage, under 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a) 1. (F) confidential  
 120 attorney-client communications; second by Joanne Jerose. The motion passed unanimously.

121 Added \*Employee Status Update – Jeff Morrill said that this needed to be moved to Executive Session  
 122 under V.S.A. 313 (a) 3. (3) the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or  
 123 employee.

## 124 8. Other Business

125 A. Warrants

126 **Al Corey made a motion to approve the warrants, acknowledging that passage of this motion will act**  
 127 **as individual Board Member authorization of their signature on these warrants; second by Jack**  
 128 **McCarthy. The motion passed unanimously.**

129 G. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Dirth provided information on SROs in our schools for the  
 130 last 4 years. There will be a modified Convocation this year virtually 9 – 10 on Friday  
 131 morning. It will be YouTube live. It will be partially live with three videos including the  
 132 student presentation. Brenda Comstock will send the link to Board members when it goes  
 133 out to MRUSD staff.

134 H. Board Announcements

135 **8. Agenda Items for Future Meeting** – September 16<sup>th</sup> is the next meeting. SROs, school opening.

## 136 9. Potential Executive Session

137 **Al Corey made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Legal matters under the finding earlier**  
 138 **in the agenda, inviting Kevin Dirth, at 7:40 p.m.; second by Jack McCarthy. The motion passed**  
 139 **unanimously.**

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141 Exited Executive Session at 8:48 p.m.

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143 **10. Adjourn** 8:49 p.m.

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145 Respectfully submitted,

146 Brenda Comstock

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