

MAINE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT #37

September 16, 2020

An Emergency Meeting of the Board of Directors of RSU/MSAD #37 was held at Narraguagus Jr./Sr. High School, Harrington, Maine on Wednesday, September 16, 2020 to consider and act upon the following items of business:

Board Members Present: Susan Beal, Chris Chartrand, Beth Hartford, Grace Kennedy, Ronald Kennedy, Gary Magby, Debra Murphy, Vance Pineo, Jr., Sarah Willson, and Mark Wright

Board Members Absent: Jeffery Beal and Charles Peterson, Jr.

Other persons present: Ronald Ramsay, Denise Vose, Lorna Greene, Susan Meserve, Maria White, Mary Ellen Day, Todd Emerson, Ron Greene, Lori Mathews, David Mathews, Tiffany Strout, Tracie Martin, Lowell Beal, Heather Strout, Hilary Oliver, Kandi Robertson, Dan Kane, Tyler Tenney, Dawn Fickett, and other citizens

MINUTES

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Pineo.

2. **RE: CONSIDERATION OF FALL ATHLETICS**

ACTION: Supt. Ramsay noted that the issue of fall athletics was revisited at the state level. At its meeting last month, the board voted to meet when we knew something to vote on the issue. There have been changes since August. Most districts around the state have voted to play, with a few exceptions. In Washington and Hancock Counties, Sumner and Woodland have voted not to play. Machias voted this afternoon to play. Calais is voting tonight.

He has been researching, talking to people, and considering the issue. He feels that the state has made a mistake as they have a double standard for attending school vs. playing athletics; however, he also feels that he doesn't want our board, himself, or the district to be the ones refusing to allow our students to play when most others around us are allowing it. Philosophically, he believes that the situation we are in warrants more attention on education than on athletics. The state says it is not safe to have kids in school without masks and socially distancing, yet they say it is safe to put athletes on busses travelling outside the district and on fields together to play sports without masks. Reluctantly, his recommendation is that we allow our athletes to play within the guidelines.

Tracie Martin noted that each sport has specific guidelines it must follow in addition to state guidelines. Right now, golf, cross-country, and soccer are the ones being allowed to play. If the board agrees to let our students play, the administration can also add more guidelines such as not allowing the bus to stop for food on the way home from games/meets, eliminating traffic inside the school during games, not allowing spectators, etc. Volleyball has been moved to the spring unless something changes.

Supt. Ramsay noted it was hard to shut down in March and not allow our athletes to play spring sports, but every other district in the state was in the same situation. This would be different if we don't allow our students to play as most other places around will be allowing it. He does recommend that we not allow our elementary schools to play outside the district. Many places around have eliminated elementary athletics for the fall. Transportation would also be an issue right now.

Dan Kane and Tiffany Strout spoke from the audience urging the board to approve letting the kids play. They noted that many of these same athletes have been playing outside the district all summer and interacting with kids from all over the state with no issues. If we take away athletics here, they will continue to travel and increase the chances of bringing the virus back to our district. We don't know what will happen six months from now, but now the state says it is safe to let them play. Kandi Robertson noted that the mental well-being of kids is affected when we take athletics away from them. Our athletes and coaches are willing to work under whatever guidelines the board sets.

Ron Kennedy noted that he is a big supporter of athletics, but he just doesn't see how playing soccer can be safe. The board represents everyone, not just the athletes. If someone gets sick, more than just the athletes will be affected. Mark Wright stated that attending school five days a week is important, too, so if it's not safe to allow them in school full-time, it is hard to consider letting them play athletics while school is so restrictive. Vance Pineo, Jr. noted that the board's first charge is to the education and safety of students. It is hard to think about bringing risk into the district when the board can limit the risk.

Tracie Martin noted that many schools are adding a COVID waiver to their athletic policies. Mr. Ramsay noted that his is only good until you don't follow the guidelines, and someone gets sick or dies. The district is only liable for what we have control of, which is why the board is discussing the issue...it is under their control.

After much discussion, Supt. Ramsay recommended that the board allow high school athletics to play a limited season as proposed by the MPA/State, staying within Washington County while also adhering to any special guidelines determined by the administration. He recommended that elementary athletics be allowed within the district only, playing intramurals or against our own schools. It was moved by Grace Kennedy, seconded by Debra Murphy, and voted (539-yes, 257-no) to approve the recommendation of the Superintendent. (Yes votes—Chartrand, Magby, Murphy, Pineo, Willson, Beal, G. Kennedy; No votes—Wright, R. Kennedy, Hartford)

3. RE: ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: Motion by Debra Murphy, and voted (unanimously) to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Ronald C. Ramsay
Secretary to the Board

MEETING SUMMARY, September 16, 2020

2. APPROVED allowing high school athletics to play limited season as proposed, staying within Washington County while also adhering to any special guidelines determined by the administration; elementary athletics will be allowed within the district only, playing intramurals or against our own schools